

Descent 661

Chapter 661

Leonel led Aina into the basement. The sudden movement caused everyone to look in his direction simultaneously, their gloominess on full display.

Kaela smiled somewhat weakly when she saw Leonel. Realizing that he was holding a girl's small hand, she looked over and gave a polite nod to Aina as well. As for the fact she was wearing a mask... Well, Kaela wore a lab coat everywhere, so who was she to judge.

Leonel scanned their faces. He couldn't help but feel a twang of guilt seeing their downcast expressions.

The truth was that Leonel wasn't very surprised to find them all here. It was clear and obvious that none of them cared to go to the arena after hearing the bells because they somewhat already knew what would happen.

However, what Leonel didn't expect was...

"I'm sorry!"

After a deep breath, Kaela suddenly stood and bowed to everyone. She did so, so deeply that her forehead almost rebounded against her shins. It would have almost been comical had tears she had been holding back not spilled forth at that very moment.

It was obvious to everyone that Kaela was only waiting for everyone to be present for her to give this apology. All her frustration and rage welled up in her eyes, flooding forth. It became obvious very quickly that she had only bowed so low in an attempt to hide the tears she could no longer hold back.

"It's all my fault. The moment I saw him, I should have known things wouldn't be so simple and should have pulled us all out. It's my fault, it's all my fault."

She felt that she had failed as a leader. She had walked them all right into a trap and wasn't even any wiser. She knew that her former master wasn't such a nice person, and neither were his wives. Each was more evil than the last. To have trusted them was the worst mistake she could have ever made.

Kaela's knees buckled, falling to the ground.

But, before she could lose balance, a strong arm had already propped her up.

Leonel's arm had reached forward at the same time as Rum's, but his speed was much faster. It was easy for Leonel to tell that Rum wouldn't have made it in time.

With a subtle wink, Leonel passed Kaela off to Rum. But, the big man was just as depressed as everyone else and hardly noticed this at all.

"It's not our fault at all, Kaela!" Litia immediately interjected, rushing up and helping Kaela to wipe her tears. "We'd never blame you for something so sinister. It was clear that we were just unlucky to be targeted."

Everyone supported Litia's words. Even the quiet Thilly hummed in almost silent acceptance.

Leonel sighed. If there was anyone to 'blame', it would be him. Kaela was a convenient target not much unlike he was. Leonel had a feeling, though, that regardless of which Faction he had chosen to enter, the result would have been the same.

Now, not only had their name been dragged through the mud, but all the resources they had poured into their products were considered to have been wasted too. They had no Ores left, their merit points were now deemed useless, and even if by some miracle they managed to recover, who would buy from them? ρ??∫??????

Realizing this, even with the comfort of everyone, Kaela couldn't hold back her stream of tears, her shoulders quaking.

Years ago, she had left the safety of Valiant Hall because she believed her master wasn't looking out for her. Since then, despite having poor combat prowess as a Crafter, she managed to join Brave Peak and claw her way back, gathering a group of friends and setting out to build her own faction.

Unfortunately, things like this never went smoothly. Everywhere she went, it seemed that she would run into another roadblock.

Whether it was the soaring price of Ores, the monopoly on stores, the difficulty in completing a novel design with her lack of knowledge... It was like continuously climbing one mountain after another.

Yet, when she finally reached the peak of the last, instead of finding shining sun and colorful rainbows, she found a steep drop into an endless abyss she could never climb back out from.

All those years of torture and laborious work didn't break her, but this most definitely did.

Aina clenched her fists watching Kaela's breakdown. She didn't know of her story, but she could still feel a shadow of something familiar when she looked at her. It almost felt like Aina was watching a possible ending for herself.

The Dimensional Verse was a cruel world. Hard work didn't necessarily mean you would succeed. The successful like to think that they reached their level simply because they did and sacrificed more. But, this was nothing but the rose tinted glasses of the rich and privileged.

Hard work guaranteed you nothing. Sacrifice guaranteed you nothing.

For a long while, Leonel stood and said nothing. He crossed his arms across his chest, allowing the group to comfort each other. Watching them support their leader in her time of need made his heart warm, but one wouldn't be able to tell by the look on his face.

Leonel emotionlessly watched it all from start to finish as though engraving this moment into his mind. Every tear, every tremble, every sob... He imprinted it all.

Eventually, Kaela managed to hiccup her way into a semblance of a steady breath. She felt quite embarrassed by her actions. Her plan was to apologize and then try to prepare a future path for everyone, likely without herself.

But, instead of succeeding in this, she had made a bumbling fool of herself.

She looked toward Leonel with a hint of shame on her face, but all she saw was a sturdy pillar, standing there as though the world couldn't impact him in the slightest.

Leonel suddenly smiled, but somehow, it seemed detached, as though it was a reflex rather than a display of his genuine emotion.

“Now that that's out of your system...” Leonel said slowly. “Do you want to watch Valiant Heart Mountain dance on the palm of your hands?”

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Leonel's words seemed to come with an air of calm around them. Despite the fact he didn't explain any detailed plan, they somehow felt at ease.

If others knew of this, they might find it to be quite baffling. Leonel's words effectively amounted to telling them to wait patiently and nothing else, yet they gobbled it up like naïve children.

But maybe this was just a product of how broken their spirits were. Any small light of hope they could get was enough to calm their hearts. It might have been as the saying went, ignorance was bliss. Maybe by choosing to live in ignorance, they would stave off this pain for just a small bit longer.

“Do we really just have to wait?” Kaela asked softly.

Her eyes were still puffy from her tears, but she still gathered herself up for long enough to say these words. Unlike the others, she couldn't afford to just accept everything at face value. It was exactly this passiveness that she felt landed them in this situation to begin with.

Leonel smiled reassuringly.

“We just need to wait for the honeymoon period to come to an end. It might take a week, it might take a month. But once we hit that tipping point, it’ll be time to make our move.”

Kaela opened her mouth to respond, but she really didn’t know what to say. At this point, she could only take Leonel’s words at face value.

“Then what do we do in the meantime? We don’t have any resources and our merit points became useless before we even got a chance to use them. All I managed to buy were some rations to fill up our empty fridge, but I didn’t really expect that to last more than a month.”

In this new system, even something as simple as good had be scratched and clawed for.

The so-called ‘rations’ Kaela bought in the past were only a result of her own quirks. She didn’t like spending money, so she often bought dry rations that most only bought for the sake of missions.

Most of the time, the group would rather eat at the free lunches given by the freshman quarters or the Peaks, but now there would be no such thing. Even the freshmen would begin to starve unless they had the capital to trade large amounts of Urbe Ore. Either that, or they’d have to go hunting on their own.

