

Descent 771

Chapter 771

In a location barely ten miles from the Capital, Elthor sat on the ground, his face swollen with bruises and his lip dripping with a small bit of blood.

It was clear that someone had roughed him up, but not to the point of leaving any lasting injuries. In fact, even though he had a cold look in his eyes at that moment, it didn't seem to be a real rage. Rather, it was more of a dissatisfaction.

Other than his partially swollen face, his clothing was in rags and his arms were chained behind his back. He sat in the dirt, not looking toward any specific direction despite the fact that several individuals were standing above him. It was as though he couldn't hear their rage at all.

Of these people, two were particularly pissed off. Just with a simple look, one could see that they bore some resemblance to Elthor, although they weren't quite as handsome.

By now, their faces had gone red from fury and their throats hurt from yelling. But, it only made it worse that Elthor didn't respond no matter what it was that they said. He simply sat there, unmoving.

He had already succeeded in his goal. The Capital was definitely being attacked right now and whether they won or lost would be in Leonel's hands.

As for the rage of his family... So what? He only did what he thought was right.

At that moment, the ground suddenly split. A silence fell as they moved out of the way one after another, even the two men who bore a resemblance to Elthor fell into silence, moving out of the way. In the presence of this man, they didn't dare to say a word.

Elthor felt a shadow cast over his body. For the first time, he looked up. But, what he saw made his pupils tremble.

The man that stood above him was none other than his own father, the King of the Oryx. Somehow, at that moment, his wrinkles seemed far deeper than they had been, as though he had aged ten years in the span of just a few moments.

He was a man of tall stature, his hair completely wizened with white. His robes were plain, and he didn't wear a crown, but he had a dignified momentum that forced those around him into silence.

He had a forceful, sort of square face. Compared to Elthor, his horns were far larger, branching out almost like the canopies of a large, ancient tree. Even though his eyes were somewhat murky with age, they hid a sharpness that seemed capable of piercing through his son's soul.

He didn't say a word for a long time. He only continued to observe his son.

For the first time, Elthor didn't see love, adoration or hope. He saw a deep rooted disappointment that made his heart tremble and his eyes water. His father didn't have to speak for him to suddenly feel a weight he had never experienced in his life before.

In that moment, for some reason, he felt that burden a King carried.

"Why?"

The Oryx King's voice was calm and soothing. It carried a silky quality one could listen to for a lifetime without becoming tired. It was hard to tell if this was simply natural, or if it was a cadence he had learned from years of ruling.

Elthor's jaw trembled before he clenched his teeth.

Due to his blatantly false information, the Oryx armies had ended up in the wrong location, too far from the battle to make it in time. It would be one thing if they were only sending a few people, but to lead such a large army, it would take too much time. Before they got there, much of the result would be set in stone.

Plus, their original goal wasn't to fight for or against anyone. They simply didn't want the rebel army to attack The Capital. Anything else they did didn't matter. However, it was obviously too late to change anything now.

"I didn't agree with your orders." Elthor finally said as firmly as he could.

"So, instead of following them, you chose to place all your people at risk instead?" The Oryx King continued calmly. "Do you understand how many will die when this plan of yours fails? Do you believe that this is something a King should do?"

Elthor snapped. "I NEVER WANTED TO BE KING!"

His breath came out harsh and hurried. He was tired of hearing the same bullshit day in and day out. This was never something he had wanted, so why were things always being framed like this to make him out to be some sort of failure?!

The King of the Oryx didn't even flinch at his son's outburst. His breathing remained steady, his gaze unmoved, his mood unchanged.

"Even after all these years, you still do not understand. Being King is not about what you want."

Elthor wanted to yell again, but his father's soothing voice spoke again before he could, making him feel as though he was choking on air.

"Becoming King... is also not about what you want."

The Oryx King continued to gaze at his son.

"A Kingship is a burden. It presses on your shoulders, it bends your back, it weighs on your heart and soul. You do not become a King by wanting, you become one by circumstance.

“Those who cannot feel this burden... Even worse, those who chase after it, lusting after it, pleading for it... These are not men fit to Rule.”

Elthor’s two brothers looked to the ground. For some reason, they felt a pang in their hearts, their expressions becoming overcast by hints of shame they couldn’t hide despite the best of their efforts.

