

## **Descent 1331**

### Chapter 1331 Xavnik

Uramus stood outside the tall bronzed doors of the Senate in a daze, not quite knowing what had just happened. He didn't even know how to wrap his mind around this. The Stalwart Polearm Party had been a Party for over 800 years. They had been a Majority or Shared Majority within the Senate for over 300. And yet, they had been demoted back down to a Faction... Just like that?

Uramus suddenly couldn't feel rage anymore. What he felt wasn't helplessness either. Rather, he felt guilt, guilty that a legacy that had lasted so long actually suffered such humiliation at his hands.

It had to be understood that Factions were a very important part of the Void Palace. The Void Palace wasn't just for training youths, it was forging the future leaders of the Human Domain. As such, Factions here represented something very different than it otherwise would.

There were several levels to Factions. Rookie Factions, Bronze Factions, Silver Factions, Gold Factions, Legacy Factions, and finally, Parties.

From Rookie to Gold was fairly straightforward, they separated power based on the strength of their leadership, their accomplishments, their number of members, their average strength, so on and so forth.

A Legacy Faction was a bit different. It wouldn't necessarily be stronger than a Gold Faction, however, it had been passed on and survived more than a single generation. This would happen when the Leader of a Faction promoted to greater ranks, left to enter a Party, or was granted a Title by a Party.

This wouldn't be considered a betrayal. In fact, a Legacy Faction would gain great prestige if their Leader was recruited by a Party. There were only 999 Senate Seats and a limited number of Parties could claim them depending on their feats of strength. A Faction promoting to a Party was extraordinarily rare, so rare, in fact, that it might only occur once every few hundred years. As such, the most talented of Faction leaders would choose to take this route.

Finally, there was the level of Parties. Parties were those who held the truest power within the Void Palace to the point where they could assert control over the rules that governed everyone.

Parties were split into Minority Parties, Majority Parties and Shared Majority Parties. There were also special Ranks among these Parties, for example, the Party Whip who was tasked with maintaining order, organizing votes, and other things of the like.

Minority Parties were unironically the majority of Parties. They could control anywhere from one seat to a few. Majority Parties were Parties that controlled at least 500 seats, giving them defacto majority on all decisions regardless of how everyone else voted.

Shared Majorities were a bit trickier. They could refer to a single Party which controlled less than 500 seats and as such might be overruled by the combined effort of all other Parties. Or, in this case, it could refer to two or more clashing behemoths.

The Unfettered Blade Party and Stalwart Polearm Party both controlled over 500 seats between them. As such, if the two Parties agreed on anything, there was nothing the other Parties could do. But... That was exactly the reason for the latter's downfall.

There were too many Parties looking for a method to finally breathe and break through. The fall of a giant would result in an uprise in competition. They had been stifled for too long.

Even now, Uramus had no idea how such a thing had happened. The rulebook of Void Senators was far too long and he couldn't be bothered to read all of it. He had thought that because they controlled 244 Seats, no one could even dream of ousting them all at once like this. And yet...

How could he not feel incompetent? His number one enemy had demoted them all the way from a Shared Majority Party down to a Legacy Faction and he didn't even know how they had done it.

Uramus listlessly stared up into the sky.

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Hours later, Rosen sat in his office. The Void Council Hall wasn't just made up of its gathering location, but also doubled as the main base of most Parties. As the current sole Shared Majority Leader, he was feeling very content. However, his expression was quite calm.

And then, the door opened.

Rosen's gaze narrowed, but didn't rise, nor did he seem too surprised. The young man that walked in did so leisurely, his expression not wavering in the face of Rosen's aura in the slightest despite clearly being several levels weaker.

The young man was handsome, his overly chiseled jaw being a hallmark of his looks. His skin was bronzed, as was his hair, a pair of hazel eyes acting as the centerpiece of it all.

He was tall, standing at least seven feet and his back was as straight as a javelin. Every one of his steps was measured and his every movement wasted not the slightest hint of energy. In one glance, you might believe this young man to be a scholar, but in the next you might believe him to be a general. It was impossible to pinpoint accurately.

"It seems that you've taken my advice. Congratulations, Shared Majority Leader Rosen."

The young man smiled, taking a seat across from Rosen. Whether it was by his actions or by his words, even in the face of this lofty Seventh Dimensional existence, he seemed to innately feel as though they were already equals...

No... Maybe that was just him giving Rosen some face. If the young man had his way, he might look down on the entire world. Despite only being within the Sixth Dimension, he had forced his seniors to dance on the palm of his hands. And, even facing them now, he had no desire, nor the need, to be humble.

Rosen stared at this young man deeply, not answering immediately. It was difficult to tell what it was he was thinking until he actually spoke...

"It seems the Morales family has an excellent pool of candidates this time around, isn't that right, Young Heir Xavnik?"

Chapter 1332 More Questions

Xavnik chuckled. "Why do you make it sound like I'm the only one that benefits from this arrangement? It can't be you've already forgotten how much you've earned just from this alone?"

Rosen sat back in his chair, still staring as though he had already forgotten how to speak. He wasn't normally a man of such few words, but facing this boy, he seemed to have become a mute.

"Since things are like this, it might be best if we lay out all the cards. We've been speaking through coded phrases and tacit head nods for too long. Don't take this as my insulting your intelligence, I simply want the line to be drawn as cleanly as possible.

"You gained the right to change the rules of the True Selection as you deem fit, the greatest control over the Senate's actions for at least the next few decades, and you've also... given your rising star an advantage over the competition."

When Xavnik said these last words, Rosen's pupils constricted. Though his heart remained steady and his expression remained indifferent, even for a person like him, there were certain ingrained reflexes that couldn't be easily circumvented.

It seemed that he had still underestimated this brat a bit too much. He had thought that Xavnik would try to humor him a bit, but who would have thought that he had something like this up his sleeves?

"There's no need to be so surprised, senior. It was a bit obvious, don't you think? Why would the mighty Unfettered Blade Party risk falling from the good graces of the Void Elder Legion and offending so many powerful families and Organizations just for the sake of sending a batch of youthful geniuses to their deaths?"

"A lesser person might really believe that Senior was a traitor of the human race, wanting to cripple this generation. But, you know something that most don't, right?"

