

Descent 141

Chapter 141

After a while, the old man left, leaving Leonel to his thoughts.

'It's interesting, I guess...'

Leonel didn't expect to be interested in this Hunt. But in the end, the old man had actually managed to convince him. Plus, it would apparently not interfere with his schedule to go back as Damian and the others would still be stuck here for a while longer.

According to the old man, the Hunt had been being planned not just a few years, but decades even. It might not even be an exaggeration to say more than a century, in fact.

'Project Hunt' could be considered to be one of Earth's contingency plans. If Hutch's words were to be believed, it was likely that a similar practice was taken on by the Empire as well.

This so-called 'Project Hunt' was an attempt to raise Evolved Beasts. As Leonel had so unfortunately found out already, humans weren't the only ones who could awaken.

The project itself spent years diligently breeding and cross breeding different species of animals to create incredibly powerful creatures. The hope was that upon the descent of the Metamorphosis, these creatures would awaken miraculous abilities that would allow humans to benefit.PANDA-NOVEL.COM

These beasts would become great natural resources. Their meat would be the best tonic for human warriors, allowing them to progress at much faster speeds.

Also, according to Hutch, beasts have much larger Ethereal Glabellas upon awakening. This is not only due to their larger size in general, but it can also be considered an evolutionary buffer to their intelligence. After all, beasts are innately inferior in this aspect. Those who successfully awaken are thus compensated in this way.

The larger Ethereal Glabellas of beasts are considered to be delicacies that can even improve the speed of evolution of one's ability. They're called Beast Crystals.

Thinking back to the octopus stored in the Segmented Cube, Leonel suddenly understood why it was that the latter had wanted the former so badly.

After all of this, Leonel was even more impressed with exactly where these projects took place. When he asked Old Hutch about that, the old man hadn't held back.

Apparently, Project Hunt took advantage of the fact that Earth only had one super continent and spread the project across several off-land islands. Each of these islands had their own unique environment, pushing the evolution of beasts in certain aspects. PANDA NOVEL

Now, after so much preparation, it was finally time to reap the rewards of their labor of over a hundred years.

Leonel wasn't interested in the beasts for the potential boost to his ability. Since his ability had already broke into the realms of the Fifth Dimension, he doubted that there were any beasts on Earth that could help him improve any further.

But, Old Hutch had let it 'slip' that the closer Earth approached to the end of the Metamorphosis, the more striking changes would take place. Soon, there would be Force Crystals forming and these islands could be ideal hot spots. After all, even if one appeared in the city on the main land, it wasn't as though Leonel could dig through the layers of dense stone and metals to reach them.

These places would be perfect toward helping him fill his Segmented Cube to the brim to pave a path for his later breakthroughs.

Even this, though, wasn't the main reason Leonel's interest had been piqued.

After so long, Leonel was finally ready to create his first Force Craft. In fact, he had already settled on two designs. One was a weapon and the other was an upgrade to a treasure he already had. PANDA NOVEL

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The second design, the upgrade, was related to his treasure shoes. However, the main point was that the main design around the upgrade was reliant on the suction cups of the octopus.

By now, his purpose might have been obvious. He wanted to see just what other Evolved Beasts existed. If there were any that were particularly useful, he might be able to design more useful upgrades...

Leonel took a deep breath and finally stood from his bed. A moment later, he had already entered the Lab Setting of the Segmented Cube's Phase One.

“Hey Little Tolly.”

After completing Lesson Three and learning everything there was to know about the relationship between familiars and their Force Crafters, Leonel named the little Metal Spirit Tolliver, a name the little guy seemed to like quite a lot.

Leonel smiled lightly, slipping on his protective gloves and allowing the little Metal Spirit to excitedly snake across his fingers. For a moment, man and spirit seemed to become one. Leonel's fingers danced and Tolly's body seemed to respond instantaneously, changing its movements along with Leonel's will.

A long while later, Leonel finished playing with Tolliver and placed the little guy on the table, turning a serious eye toward the several large pieces of paper laid out before him.

After Leonel learned everything there was to learn about Lesson Three, the next touched on Force Art, and the Lesson after that was titled 'Functional Design'. This Lesson not only taught him basic concepts of design, but, most importantly taught him about drawing blueprints.

Leonel had never taken an art class before, nor was he familiar with calligraphy. After all, this was the 25th century, nobody writes anymore. So the first few attempts he made were abysmal. But, over time, with how high his coordination stat was, not only did he improve by leaps and bounds, his penmanship could even be said to be quite beautiful.

Calligraphy on Earth referred to the writing of characters. In ancient Eastern countries, this was especially important to their culture. However, the West had quite a few practitioners as well.

To Force Crafters, Calligraphy referred to the art of drawing Force Arts. Each branch of Force Art was a unique language with its own unique quirks. A steady hand and a keen eye was, of course, important for all of this.

Thankfully, Leonel's basics were exceptionally robust. Due to the Force Art he had drawn on the back of his palm, his knowledge of Third Dimensional Force Arts was incredible. So, when he moved on to Fourth Dimensional Force Arts as he was now, the result was him improving at unimaginable speeds.

The blueprints before Leonel now were the product of several hours of work. But, he still felt like something was missing. It was an intuition that kept nagging at him. He knew that if he designed his first weapon based on these designs, it would fail.

At that moment, Leonel suddenly slapped his forehead.

'Idiot. Why waste time drawing all of these blueprints in real life when you have your Dream World?'

Leonel closed his eyes and sunk into a state of meditation. A moment later, he found himself in a wide blank space, but there was a bright smile on his face.

A quill identical to the one Montez gave him manifested in his hand. This was the product of a Dream Sculpt he forged.

Then, he began to draw in the air.

The scene was absolutely dazzling. The sight of several layers of blueprints being built atop of each other with glistening transparent lines made it almost feel as though Leonel was playing God.

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It was as though a whole new world had opened up to Leonel.

Even someone with an ability as analytical as himself had been having issues with the blueprinting process. It wasn't that his mind didn't have enough computational ability, but rather that he simply didn't have enough experience.

Since this was his first creation, it was only made of three parts. Yet, the process of transferring those ideas to their individual blueprints, then visualizing the 2D in 3D while ensuring that all the parameters are within appropriate margins of error was difficult for a newbie like Leonel.

Imagine for a moment that you had to design a screw and the hole it would screw into. From the outside, this seems incredibly simple. However, this isn't the case at all.

The grooves of a screw that allow it to solidly embed itself into the appropriate hole could be measured in millimeters. If the hole is a fraction too big and the screw is a fraction too small, suddenly, the error compounds and you have a useless screw on your hands.

This was the absolute simplest example. What if the parts are more complex than this? What if there's more than just two parts to consider? PANDA-NOVEL.COM

Leonel was dealing with three parts currently, but he already had a headache. Ensuring that machine parts work smoothly as one even when they were manufactured separately was probably the bane of all engineers. But now, Leonel felt that he had solved this problem that plagued all beginner Force Crafters.

In the blink of an eye, Leonel had drawn out the blueprints for all three of his parts and laid them flat in the air. Though his arm moved as though he was really 'drawing', this was his dream world. Was there even a need to actually do so? At most, this was a little fanfare.