Elthor himself trembled fiercely, his eyes watering outside of his control.

“I...”

He couldn’t find the words in him to rebuttal.

“Everard. Richeut.”

“My King!”

Both Generals spoke in unison, their voices booming.

“Today, we ride to battle.”

“Father!” Elthor called out, sensing that something was wrong.

The King no longer looked toward his son.

“From this day forth, Elthor Umewraek, will be the 57th King of our Oryx Kingdom. Ensure that the ceremony is grand and his name resonates with the Heavens.

“This King will watch on from the other side.”

The Oryx King leapt onto his tall, black steed, his back straight and his halberd appearing in his hand. To his left and right, Everard and Richeut sat just as tall, their expressions determined.

Then, they charged into the distance, carving a straight line toward the Capital.

Chapter 772

“Let me go! I SAID LET ME GO!”

Elthor fought with all his might. But, compared to the Generals that remained and just how many of them there were, Elthor was just a young boy without a chance.

With so many restraining him at once, he had no chance of breaking through.

Rage lit his features, his body breaking into his battle form and even shattering the chains that held him down. But, even this wasn't enough. It only made the strikes he suffered even heavier.

The Oryx were never a light handed race. Even knowing that this was their new King, they didn't hold back. They refused to allow him to charge off into a battle that meant nothing but death.

He was their future, their light and their hope. If they ever wanted a chance to avenge their King, they needed him to grow and mature... Or else their Kingdom wouldn't last very much longer.

Even as they pummeled their young King into the ground, their fists heavy, tears streamed down their faces in an endless torrent. Not a single one of them looked toward their King's back receding into the distance. But, they all knew that this was the last time they would see him.

Elthor collapsed onto the ground, his bones beaten and broken. He couldn't stand even if he wanted to. It felt as though every inch of his body had suffered a severe injury other than his organs themselves.

However, somehow, he still found the strength to pound the ground with his fists, his wails spreading through the entire Oryx army.

“He’s a King! I’m the warrior! I should be on the frontline! Not him! NOT HIM!”

The ground cracked, splintered and cratered beneath his strength, his pupils darkening the more rage he felt.

All around, the upper echelon of the Oryx Kingdom stood. The only sound for miles seemed to be the cries of their young King.

**

Leonel felt his arms almost shatter the instant he made contact. His leverage in the air wasn’t the best to begin with since he had to rely on a piece of earth floating beneath his feet, but he had a feeling that even if he had such leverage, it wouldn’t make much of a difference.

Alexandre was immovable. His palm stopped the blade of his Quasi Silver Spear as though it was any ordinary weapon.

The forces of repulsion almost blasted Leonel back to the ground. At least, it seemed like it was just almost... Until the piece of earth beneath his feet shattered and he was sent careening into the city below as though a falling meteor.

The air shot out of Leonel’s body.

In these years he hadn’t managed to progress past the Tier 4 stage of his Fourth Dimensional Metal Body because he couldn’t find the specific Ores he needed in this place. However, this didn’t mean that his body wasn’t obscenely sturdy.

Even though he didn’t cough up blood, though, his inner organs were rattled. Falling from almost 30 meters in the air like that was tough even for him.

Yet, Leonel shot out in the next instant, appearing in the skies again with a whole barrage of broken stone and earth following behind him.

Leonel unleashed a flurry of attacks, the tip of his spear exploding with flames as bombs of fire erupted in the skies.

Alexandre calmly glided backward, navigating through the earthen projectiles flying toward him at astonishing speed as though he was skating on ice. ρ??∫???

Every time he lightly pressed his palm forward, Leonel's attacks would be rebuffed as though meeting an impenetrable wall. The attacks almost seemed to be nullified completely and none of the strength even traveled to the other parts of Alexandre's body.

'A defensive type ability? Is it just his palm? Or is it his whole body?'

Leonel's white gold wings appeared once more, his body erupting as Bronze Runes surged throughout his skin. A violet-red colored his eyes as his strength exploded.

He hopped from floating rock to floating rock, his speed growing faster and faster.

'[Harmonic Spear].'

At that moment, Leonel's body was suddenly cloned, each of them seemingly leaving afterimages in the air. In the blink of an eye, he looked to be everywhere at once, both being a long distance from Alexandre and a short distance at the same time.