Xavnik smiled. "I was racking my brain, trying to figure out what reason you could possibly have. I decided to think outside of the box. Rather than assuming the obvious and believing you to be a traitor, I made the assumption that this benefitted you in ways that were rooted outside of just a weakening of the human race.

"At the same time, I realized that this might have been a death sentence for most other years, but considering the talent of this generation, it was more likely that such a challenge would result in casualties no greater than any other year so it would balance itself out..."

"And that was when I stumbled onto a clue. I heard your family has a young one that calls himself the Sword Deity?"

Xavnik smiled meaningfully, looking toward Rosen who had already regained his composure. From the first sentence Xavnik had spoken, he had already expected much of the rest of this.

"It's quite interesting. Being a Void Palace disciple gives you access to a whole other world, but the restrictions are heavy. You can't even set foot onto a Void Battlefield until after having accumulated

enough merits and if you fail to gain access to one fast enough, you get punished with demotion nonetheless. It's an odd push and pull where on one hand, it looks like everyone is coddling you too much and on the other, they want to thrust you off to your death.

"I've heard, though, that the situation of your Suaird family is a bit precarious. The Tribulation of Sword Domain is coming u very quickly but the inheritor of this generation hasn't grown up yet. In a situation like yours, I would be stressed out as well. Unfortunately, your Sword Deity isn't much of one just yet.

"Unlucky, if you ask me. But, you're trying your best. The Void Battlefield is the most unique opportunity there is for your Sword Deity as it represents more than just a death trap. However, you simultaneously also needed a reason to use the Void Palace's resources for your own personal gain without breaking any rules.

"We all know that the Void Battlefield is a land of death to some, but to a select few... It can be a land of opportunity...

"You know, as a Morales, I never really liked swordsmen, you're all quite annoying to me. However, for the sake of my goals, it seems I have no choice but to help out the enemy.

"The only unfortunate thing is that while I understand this much, I still don't know how much you could possibly gain from this. I wonder what target your Sword Deity has that's so important that he must risk his life in this way and can't wait just a few years to be let onto the Battlefield naturally."

Xavnik scanned Rosen's expression but could only sigh when he didn't receive the answer he was looking for at a glance. It seemed that his deductions would come to an end here, but he didn't seem to be too disappointed. In fact, his smiling expression was still very much there.

Suddenly, Rosen smiled.

"Do you believe that you're the only one with deductive abilities? I personally found it very interesting when I heard that there were only two Amethyst Tokens given out this year. That's quite a low number, don't you think?"

Xavnik chuckled. "It is quite a low number. So, imagine how surprised I was when I found out my littlest cousin is among them?"

Rosen's smile faded, his eyes narrowing. Xavnik was too calm. If his goal was truly to kill Leonel, he should be sweating buckets. Such a large movement wouldn't fool that man.

"Oh? You thought I wanted to kill Littlest Nova? What kind of big brother would I be if I planned all of this out to do that? My goals are much higher than that. I wasn't even aware that Littlest Nova would be joining with this batch until just a few hours ago. By then, all of this had already been set into motion.

Xavnik sighed. "It can only be said that Littlest Nova is unlucky. Or, maybe he's quite lucky. I guess it would depend on the outcome, don't you think?"

Rosen's gaze narrowed firmer.

Xavnik stood. "Well, this is unfortunate. I wanted to have this meeting so that we could clear the air. But, it seems that we'll be ending this meeting with more questions than answers"

Xavnik smiled lightly and walked toward the door. "Have a nice day, senior."

With a light click, the door closed.

What was the purpose of the Sword Deity on the Void Battlefield? What was so important that Rosen would risk public ire to allow him this chance? Xavnik had no idea.

But, on the other hand...

What was Xavnik's goal? Why would he, as a polearm wielder himself, cripple the strongest Party capable of backing him? ... Rosen had no idea.

#### Chapter 1333 One Rule

Xavnik walked out of the Senate with a light smile on his face, his expression carefree. He walked by the straggling members of the Stalwart Polearm Party without a word, none of them being aware that the young man who had put them in such a state was right before them.

He strolled down the pathways, his demeanor remaining the same. However, when he reached a patch of forest, his steps suddenly paused.

"It was you, wasn't it?"

The voice came from a shadow hidden behind a tree. Despite the fact Xavnik was at most a meter away, it was still difficult to see this person as though they had perfectly fused into the shadows. Still, Xavnik didn't seem to have a very hard time telling who it was.

Smiling lightly, Xavnik shook his head. "I'm not sure what you mean."

The voice remained silent for a long while, but Xavnik didn't move either. It was as though the both of them had entered a state of tacit silence, each probing the other as though to check to see which of them was bluffing more than the other.

"I have to say, it's quite an excellent move. First Nova was just on the verge of becoming a core member of the Stalwart Polearm Party, and now he's effectively wasted more than a decade of effort. Fourth Nova also just managed to gain their favor and promote his Faction to a Legacy Faction as well. If this was you, you've quite effectively crippled two of them."

Xavnik chuckled. "Even if it was me, your conclusion would be too exaggerated, don't you think? Crippling First Nova with just a single move? Is that even possible? Your attempts at probing me are just as terrible as they always are, Second Nova. We both know First Nova well enough to understand that this isn't a setback, it's an opportunity on a silver platter. So, why would I ever do that?"

"Indeed..."

Despite not being able to see Second Nova's face, the narrowing of his gaze was practically palpable.

The crippling of the Stalwart Polearm Party might sound like a terrible plight for First Nova, but that was only if their Eldest Nova was incompetent. The only one to truly suffer from this was Fourth Nova, but he was actually foolish enough to follow in the same path as First Nova as though there would be scraps to pick up and make use of. He had no one to blame but himself.

With the regression of a Party back to a Legacy Faction, especially a Party with such deep roots and foundations, there would be a chance to capitalize. The heads of former management would likely roll and that would allow new voices to bloom where they would otherwise not have a single chance.

So, Xavnik was perfectly correct, First Nova would actually greatly benefit from this, and that was exactly why though it seemed Second Nova was sure that Xavnik had acted, there was actually no way to tell... because the motive was simply too murky. Even he couldn't tell exactly what Xavnik's purpose would be if he had done this...

And that made it all the more serious.