'So it's like this...'

Leonel's eyes shone brightly, internally kicking himself for not realizing he could use his Dream World in this way.

If he entered his Dream World, then used Dream Sculpt to build up the individual parts of his creations, it was possible to test everything before he even began. Not only this, but he could check the feasibility of his designs without causing irreparable changes to the materials he was handling. [PANDA NOVEL](http://PANDA-NOVEL)

Leonel pinched his fingers toward one of his blueprints and pulled them apart, causing the design to expand. Before Leonel's eye, what once was a flat drawing gained form.

In a flash, the other two pieces followed suit, then, along with the closing of Leonel's hands, they came together and formed a complete treasure.

If someone else was here, they would immediately recognize it as a handgun, albeit a uniquely shaped one.

The nozzle was incredibly long and narrow for a gun of its kind. It was just over a foot in length, but barely a centimeter and a half in width.

Its handle was thick and ergonomic. If Leonel were to reach out and grasp it, it would perfectly form to his hand. However, if one looked closely, it was possible to see many small holes spread all across its surface. $\rho \approx \int \delta \mathbf{r} \cdot \mathbf{r}$

This was the true secret of this gun. It could work with bullets, but the main reason Leonel created it was thanks to its ability to function even without bullets.

That was right, Leonel designed this gun to work similarly to the invisible attacks of the Mayan Priest or the arrow of Seer's staff. All he had to do was pour his Force into it and it would form and shoot the projectile for him.

As for how this projectile would compare to Seer or the Mayan Priest, Leonel was certain that its speed and piercing power would be more than double. However... Those were calculations he had made before he awakened his Light Elemental Force. If he used Light Elemental Force instead of normal Force, the effect would definitely be even more exaggerated.

The trouble was whether or not his design could take it and whether the Force Arts he chose to pair with this treasure would be enough.

Leonel exploded the size of his design again and narrowed his eyes, allowing the hovering design to spin slowly before him. He wanted to grasp every single little detail.

‘The design I settled on is very simple. The nozzle, the hollow grip, and the weight.

‘When I pour Force into the gun, the weight within the handle is pushed up. The moment the energy is released, the weight will shoot back down to its original position. Depending on how much Force I use, the rebound can be either stronger or weaker. Thanks to this, the recoil mitigation can be properly scaled depending on the situation...’

Compared to the anti-recoil technology of the Empire’s best guns, Leonel’s could be considered to be rudimentary to the extreme. In fact, he knew there were many problems with it.

For one, the current design only accounted for vertical recoil, but not horizontal. Leonel felt that this was an easy fix. If Leonel angled the weights ascent and descent, he could account for this as well.

Leonel mentally made the changes that were needed. And, thanks to his Dream World, they immediately manifested in the design before him, causing him to smile beside himself.

‘The next issue is the nozzle. The longer the nozzle, the more time the bullet will have to accelerate, but it also makes it a weak point of the design.’

Leonel thought about this for a long time. If things remained like this, he didn’t believe that the nozzle would last very long. It was too fragile.

After a moment, Leonel came to a conclusion.

‘It’s impossible to create something perfect. Everything has give and take. Instead of worrying so much over this, I should instead modify the design so that the nozzle is a fail point that can be easily swapped and replaced.’

When Leonel came to this decision, instead of making the nozzle stronger, he actually purposely made it much weaker. There was no need to invest too many materials into something that was bound to fail. Not only did he make it weaker, but he added many natural breaking points so that repair would be easy and simple.

These break points would not only allow the nozzle to fail in predictable ways, but it would also ensure that its failure wouldn't harm Leonel. It would be too great of a joke if Leonel's gun exploded and killed him mid battle.

Leonel planned on making two guns and ten nozzles. This way, he could swap the nozzles mid battle if necessary.

When Leonel settled on the final design, he used Dream Sculpt to create perfect memory fragments within his mind. Now, he was ready to begin.

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Leonel exited his Dream World and smiled, taking the little Metal Spirit into his hands and playing with it again.

"This'll be our first project together, Tolly. Are you excited?"

Tolly split into numerous balls of silver, jumping around Leonel's hands like little globules of mercury. The little guy didn't need to speak for Leonel to know that it was excited.

Recently, Leonel had been feeding it a lot of metals. Earth might have not been a Fourth Dimensional world just yet, and as such, was lacking in high quality minerals that came with this evolution. But, they as a people had squeezed everything they could out of the materials they did have, creating alloys that this little Metal Spirit loved to eat at its current stage of evolution.

Tolly's favorite snack was an alloy of platinum and iridium. Using it, the little guy had already reached the Fifth Black Tier.

Leonel was very careful not to overfeed Tolly, though. According to the hazard lesson, doing so could cause 'Overflow'. It was a dangerous state spirits could enter where they sought to devour everything.

Toward this, Leonel could only shake his head. His father had actually likened the state to a stomach ache. How such a catastrophic event could be as simple as a stomach ache was beyond him. PANDA-NOVEL.COM

Leonel took a deep breath and went into a state of meditation. This time, however, it wasn't to enter his Dream World, but rather to prepare his mind and settle his heart. His father said that the most important thing in a successful crafting was one's state of mind.

His oppressive aura unwittingly surged out from him, causing the playful Metal Spirit to grow silent and solemn. It was easily affected by Leonel's presence, its own will becoming somewhat suppressed.

The first step in crafting was exactly this, Spirit Unity.

During the process, Leonel and Tolliver would have to work as one. It was necessary for their thoughts and actions to be one in the same.

At that moment, Leonel's dull gaze became bright once more and two familiar ores appeared before him.

Tolliver separated into two, coating each one of his palms as he grasped toward the first ore. PANDA-NOVEL

This unrefined ore was known as 'Black Urbe Ore'. It was part of the 'Urbe' class of metals. Those of this class were exceptionally good at forming alloys and had strengthening effects on metals they were melded with due to their special chemical structure.

Urbe ores were a strategical resource no matter which world one was talking about. They were a foundation piece in almost every treasure in existence and were key components in treasures that needed to fuse two volatile materials.

Black Urbe Ore was considered the lowest grade. However, if it was combined with the high level metal technology of Earth, it was like giving wings to a tiger.

Even compared to other Pseudo Fourth Dimensional worlds, Earth was incredibly advanced. If strength was strictly compared, Earth was most definitely the strongest such world in the history of the universe. Actually, it wasn't so exaggerated, but Earth was most definitely top ten.

Leonel already had a plan in mind and the sniper rifle he took from Xinghai's corpse would be perfect.

It was time to begin the second step: Purification. $\rho_{\text{U}} \int_{\text{U}} \text{U} \text{U} \text{U} \text{U} \text{U} \text{U}$

There were many ways to approach purifying a metal. In the world of Force Crafting, 'purification' wasn't as simple as removing impurities. It was more accurate to say that this was the process of a Force Crafter 'treating' a material to create a wanted result.

Consider steel, for a moment. Technically, steel is just iron with a certain concentration of added carbon. If Leonel's goal was to make steel, then his 'purification' process would be taking iron and smelting carbon into it, thus producing the desired product.