Alexandre's eyes narrowed. Spears descended toward him from all directions.

Just when it seemed that he would be skewered, his Force surged.

BANG!

All the images dissipated at once, leaving just one Leonel piercing toward Alexandre's back.

However, rather than the image of him being run through that many might have expected, a spherical shield had appeared all around Alexandre, making Leonel's arms rattle.

There was just a slight pause before Leonel found himself being shot out once again. Like a ball out of a canon, he crashed through the city, bounding through walls and the stone tiled grounds.

Leonel coughed, shaking his head.

Looking up into the skies, he saw Alexandre looking toward him with an indifferent expression.

‘So it is a defense ability fueled by World Force. No wonder even my Quasi Silver spear can't break his defenses. His ability is probably equivalent to a Sixth Dimensional one with the support of his World Force. And, unlike his Titled Knights, he doesn't have to call out his Title...

‘But, Goggles said that this Alexandre had an ability related to words... Was that wrong? Or am I missing something...?’

Leonel slowly stood, his expression indifferent. It was as though he wasn't the one who had just suffered such a loss.

‘It seems it's time for you to make your debut.’

Leonel pierced his spear into the ground, his momentum growing fiercer as Force whistled around him.

At that moment, the Halo above his head began to glow fiercely, expanding a fold in size as it continued to tremble.

Then, it grew another fold, then another. Eventually, the Halo was over two meters in diameter alone, shining such a bright Bronze-Violet that it almost looked like a violet-gold.

When it reached its peak it descended over Leonel's body, reaching his feet in a single bound.

Nothing seemed to have happened. But, as it rose back over Leonel's body...

A brilliant armor began to appear.

Chapter 773

The whipping winds came to a grinding halt.

Beaming sunlight reflected off of the plates of armor. Bright silvers and delicate blacks alternated along its elaborate patterns. Just its presence alone seemed to make time itself stop, an eerie stillness hanging all around it.

As the halo passed over Leonel's head, it was slowly covered by a helmet, sealing away his handsome, indifferent features.

A light clicking locked everything into space. As though it had come alive, the armor shrunk a size, clinging to Leonel's armor as though it was nothing more than a second skin.

This was the true ability of Divine Armor. It didn't function like a normal armor would. For all intents and purposes, it had become a living, breathing part of Leonel's body.

When it was damaged, it would be repaired. When it moved, it would have a flexibility other armors couldn't match. Its power was now Leonel's own, its presence Leonel's presence.

Leonel ripped his spear out from the ground, the world quaking beneath his benign action.

White gold wings spread along Leonel's back once more. The contrast between his silver-black armor and them seemed to dazzle the world. However, whatever absentmindedness one could have had vanished when Leonel suddenly shot forward.

In a blink, he was already above Alexandre. Without any aid, he stepped into the air as though it was as easy as breathing, his spear descending with such forcefulness that one would have thought that his goal was to split the planet below rather than the man before him.

Alexandre's pupils constricted. He was able to fly not because of an ability, but because of World Force which granted him such a strength. This was the first time he had seen someone who shouldn't have a flying ability do so.

None of the reports he had received ever mentioned this armor, nor did any mention his ability to fly. It was clear that this was a trump card that Leonel had left hidden just for this exact moment.

Alexandre reacted quickly, his palm shooting outward toward Leonel's blade just as it always had.

But, in that moment, he suddenly felt as though his hand was moving through a wall of wind or a depth of quicksand. It slowed considerably even though he felt it was moving just as fast as it originally was.

The cognitive dissonance threw him for a loop. However, it was then an alarming sense of danger shook him to his core.

Without hesitation, he shot backward.

Leonel's spear descended. In one moment, it was before Alexandre's palm. But, in an act that could only be said to break the laws of reality, it appeared past it in the next instant. It didn't even seem to have teleported. Somehow... it felt that it had always been there.

Alexandre's dodge came just in time, but he was too late to stop his Kingly robes from being torn in two, a shallow line of blood running down his chest.

Alexandre's acceleration met the same muddy pastures. It was as though he was locked down from all sides. No matter where he moved, how he moved, or how much effort he put into it, it felt as though his speed had been cut down drastically.