Basically all freshmen perks had been stripped. The only ‘benefit’ they had gained was that now they were allowed to travel outside the mountain range on their own without first passing any Peak Exams.

But, that was about as good as telling them that they had the right to go and die now.

Thinking of Freshmen, Leonel couldn’t help but be keenly aware that Radlis was nowhere to be seen at the moment. However, he only spared it a fleeting thought.

“I sent him away since he was never really one of us to begin with...” Kaela said softly as though she could read Leonel’s mind.

“That’s not a problem. He might be even more useful when he isn’t here.

“As for food, don’t worry about it. I also plan to take no small number of missions quite soon. But as for what you can do now...”

Leonel flipped his palm, secretly communicating with the Segmented Cube as he sent out one ore vein after another.

“... How about train?”

Leonel grinned.

He might have used up much of Camelot’s high level ores, but Leonel had a city’s worth of low level ores he had yet to use, all of which he got from the hive during his time with the Slayer Legion.

For Leonel’s current needs, these low level ores were too weak to build anything that could be useful to improving his strength. However, his strength wasn’t what would need help very soon.

“I’m going to impart some low level Force Arts to you. With your current level of skill, you should be able to grasp them quickly and it should help solidify your foundations. After that, we’ll be able to start preparing.”

“But...” Litia’s twin sister, Madia, couldn’t help but speak up in her soft voice. p??(?????)

Though she didn’t say the words, they hung at the tip of her tongue. Even without her bluntly stating it, everyone else was already aware. Though they were happy to learn new Force Arts, what good was it when no one would buy from them? Even if someone was willing to take the risk, who would dare to offend the members of Hero Peak?

Though the Peak system had been dissolved, only the naïve believed that they would all be one happy family now...

Toward this question, though, Leonel only smiled mysteriously, not explaining further.

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Three days later, Leonel left the small abode under the shadow of Brave Peak and headed toward the former location of Valiant Hall. He walked hand in hand with Aina, not caring in the slightest for what looks he might receive.

He strolled through the front doors, walking into the hustle and bustle. Compared to when he first entered Valiant Hall, it felt even rowdier. The excitement of the new changes still hadn't quite settled just yet so everyone was still hopping around with mad joy.

A few recognized Leonel and gave him hostile glances, but it wasn't exaggerated enough for everyone to stop what they were doing to look toward him.

Without a care, Leonel made his way to the front counter. There were many receptionists manning the long curved desk, but one didn't need to go through them to accomplish their goals. One would only need a receptionist upon handing in a mission. But, as for accepting them, it was a simple matter.

Leonel reached forward to open a catalogue of missions, only for a large hand to slam onto the cover before he got a chance to open it.

Leonel gazed at the hand for a while before his eyes traveled up to the face of its owner. On the end of it, he found a young man with a patchy beard he could probably do with shaving clean. Despite being a head shorter than Leonel, he had the haughtiness of someone twice his height.

“Is something the matter?” Leonel asked calmly.

“Obviously. You're not welcomed here, scram.”

The words immediately drew far more attention than Leonel silent appearance had.

“Oh?” Leonel raised an eyebrow. “And why’s that?”

“Did you not hear me? Scram!” The sneer of the young man only deepened.

“Interesting.”

Before the young man could react, Leonel tapped his identification ring onto his.

A small light spread out between the two of them, immediately forming an illusory dueling stage. The only oddity was that this dueling stage was split in half by a receptionists desk.

<Challenge issued and accepted>

<Leonel Morales> . <Halgo Warine>

The words hovered in the air about the two, making their names clearly visible to all who were around.

Leonel reached a hand forward and caught the front outline of Halgo’s hair.

BANG!

Halgo found his nose smashing into the catalogue, a dizziness he had never experienced before making his sight blurry.

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BANG!

The first hit left Halgo in a complete daze. But, the second made his vision go black. The last thing he felt was a rush of heat to his nose before he collapsed to the ground.



As for everyone else? All they saw was a flash of light denoting the start of the duel, only for it to quickly end in a fountain of blood spraying out from Halgo's nose.

Yet, not only did the blood not touch Leonel, it didn't even touch the catalogue either. By some mysterious force, it shot back, splattering all over the falling Halgo's face.

Leonel blinked, looking toward Aina.

"Is that another cool vampire ability?"

Aina pouted slightly beneath her mask. "I'm not a vampire."

"Are you sure about that?" Leonel grinned.

Aina turned away and ignored him. How could she be a vampire? Wasn't she walking around in the sun just fine? Garlic was probably her favorite flavor to add to food. Plus, she never really craved blood... unless you counted that one instance.

Leonel was just teasing her.

As though the couple couldn't sense all the eyes around them, they bantered as Leonel flipped through the selection of missions.

"... A shame."

A while later, Leonel shook his head.

"Seems we can only take missions allowed for black belts. In that case..."

Leonel took ten missions. Truthfully, he wanted to take more despite the penalty and time constraints placed on these missions, but he decided to hold back a bit. Plus... There might just be more to do than just these missions once he stepped out.

“Let’s take these ten, they have relatively good rewards. Once we accumulate enough, it’ll be easier to promote to white belt and open up more avenues for us.”

“Don’t you think it would be easier if we prioritized being promoted first?”

Aina wasn’t exactly wrong. Nibbling at these easy missions was a good way to waste time.

There were a lot of things about the changes to the rules that benefited them. For example, the duel Leonel just initiated. This duel had always been a part of Valliant Heart Mountain’s culture, but now it was even more important and prominent.

In the past, it was only used to clear up grudges and essentially sanction battles that occurred within Valiant City. That way, one wouldn’t be accused of breaking the rules like Leonel had been on his first day here.

But now, thanks to the rule changes, it had essentially become a court system, not much unlike the Valiant Hall Meeting that was called just three days ago, except on a smaller scale.

Now, it wasn’t just for settling grudges, but could be used to battle for resources, decide contracts, and many other similar things.

In fact, the only rule policing these duels was that those of higher belts couldn’t challenge their younger classmen.

However, while this was a benefit, there were still many other hindrances. Black belts, while receiving these protections, were also restricted in many ways.

There were certain kinds of resources that black belts couldn’t touch, certain establishments within the city they couldn’t enter, and, as seen here, certain missions they couldn’t choose. p??J??????

In Aina's opinion, it would make more sense to raise their status first even if things might get a little bit prickly for a moment.

Leonel smiled. "No rush."

"Alright, you keep being mysterious. I can be mysterious too."

Aina said these words without much oddity in her tone, but she seemed to be hinting at something that made Leonel freeze.