One must know that even amongst steel, there are various stages, purities and strengths among them. This is all decided by the process taken in forging the metal. Urbe ore, likewise, works in this fashion.

Leonel's goal was to temper the Black Urbe ore such that its chemical structure was perfectly suited to the alloys of the sniper rifle. How well he performed this task was decided by a 'Compatibility' rating. Depending on the metals and materials used in the craft, the Compatibility of a metal prepared, even in the same exact way, could vary.

The methods he had to choose from were Smelting, Macro-Separation, or Oscillation. Leonel had already learned all three, respectively, via the techniques [Melting Hands], [Dancing String] and [Delicate Touch].

Without hesitation, Leonel began to use [Delicate Touch]. The ore became like a bouncing ball trapped between the cage that was his fingers.

The movement of his hands became blinding. Despite the fact his arms and wrists were locked in place, his fingers continually flicked at the ore, causing it to slowly, but surely, turn a deeper and deeper shade

of red as its body became hot. However, the odd part was that this red only seemed to appear in spots that didn't seem capable of spreading their heat elsewhere.

The Oscillation technique was one of Induction. It was the process of agitating the chemical structure of the metal and raising its heat. But, it was special in that it could target very specific chemical bonds, causing them to break and restructure themselves according to the Force Crafters will.

This alone made the Oscillation method the most difficult of the three. Controlling things on such a micro level while ensuring that the heat wasn't spread was nearly impossible for beginners. Of course, Leonel wasn't really controlling things on an atomic level. He was simply able to use his strong Internal Sight to separate the ore into larger sections to be tempered individually.

It was impossible for the current him to create a 100% Compatible Metal as that would require being able to use his Internal Sight to scan minerals at the level of chemical bonds. However, about 60% was well within his grasp.

If others knew that Leonel was confident in such a thing, it would definitely cause an uproar. Even veteran Black Grade Force Crafters would find 50-60% acceptable while 40% was passable. Something like 70% was already above average, 80% was elite, 90% was legendary, while 100% was basically folklore. Who could claim to be capable of commanding the trillions of atoms in an ore perfectly?

Leonel's Force poured from his body and into Little Tolly without reservation, the rhythmic drumming of his fingers growing faster and faster.

Beads of sweat fell from his forehead, but he didn't even take the time to wipe them, his eyes shining brighter and brighter with each passing moment.

'[Dancing String]!'

Leonel's rhythm abruptly changed as Tolliver shot out from his palms, covering the reddened ore.

Leonel pinched his fingers on either side of the ore and pulled, elongating the hot ore into a thin line, folding it over itself, and pulling once more.

As though he was working a dough, Leonel stretched and folded the metal continuously, his fingers oscillating in a mesmerizing rhythm.

‘Perfect. 67% is better than what I was expecting.’

Leonel didn’t allow himself to bask in his success. He immediately reached toward the sniper rifle he had already separated into its parts the moment the Black Urbe Ore was prepared.

Compared to the Black Urbe Ore, dealing with the pre-processed alloys of the sniper rifle was much easier. The compatibility rating of the Urbe Ore was precisely decided by how well it could meld into these alloys. This meant that the last of Leonel’s task was simply to combine the two and then inscribe his chosen Force Arts.

He could almost see the final product before him. And, considering he had practiced many times in his Dream World already... was failure even possible?

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Leonel really didn’t expect that he would be the subject of so many glares again so soon, but this was the reality before him.

At this moment, he stood on the deck of a ship anchored a distance away from an island covered in a forest so thick one could hardly see in a few meters from its coasts. However, even with such a beautiful destination before him, Leonel found it difficult to enjoy because the youths that took part in the gathering were all sending looks toward him that just might tear him apart.

However, Leonel really couldn’t mind any of this now because compared to a few days ago, he was even more excited to go on this hunt.

According to what the leading Commander of this Hunt just said, a Commander that just happened to be the very same Violet Rain who oversaw the gathering, this Hunt would decide who would gain a quota to enter an SS-grade Zone.

This was most definitely an unexpected surprise for Leonel. Since Old Hutch hadn't known that Leonel had been scouting out high level Zones, he had never said anything about it. The old man hadn't said a word about it, thinking that he was successfully tricking Leonel into another task. He had no idea it would have convinced Leonel to join much quicker had he been more honest.

As for the reason why Leonel was looking for high level Zones, that was obviously so that he could earn a Tier 9 Black Reward so that he could go to Terrain and find Aina. Unfortunately, Leonel had vastly underestimated just how rare high level Zones were. It could be said that he was both lucky and unlucky to stumble upon the France Zone the way he had. PANDA-N0VEL.COM

Still, if others knew that Leonel was dissatisfied with the rarity of high level Zones, he would probably be beaten to death. After all, each Zone needed to be cleared, it was a requirement. If Zones weren't cleared, a world would never be able to finish their Metamorphosis and could even have its timeline swallowed. It was most definitely in Earth's best interest that these Zones were as rare as possible.

Of course, such being the case, entering such a high level Zone wasn't a joke. This Zone apparently had a 12 person entry limit, and only three spots would be available to them. The rest would go to high ranking officials of the Slayer Legion who had great combat experience.

But, this alone was enough for Leonel to take this Hunt more seriously. Entering this Zone was essentially his ticket to seeing Aina again. If it could be said that before he was only a bit curious about what benefits this island might bring him, now he wouldn't allow anyone to get in his way.

"... those who collect the most Beast Crystals will be ranked accordingly. However, do keep in mind that this island isn't a controlled environment like you're used to. There's no way to know what kind of abilities these animals have awakened nor is there anyway to tell what sort of threat they pose.

"And, if you believe the beasts are the only danger, you'd be wrong. The Eastern Lookout will be participating in this Hunt as well. Be wary of the human heart." PANDA NOVEL

Violet Rain scanned the youths with an apathetic gaze.

Though her eyes landed on Leonel for a moment, it didn't linger there any more than it did on another person. It seemed that she had regained her bearing as a Commander in recent days. At the very least, her one sided hatred of Leonel wasn't bubbling to the surface anymore.

“I’ve said all I’ve needed to say. You all can go.”

The youths were stunned.

They could go? What was that supposed to mean? They were still hundreds of meters from the island!
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Even if it was before the Metamorphosis, swimming in the ocean like this wasn’t exactly the safest thing. Even if one disregarded the potential dangerous creatures, just swimming against the waves alone would sap up their energy.

All of this was amplified several times more after the Metamorphosis. It was widely accepted that the oceans of Earth were practically a forbidden zone now. If it was already difficult to explore the oceans before, it was at the point now where no one even dared to do so.

It was at that moment that the boat they were all on suddenly rocked, caused by someone using it as a spring board to leap toward the open waters.

When they saw who it was, flames of competition couldn’t help but be lit in the depths of their souls.

This was the man they all hated. If they lost to him in strength, it was still fine. But, if they lost to him in courage too... where would they put their faces?

Thunderous Clap watched Leonel’s figure leap through the air. The eyes he had toward the latter didn’t seem to contain the hatred it once had. Instead, there was a deep unwillingness and the fire of a competitive spirit.