The struggle between Swordmen and Spearman was a tale as old as time itself. The push and pull of both factions had gone back and forth for too long. Even though most of the Morales brothers hadn't chosen to join the Stalwart Polearm Party because First Nova had already staked his claim upon it, that didn't mean that they didn't benefit from the Stalwart Polearm Party in other ways.

Polearm wielders fell under the former Party's umbrella of protection. With their fall, the changes would start subtly, but they could very well eventually snowball.

It would start with less materials capable of manufacturing polearms being procured, then it would lead to less spears overall being forged, then it would lead to less investment in the discipline overall, less techniques created, less training rooms maintained, and eventually, you would look up one day and there would be less polearm geniuses overall.

These would all be small, almost insignificant changes in the short term, but in the long term, and on a large scale, it would soon become an avalanche.

This would just be the tip of the iceberg. Second Nova wouldn't be surprised to see more sword fanatics in positions of power very soon, making life a living hell for those at the very bottom.

This was the second reason why Second Nova just couldn't reconcile this matter. The grudge between the Morales family and the Suaird family, the Kings of the Spear and the Kings of the Sword, was just as deep as the grudge between the Morales family and the Force Crafter's Guild.

There were no small number of Morales family members who were active members of the Stalwart Polearm Party, and it was likewise for the Suaird family and the Unfettered Blade Party. Crippling the former would be like Xavnik shooting himself in the foot. None of it made sense.

"It's been a nice talk, Auran." Xavnik smiled lightly. "You should really get rid of that habit of sneaking up on people, I'm used to it already, but what will Littlest Nova think?"

Auran fell into silence for a moment before he responded.

"... You weren't targeting our littlest brother, were you?"

His voice seemed to carry a hint of cold to it that hadn't been there before. Though Seventh Nova was the least threatening of them all due to his late start, he was also the greatest variable purely due to who his father was. With a wild card in play, maybe someone smart would prefer to take him out before he could grow.

Xavnik, though, let out an exasperated sigh. Why did everyone think he was a murderer? Actually, he was a murderer... Just not one that would target his own family, and definitely not one that would target someone who was effectively his baby brother.

"You think my information network is better than yours? You tell me when you found out he would be here and if you'd have enough time to plan this in that span."

These words were simple and Xavnik had already begun to walk past the tree as he spoke them. But, they also seemed to relax Auran a great deal.

It seemed that Auran would allow Xavnik to simply disappear. But, in the end, he still got in another word.

"Third Nova, you're walking a thin line here. There's only ever been one rule for the Heir Wars. Don't choose power over family."

Xavnik chuckled. "I'll keep that in mind, Second Nova."

Chapter 1334 Fast

BANG!

A violent mouthful of blood shot out from Leonel's lips, his eyeballs threatening to pop out of their sockets even as all the air that had once been in his lungs was forcefully ripped out as though by the hands of a menacing god.

The impact he felt against the opposing wall was just as devastating. If it wasn't for the improvement to his Metal Body, he would have experienced what it felt like to have all the bones in his body crushed at once.

"Leonel!"

Aina's part enraged, part worried cry resonated through the cave walls, both her and Little Blackstar leaping to action.

'Son of a bitch...' Leonel coughed and wheezed, trying to quickly regain his bearings.

The group of three had just began to run, realizing the kind of trouble they were in. If they allowed themselves to be pinned down by the Rapax, their deaths would be practically inevitable. Their goal, first and foremost, was definitely to get out of the range of the location they had teleported into as quickly as possible. That way, even if the Rapax knew there were invaders, they would have a harder time finding them.

Who could have expected, though, for them to hardly have traveled 50 meters before running into their first altercation? If not for Leonel's sturdy body, he would have already ended up blasted into bits and pieces of flesh and blood.

Leonel only had himself to blame. He took the lead and rushed forward, protecting Aina and Little Blackstar to his back. But, so confident in his Internal Sight and sense of danger, he rounded a corner, only to find a vicious straight leg kick waiting for his sternum.

Leonel had obviously not accounted for the most pressing thing. Or, rather, it was difficult to do so... Internal Sight was useless against Rapax!

Because his sense of hearing had been impaired by the previous screech and because of the all encompassing, grotesque scent that filled the hive nest, Leonel had no way of hearing it coming nor smelling the distinct scent of the Rapax, landing him in such a situation.

He could feel his ribcage bow and flex, almost snapping at its hinges entirely. He had never been more happy that his Metal Body had undergone such drastic improvements until now.

The instant Leonel crashed against an opposing wall, he activated his Bronze Runes in full force, dispersing the strength of the impact across his entire body before he fell to the ground, his head spinning.

'I have to adjust. Locking onto Rapax is impossible, at least not until I can figure out a way to circumvent their natural protections. However, it's impossible that Rapax wouldn't affect their environment. Start Dream Simulation.'

Leonel's mind began to work at top speeds. Although he no longer had access to Tier 4 abilities, Dream Simulation didn't have such high requirements. The fact that it was one of the first abilities Leonel had created for himself spoke for itself.

Quickly, Leonel went through his memory bank of battles with Rapax. He organized their movement patterns, their gait, their general impact on the environment around them.

In the blink of an eye, he had finished and created a new pseudo Dream Counter ability. He couldn't use the real Dream Counter as it was a Tier 4 ability he had created capable of triggering a reaction in his body without his explicit input. But, he could use the principle of assigning a mind to a task just the same now. It was just that he would have to constantly divert overt attention to it.

Leonel adjusted the way he used Internal Sight from a general sweep of the surroundings to a focused and dialed in intention toward certain parameters. His thought process was simple. The Rapax could hide themselves from Internal Sight, but they couldn't hide themselves from the environment.

If this was a grassy land, the process would be simple: just look for imprints in the grass. Unfortunately, there was nothing but dry stone everywhere. However, this wouldn't impede Leonel in the slightest.

'Their tails swish at a certain cadence, look for regular patterns in the wind. Wind is too unpredictable to have such measurable and constant repetition... Their bodies are heavy, though slight and almost impossible to detect, as they move, so will the ground tremor... It's difficult to detect their distinct smell in such an environment, but it's still possible to if I'm looking for distinct signatures with my Internal Sight...'

Leonel went out to list at least a hundred other parameters, tweaking them to the point they fit in perfectly with the environment they were in and all completed before he fell to a knee sinking down from the wall he had been smashed against.