"Wait, what is that supposed to mean?"

Aina gazed up at Leonel as they began to walk toward the exit together.

"I don't know. What does it mean?" She replied.

At that moment, the little mink hopped out from the Segmented Cube, nuzzling up against Aina. Letting go of Leonel's hand, Aina began to play with the little guy.

"Yes, yes. We don't need him right? He can go act mysterious by himself." Aina smiled sweetly beneath her mask, stroking Little Blackstar's glossy fur.

The little mink nodded in agreement. "Yip! Yip!"

Leonel opened his mouth to say something, but he already felt as though he had been checkmated.

"Alright, alright. You win." Leonel laughed. "Being a black belt is restrictive, but it's also freeing too. There are quite a few loopholes in their new laws as well. The fact that higher ranked belts can't challenge lower ranked ones is just the first. For example... black belts might not be able to own ore

mines or stores or even form factions of their own. But, they likewise don't have to report what they gain on missions or pay taxes on their resources."

"You're planning on causing trouble again, aren't you?" Aina shook her head.

"Me? Trouble? Never."

"You said three days ago that we couldn't solve things with violence. Yet, what was the first thing you did when you ran into a roadblock today?"

Leonel coughed. "Extenuating circumstances."

Aina giggled, ignoring Leonel's shamelessness.

Just as the couple were chatting and laughing, they had made their way to the exit of the former Valiant Hall. They didn't seem to notice that most of the attention was still focused on them at all. They might as well have been in their own world.

It was then, though, that a small group of five happened to be walking in their direction.

Completely focused on Aina, Leonel's senses only noted that these people were there, but he didn't really care to identify them. That was until he noticed that they had come to a stop before them, all of their auras locked onto him simultaneously.

Leonel finally looked up only to find a face that he recognized immediately. In fact, he recognized multiple.

There was the jagged toothed Cormus, the giant sword wielding Ardryn and even Nigmir who seemed to have recovered quite well from a spear in the chest.

As for the last two, though, Leonel didn't recognize them at all. One was a young lady with fiery red hair that seemed to be accented with highlights of blackness. But, it was the second that caught Leonel's attention the most.

His eyes were dangerous.

It didn't take Leonel much to understand who this person was. It was none other than the King of Ores, Sarrieth.

Leonel's smiling expression gave way to a coldness, a heavy air forcing the surroundings into silence.

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Sarrieth had a tall stature, being just two or three inches short of Leonel. From his exposed torso, he didn't seem to be very muscular. In fact, compared to the others Leonel constantly ran into, he could be considered to be average at best in terms of physique. Other than being somewhat lean, he didn't have any other stand out qualities.

However, it wasn't his physical stature that made those around him feel uncomfortable. It was most definitely the look in his eyes.

Meeting his gaze felt like locking onto a venomous snake. He seemed capable of peering through everything, his intuition and sharpness reaching a level that most couldn't hope to ever even touch.

Sarrieth was very used to people looking away when they saw his gaze for the first time. Even if they recovered later, that first instance would leave a mark on their soul. However, to his surprise, Leonel didn't seem to be one of these individuals. In fact, he locked onto Sarrieth as though he was a beast who had finally found his prey.

The flood that was Leonel's aura made it feel as though the gravity in the surroundings had grown by a factor of ten. Hardly anyone dared to breathe too heavily, scared to gain the ire of this beast.

“I received word that there’s been a disturbance here.” Sarrieth suddenly spoke, far more quickly than anyone expected him to. Others would have assumed that this standoff would last much longer, but Sarrieth was far too cunning for this. Seeing that he had lost to Leonel in momentum, he immediately shifted tactics. “Care to elaborate?”

“Disturbance? I didn’t see any.” Leonel said plainly.

Sarrieth didn’t seem surprised by this response. He continued to speak unhurriedly.

“Are you aware that lying to a member of the Valiant Council is considered to be an act of rebellion.”

“I’m well aware of all your little rules.” Leonel replied. “Unfortunately, though, ‘disturbance’ isn’t clearly defined within your by-laws. So, I can only interpret your question to the best of my ability.

“If, though, what you meant was to ask if a battle had occurred, then the answer is yes. But, this was a sanctioned battle recognized by Valiant Heart.”

Sarrieth’s gaze narrowed. “Oh? In that case, it seems that I’ve made this trip for nothing.”

“Indeed.” Leonel nodded, moving to walk by Sarrieth. “But, you also seem to have a habit of doing exactly that, no?”

Sarrieth didn’t react much to these words, but Nigmir’s forehead vein bulged. It seemed like he wanted to attack any moment now. How could he not tell that Leonel was referring to the matters of that day? In fact, it felt as though he was publicly mocking them.

Back then, not only did Sarrieth come too late to do much of anything, for the sake of the bigger picture, he also had to swallow his pride and wait patiently for all the matters to be concluded. It was precisely because of Sarrieth that their plot went so smoothly and it was also because of this his path toward the blue belt was so easy and why he had a place reserved for himself on the Valiant Council despite being the youngest member.

Now, they could only watch as Leonel’s back receded further and further away.

“King, we should have taught that brat a lesson! We could have easily come up with any number of fake charges if we wanted to!”

Unable to hold back his anger, after Leonel had left, Nigmir couldn't help but growl this out in a low tone. But, what he received in return was a smack to the back of the head.

This smack wasn't from Sarrieth, but rather the red-headed beauty beside him, Aanlin. ρ??∫???????

“Don't say such stupid things again.” Aalin warned.

Nigmir bit his teeth. “Why?!”

If it wasn't because he knew that this woman was Sarrieth's closest confidant, he would have most definitely lashed out by now.

“Use your head. Why is it that that 'brat' was effectively accused of killing ten students, a crime punishable by death, yet is still able to walk and strut about?”

Nigmir froze.

“Now you want to use your head? Do you really think that Raylion didn't say his name because he disdained to? That was just a convenient excuse. The real reason he didn't say that kid's name is because it's obvious that the elders are hiding a secret about him that they haven't told any of us. Not saying his name is akin to leaving us a way out should anything go wrong in the future.

“As long as matters stay like this and everything remains above board, things can be dismissed as matters between kids. But, the moment you start bending rules to suit your needs, it becomes bigger than that.

“Rules are agreed upon by the upper echelon, if they're ignored, it can be argued that it's by tacit agreement of the elders. In that case, this matter will blow up.

“He can be suppressed, he can be bullied and even somewhat humiliated, but don’t take things too far until we learn of what his background really is.”

Nigmir clenched his jaw so tightly that his gums almost bled.

“Are you trying to tell me that we should just let him strut about as he pleases because he comes from a powerful family?”