In truth, he still didn’t believe he had misjudged Leonel. Since the others still weren’t aware of the circumstances behind ‘Indomitable’s’ rise, they still thought Leonel was an arrogant prick. It was just that he happened to be an arrogant prick with the strength to back it up.

However, hatred wasn't the emotion he had for Leonel. All he had said was the truth. He really could beat them without Hutch's help. In that case, it wasn't arrogance, it was simply a fact.

'I wonder, between him and those top few... who's stronger?'

Thunderous Clap was only ranked fourth. Yet, he knew that those the Slayer Legion truly saw as their future pillars wouldn't even be risked by being allowed to appear on the rankings. It was quite a joke. His goal was those people, yet he couldn't even rank first on the list they disdained to appear on.

This was all to say that he couldn't fathom why it was they had allowed Leonel to appear on the list... But to him, this was a good thing. He could finally measure himself to those hidden monsters, he finally had a target to chase after.

The gazes of the youths watched on as Leonel glided across the waters as though it was solid ground. Then, one after another, they dove in.

Violet Rain's watery eyes twinkled at this scene.

'I guess it isn't so bad even if he might be a spy. Like this, these little pups can have a fire lit beneath them...'

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'Alright, it seems that this is the limit.'

At this moment, Leonel crouched on the highest branch of a tree that could support his weight, concealing himself within the dense foliage as he analyzed the gun in his hand.

The gun had quite a simple sleek silvery black look to it. Its nozzle was especially long and narrow, leaving it heavily weighted toward the handle. But, Leonel favored this design very much. Since it was like this, the long nozzle wouldn't influence his shot downward.

Though the gun looked to be intact, if one looked closely, it was possible to see several fine cracks along its surface. Leonel estimated that this nozzle could at most take two more shots before it broke along the points of weakness he purposely built in.

After testing it, Leonel knew the limits now, and they were exactly in line with the experimentation of his Dream World. A single nozzle would last somewhere between 20 to 30 normal Force shots. However, if he used his Light Elemental Force, it would at most last 2 to 3 at most.

If Leonel used the second phase of the gun and loaded it with a projectile he modified from his atlatl darts, then it could shoot just one.

Though things were like this, there was good news as well.PANDA-NOVEL.COM

Leonel twisted and pulled the chipped nozzle off. After slipping his protective gloves on, he pulled Little Tolly from the Segmented Cube and got to work.

He immediately activated [Melting Hands]. This technique worked similarly to [Delicate Touch] in that it heated up materials using the oscillation of atoms, however, it was much simpler to use because its application was broader. Since the nozzle's alloys were already set, there was no need to use [Delicate Touch] to fine tune the metal characteristics, so it was more of a brute force technique rather than a finesse technique.

Leonel's fingers worked deftly. Almost like a musician plucking the strings of a harp, he worked in unison with the little Metal Spirit, melting down the metal.

Upon sensing that the metal had reached the ideal temperature for molding, Leonel used Spirit Unity with Little Tolly to project the Dream Sculpt image of the nozzle's blueprint. This communication with extremely steady and completely without flaw, displaying the prowess of Leonel's ability once again.

Most beginner Force Crafters who use Metal Spirits struggle with this step. The advantage of Metal Spirits is that they were able to mold metals into incredibly intricate parts just by comprehending the will of their partners, however, was this really so easy?

How many could think of a single thing without straying? Even if you wanted to focus on a single thing, could you guarantee you wouldn't have a few stray thoughts? And, even if you succeeded in not having any, could the image you projected truly be perfect? PANDA NOVEL

The human mind was known for playing tricks. Often, memories are easily distorted. The only way for a Force Crafter with a Metal Spirit familiar to circumvent this weakness is by constantly tweaking the image they send through Spirit Unity. Only in this way can they ensure the final product is perfect.

However... Leonel had his Dream Sculpt? Was it even necessary for him to do such a thing? The image he projected would always be perfect.

Little Tolly acted quickly, wrapping the melted body up and shaping it into a thin rectangle of metal in what seemed like the blink of an eye.

Leonel's eyes flashed, his palm flipping over to reveal a quill with a beautiful white feather.

Taking advantage of the moment, Leonel's hands moved swiftly. Force Art after Force Art was drawn across the surface of the floating rectangular piece of metal.

Of these Force Arts, there were three kinds. One was a Force Compression Art, the second was a Force Acceleration Art, and the third were Force Barrier Arts. ρ??∫??????

The Force Compression Art concentrated the Force Leonel poured into the gun into a fine point. The Force Acceleration Art made the nozzle into a rail gun that accelerated the Force bullet continuously. And, finally, the Force Barriers were arranged along the inside of the nozzle such that the bullet was forced to follow a winding path that would give a stronger spinning action to the final product.

There were multiple Force Arts of each kind dotted along the inside of the nozzle, making it look as though it was densely packed with graffiti. Yet, it still exuded a mysterious and somewhat ancient aura.

The moment Leonel penned the last Force Art, the rectangular sheet of metal rolled close under Little Tolly's manipulation, forming a nozzle completely identical to the one that Leonel had just melted down. The only difference was that this one didn't have even a single crack on it.

' 16 minutes and 24 seconds. Not bad, I'm getting faster.' Leonel smiled to himself.

If others knew that he had just Force Crafted while squatting on the balls of his feet, high up in a tree... It was just best you didn't compare yourself to others.

Obviously, with how much time it took, Leonel couldn't do this mid-battle. But, it was definitely not too much of an inconvenience. After all, he had two guns and ten nozzles total. The only reason he had bothered to reforge this nozzle now was for the sake of preparedness. Since he had time now, there was no need to ruin a second nozzle, or else he wouldn't have time to cry later should a worst case scenario situation happen.

Leonel put the gun away after twisting the newly made nozzle onto it. Then he smiled, watching Little Tolly rush around his fingers as though the little guy was seeking credit.

"Yes, yes. You did very good."

Leonel didn't want to keep putting the little guy into the Segmented Cube, so he let Little Tolly stay out. His father had made it clear that keeping the little guy cooped up wasn't a good thing, so it was only right he let it out every once in a while.

'Alright, I've already collected over 20 Beast Crystals from a few B and A-grade threats. I guess I should look for a greater challenge this time...'

According to Violet Rain, B-grade crystals were worth one point, A-grade were worth ten points, and S-grade were worth a hundred. There was a month of time, so though Leonel was fairly certain he was far ahead at the moment, he knew this wouldn't be enough for him to slack off.

Suddenly, Leonel shook and fell from the tree branch.

To an outside observer, it seemed that he had lost his footing and was now paying for it. But, just a moment later, the branch he was sitting at was blasted away. No, even the side of the tree trunk it was attached to looked like something had taken a bite out of it. The issue was that... there was nothing there!

Despite the fact there was nothing to be seen with the eyes, Leonel's alertness was on high. He felt all the hairs on his body stand up, the residual effects of fusing with the primitive man's consciousness still benefiting him.

'Dammit, if I fall to the ground like this, I'll definitely break a few bones.'

Leonel's jaw clenched. At that moment, his back was facing the ground as he fell and his eyes were trained on the place the branch he squatted on had just been. If he didn't brace himself for the fall, he would suffer. But, he still didn't dare to turn away.