'I'll call you Dream Detect.'



Leonel's head snapped upward, his gaze having regained its sharpness. He completed all of his calculations in a near instant, in time to see that there was just a single Rapax before them. This Rapax, though, was of Tier 9 of the Fifth Dimension and its kick was no joke at all.

"Kill it before it can call for reinforcements."

Leonel said quickly.

Aina didn't say a word herself. She spun on her heels, her ax glowing with lethality.

The Rapax, whose leg had just descended from its assault on Leonel, reacted quickly. Closing in the distance, it rose a knee to the skies, aiming to deflect and quickly counter. It was a combination that Leonel had seen many times. The Rapax loved to use their knees for defense as it could be retracted much faster than a kick.

However, it was then that Leonel, who the Rapax likely thought would be out for a moment sprung to action, his speed blazing as a trail of Star Force followed his path.

The Rapax reacted almost instantly. Canceling its thoughts at countering, it fell back. Unfortunately, it hadn't seen that there was a third member of their party until it was far too late.

Little Blackstar appeared to the Rapax's back, his little claws glowing with a dangerous light. With striking precision, Leonel's punch and Blackstar's claw landed at the same time, forcing the Rapax to take the full brunt of both.

Little Blackstar's claw ripped right through tender flesh, severing the Rapax's head from its body.

"I don't think this was a coincidence." Leonel spoke before the corpse even fell. "We need to move, fast. Or else we'll be surrounded."

Chapter 1335 Fertilizer

With a thought, Leonel sent the Rapax corpse into the Segmented Cube. The one advantage they would have in all of this would be the size of their spatial treasures. The space Leonel had access to was practically unlimited. Like this, they would leave the least amount of traces behind that could be used to quickly find them and this would also help Leonel bolster the resources he could use with the tentacle womb.

However, none of this was the reason Leonel's brows were so furrowed.

"I have a feeling that the reason they separated us during the teleportation was less about the Void Palace being sadistic and more about them giving us a lifeline."

When Aina heard this, she too frowned. She didn't need Leonel to explain anything else. They had been found far too quickly. Leonel had learned to minimize his mistakes in battle to a great degree as he gained more experience, something like being caught off guard like that was rare for him at this stage. And yet, it had happened, all because Leonel had missed this very key detail.

If Leonel was correct, teleporting them all individually kept the fluctuations to an absolute minimum. This way, the likelihood they would be spotted and found would be drastically lessened. Ironically, if separation had been part of the test itself, the Void Palace would have probably put more effort into

making sure Leonel couldn't ignore the rules. But, because it was only for safety measures, ignoring it hadn't been nearly as difficult.

After reaching this point in his thought process, Leonel really had no idea whether he should be cursing himself or the Void Palace. In fact, why not do both? He had really stepped in shit this time.

'Still, regardless of how dangerous this is, there's still a chance to benefit. If this is a nest, then that means that there's probably a spot here where a ton of high level Rapax are born. It would probably be a death sentence to fight a fully matured high-class Rapax, or, rather, a Runed Rapax, like Wise Star Order calls them. But, what about a baby that hadn't quite been born yet...? The DNA is the same...'

Leonel slotted this thought into the back of his mind. His first intention had to be to escape this place or to find a viable exit. This could only take second place.

The nest regions would definitely be the most highly guarded, trying to steal something from there, especially one of their more talented seedlings, would be like throwing himself into a pit of fire. Survival came first and foremost, benefits came as a very far off secondary option.

As they ran, Leonel's gaze flickered, taking in everything. He memorized the routes they were taking but he was also paying close attention to the enormous holes above their head.

Every so often, they would run beneath a large opening to the outside world reaching at least 300 meters above their heads. Jumping that distance was out of the question. However, it might still be possible for Leonel to use his wings to fly that distance, the trouble was that Leonel didn't believe doing such a thing would be smart.

From Leonel and Aina's perspective, these holes represented an opportunity to escape. But, if you look at it from the perspective of a Rapax, each one of these holes was a security concern. And, with such a security concern, there would obviously be guardians overseeing it.

Simply put, it was definitely more dangerous on the surface than it was within the nest. If they wanted to make use of these holes to escape, they had to find a point near the edge, furthest from the store of what Leonel assumed must be eggs. Only in that way would he be able to take such a risk. In that case, even if there were guards above, there would be fewer than one might expect nearer the center of the territory.

Aina seemed to understand this as well and didn't question Leonel's choice. Instead, they all followed the wind, moving with it toward a hopeful exit.

'The flow of the wind seemed to be ventilating this smell, this should be why the flow is greatest beneath the holes. If we follow the wind until it weakens considerably, we should, then, be nearer the outskirts of the hive and be in a safer position to move up to the surface...'

Leonel felt that his deduction was correct, but he still reached out to Wise Star Order. In the end, the old man confirmed his thoughts.

'... The smell isn't from what you think it's from. The Rapax had a very different culture from humans and don't like wastage. After a warrior dies, rather than being buried, they become fertilizer for the next generation. The more talented the lineage of the batch, the stronger dead warriors become the fertilizer for their growth.

'In their incubation stage, the eggs absorb nutrients from this fertilizer. Unfortunately, what's left behind after the eggs are done is highly toxic. I don't need to tell you that corpses are hotbeds for illness and disease. So, nests of Rapax have to be very well ventilated.'

Leonel frowned. 'That's true even for higher Dimensional corpses as well?'

'Of course. Don't you still need to sleep, shit and shower? Do you think that stops? At best, you'll just need to do less of it. You don't transcend mortality, that's fantasy nonsense. Seventh Dimensional corpses just take a bit longer to rot. And, with the methods of the Rapax, they can speed up the process to help their young along.

'If anything, the toxins and diseases that can latch onto higher Dimensional corpses are even worse. I would be very careful of Corpse Poison if I were you. I know a fool like you probably wants to go and take advantage of this situation, but not to mention the fact those guarding the Main Lineage nests are far stronger than you can imagine, it even requires their level of strength to stand in those areas without dying to a single whiff of the air.'

Leonel's blood ran cold when he heard this.

The trio rounded yet another corner, heading further and further toward their destination. However, Leonel felt like his hair was still standing on end. That original screech that sent them running still replayed in his mind... it had most definitely not come from the Rapax they killed.