The sight of the Apex suddenly finding himself on a backfoot left those watching stunned. To a degree, these even included those of the rebel army. But, very soon, they began to roar at the top of their lungs, emotions they had been bottling up for decades bubbling forth. ρ??∪???????

Leonel's spear spun in his hands.

Through the air, he took slow and deliberate steps forward, bearing down on Alexandre.

His spear lashed out, splitting into two of its three parts. The blade shot forward like an arrow, completely unaffected by the same slow in speed Alexandre was. In fact, it seemed to have become even faster than it would be normally.

Alexandre put up his barrier once more. The only way he had managed to keep his head all this time was by protecting his body from all sides like this.

However, just when he was expecting the blade to pierce at his chest, it vanished, a massive pressure slicing into the shield to his back.

The sight left the nobles in horror. By now, they were absolutely certain. It was a spatial ability, and a devastating one at that.

Leonel's chain snapped back into place, but in one fluid motion, he spun the opposing side forward sending another chain snaking forth.

What began as a slow, methodical approach became a torrential assault in the blink of an eye. The sound of snapping and retracting chains rang through the battlefield, shadows of grey and silver whipping about as Leonel practically used the supposed king for target practice.

Alexandre's expression darkened. As though he was hiding in a turtle shell, he could only take the endless barrage, the sound of clanging metal ringing in his ears endlessly.

Looking at the armored figure standing in the skies even above him, his heart filled with intent to murder. It had been a very long time since someone truly thought to test his sovereignty.

He had never really counted Normand. In his eyes, such a man was nothing more than a rat struggling on his very last breath, a rodent caught in a trap without even the slightest chance to escape.

However, this was very different. This sort of assault on his rulership was unprecedented.

He was Alexandre the Apex. This world was nothing more than a stepping stone to him. There would come a day where he ruled this universe and would become the true Apex of all!

Alexandre roared, what remained of his robes shattering to reveal a powerful and toned torso.

The singular line of red running down it quickly healed, a large pillar of light descending from the skies.

At that moment, he truly evoked his Apex Title, his strength soaring.

He tore a trail forward through Leonel's Domain, his palms squeezing into fists.

With a single punch forward, a golden fist appeared in the skies. It felt as though the world might collapse at any moment.

Chapter 774

Leonel's cold and calculating eyes watched as this golden fist bore down on him.

As though it was still being constantly fueled by the energies of the world, it continued to expand in size. From matching Alexandre's fist, it was soon larger than even Leonel's body, wanting to crush him into minced meat.

Leonel didn't seem to realize that this fist was meant for him. He remained unmoving, his spear being held between his fingers and thumb as though it was as light as a feather.

In his mind, thoughts of Normand continued to surface... The pain of the commoners, the nightmare of the nobles... All the pains and atrocities this man had committed in the name of maintaining his power and strength.

Leonl found that there were too many people like this in the world. It was just that not all of them had the power Alexandre had.

It was as though a cancer had been brewing in the Dimensional Verse for millennia, but not a single person had been able to do a thing about it.

Those that were at the bottom simply suffered in silence. Those at the top perpetuated it to hold onto their power. Those that managed to raise up from the former and enter the ranks of the latter believed that their hard work gave them the right to do as they pleased.

Maybe the third group of people was the worst. They had perspectives on both sides, and yet they chose to maintain the status quo, saying garbage like those at the bottom should just work harder as though they had a monopoly on what it meant to put in effort.

Such people completely forgot about what help they might have received, what luck they might have stumbled into, what aid someone else had given them... Once they succeeded, nothing else mattered to them than to make sure others knew they reached their goals while you didn't because you didn't work hard enough.

And then there was this Alexandre. He was already at the top of this world, but Leonel could see the ambition in his eye. It couldn't have been more obvious.

This 'king' had already been lucky, being born into royalty in the first place. Now whatever card he had up his sleeve that made him so confident that he could face the whole of the Dimensional Verse... Do you think that he felt he was lucky to stumble into such an opportunity too?

No. He probably thought that he was destined for such a fate. That it was his 'hard work' that put him in position to benefit from such a boon. That he 'deserved' it.

It all sickened Leonel to the very pits of his stomach.