Leonel involuntarily blinked. It was a normal action, no different from the thousands of times he had already done it in his lifetime to this point already. However, he could have never imagined that, this time, it would come with dire consequences.

It was only a split moment, but when Leonel opened his eyes once more, a streak of black was already about to hit his chest.

Was it going to do to his torso what it just did to the tree? And why was it that his instincts were screaming at him? Telling him that his Quasi Bronze chain necklace would be of no help...

Chapter 146

Leonel's thoughts accelerated. A moment later, he understood where this feeling was coming from.

In the past several months, he had learned quite a lot about Force Crafting. In that time, how could he not look into his Quasi Bronze chain necklace? After suffering the barrage of several bombs, it had suffered a few minor cracks, but Leonel could tell that those 'minor' defects actually decreased the strength of the treasure by as much as 10%.

During his studies, Leonel had learned about the type of treasure his necklace was. As an energy based defensive treasure, it also came with several downsides.

One of those downsides was an inability to function in the presence of Force disrupting towers. This was something Leonel learned personally, much to the sadness of his shoulder. But, most importantly, it was incredibly fragile when meeting higher level Force types.

What did this mean? It meant that whatever was in the process of attacking him now had grasped a Force Strengthening Deviation.

Whether or not this Force Strengthening Deviation was powerful or not compared to other didn't matter. All that mattered was that it was at the very least a level beyond normal Force.

'Dammit. Aren't these deviations supposed to be rare? How the hell did I randomly come across one like this?'

As Leonel continued to fall to the ground, he couldn't help but lament his bad luck once again. At the same time, he caught the faint inkling that though this 'Project Hunt' provided good opportunities, it could very well create new enemies for Earth as well.PANDA-NOVEL.COM

If there were other beasts this powerful... Let's just say Leonel didn't want to think about it.

Just as the black light was about to collide with his chest, Leonel's right sole lit up and he stamped down hard, sending him shooting off to the side.

As he did this, he couldn't help but shake his head. First it was the chariot, now it was this weird creature. When he chose these treasure shoes, he had never thought that instead of using it to glide through the air, he'd always be using it to escape a sorry state.

Luckily, he had already upgraded his treasure shoes. Now, the cool down on their activation was only 30 seconds and they also provided a boost to his leaping ability.

The moment he gained some distance, Leonel took out his two pistols, firing four rapid shots, two from each.

SHUU! SHUU! SHUU! SHUU!

Unlike a normal gun, the sounds of Leonel's shots were no different from whistling wind. However, even compared to a gun of the 25th century, though the range was at most half a kilometer, Leonel was confident that the piercing power and lethality was a few levels higher. PANDA NOVEL

Four pellets of white energy shot forward, spinning so quickly that they left spirals of air in their wake. For the span of the blink of an eye, it seemed like they were the center of their own miniature hurricane.

However, before they could even land on their mark, Leonel's eyes widened.

The line of black energy vanished into thin air, blinking away before the energy spheres could hit it.

PUU! PUU! PUU! PUU!

The four bullets tore through the opposing tree, leaving the same number of small holes in its bark and easily tearing their way through the other side before disappearing into the foliage.

The rustle of leaves sounded as Leonel disappeared into the dense canopy of a tree he had kicked himself toward. He landed on a branch with a dull thump, the wood beneath him swaying up and down beneath his weight.

'... It disappeared?' ρ??∫??????

Leonel couldn't help but think back to Xinghai's blink ability. Could it be that this weird beast both had such an ability and access to a Force Strengthening Deviation? Wasn't this too exaggerated? If it had been any other youth who came across this creature, they'd likely already be dead.

The greatest trouble was that Leonel's Internal Sight was seemingly having problems locking onto the target, almost as though it was able to hide from the fluctuations of his Soul Force. This made this beast a hundred times more complicated to deal with.

'This is at least an SS-grade threat...'

Leonel silently waited for the beast to strike again. When facing an enemy like this, the worst thing he could probably do would be to move about randomly and allow it a chance to find an opening. It was best he stayed still, raising his awareness to its maximum and keeping his reflexes primed.

As Leonel did this, he began to concentrate his Internal Sight into a smaller radius. This was a technique he learned in Force Crafting. It was usually used so that a crafter could maintain quality control of their craft by increasing their observational ability, but Leonel now realized that it applied perfectly to combat as well.

He never thought there could exist something that could hide from his Internal Sight, but now he had been taught a lesson. He really had to be ready for anything in this new world order.

The sharp range on Leonel's Internal Sight was continuously compressed by him. It took a toll on his spirit to do this, but he didn't have any other choice. How else could he deal with an enemy he couldn't see?

200 meters became 100. 100 meters became 50. 50 meters became 25. At this point, Leonel had reached his limit and as much as five minutes had already passed. But... there was no sign of the beast that had attacked him.

Leonel clenched his jaw and continued to wait, not moving even after half an hour had passed. But, there was still no sign of the creature.

With sweat pouring down his forehead, he had no choice but to release his Internal Sight, allowing him to gasp deep breaths. He knew by now that the likelihood the creature was still stalking him was low.

'Was it scared away...?'

Leonel had always heard that animals were more afraid of humans than humans were of them. But, he didn't really know if this was true or not. At the very least, it seemed that this beast was gone.

Jumping down from the tree, Leonel soon landed on the ground. After taking a look around and realizing that the creature really wasn't going to attack him, he began to approach the center of the island with more caution.

Leonel flipped his palm over, causing a silver disk to appear.

“What Force Strengthening Deviation did that beast use?”

[*Ping* Replying to Seed, there are fluctuations of Dark Elemental Force in the air]

Leonel didn't react much to this, but this was only because he wasn't aware of just how unlucky he was. Dark Elemental Force was just as rare as Light Elemental Force. Yet, he had actually been marked by such an entity.

**

At that moment, on the other side of the island, another ship could be found anchored. A group of youths jumped from its side, swimming toward the shore with ambitious glints in their eyes.

However, neither those youths from the Eastern Lookout, nor the youths that came with Leonel from the Southern Lookout, was aware that there was a third gathering taking place as well.

Nearby a large lake on the island, a gathering of beasts was taking place. Though none of them exchanged words in a human sense, their eyes seemed to tell a different story.

From an outsider's perspective, all that could be heard was a series of grunts and growls. However, if one paid close attention and removed themselves from their preconceived notions...

These animals seemed to be having a meeting.

Unlike the youths from the Southern Lookout who had been stimulated by Leonel to the point none of them even suggested forming a group upon entering the island, the youths of the Eastern Lookout were different.

Without someone like 'Indomitable' egging them on, they didn't think twice before forming groups of two or three, walking through the dense forests together.

The top three youths of the Southern Lookout, setting Leonel aside, were Roaring Black Lion, Chasing Wind, and Thunderous Clap. Likewise, the Eastern Lookout youths had their own top three as well.

One would expect these youths to be leading groups of their own, maybe having too much pride to share a stage together. But, this wasn't the case at all. In fact, the top three youths of the Eastern Lookout formed a group together, hoping to maximize their profits and monopolize all three spots to the SS-grade Zone to themselves.