'Huh?'

Leonel came to a grinding halt, his gaze sharpening toward a particular region.

At that moment, a familiar little violet puppy quivered.

Chapter 1336 This Way

Leonel's expression flickered. He recognized the little puppy almost instantly, it was the very same little beast that had been following behind Simona. Clearly, the little one had gotten separated from its owner during the forced teleportation.

'Why is it quivering, though? A beast that could follow her around shouldn't be so cowardly.'

Leonel frowned, making the decision to turn away. Even if this beast was cowardly, there was no way that it was weak. And, at this level, beasts should definitely have intelligence no weaker than an average human, some even surpassing this level. He couldn't just randomly pick up a puppy for no reason.

Shockingly, though, Leonel didn't get a chance to walk away before Aina appeared before the little one, bending over to pick it up.

The little puppy dodged backward, its speed confirming Leonel's thoughts. Just the fact this little beast could survive so well within this thick Anarchic Force spoke for itself. There was no way that it was weak.

'Don't tell me that...' Leonel felt a headache coming along.

His father often said things about women that would end up with him sleeping on the couch if his mother was around. Among those things was his disdain with their fascination with cute things. Now

that Leonel thought about it, everything his dad said about female nature was probably another trick he used to lure another into his bed.

Leonel usually rolled his eyes when his dad said such things. But, if Aina was really doing this for the sake of cuteness, it seemed he would have to give his old man a point in his favor. This definitely wasn't the time to be soft hearted.

Leonel still remembered that the first time he met Little Blackstar he tried to kill him. Luckily, the little one was practically invulnerable to attack. Though, Leonel recalled feeling exasperated at the time. Now, this situation felt eerily similar.

"It's okay, little guy. Just come with me." Aina smiled a beautiful smile, her golden irises twinkling.

The little purple puppy hesitated. But, under Aina's coaxing, and likely a bit of her mental coercion, the little one was forced into her arms.

Leonel's Internal Sight continuously swept through the surroundings as far as it could go. His range was even less here than it was in the forest previously. If not for his breakthrough in the Heavenly Body Realm, he might have trouble stretching it past just his skin.

Aina rose from the ground with the puppy in her arms. Right then, she suddenly tossed it through the air at Leonel.

"Put it in a snowglobe."

Though Leonel was caught off guard, his reaction speed was very fast. Before the little puppy could react, it was trapped in a frozen time loop, unable to do much of anything except enter a deep sleep.

Leonel raised an eyebrow.

"What?" Aina asked. "Did you think I stopped because it was adorable? With this, she'll owe you a favor."

Leonel speechlessly watched as Aina turned and broke out into a sprint once again. As he followed, he couldn't help but wonder if he was having a bad influence on her, or if she was always this savage. Something was telling him that it was the latter.

A third party observer would definitely look at Leonel like he was an idiot. It wasn't the countless people she had decapitated with her ax that made her savage, but rather tricking a puppy into a benign cage that was? It was either he was blind or a love struck fool.

Leonel's lip couldn't help but curl upward. It was hard to tell if he even realized it was happening.

Right then, the pair came to a grinding halt.

A fork lay ahead, making it difficult to tell which direction to go. It wasn't the first time they had come across a fork. However, before, the direction of the wind had made it easy to decide which way to go. This time, though, both paths seemed identical wind wise and they didn't have enough information about where they were in the hive to make a decision based on the direction either.

Leonel stopped by Aina's side, his brow furrowed. He took deep, steady breaths, ignoring the foul smell in the air.

"Is it possible based on smell?" Leonel asked.

Aina had said that she was very sensitive to these things so maybe she had a general idea of where the nutritious nutrients she had sent before were. Even if it wouldn't be a 100% guarantee, they would just have to pick the direction opposite of it and hope that the pathway didn't curl or turn oddly.

Unfortunately, Aina shook her head.

"The strong winds override the natural movement of the scent a lot, there's no difference between following the wind and following the smell..."

Leonel nodded. He had expected as much. So, it was a 50/50 chance, huh? Leonel very much doubted that both paths would lead to an exit. Or, even if they did both do so, he was certain that one would be safer than the other.

"Let's do it based on this, then... These nests probably need a large supply of water. Since we're guessing anyway, let's do it based on which direction has the weakest Water Force concentration."

Aina's brows suddenly shot up. "That's not a bad idea. But, instead of doing it with Water Force, let me do it with Life Force."

Leonel nodded. This was indeed the better idea. He had almost forgotten that one of Aina's main affinities was Life Force. It was already high before she removed her curse, he could only imagine what level it had risen to now.

"This way."

Leonel didn't refute Aina. Logically, the location with the highest Life Force would be the direction of the core of the nest. Not only would it have the strongest warriors guarding it, but it would also have the Rapax eggs.

Every time the pair came across a fork, they would take the same approach. However, the uneasiness in Leonel's heart grew every time they did. Their frequency only seemed to increase.

Chapter 1337 This King

'What's going on here, old man?'

'I've never been stupid enough to enter a Rapax Nest, how the hell would I know?'

Leonel's heart felt uneasy, it was like his heartbeat had gone hollow, ringing in his ears and sending an odd wave of something slightly less than pain through his chest. It wasn't quite piercing enough to harm him, but it was too great to ignore at the same time.

The more uneasy Leonel became, the colder his gaze got. Eventually, they began to flicker with a smoldering flame, the temperature around him even rising for a moment.

Aina shifted her eyes from the path ahead to land on Leonel's side profile. But, not long after she did so, she found herself looking into his eyes.

"If it comes down to it and I try to bring you into the Segmented Cube, don't resist." Leonel spoke, his voice tinged with a hint of cold.

Aina stared at Leonel deeply for a long while. It didn't seem like she would respond at all after a while. But, when she finally did, her choice of words were like a baffling sledgehammer to Leonel's chest.

"I am stronger than you."

Leonel, who hadn't looked away from Aina, continued to do so. Despite the fact the words should have been shocking, he didn't seem to react like it was at all. His pace didn't falter, his expression didn't change, and his heart seemed to have regained its calm bearing.

"Don't think that I'm just saying that to say that." Aina continued. "I'm not making it up, nor am I only stronger than you by a small measure."