“Are you a child?” Aanlin snapped. “That’s exactly what I’m saying. The world isn’t fair. You better put that murderous intent of yours away. It’s not like you can defeat him anyway.

“The only reason Raylion pitted himself against this Leonel so firmly was to force the elders to choose. He sees himself as the future of Valiant Heart Mountain and can’t allow the elders to be swayed by the potential of outside support.

“None of that means that he’s willing to become enemies with such a family. If you want to seek death, do it yourself. This arena we’re playing in right now is a duel between those two. Read some history books if you want to find out what happens to those who stick their noses into the battle between two lions.”

Sarrieth didn’t say a word from start to finish. But, his gaze told a completely different tale outside his expressionless visage.

‘Two lions, huh...? Aren’t their corpses devoured by the hyena in the end regardless?’

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“You aren’t going to do any work?” Aina sent a glance back toward Leonel, standing over a beast corpse.



As opposed to Earth which was mostly water, the world Valiant Heart Mountain resided on was mostly land. This not only made water an extremely valuable resource, but it also made controlling ownership of land just as difficult.

One would think that the reason Valiant Heart Mountain was set up at its current location was because of the seven Peaks acting as a great protective barrier. But, the truth was that this was only a secondary condition. The main reason that location was chosen was due to the floating islands. Namely, the waterfall phenomenon on said floating islands.

With the Valiant Heart World being over 90% land, and with the remaining 10% of water being mostly salt, it was no surprise that such freshwater sources were incredibly valuable.

This was all to say that many of the missions Valiant Heart handed out in exchange for merit points were population control missions. Of course, not population control for people, but rather, beasts.

One would think that with such a low supply of water, the population of beasts would also suffer, and this line of thinking wouldn't be wrong. However, before one could reach that saturation level, Valiant Heart Mountain would likely be overrun.

As one might expect, then, all of the missions Leonel chose were targeted toward these matters. And, since they were freshmen missions, all the beasts were also quite weak and easy to deal with. In fact, Leonel felt that the beasts that had stored the regular tags from the Freshmen Exam were actually more powerful than their current targets, let alone the golden tag beasts.

The result was Leonel watching Aina do all the work while he supposedly laid back. It was no wonder she was complaining.

Leonel grinned from atop a tree.

"I can't enjoy watching my girlfriend fight? Your battle tactics are too mesmerizing."

Aina blushed beneath her mask, but unfortunately for Leonel, he couldn't see it. Instead, all he received was a scathing reply.

“You have that sort of fetish?” Aina blinked innocently, but there was very clearly a judgey light in her eyes.

Leonel looked from Aina, toward the massive ax in her hand, and then back. Thinking about how she manhandled the beast previously, he coughed.

How had he gotten himself painted into such a corner?

James once told him about a sex position called reverse missionary where the female did all the pumping. Leonel remembered thinking that it was absolutely ridiculous, what kind of man allowed such a thing. But now he was being painted out to be that man.

He really couldn't afford to get into a war of words with this girlfriend of his. How was he always on the losing end?

Leonel coughed. “A fetish for petite beauties? Of course!”

Aina burst into a fit of laughter. Hiding her own kinks while teasing Leonel for his? Would she be a good girlfriend if she didn't do at least that?

“Truthfully, I'm trying to model your fighting style.” Leonel hopped down from the tree. ρ??∪??????

With swift movements, he cut the right paw of the massive bear off and placed it into his spatial ring. As for the rest of it, he gazed at Aina.

“Do you think it would make good meat?”

Aina took a quick look before shaking her head no. With that, the two quickly left the area, needing seven more right paws to finish their quota.

“What do you mean by modeling?”

Aina followed after Leonel. With his senses, it was basically like a compass that always led them to the next target quickly and safely. She had no reason not to trust him.

“I’m working on a new ability. If it works out, it will allow me to quickly complete a prediction model for an opponent after a few exchanges in battle. But, coming up with the perfect parameters is a bit difficult.”

Not many would understand what Leonel was saying, but considering Aina had been in Class A alongside Leonel, she of course understood.

“Sounds like the weather problem.” Aina commented offhandedly.

Predicting the weather had been the bane of all meteorologists on Earth for centuries. One would think that after the turn of the 25th century, it would be easier. But, ironically, no... In fact, the Ascension Empire had an easier time forcing certain weather patterns through their terraforming technology as opposed to guessing it with 100% accuracy.

The so-called ‘weather problem’ Aina mentioned was actually one the pair learned about in one of their many philosophy classes. Ironically, it had very little to do with the field of meteorology. In the schooling system of the Ascension Empire, that you thought was far less important than how you thought.

The weather problem essentially emphasized the important of taking hold of the future in your own hands and not being passive. Who cared if you couldn’t predict the weather if you could cause the weather?

The instant Aina said those words, Leonel’s feet came to a grinding halt. His actions were so abrupt that Aina, who had been running diagonally to him, crashed into the side of his shoulder and spun like a top.

But, before she could fall, Leonel caught her waist and rose her into the air as though she was a baby rather than a full grown woman.

“You’re a genius!”

Leonel happily laughed, bringing Aina down into a strong hug.

“...Mmm... I can't breathe.”

“Sorry, sorry.” Leonel grinned wildly. He would have planted a kiss on this girl had she not been wearing her mask.

That was right. Creating a perfect predictive model was a tall task, it would probably require as perfect an understanding as he had for the spear for every weapon in existence, not to mention a myriad of other factors. Even if Leonel slowly built a model mid battle, how many exchanges would it take? Would it even be worth it? Would he be defeated before the model even finished? Or would he defeat his opponent long before, thus making his efforts useless?

‘But this... This could work...’

Just as Leonel was about to answer to Aina's questioning gaze, his head snapped in a certain direction.. A powerful howl reached their ears followed by the screams of humans.

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Leonel and Aina locked gazes for a moment before simultaneously jetting off in the same direction.

Aina couldn't help but look toward Leonel with a hint of surprise.

“When'd you get so fast?”

Leonel turned toward Aina and winked. Leaping off the ground, he shot into the trees like a swallow, the faint image of an illusory pair of wings appearing to his back.

“...” Aina shook her head. “Show off.”

Aina's body was instantly wrapped in a thick crimson fog. Her thighs bulged to a one size increase, causing her body to catapult forward.

The couple almost instantly made it to the source of the sound. But, they weren't foolish. Rather than instantly jumping into the fray, they both hid in the trees, watching what was happening below with furrowed brows.

The beast could only be described as grotesque.