Ranked seventh on their Promising Rankings, there was a young woman who went by the name of Flowing Wind, a name not much different from the third ranked of the Southern Lookout, Chasing Wind.

Her form of dressing was particularly provocative. Other than a sports bra and a pair of skin tight spandex shorts, she wore nothing else. Though her face was covered by a mask tattooed in red swirls not unlike Chasing Winds green swirls, her fiery figure alone was enough to set one's mind ablaze.
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It could only be said that she put more worth in her looks than her own safety, or else she would never wear such a thing upon entering a forest with unknown dangers like this. Well, it was either that or she was extraordinarily confident in her abilities...

Ranked fifth on their rankings, there was another young woman who went by the name 'Pisces'. The first feature about her that stood out was her flowing blue hair. What was even more striking about this color was that it was possible to tell that this color was definitely not dyed in the slightest. It could only be said that her awakening had caused this mutation...

Maybe it was something weird about the culture of the Eastern Lookout, but Pisces too was dressed particularly inappropriately. Though her clothing wasn't as provocative as Flowing Wind's, she still wore

a flowing blue dress that was completely out of place. Not only this, but her dainty bare feet could be seen poking out from its folds with every step. She hadn't even worn shoes.

As if these two weren't weird enough, the third of the was a young man ranked second on their rankings. He went by the name of King of Seas.

He carried around a golden trident that stood a head taller than him. It reflected the rays of the sun so well that it illuminated the forest despite how few rays made it through the thick canopy above. PANDA NOVEL

This alone wasn't enough to raise an eyebrow. The true problem was that he was wearing nothing but a speedo, revealing his bronzed torso and thighs, each portion of which was rippling with muscles.

As though this wasn't enough to leave a person speechless, his speedo seemed to be made out of a brass metal, making it look more like a chastity guard than a piece of clothing. It was impossible to tell whether this young man had done this on purpose or not.

It could only be said that this group of three was simply too weird...

"There's something off about this forest." Flowing Wind spoke in a low voice. "Though we've already gathered a few beast crystals, it doesn't seem to be as many as we should have."

There was definitely something off. According to theory, animals should have the same chance at evolution as humans did. After all, there was no reason for the Laws of the Universe to favor humans over any other species. It wasn't impossible even for plants and vegetation to evolve. PANDA NOVEL

This was all to say that even if humans didn't go out of their way to breed powerful animal sub-species, they would have likely awakened powerful members among each other regardless. If this was taken into account, the beasts they had come across to this point should be far more powerful. But, from Flowing Wind's perspective, they seemed to be quite... normal.

"Your perspective is just skewed." Pisces said lightly. "With the three of us here together, how could these animals not be easy to deal with? If you just consider the fact the most we've come across are B and A-grade threats, this is impressive enough."

“Maybe...”

It seemed that Flowing Wind was itching for battle. She was completely unsatisfied with the challenge and even somewhat regretted forming a team with these three. If things were like this, wouldn't the next month be too boring?

“If you're really feeling bored, there's still some other entertainment on this island.” Pisces said with a light smile. “We could just find a few of our peers from the Southern Lookout to exchange some pointers with.”

King of Sea's gaze sharpened at these words. It seemed that even though he was stoic and a man of few words, this prospect still made him feel quite anxious.

“Hm?” Flowing Wind's steps paused. “Finally, something interesting.”

Without saying a word, she shot into the distance, not even explaining her actions to her two team members. It was almost as though she didn't care whether or not they followed her.

After sending a glance toward one another, King of Seas and Pisces could only shoot forward. Flowing Wind was their scout, without her, finding the next target would be a few times more difficult.

In the distance, Roaring Black Lion was in a fierce battle with a black bear. Considering he had already entered his beast form and the thin line of blood flowing from the corner of his lip, it was obvious that he wasn't having an easy time.

It was a small clearing of green within the dense forest, yet it managed to contain such a savage battle. The palms of Black Roaring Lion and the black bear continuously slammed against their opposition's chest. They looked like two madmen having a contest of brute strength.

If one looked closely, it was possible to see that the immediately vicinity of the black bear seemed to have sunk into the ground as though its great weight was effecting change on a much grander scale...

Flowing Wind appeared by the edge of the clearing, her eyes lighting up when she recognized Roaring Black Lion's beast form.

'Rank fifth on the Southern Lookout rankings... hehe, seems like I'll have a good harvest today.'

Chapter 148

Half a month later, Leonel could still be found walking around the forest. Though his harvests could be considered to be great, he was still in an incredibly sorry state.

His Quasi Bronze chain necklace managed to mend his clothes in places they had once been torn, but the limp in his gait, the caked blood and dried wounds on his skin, not to mention the paleness on his face were things it couldn't do anything about. This led to a situation where his clothes were in mint condition, yet his body looked like it had just gone through a hundred consecutive battles.

If one had followed Leonel from the start to now, one would see quite a weird scene. First, Leonel would find himself a beast to target. Second, he would easily kill that beast. And, finally, just when he was feeling complacent in his victory, that very same damned streak of black would attack him from an unpredictable angle.

At this point, Leonel had already had dozens of fights with that unknown beast. And though it couldn't be said that he always definitely lost, he most definitely didn't win either.

It really was too much. He had no idea why this thing was targeting him, but it rarely even allowed him a moment to rest.

By now, Leonel had learned from the dictionary that Dark Elemental Force, and his Light Elemental Force for that matter, weren't normal Force Strengthening Deviations. Each was incomparably rare and powerful. But, this only made him feel more aggrieved.

Just what were the odds of a beast with such a rare ability deciding to target him? Where was the justice?

At first, Leonel thought that maybe those with Dark Elemental Force had some baked in bias against those with Light Elemental Force. But, this didn't seem to be the case at all. He almost laughed at himself for having this thought.

This wasn't some cheap anime his dad liked to watch. There wasn't any light side versus dark side nonsense going on here, this creature just apparently didn't like the way he looked. What other explanation could there be?PANDA-N0VEL.COM

Leonel sighed.

In a motion he had practiced one too many times, he flipped his palm, allowing his long-nozzle pistol to appear. He hardly shot a glance at his target before he fired, causing a white pellet of energy to pierce through the left eye of a fox that had been stalking him in some thick bushes. The poor thing hardly new how it died.

And, once again, as though on cue, a flash of black headed for the back of Leonel's head.

Leonel dove forward, ducking and rolling out of the way.

'Eat this.'

Light Elemental Force surged from Leonel's hand and into the pistol. A sharp eye would easily notice the nozzle bulge a small bit before a bead of golden energy shot out from it, barely able to hold out under the power of the bullet.

SHUUUU! BANG!

The streak of black dodged once more as usual, but Leonel heard its faint 'yip' that almost sounded like the bark of a small dog. It usually made this sound whenever Leonel sent an attack toward it that could threaten it and it was something Leonel had been hearing more and more often lately. PANDA N0VEL

The golden bullet collided with a tree that would take ten men to wrap around. Yet, it was blasted through as though no more resistant than a piece of paper.

The bark, the wood, its innards, all of it, was completely vaporized.

Even though Leonel didn't have much of a reaction to it now, the first time he had seen the strength of Light Elemental Force, he was stunned silent.