Aina didn't need to make it up. When her and Leonel's Internal Sights fused, she realized that her ability could be extended to others through this incredibly intimate action. Though not as detailed as when she used it on only herself, she could tell Leonel's deficiencies and had a vague idea of the path he could take to improve himself as well. Of course, she would never give this information to Leonel because of how vague it was, it could very well be skewed. But, it was still enough for her to tell the gap between them.

Leonel hadn't been joking when he said that Aina would be a greater challenge for him than Myghell would be. In fact, Leonel hadn't yet caught up to where Myghell would be at 100% since he had yet to catch up to Aina.

"I already know this." Leonel responded, his voice not wavering.

Aina's brows furrowed.

"However, if I fought ten people just as strong as you, I would still win ten out of ten times."

Leonel's violet hair danced in the wind, a stronger tinge of purple suddenly suffusing within them.

At that moment, Aina's furrowed brows slowly relaxed, her limbs becoming looser and her stride becoming wider. Her hair fluttered as well, a deep coercion reflecting all impurities from her body.

Leonel looked ahead as well, exhaling a heated breath, his body seeming to glow.

"I really hate you." Aina suddenly said.

"Then why do you follow me?" Leonel asked without missing a beat.

"Because I also love you." Aina replied, her tone even.

A silence fell between the two. The sounds of their steps were so light that nothing of their passage was left behind. As for Little Blackstar, he was even less of a problem, gliding through the air as though it was solid ground and vanishing into the void without the slightest issue like a fish on water.

"I love you, too."

Aina's eyes widened, her head suddenly snapping in Leonel's direction. But, before she could react, she found a hand having appeared on her shoulder.

"Leon—!"

Aina vanished into the Segmented Cube just as Leonel rounded a final corner.

Aina stood in a daze within the expanse of the Segmented Cube for just a moment before her fury bubbled over. A violet rouge fog erupted around her, her hair grew to the length of a river and her gaze became like a piercing dragon's.

She roared, her rage so palpable that the garden around her was vanquished into an ashy pit under nothing other than the oppression and density of her Force alone.

The worst part about it all was that she couldn't tell whether she was more enraged by the fact Leonel had done this to her again, or if it was because she had no idea whether Leonel had meant those words he had just said or had just used them as a method to distract her into not resisting...

Aina's head rose into the skies, roaring at what felt like nothing. She broke through another Tier, entering Tier 6, and yet she didn't seem to notice in the slightest.

...

Leonel stood on the other side of the corner, his breathing steady and his gaze cold. What he saw across from him, though, was enough to make almost anyone else's heart freeze over.

The Runed Rapax stood as though it had been waiting all along. Though its demeanor was different from a human's, Leonel could still feel the air of nonchalance around it.

Even after noticing Leonel, it hardly reacted, it stood in place, its body as unwavering as a mountain.

Its body was an entire meter taller than the Rapax Leonel was used to, standing at four meters even with its overly slouched back. The very same silver plates danced across its body. However, there was a very distinct difference, here. All across its plated armor, dense, swirling tattoos of black could be found, giving it both a profound air of majesty and a secondary air of oppression and warlike violence.

Leonel's veins pumped with a reddish gold, his skin beginning to glow as Bronze Runes awakened all across his body. With every exhale, another heated fog would manifest until his body was coated from head to toe in a gorgeous silver and sky-blue armor.

Leonel could very clearly see the spurs that had begun to grow on its pill-shaped head. They were subtle and not too large, but they were enough to tell Leonel what he needed to know.

Spurs on the tail denoted the Fifth Dimension. Spurs on the head though... Denoted the Sixth.

Leonel's Force erupted.

"Come on, you alien piece of shit. This King has a beauty to protect."

Chapter 1338 Blindspot

Leonel's body erupted with a swirl of fog. A dense blackness, an oppressive violet, and a deep crimson. Without the slightest hesitation, he activated <Star Fusion: Combustion>.

BANG!

The air around Leonel exploded, the oxygen around his feet releasing crackling booms of violent chain reactions as the flames within him ignited.

If <Star Fusion: Infusion> filled Leonel's body up to the brim with Vital Force, accelerating his healing factor and pushing his body to the brink, <Star Fusion: Combustion> pushed him past those limits. From the very beginning, Combustion was meant to take advantage of Leonel's Nodal Pathway, igniting his blood and surrounding his heart in a wreath of flames.

In this state... His body was at its very strongest.

'Give me everything you have.'

Two orbs of crimson hovered in place of Leonel's eyes, the viciousness of his demeanor finally making the Runed Rapax somewhat more alert.

"Yip! Yip!"

Little Blackstar body seemed to double in size, his fur standing on end and his long whiskers jutting outward like finely pointed needles.

However, under Leonel's orders, Little Blackstar didn't move at all. Hovering in the air, a strong surge of might came out from the little guy, suddenly causing the Force in the surroundings to begin to increase in density and the Anarchic Force to concentrate.

Leonel had only given Blackstar a single command: make them choke on Anarchic Force.

BANG!

Leonel sent out four punches in quick succession, his forward momentum and the twist of his hips fusing as one to bear down upon the Runed Rapax. For this creature, who was very much used to its overbearing pressure severely weakening opponents it felt was far weaker than itself, this was something completely unexpected, resulting in Leonel's fists actually landing.

The harsh sounds of metal banging against metal resonated through the air, ripples of concentrated wind and sparks of volatile flames flying off in every which direction.

The Runed Rapax found itself sliding back against the stone ground, its large, curled claws scraping against the ground and leaving behind shallow imprints.

A short silence followed. The Runed Rapax's head seemed to tilt downward, its gaze, or what Leonel thought was its gaze, looking down at the region where the latter's fists had landed. It seemed surprised that such an ant would actually dare to attack it. Or, maybe it was surprised that it had actually been pushed back.



The Runed Rapax looked back up. The silver shell that covered its head didn't seem to have any slits for eyes, making it difficult to tell if it was really 'looking' at all. But, the feeling, at least to Leonel, felt the exact same.

BANG!

Maybe the Runed Rapax had thought its nonchalant reaction would effect Leonel, or maybe it thought that the intimidation of its growing and more serious aura would at least cause him to pause. Whatever the reason, the Runed Rapax stood unmoving as Leonel launched yet another series of attacks, seemingly just as baffled as the first time.