It stalked forward on four legs, its jagged teeth dripping saliva that stunk of rotting flesh. It was two and a half meters in length, not including its tail which seemed to have had a chunk bitten out of it.

Its body was covered in patchy, mustard yellow fur with a sprinkle of black spots. Somehow, though it was clearly a four legged creature, its upper half was far bulkier, manifesting itself in a large hunched back that bulged with muscles that could make one's scalp tingle.

The creature's claws were about the only clean thing about it. They were so polished and sharp that dirt, grime and blood couldn't seem to get any hold on them. They almost seemed completely out of place.

Though the creature's looks weren't great and it was even missing an eye, its strength was undeniable.

As though its bones were formed of heavy steel, its every step made the ground quake. The rippling of its muscles bulged with energy, carrying a strength that could snap even these ancient trees, tempered in a Fifth Dimensional world, right in half.

Leonel could immediately tell that this creature had the strength of someone at Tier 6 at the very least, and that was only if he considered its lack of intelligence. Objectively, it had the strength equivalent to someone at Tier 7.

If it wasn't for the situation, Leonel would suck in a cold breath. What kind of monster was this? And what the hell was it doing here?

What made it even more baffling was that the screams from below were from black belts just like them. In fact, Leonel recognized two among them: Irolana and the massive Ingkath.

Along with Radlis, Balthorne, and of course, his lovely Aina, these two were supposed to be the cream of the crop of this freshmen batch. And, as expected, they didn't disappoint, joining a Peak not even a few days after entering Valiant Heart.

Due to this, Leonel hadn't seen them since that fateful day.

The last time he interacted with them, they tried to draw a line between him and them so as not to offend their seniors. But, Leonel didn't mind this very much. After all, they didn't owe him anything, he didn't expect everyone to be as stupid as he was.

Now, though, he was in a bit of a dilemma. A fight against a beast with Tier 7 strength most definitely wouldn't be easy.

Just as Leonel was fighting against his own morality, he found Aina looking at him with a blazing gaze. Within it, he saw excitement and anticipation, as well as a slight pleading.

Leonel knew Aina well. She wasn't begging to save these people. In this regard, she was far more cold blooded than he was. Rather, she wanted to battle. p??(???????)

Leonel grinned. "Alright. Let's do it."

"Yip! Yip!"

"Sit tight Little Blackstar."

"Yip! Yip!"

“Yes, yes. I know you want to fight too. But I want to test something.”

Aina shot out of the tree that instant, leaving deep footprints in its bark.

She fell like a speeding bullet, her palm flipping over to reveal an ax shimmering of gold and red as she landed heavily on the ground between the group and the creature.

Leonel stood, his expression turning a jarring cold as a bow appeared in his hands. His breathing grew steady, his heartbeat slowing to a crawl. Every blade of grass seemed to be reflected in his mind. The speed of the wind, the humidity, the shade of the trees and the rays of the sunlight, all of it was perfectly formulated.

The group of freshmen below were stunned. At first they were happy beyond measure, but when they noticed the black belt around Aina’s waist, they fell into despair once again.

“Run!” One of them yelled.

It might have been nice had these words been targeted for Aina, but they very clearly weren’t. The words had hardly left his lips before he turned tail. The only thing he wanted was for Aina to last just a few more seconds than the last person did before getting ripped apart. Maybe then he would be able to escape.

Leonel’s senses locked onto this person, but soon he wasn’t the only one running. A group of what was at least seven only had three left in the blink of an eye.

Leonel couldn’t be bothered to care anymore. This was the world of the Dimensional Verse. Over time, he was getting more and more used to it.

Aina faced the creature as it ripped into the corpse of a freshman, one of its paws anchoring the carcass down as it used its sharp teeth to rip into the poor kid’s chest.

Sensing Aina, it looked up, its one eye turning hostile instantly.

Leonel stood within the tree, his breathing relaxed as Aina brandished her ax.

‘Dream Model.’

Leonel’s gaze flashed, his Dream Force churning as the Three Stars of his Ethereal Glabella began to rotate faster and faster.

Leonel nocked three arrows, releasing them all at once as Aina charged.

One whizzed a centimeter from her earlobe. The second deflected slightly off the neckwear that hung from her shoulders. The last shot just beneath her elbow as she raised her ax.

If anyone was looking on from afar, it would seem as though Leonel was trying his best to kill Aina and she just so happened to subtly move enough to dodge all his attempts...

Chapter 667

As much as Aina trusted Leonel, the feeling of whipping wind slicing so close to her body couldn’t help but make her freeze for a moment. It wasn’t like Leonel had never supported her from the rear like this before. In fact, this was their favorite battle style whenever they fought together. The main issue was that usually Leonel’s arrows would be half a foot from her at the closest, he had never toed the line like this before.

Luckily, Leonel had already accounted for the chance of Aina freezing.

His arrows tore past her, two curving toward the snout of the prowling creature and the last shooting for its last remaining eye.

Distracted by the arrows, the creature couldn’t take advantage of Aina’s lapse, immediately finding itself targeted in some of its most sensitive regions.

PENG! PENG! PENG!



The creature reacted quickly, swiping its paw and knocking down all three arrows at once.

“Trust me.” Leonel’s voice drifted to Aina’s ears.

Aina had already begun to move, her ax descending from the skies with a valiant strength.

Leonel’s gaze flickered, several simulations layering in his mind at once.

After his training, Leonel was able to split his mind into 27 ways. Originally, Leonel had been planning to rely on this to complete Dream Model.

By now, Leonel was able to simulate matters of the Third Dimension with a probability infinitely close to 100%. Even when it came to matters of the Fourth Dimension, he had a better than 90% accuracy.

The issue came in that 90% was not good enough in battle. It worked fine when Leonel had time to complete thousands upon thousands of simulations for the sake of his Crafts. But in battle, if he tried to do such a thing, he would be asking for death.

At best, in battle, he would be able to use his 27 minds to complete 27 simulations in a split second. This was nowhere near enough with such a low accuracy rate.

As if this wasn’t bad enough, the accuracy of Leonel’s simulations in a controlled environment versus one with endless variables varied wildly.

It was one thing to simulate the creation of a Craft in a laboratory with no outside influences, but how could it be just as easy to map out the simulation of a living, breathing being?

When Leonel ran into this roadblock, he was enlightened during his time of intimacy with Aina. Rather than trying to have the perfect parameters already formed pre-battle, why not build them in the midst of battle? This would give him far more flexibility and it would also take far less stamina.

However, it was then that Leonel was met with yet another stone wall.

Leonel became like a machine, his arrows raining down in an endless avalanche. Every time, they would narrowly slide past Aina, almost making it seem as though she was spontaneously dodging every time.