Leonel grit his teeth. 'You damned beast.'

Thanks to this thing, he couldn't eat, sleep, or even relax. Yet, there was still half a month more in this hell hole. How could he not be aggrieved?

Unfortunately, before he could launch another attack, the beast disappeared again. Once again, from start to finish, Leonel didn't even catch a glance of what it was. He only managed to decipher that it must be a small creature of some sort. Outside of that, he really knew nothing else.

Leonel took a deep breath, calming his agitation. He found a tree to lean against and slid down, taking a rest.

Aside from this particular annoyance, this Hunt couldn't be said to be completely without merit.

For one, he had come into contact with many beasts that provided interested prospects for Force Crafting. The only unfortunate part was that none of these would help him to repair his chain necklace. Unfortunately, he didn't have the skill to repair such a high level treasure.

His two pistols could be ranked around the Tier 5 or 6 Black. It could be said that it was his accuracy and his Light Elemental Force that made them so lethal. In his hands, they were no weaker than a Tier 9 Black treasure, but in someone else's, Tier 6 was the best they'd be able to hope for. Such a treasure was about Leonel's limit at this moment, something that left him a bit disappointed.

But, if these matters were put into perspective, just how shocking was it that Leonel, who had just stepped foot into the Force Crafting world, could already be considered a Tier 6 Black Force Crafter?

‘Hm?’

Leonel noticed that there was someone coming toward him. But, since it was a human and not an animal, he didn’t bother to move. This wasn’t because Leonel assumed that this person wouldn’t be hostile. The words Thunderous Clap had spoken to him were more than just a small wake up call to him about the kind of world he lived in now. Rather, it was that he didn’t think this person in particular could harm him even if they wanted to.

When that person entered the clearing Leonel was resting in and saw that it was him, they were stunned for a while.

“Indomitable, it’s you.”

The person didn’t seem to be hostile. Of course, Leonel immediately recognized him. It was none other than Erupting Volcano, one of the young men Leonel had defeated during the gathering. It was easy to tell from the molten magma drawn directly onto his mask.

“Hello.” Leonel said as a polite greeting.

Though Erupting Volcano’s face was covered by his mask, Leonel could tell from his eyes that he was stunned. Toward such a thing, he could only bitterly laugh. Did they all really take him to be such a bad person? Even to the point they were shocked by something as simple as a greeting?

Erupting Volcano suddenly felt hesitant, not knowing how he should approach.

Leonel laughed lightly. “If you have something you want to say, just say it. I won’t bite you.”

Hearing such words, Erupting Volcano relaxed slightly.

“I don’t know how much you know about what’s going on right now?”

“What’s going on?” Leonel’s brow furrowed.

“As expected, you really weren’t aware. In the past half month, there’ve been a few skirmishes between us and the Eastern Lookout participants. We were caught off guard because most of us traveled alone while they traveled in groups. A lot of us got ambushed and had our stash of beast crystals taken away...”

“So that’s what happened...” Leonel mumbled.

“You know about it?”

“Well, a group did try to rob me a few days ago. But...”

Erupting Volcano smiled bitterly. Leonel didn’t need to finish. He knew those people hadn’t succeeded. Shaking his head, he continued.

“What’s more pressing is the lack of S-grade and above beasts. Even A-grade beasts have been getting scarcer and scarcer.”

Leonel frowned. Now that he thought about it, this was true. He only didn’t notice because that creature was always attacking him. He knew that little thing was at least an SS-grade threat. With such a beast constantly haunting him, where would he get the time to think about why stronger creatures weren’t appearing?

“It can’t be that we’ve already hunted them all?” Leonel asked probingly.

Erupting Volcano shook his head. “That’s impossible. Even though this island isn’t as big as a continent, it’s still at least a hundred kilometers in diameter. The population of beasts should be in the tens of thousands. We don’t even number a hundred total, how could we clear them all in a few days?”

Leonel nodded. This made sense.

“So none of you have an answer to this?”

“Well... we’ve been trying to go to the center of the island for a long time. The problem is that there are a lot of rivers and lakes blocking the way there with dense populations of dangerous underwater creatures. I’m actually part of a scout sent out to find and stragglers so we can come together to make a push.”

Hearing this much, Leonel fell into his own thoughts. Ultimately, he chose to follow only for the sake of his own curiosity. Why were the beasts acting so weirdly?

Chapter 149

Near the center of the ‘Project Hunt’ island, there was a gathering of not so inconspicuous youths taking place. Some were looking toward one another with vigilance and hostility that could hardly be concealed.

If one could set aside the peculiarity of the atmosphere, the surroundings itself was quite beautiful. Many lakes, rivers and rolling hills could be seen. The only issue was that it all seemed quite unnatural.

It felt impossible that such a scenery could be formed organically. It was almost like a painter laid down a fantasy world on their canvas, only for it to somehow pop up and become a reality.

The rivers wound in and out of the lakes like ribbons of water flowing as they pleased. Some of them didn’t even take the green hills as obstruction, crawling up their sides and falling down the other in small waterfalls.

It really was a beautiful sight. But, it seemed that none of the youths had the mind to care about such things as they looked toward each other with vigilance.

Roaring Black Lion stood to one side, his gaze practically spitting fire as he looked toward a group of three youths. There were numerous wounds across his body, making it obvious that Leonel wasn’t the only one having a hard time during this Hunt. But, judging by the hostility in his gaze, it was obvious that while Leonel was suffering at the hands of a beast, it seemed that he had suffered at the hands of his fellow man.PANDA-NOVEL.COM

It wasn't just him who had such wounds and carried such animosity. Aside from Chasing Wind — whose indifference was maybe somewhat obvious considering the speed at which she could escape — they all had such gazes, even Thunderous Clap.

Toward such eyes, Pisces, Flowing Wind, King of Seas and the rest of the Eastern Lookout youths could only chuckle. Who asked the Southern Lookout Promising Youths to be stupid enough to travel alone? If it wasn't for this, would they have suffered such obvious losses?

Of course, there was one group amongst the Eastern Lookout fellows that didn't seem to be having such a great time. However, rather than having their eyes trained on a particular person, they were constantly scanning the surroundings as though trying their best to find their prey.

"I know I'm beautiful, but is there a need to stare at me so intently?" Flowing Wind blinked her eyes and brought her elbows together, winking flirtatiously at Roaring Black Lion and Thunderous Clap, both of whom had suffered due to her.

The action was really too provocative. She was hardly wearing much to begin with. Now with this, it felt as though all her assets might pop out at any time. PANDA NOVEL

Thunderous Clap didn't even spare her a glance, but Roaring Black Lion looked her up and down. Despite the rage in his eyes not dispelling, it seemed he was perfectly fine with enjoying the show. And why not? He didn't have to turn a blind eye to her beauty just to get his revenge, right? He would teach her a lesson regardless.

"If you want to look some more, I don't mind. But you'll have to get a little closer." Flowing Wind said sweetly.

"I wouldn't mind coming closer, but you look a bit fragile. I might accidentally snap you half."

"Oh? But that's exactly what I want."