Leonel didn't even seem to register the failure of his first volley of attacks. In fact, he only grew more furious, the relentless pursuit of a stronger and stronger attack barreling down upon the Runed Rapax.

"SSKREEEEEE!"

The movement of the Runed Rapax was so sudden and fast that Leonel only had to the time to cross his arms above his head. Even replaying his perfect memory, Leonel couldn't find the image of the Rapax having raised its leg, and yet by the time he registered it, a vicious ax kick had nearly crumbled him to his knees from above.

In inaction, the Runed Rapax had been as steady as a mountain. However, the moment it moved, it was like a relentless, explosive avalanche, the monstrosity of its attack power feeling like enormous implosions going off within Leonel's body. Even with his Bronze Runes fully activated, just this one attack alone made Leonel feel as though his body was collapsing.

Still, even in such a situation, the fierce glow in Leonel's gaze didn't falter. In fact, despite their crimson hue, they seemed decidedly cold. Thoughts of everything else vanished, his entire mind focusing on the creature before him. Even without the ability to lock onto it with his Internal Sight, Leonel dissected everything he could, an eerie calm cooling his head.

'Blindspot.'

That was Leonel's ultimate conclusion. This Rapax was using a special Style that took advantage of its innate ability to avoid detection of Internal Sight. Like this, it was able to levy attacks using speed and timing to make it seem as though it had practically teleported into place. This was exactly why despite standing right before it, Leonel had somehow missed a leg raising into the air.

It took Leonel just a single exchange to comprehend this and he adjusted accordingly.

BANG!

Under the relentless pressure, Leonel's knees crashed in the ground, his forearms threatening to shatter entirely. However, almost the instant the Runed Rapax rose its leg, so too did Leonel rebound from the ground. It looked as though he had used the hard stone as a trampoline, fighting back against the strike of the Runed Rapax just enough to have such an effect.

The Runed Rapax had already prepared a second attack, but Leonel leapt over it, his knees tucking and his arms spreading out as though to balance himself in the air.

If the Runed Rapax could display human emotions, its eyes would have most definitely widened even as its brows shot up. It had executed its technique perfectly, how had this human, clearly in such a bad situation, dodged?

Leonel landed on the ground as light as a feather, his body exploding forth as he landed a vicious kick on the side of the Runed Rapax's knee joint.

He drilled everything he had into it, his Vital Force, Destruction capabilities and Universal Force all coming together to form a torrent of wind that even manifested from the other side of the Runed Rapax's tough shell as well.

Chapter 1339 Vessel

Leonel didn't wait for the result of his attack. He instantly erupted with the full force of the Heavenly Body Realm, rotating to the back of the Runed Rapax in one fluid motion.

As expected, Leonel's attack wasn't nearly strong enough to snap the Runed Rapax's knee. But, it was just enough for it to lose its balance while it had a leg in the air. And, just as predicted, its tail quickly flickered, stabbing into the ground with a dull thump to keep it upright.

Even for a Sixth Dimensional Runed Rapax, stabbing through a ground of a Seventh Dimensional world like this, especially one continuously tempered by the erosion of Anarchic Force, was a difficult task. The result was its scorpion-like tail catching a small bit of earth before slipping, only to quickly stab down again to achieve true balance.

But, by the time it had done this, Leonel was already to its back, his fists glowing like two radiant suns as a moon and planet appeared to his back. The moment they did, Leonel's Dark Ice Domain erupted, making the Runed Rapax feel as though its body was stuck in limbo.

Leonel's gaze flashed, his mind entirely focused on the tender flesh of the Runed Rapax. His Star Constructs shrunk down violently beneath his command, their strength concentrating into fine points as Level Two golden Spear Force manifested under Leonel's will.

BANG! BANG!

"SSKKKREEEE!"

Leonel drew blood. The spurt of bluish liquid reflecting in his irises as two holes appeared on either side of the Runed Rapax's spine. However, despite the minor victory, Leonel's expression didn't shift even the slightest bit. With smooth steps, he glided backward, dodging the whipping tail of the Runed Rapax.

With a thought, Leonel's Meteor Construct manifested. Following the momentum of the furiously whipping tail, the beam of metallic gold enveloped the scorpion-like spikes and increased its weight several fold, causing the Runed Rapax to misjudge and overcorrect, veering its tail off course and out of its control for a few precious fragments of a second.

Leonel's Moon Construct flashed, the Runed Rapax's conceptualization of time dilating. In those moments, the Runed Rapax felt as though it had suddenly entered a Dream, no matter how fast it ran, it wasn't fast enough. But, in this case, no matter how much strength it put into swinging its tail back after missing, it didn't seem like enough.

The gorgeous white planet to Leonel's back layered this effect. While the Moon attacked the Runed Rapax's mind, the Planet Construct attacked its physical body, fusing with the effecting of the Meteor Construct and pressing down with an oppressive gravity.

The fluidity of Leonel's actions were seamless. One action rolled into the next, his mind working at warp speeds and his calculations becoming more and more precise with each passing second.

The Runed Rapax found itself swinging from being off balance on one side to suddenly overcompensating and being caught completely off balance toward another.

It was right then that Leonel's second prepared attack flourished. His Spear Domain crown glowed, shimmering with a blinding golden light that washed the dark tunnels in a Kingly Might. His Vital Force brought his body to the very brink, the flames surrounding his heart forcing it to heat up and pound relentlessly. And finally, his Forces fused into one, piling on top of one another relentlessly.

Leonel had learned a lot about his Spear Domain Lineage Factor after his recent breakthrough. While it seemed like the only change was that his Spear Force had gone from a more normal and bland white color to a piercing gold, this was far from the case.

Leonel had come to understand that while his Spear Force could be powerful on its own, it could also act as a vessel and conduit for his other strengths. Why was it that every Spear Domain Spear felt so unique? Each had its own unique Element or ability to it. Such a thing felt odd. Should they be more focused on the purity of the Spear itself as a weapon? Why was it that some focused on Water, others on Fire, yet others on Lightning or Light?

The answer to that was simple. From the very beginning, the Spear Domain Lineage Factor was capable of absorbing all things, becoming the foundation of a warrior's Style no matter what kind of Ability or other affinities they might have.