Leonel's gaze grew fiercer and fiercer, his fire rate increasing.

PENG! PENG! PENG! PENG!

Having long since tapped in the Four Seasons Realm, Leonel's endless barrage filled the surroundings with a biting cold. It felt as though a relentless hail was falling. The combination of both he and Aina made the creature constantly backtrack, its steely body becoming peppered with terrible wounds.

'This is it...' ρ???

Aina had brought enlightenment to Leonel. In battle, why should he be the one to wait for the opponent to react? Wouldn't that constantly put him in a passive state?

The weather was so difficult to predict because even the smallest changes in variables could lead to large sweeping changes. However, who cared if you could control it as you pleased?

In battle, Leonel wasn't the only one that needed to counter. His opponent needed to counter as well. Just like he was trying to see through his enemy's movements, so was his enemy trying to see through his own.

In that case, rather than wasting time trying to guess every possible reaction his opponent might have, why not force him to the point only a few reactions were even possible?

If an enemy felt a strike coming for their head, they might be able to dodge and counter quickly. But, if that same strike was coming for their knee, would it be just as easy?

Most would have to block in that situation, thus delaying their counter. The only exceptions would be someone with a special ability that allowed them to circumvent this. But in that case, Leonel would only have to tweak the model.

‘Model complete.’

Within Leonel’s Dream World, a life-like construction of the creature appeared. It was as though he had Dream Sculpted a living, breathing beast.

However, there was a difference between this construct and the real one. This Dream Model had pulsing red points dotted across its body almost like a location tracker.

In the real world, Leonel’s aura reached its peak.

He grasped at air, pulling out two arrows from nothing.

He held one between his pinky and ring finger, nocking the other one and releasing it in swift motions.

Without pausing, he nocked the second, flipping it between his fingers as though it was a pen rather than a lethal weapon.

The two arrows flew in a completely straight line, headed directly for the back of Aina’s head. One would think that Leonel surely had murderous intentions. But, in that instant, Aina’s weight suddenly shifted.

Aina’s hips dropped. Swinging her ax to a side, she gathered up momentum, feeling the arrows whizz by her.

Within Leonel’s Dream World, 27 creatures faced 27 Aina’s and 54 arrows. In that moment, the images all overlapped, all pointing toward a single future.

Caught off guard by the sudden attack from a blind spot, the creature could react before its only good remaining eye was pierced through.

Before it could even cry in agony, the second arrow arrived right behind it, tearing the butt of the first arrow in two.

The creature felt the two arrows spreading its eye and brain matter apart. A horrified howl finally released along with the rotting stench of its breath. But, there was no recourse as Aina's ax swung down.

As though by coincidence, the large blade fell over the creature's wounded eye, splitting its head into a third and a two-thirds piece.

## Chapter 668

Leonel jumped down from the tree, landing heavily on the ground beside Aina.

"Not bad." He said with a grin.

What he received in response, though, was an elbow to the side.

"Were you trying to get me killed?"

Leonel smiled sheepishly. "Of course not, how could I bear to hurt you?"

"Yip! Yip!" Little Blackstar landed on Leonel's head, knocking him a few times on the head.

It seemed this little guy would never take his side again. Leonel really didn't know who his true partner was. Was her chest really so comfortable?

The moment he had this thought, Leonel grew absentminded before he nodded. Maybe it wasn't so shocking after all.

'Alright, fair enough. You win.'

"At least give me an inch next time." Aina rolled her eyes, feeling that Leonel was thinking of something lewd.

Leonel laughed. "Nope. I understand my precious girlfriend's combat style the best, you're the only one I can do this with. How can I not take advantage?"

Aina was speechless. She was precious? So precious that you didn't mind almost killing her?

Aina shook her head. If it was anyone else, she might refuse to the end. But since it was Leonel... Well, she knew that he would never harm her.

Maybe to Leonel, the barely half centimeter of breathing room he gave her was already him being overly cautious. If he really didn't care about her life, he might leave her small cuts with his every arrow to be the most efficient.

Though Aina only had this thought fleetingly, she had no idea how true it really was. To Leonel, that half a centimeter had no difference from a meter or more.

"Fine. Get to dissecting then." Aina spoke.

"Huh?" Leonel blinked.

"This beast has some useful pieces."

Leonel's expression changed. Sniffing the air and confirming that the rotting smell was indeed coming from this vile creature, his face warped.


“Are... You sure? You’re not just saying that to spite me, right?”

Aina didn’t even respond to Leonel. Rather, she looked back toward the three who still couldn’t believe what they had seen. Though her expression instantly turned cold when she saw them, she still felt that they were better than the four of their teammates who ran.

Ingkath and Irolana, along with a third Leonel didn’t recognize, were still in shock about what they had just seen. Were these two really freshmen?

The third individual might have been wearing a black belt, but they had already been in Valiant Heart for more than two years. But, they had never seen such a thing before.

Two freshmen defeating a Tier 7 beast... Was this a joke?

“Thank you!” 

Ingkath was the first to step forward and display his gratitude. In truth, he was a bit embarrassed. Most of his team had run away, while he, himself, hadn’t dared to help. Though he was sure that he would have only gotten in the way had he tried, it still didn’t feel too good.

He had come to this place with such high aspirations and thought he wouldn’t ever have to fear anything as long as he had his two fists. Everything was supposed to be smooth sailing.

Yet, the moment he got here, he met roadblock after roadblock. First he failed to join Hero Peak, that honor going to the girl before him now. Then he barely passed the Exam for Honor Peak, leading to a whole host of injuries he couldn’t afford to cure. This eventually led to him falling behind and not getting a chance to take advantage of any resources.

By the time he had slowly healed, the rules of the organization were flipped on their head. Now, even as a freshmen, he had to leave and complete endless missions before he could even think of training in exchange for merit points.

Now, he was seeing Leonel, the very man who he had looked down on before, casually dissect a beast he couldn't dream of beating.

From his kneeling position, Leonel waved an arm toward their thank you.

“No problem, don't worry about it. We're fellow freshmen anyway.”

Ingkath looked back toward his teammates, not knowing what to say to this. As for Aina, she remained completely silent.

“Do you need the whole thing?” Leonel suddenly asked.

“Not the whole thing. Just its kidneys.” Aina replied.

“Alright.”

Leonel learned his lesson from last time. This time, he wore his Crafting gloves so as not to get dirty.

If others knew he was using such a treasure in this fashion, it would likely start riots. But, since they had no other use for him now that he Crafted bare handed, he didn't really care much.

“Oh, this skeleton is pretty good.”