Flowing Wind blinked with expectation as though hoping Roaring Black Lion would cross the distance between them at that very moment. She looked every bit the part of a woman who couldn't wait a moment longer. PANDA NOVEL

However, the underlying murderous intent was clear to the point that if one closed their eyes and only focused on her words and not her tantalizing figure, it would sound as though she was inviting you to the depths of hell rather than her bed.

That said, Roaring Black Lion didn't seem to notice as he took numerous broad steps forward. In a moment, he was so close to Flowing Wind that her ample chest just barely grazed along his ribcage.

She stood with her hands on her hips, looking up at Roaring Black Lion with an 'expectant' glint in her eye.

Just when it seemed that the atmosphere might take a turn for the worse, the sound of shuffling grass and a snapping twig sounded. Many looked over to find a pair walking toward them, both of who were young men. One had molten lava painted onto his mask, while the other wore a plain white one.

Everyone on the Southern Lookout side seemed to recognize both young men and even shot complicated gazes toward the latter. However, a hint of confusion could be seen amongst those of the Eastern Lookout. Well, almost all of them.

There was one particular group that seemed to have found the prey they were looking for. Almost like ravenous dogs tied to a chain they couldn't wait to free themselves from, they stared toward Leonel with all the animosity they could muster.

"You know who he is?"

Pisces who was used to being the only one of her group of three who thought about the overall situation noticed this distinct change.

Through gritted teeth, a young man who had red veins painted across his mask and went by the name 'Ruptured Artery', spoke.

"We were tied up in a tree and couldn't get down for three days because of him. We nearly starved to death."

Pisces frowned upon hearing this information.

“He was alone?”

“... Yes.”

“And he still subdued you all without killing you?”

“Yes...”

“Or injuring you?”

At this point, Ruptured Artery stopped speaking. He was already enraged enough without having to deal with the odd gazes he and his group was now receiving.

However, the others of the Eastern Lookout could only look toward Leonel with vigilance. Ruptured Artery wasn't the best among them, but he wasn't the worst either. If he participated in the Southern Lookout gathering, he would have been the fourth or fifth seed. On top of that, he had been alone, yet he had been tied up in a tree without the ability to resist...?

Even with all this being said, the reason they were so apprehensive was because Leonel was a complete unknown... They had never even heard of him until this very moment.

Chapter 150

Leonel didn't react much to all of the eyes on him. He was much more interested in learning what was going on here. This place looked so beautiful, but judging by the fact they were all at least a hundred meters away from the nearest riverbank, nothing was as simple as it seemed.

“Hello.” Leonel spoke first. Though he didn’t think the amiable smile he had on right now was helping very much considering the fact he was wearing a mask, he still used it out of force of habit.

Those of the Southern Lookout responded to Leonel’s greeting with awkward nods, while those of the Eastern Lookout didn’t say much of anything. Most were only curiously observing Leonel, however, the young man in question walked by them all and approached the closest riverbank.

“Indomitable, wait!”

Surprisingly, it was Roaring Black Lion who called out. Hearing the voice, Leonel couldn’t help but stop and look back.

“It’s dangerous. There’s a group of creatures hidden in the lake led by an exceptionally powerful leader. Some of us almost lost our lives.”

When he was saying these words, Roaring Black Lion sent glares toward the Eastern Lookout youths once again. They had reached this place long before they had, yet hadn’t said a word. Obviously, he had more than just one grievance with this group of people.PANDA-NOVEL.COM

Leonel nodded. “Got it. Just want to check something.”

Leonel turned back and continued to walk forward. Roaring Black Lion didn’t try to stop him again, he had already done all he could. Plus, it wasn’t like he could stop Leonel by force.

It wasn’t long before Leonel had made it to the side of the closest river. He tried to reach in with his Internal Sight, but he suddenly found that passing it through water was a lot different than air. In fact, his range was reduced by a factor of ten, barely stretching down a couple tens of meters.

In truth, this should have been enough to make it to the bottom of most rivers. But, the issue was that not only was this river much deeper than usual, but even if it wasn’t, the fact was that there was still the rest of its length and width to deal with. Even if he could see to the bottom, he could still only look to the left and right a few tens of meters.

It didn't take Leonel long to decide that it was a fruitless endeavor. Instead of continuing to do something useless, he flipped his palm, causing the corpse of a deer with particularly sharp antlers to appear in his hands.

The others were stunned by this. Some even had eyes that gleamed with curiosity and greed, most of whom came from the Eastern Lookout. It wasn't that those of the Southern Lookout were better people, it was just that they knew enough about Leonel to not foolishly think of stealing his things. PANDA NOVEL

Spatial treasures were already innately high grade treasures. They were all at least A-grade treasures. But, this alone wasn't enough for the to turn their greedy eyes toward Leonel. The most important point was how large of a space Leonel's spatial treasure must have.

What they didn't know was that this carcass wasn't taken from Leonel's spatial bracelet, but rather from his Segmented Cube.

In recent days, Leonel was really lamenting not knowing more about the Segmented Cube earlier. It was actually able to house Little Tolly just fine even while within his spatial ring. Had he known this earlier, he could have stored Aina inside it while he escaped that day instead of sending her off to some unknown world.

But at this point, he could only sigh. It wasn't like he could go back in time.

Leonel turned his attention back to the riverbank. Then, with strength that surpassed a normal human, he tossed the deer carcass toward it.

The reaction was immediate. $\int_{\text{PANDA NOVEL}}$

The calm surface churned. In one moment, there was not a life form in sight. But, in the next moment, the water suddenly fell as though a pit hole had appeared at its bottom. Then, a massive mountain of blue shot up.

Beneath the towering wave of water, Leonel could faintly catch a glimpse of beautiful, reflective blue scales.

Without hesitation, he pulled out his pistol, shooting a single normal shot. He thought that this would be all he needed to end things. But the result was far outside of his expectations.

DING!

Leonel's shot didn't even leave a dent. It rebounded off, causing Leonel to look in shock as his shot landed on a nearby patch of grass, burrowing into the soil.

After a moment, Leonel smirked.

'Well, good thing I picked that beast in particular.'

The massive scaled creature fell back into the waters, causing waves to flood over the sides toward Leonel. However, he didn't move, weathering the storm.

"... What is he doing?"

This was a question many of the youths were asking each other. Why was he standing in such a dangerous place? It should be obvious that normal methods weren't enough now.

KKKKKKUUUUUAAAAAAAAAA!!

'There it is.'

Leonel's gaze got focused. This was exactly what he was looking for.

'Don't blame me.' Leonel grinned to himself. 'I've lost count of the number of times I've gotten fish bones caught in my throat. Consider this a little payback.'

The rage of the massive beast shook the river. Leonel could imagine its pain. That deer he had fed it was no joke. Leonel had defeated it easily, but after testing the strength of its sharp antlers, the result shocked even him.

One could imagine the damage it could do inside that creature's stomach.

However, this wasn't all Leonel wanted. He was still biding his time, still waiting.

By now, the other youths realized that Leonel had done something. As for whatever it was, it was clear that it was very effective.

'There it is!'

The creature surged up once again, doing whatever it could think of to try and alleviate the pain it was suffering.

At that moment, Leonel did the unthinkable and jumped into the air with it.