So, when Leonel fused his Light Elemental, Fire Elemental and Star Elemental Forces into his Spear Force, it was as though a dry land had suddenly been blessed with a flood of water. It greedily swallowed it all, its insatiable greed fueling its rise in power.

'That's it.'

A CRACK! suddenly resonated in Leonel's mind, his irises flickering to life as a red-gold Rune formed within their midst. As though being infused with a raging new power, Leonel's Spear Force gained a tinge of crimson, forming into a drill under the strength of his Star Constructs and aiming for the back of the Runed Rapax once again.

BANG!

The result... Was far outside of expectations.

Leonel found himself being slapped flying, his ribs breaking in several places and a projectile of blood leaving his lips and marring the inside of his helmet. Leonel could only use the tendrils of darkness from his beast armor to break his impact against the wall, but even that hardly made it better.

With a grunt, Leonel slid down an opposing wall, the menacing roar of a Runed Rapax bearing down on him.

The Runed Rapax's mouth had split over, revealing a long row of sharp, saliva dripping teeth and a tongue longer and more rugged than any Leonel had ever seen before. In the blink of an eye, it had already appeared above Leonel, its menacing mouth dripping.

Leonel coughed again, his gaze looking up as he slumped to the ground. It seemed that in the end, he wasn't able to predict the next attack like he had the first. Leonel had maximized his chances by minimizing the amount of times the Runed Rapax could attack, but he couldn't seal the deal.

However, even now, Leonel's gaze was unmoved.

"Haven't noticed something wrong with your body yet?" Leonel asked coldly.

The Runed Rapax froze.

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Chapter 1340 No Use

The concentration of Anarchic Force in the region had reached a point the Runed Rapax had never experienced before. In its rage, and also thanks to Leonel's Moon Construct dilating its senses, it hadn't noticed until it was far too late. And, to make matters worse, albeit just to small wounds, the open gashes on its back seemed to become a prime spot for the most vicious Force in the universe to assault.

Leonel had thought a lot about the Rapax in recent days. Among what fascinated him the most, aside from their ability to escape detection of Internal Sight, was their odd use of Force.

This race of being didn't use Force like humans did. Or, rather, they might have only done so in part. They didn't pull on atmospheric Force and seemed to rely entirely on what their bodies could produce. It could be said that they were completely antithetical to much of the battle style Leonel had forged in recent years.

Because of his apprehension toward his Scarlet Star Force Innate Node, Leonel rarely if ever used his internal Force, relying entirely on outside measures. However, what was truly interesting was that after beginning to use his Nodal Pathways and Force Nodes as he should, Leonel was still very much certain that his efforts were different from the Rapax.

It was something deeper than just using internal Force, something more profound. Even when Leonel used his internal Force, it didn't seem as fused and one with him as what the Rapax could accomplish. It was clear that the Rapax were fusing with their Force on a much deeper level, a level Leonel couldn't fathom. And, that was when it clicked.

How was it that Leonel's Metal Synergy Lineage Factor worked? Well, his Bronze Runes became the conduit by which he could absorb the Essence of Ores and foundationally change his body. It etched onto his bones, his inner organs, and even his blood vessels.

When thinking to this point, was it truly a coincidence that the most powerful of the Rapax were known as Runed Rapax?

The mechanism was likely not the same, obviously. But, Leonel felt that it was highly likely to be similar. And, just like Leonel had Runes within his body that others could see with the naked eye, so too would the Rapax.

With that thought in mind, Leonel realized that this should have been the source of the Rapax's strength. They absorbed Force during their practice and infused it into the Runes. Upon doing so, they could assimilate with this Force, fuse with it, and make it their own, thereby strengthening their bodies manifold over.

So, why was this so important now? It was because all the precious source of Force that the Runed Rapax pulled upon was within its body, and it was precisely these sort of dense regions of Force that Anarchic Force liked to latch onto and swallow the most.

Leonel believed that if he could just make the Rapax suffer a wound, a deep enough gash that its blood flowed and the Anarchic Force could get a taste of, the creature would suddenly find itself in a predicament that it would be hard pressed to crawl out of.

"SKRREEEEE!"

Leonel slowly stood from the ground, a hand across his chest and ribs as the Rapax struggled and screeched. The size difference between the two was enormous and the strength gap was even more exaggerated. And yet, it was Leonel who stood, a cold expression on his face and his aura bearing down as though this was just the obvious outcome.

"There's no use in screaming." Leonel said lightly. "I've learned in recent times that the higher up in Dimensions you go, the more reliant you are on the push and pull forces of Force itself. It's quite fascinating, really. Even a shout won't travel as far in a higher Dimensional world as it would in a lower one, let alone when the Anarchic Force is so great. Why do you think I dared to battle you instead of just running?"

Leonel had no idea if the Runed Rapax could understand him, but he didn't seem to care, his cold eyes calculating everything as the Rapax soon found it difficult to even stand.

The Anarchic Force concentration had been multiplied to the point there was practically no other Force to pull upon in this region. Maybe the only two existences that could survive beneath such a concentration was a little beast with Void Beast blood and a man who had spent the last several months torturing himself on an even greater quantity.

When Leonel seemed to have seen all he needed to see, he turned his head toward Little Blackstar.

"Yip!"

The little mink dove down. Unable to even resist at this point, the Runed Rapax could only put up a futile attempt at resistance before Blackstar exited out the back of its skull having entered through its mouth.

Before the Runed Rapax could die, though, Leonel sent it into a snowglobe. He had no way of knowing if the Rapax sent out signals after their death or if there was a method of keeping track of them. Though he was quite confident in the concentration of Anarchic Force stopping pretty much everything, given the fact the Rapax had become used to this environment over such a long period of time, there was no

way of telling whether they had more sophisticated methods of dealing with this and Leonel didn't feel like finding out.

Coughing heavily, Leonel looked down at his chest. That one kick had almost broken all of his ribs. In fact, he was lucky that each had only broken in one spot. If not for his sturdy body, the result would have likely been countless little shards of bones piercing through his lungs and heart.

'My healing factor is so slow in this world...'

Leonel debated whether or not he should use his <Instant Recovery>. But, after a moment, he decided against it. He could still hang on.

Picking a direction, he sprinted out of the dense concentration of Anarchic Force. Then, taking a deep breath and bracing for the worst, he brought Aina out once again.

**BANG!**