Leonel's brows raised. He had guessed that the creature definitely had a heavy frame, but he didn't really expect its whole skeleton to actually be made of metal. The best part was that it was Tier 7 to Tier 8 in sturdiness despite not having any other special abilities.

Leonel smiled, making sure not to breathe as he stripped the whole beast bare of flesh. He realized during this battle that his arrows were far too fragile. He could definitely use this skeleton to form some powerful arrow heads.

“Ah!”

At that moment, the third of the group, the very one of the freshmen Leonel didn't recognize, suddenly covered his mouth in shock.

Leonel's head snapped around, but he frowned when he realized there weren't any other enemies around. Now that he thought about it, how could anyone possibly sense an enemy before he did?

He raised an eyebrow, his gaze landing on the young man.

“Is something wrong?”

“T... Th... That....” The young man felt his knees going weak. “That's a Silver Clawed Titan Hyena!”

Leonel blinked. “... And?”

If it was poisonous, Aina would have already warned him long before this young man said anything.

The lip of the freshmen quivered, realizing that no one understood how important this matter was.. It was only then he realized that these people had hardly been here for two months.

Chapter 669

“We need to run! Now! The Titan Hyena is the favored mount of the Oryx Tribe. You don't understand how rare it is for this species to have a complete skeleton of metal!

“Originally, I didn't think much of it. Titan Hyena's with incomplete skeletons are still rare, but it wouldn't be impossible to run into. But, one with a complete skeleton is a completely different story. The full metal skeleton genes are all recessive alleles. If even one is missing, the Titan Hyena will have an incomplete skeleton. There's no way the Oryx Tribe would mistakenly let such a pure bred Titan Hyena loose without reason!”



The freshmen was so agitated that he spoke out everything in a single breath.

Leonel frowned.

This Oryx Tribe... It wasn't the first time he had heard of them. During Raylion's speech, many of the worst sins toward the end involved the mention of this Tribe. But, that was about all Leonel knew. He wasn't aware of anything else about them.

A recessive allele wasn't complicated, at least not on Earth. There were only two types Leonel was aware of. The dominant allele and the recessive allele.

When a baby is conceived, it will receive one allele from each parent for every gene expression it might need in the future. A dominant allele only needed one of itself present to manifest. A recessive allele, however, would need both from both parents.

This essentially meant that for the Titan Hyena to have a full skeleton, both of its parents would have to also share this trait.

Well, that was as long as genes were expressed in the same way across worlds, something that Leonel wasn't exactly sure of. For all he knew, the process was more complicated than this for Titan Hyenas.

Technically, if things worked like they did on Earth, two parents who each had one dominant allele and one recessive allele could still come together to produce a child with two recessive alleles. But, from the words of the freshmen, it seemed that the Titan Hyena needed multiple sets of recessive alleles for multiple gene expressions rather than just one.

In that case, the luck that would be involved for the spontaneous creation of a perfect Titan Hyena would be astronomical. It was no wonder this freshmen was panicking.

In all likelihood, a member of the Oryx Tribe was definitely nearby. Or, at the very least, they were scouting in preparation for a mission and just never expected that there would be anyone in this region who was capable of taking down such a beast.

Thinking it through, the likelihood of it being the latter was incredibly high.

This was a region where freshmen were deployed for population control missions. Logically, there shouldn't be danger on this level here.

Leonel's gaze sharpened. 'What an interesting opportunity... Seems lady luck is on my side.'

Leonel looked toward Aina, their gazes seeming to have come to a tacit understanding. It seemed that things were getting interesting.

Leonel stood from his kneeling position by the Titan Hyena's corpse, taking out a spear with a long blade. It was a weapon those of Valiant Heart Mountain would drool over, yet he seemed to always use it to dissect corpses now.

With swift movements of his wrist, Leonel sliced all the flesh off. If it wasn't for the sparse droplets of blood that still remained on the corpse, one would have never guessed that the skeleton had ever been attached to any flesh at all.

"Have you run into other teams in this region?" Leonel asked, putting the skeleton away.

"... Yes, there should be quite a few." Irolana replied. "Ever since freshmen began to need merit points to train, this has been one of the most popular regions..."

Leonel nodded. He had been focused on Aina and finding their next target, so Leonel had functionally ignored everything else.

"We're going to need to start getting everyone to retreat. Is there some sort of signal you all learned?"

Leonel was aware that until just recently, only freshmen who had joined Peaks were allowed to leave the mountain. Logically, there would probably be some life saving measures Valiant Hall taught to decrease the casualty rate.

“... We have flares, but they only call for help.” Irolana explained.

Hearing this, Leonel shook his head. He only needed to remember the reaction of those four who ran away to know how that would go. Even if he lit the flare under the guise that they needed help just to attract everyone over, who knew how many would come? Plus, wouldn't the signal flare also alert the Oryx Tribe?

“The Oryx and their Titan Hyena's only see in infrared and the warmer colors of visual light. They basically only see in reds and everything else blends into it. The color of the flare was chosen to easily blend into their vision and fuse with everything else. Even if we shoot it, unless the Oryx are specifically looking for it, they won't notice.”

Leonel paused. Considering this was likely a plot by the Oryx, it was still possible that they'd be looking out for such a flare. But, this was better than nothing.

“Let's do it. Light up the first flare.

...

“Wait! Wait! I can't run any further!”

Deep within the thick forest, a group of four gasped for breath. You would think that as Fourth Dimensional entities they would be able to run for much longer. But, no matter what strength level you were at, going all out was going all out. ρ??√???????

Plus, this was a Fifth Dimensional world. The fact they could even stand in this place without falling to their knees was a testament to their talent.

“It's not chasing us, is it?”

“I think we got far enough away.”

“... The others...?”

The three looked toward the one who had spoke these words before looking toward each other. A hint of guilt in their eyes.

Eventually, a young man amongst them steeled his resolve.

“Staying would have only gotten us killed. We didn’t have the strength to be of any help, what good would it have done to throw our lives away?”

The three felt somewhat better hearing this.

Right. Wasn’t it better that some of them survived? Would there even be a point to sacrificing themselves? What a joke.

“Hm? Did you guys hear that?”

“Hear what?”

A slight tremor shook the ground.

The four froze, looking in a certain direction.

The trees seemed to bend out of the way, the foliage snapping and flattening under the presence of this humanoid.

At first, all they saw was a simple shadow.

The ground trembled once again. But, this time, it made their knees quake. The vibrations traveled through their feet, reverberating throughout their chests.

What the four saw next was a sight they would never forget in their lives. Though, for how long said lives would last for beyond this period... Maybe that was something they knew well wouldn't be long.

The figure could barely be considered to be humanoid. Its frame was incredibly wide and its legs were inverted at the knees and covered in coarse black fur.

The digitigrade legs of the figure ended in bestial feet with curling sharp claws that dug deeply into the ground.

The torso of the humanoid was bare, but it bulged of muscles that seemed constructed from steel cords. Its individual muscle fibers were so clear from every minute movement that it looked as though it was flexing as hard as it could constantly. But, the reality was very far from this...

Even with the height of the humanoid being almost three meters, the eyes of the four weren't drawn to its fur covered legs, or its steely torso... Rather, they couldn't take their eyes off of its face.

Two tusks so long they nearly pierced into its chest hung from its mouth. Its horns were thick and rounded almost like a sheep's, but it radiated with a light that made it look like polished steel.

The humanoid had three eyes. Two placed normally and a third running a vertical slit between its brows. Each was a furious shade of red that made it look as though they had been dyed in blood.

Crisscrossing scars danced across the humanoids body, its vision expressionless as it locked gazes with the four before it.

“... Or... Oryx.... Oryx Tribe...”

The four stuttered. But, the humanoid walked by them as though it had seen and sensed nothing. If they hadn't been so racked with fear, they would have noticed that within the eyes of the Oryx, there was an absentminded, one track thought that had taken over its mind.

The four stood frozen. The stench coming from the Oryx was so palpable that it made their eyes water. Yet, they didn't dare to move from start to finish, even as the Oryx disappeared into the distance.

The four held their breaths even long after the Oryx had disappeared, not daring to move a single inch.

Minutes later, their heart beats began to return to normal. Had they really survived?

They looked toward each other with excitement and happiness before their expressions immediately became one of horror.

SHIIING!

Not a single one of them got the chance to speak another word. Their bodies were sliced and diced apart, their remains being minced into such fine paste that they appeared like a crimson fog.

Their last thoughts were filled with grievances. Not a single one of them seemed to understand how it is they had died..... Not a single one of them had noticed the massive crimson halberd on the Oryx's back move.

Chapter 670

"Hold on."

Leonel stopped Irolana just as she was about to release the flare.

"Hand the flare to me."

Irolana was confused but nodded in the end.

Leonel rolled the flare in his palm, scanning it from top to bottom.

“Let’s move.” Leonel said, gazing at the Titan Hyena’s corpse.

The group quickly complied as Leonel continued to observe the flare.

If the Oryx could only see in red, that would be fine. But, according to Irolana and the others, they could also see infrared. This was a problem for two reasons.

For one, they’d be on a time crunch. Things would be fine as long as the sun was still in the sky. But, once it set, the Oryx would gain a decisive advantage.

During the day, the Oryx’s red sight would interfere with tracking somewhat. But, at night, an Oryx might be able to pick out a human through hundreds of meters worth of foliage just based off their body heat.

The second issue was tied to this issue of heat. The signal flares Leonel was aware of were essentially controlled bursts of combustion. Even if it was masked with color, it might be an issue.

‘Oh, so it’s not the same. It works with a Light Prism Ore.... In that case...’

Leonel’s fingers began to move at a blistering pace, leaving blurs in their wake. In the blink of an eye, he deconstructed the signal flare and put it back together.

“Little Blackstar.”

“Yip! Yip!”

The little mink hopped down from Leonel’s head and snatched the newly made signal flare. He vanished into thin air before suddenly appearing a hundred meters up a thick tree.

Quickly reaching the outer edges of the canopy, the little mink hid his body within the foliage and raised the signal flare up, his little paws swiping at the triggering mechanism.

A muffled pop rang out. But, the dull nature of the sound was nothing compared to the tall light that suddenly pierced into the sky.

It looked as though a laser had shot into the skies, only to be swallowed by the clouds above. The most shocking part, though, was the fact it didn't disappear. It hung there like a beacon even long after the little mink hopped back down.

"A blue flare?" Irolana was shocked.

She found it hard to still call that pillar of light a flare. At most, it should have lasted two or three seconds. In addition, the color shot should have been red to blend in with the shades of red the Oryx saw in. What was going on?

"I don't know enough about the Oryx to guess what shades they see in. Don't you think it's much easier then to just copy the sky's color? In that case, no matter what shade they see in, it will blend in no matter what?" p???(???????)

Leonel explained off handedly, but he had already brought out the Titan Hyena skeleton.

Little Tolly sprung into action, rapidly helping Leonel form arrow tip after arrow tip.

Leonel didn't seem to have any idea that his simple explanation had fried the minds of the freshmen who followed him. They looked up into the skies, only now realizing that after taking their eyes off of the beacon for a moment, it took them a moment to find it again and that was despite knowing that it was there!

For anyone who knew how Light Prism type Ores worked, even a subtle tweak could result in a completely different color. It was easy to hone in on a large group like 'red' or 'blue', but to nail down a specific shade required accuracy on the order of a fraction of a fraction of a degree.



How Leonel had accomplished this without measuring tools or even a proper working environment was completely beyond them.

“Is... Is it really alright to make it so difficult to find?” Ingkath couldn’t help but ask.

At the moment, the three felt like lost sheep. They absentmindedly followed Leonel without even knowing why. Maybe it was because all of his actions seemed so confident, but they couldn’t really explain why themselves.

Due to this, they had missed an obvious flaw. If it was so subtle even for them, was this really conducive to gathering more people? How many would actually recognize the signal for help? Not only had Leonel changed the usual color, he had changed its usual function and even made it difficult to spot.

Leonel shook his head. “Things will be even better this way. Even if only a few come, that’s even better. Soon, we’ll be setting out to find them so even if they don’t, it won’t be a big deal.”

The pupils of the three constricted. Could it be that Leonel only casually did this so that they wouldn’t be too idle while he completed his Craft?

Hold on, he was Crafting?!

Watching the liquid metal run through Leonel’s hand with such deftness left them in a state of shock.

Aina shook her head watching Leonel, a light smile on her face.

“It’s more than that.” She supplemented, clearly realizing that Leonel was focused on forming these arrows as quickly as possible.

“The fact that the flare isn’t normal will help us. The first thing people will think when they see it isn’t that someone is asking for help. If they thought that, very few if any would come and some might even run in the opposite direction.”

The three blushed furiously when they heard this, still embarrassed about the actions of their teammates.

“But, if it’s like this, it will make people curious instead. They might even think that there’s a hidden treasure here and that they were the only ones sharp enough to spot it. That will make many more come than what you might expect...”

Aina had hardly finished her words when the shuffling of grass and the soft words of a few groups reached their ears.

It had hardly been ten minutes and the first few had already come.