Why was it that he never thought his life was more valuable than another's? Wasn't it obvious that he was worth more? Just look at his talent, just look at his strength... Him dying wasn't the same as another dying, how could it be?

But this was never how Leonel had seen it.

Why did his talent give him more worth than someone else?

He had been lucky to be born to a father from the Seventh Dimension. He had been lucky to be born to a talented mother who could catch such a man's eye. He was lucky to have a grandmother from a Sixth Dimensional family, lucky to have a grandfather who ruled a world with Eighth Dimensional potential.

What had he done to deserve any of this? He won a lottery. That was all it was.

He hadn't earned anything. And, neither did this false king before him.

Such trash with an overinflated sense of worth, all because they were born with a golden spoon in their mouths...

Leonel hated them all.

In the past, he hadn't been able to put his thoughts together so clearly, to understand what it is that sickened him so much with such clarity. $\rho \int \sqrt{\rho \rho \rho \rho \rho \rho}$

But he understood now. If there was anything that could change the world, it would be reliant on those at the bottom to rise up. It would require those who understood the plight of those lesser than them, those were deemed lucky enough to win the Dimensional Verse's lottery, who would have to choose to do something.

So, right here and now. In this world. Leonel chose to do something.

A dense black energy coated Leonel's spear. Its presence alone made space quake, the fabric of reality threatening to tear apart.

He rose his arm into the skies.

When it descended, silence reigned, Alexandre's roar coming to a deathly silence.

A scythe of Spatial Elemental Force tore through the air, splintering the massive golden fist in two as though it was deflating a balloon.

Leonel took a step forward, his body vanishing only to appear before Alexandre.

The Apex? The greatest speed. The greatest strength. The greatest power.

But who cared? That was only the Apex in this false king's small world view. Leonel would show him the view of a person far luckier than he was... He would show him an Apex above his.

"Die." Leonel said coldly.

Alexandre shot a fist forward, still believing in his barrier. But, at that moment, Leonel's blade vanished.

When it reappeared, it had already crossed Alexandre's defenses, appearing above his collar.

Before Alexandre could even react, the blade had already cut into the traps of his shoulders, slicing his body across diagonally.

Blood rained through the sky, Alexandre's two halves flying through the air past Leonel without the ability to stop their momentum.

But, as all things, this too eventually came to an end.

With Alexandre's eyes dimming, his body lost any strength it had, falling through the skies in a shower of crimson.

Blood droplets hung around Leonel, completely unable to touch his body. They fell down one after another, bathing the Capital in the life of their false king.

The cheering of the rebel army came to a grinding halt.

Had they done it? Had they really succeeded? Were their years of suffering finally over?

Hot tears fell down their cheeks, falling to the lands that were now their own.

Leonel stood in the skies, his armor glistening, his spear point relaxed.

He looked up into the skies, a light smile hidden beneath his helmet.

But, it was at that exact moment that his pupils constricted.

His head whipped in the direction of Alexandre's corpse, his expression frosting over.

A deep cackle filled the air, the manic laughter plunging the temperature of the Capital down by dozens of degrees.

Chapter 775

The laughter held a madness that could only fill one with a sense of apprehension in fear. It was the kind of laughter that came from a man who had lost his mind, the kind only one who had stepped over their breaking point could produce.

The two halves of Alexandre's body began to stitch itself back together.

As though it was a mere surface stitching, as he tried to rise up, his body threatened to fall apart again. However, slowly but surely, the connection became steadier and stronger. By the time Alexandre had risen to his feet, the stitching began to mend itself, disappearing beneath healthy, healed skin.

In the skies, Leonel watched on with narrowed eyes. He was trying to understand if he had made a mistake or not. Where had he gone wrong? What exactly was this ability? Where did it come from?

Was this another ability of World Force? Did Alexandre's Apex Title give him superior healing? Now that Leonel thought about it, he had already injured Alexandre once before in this battle. And, though it had been an exceptionally shallow wound, it had also healed very quickly... Or, could it possibly be something else entirely? Something he had no idea about?

At this moment, the inconvenience of the dictionary shone through.

He was certain that his father had done it on purpose. He didn't believe for a moment that his father didn't have the skill to make the dictionary more convenient to use. Even the people of Earth could make microchips the size of a single cell, let alone what his father would be capable of.

Leonel could feel a great and suffocating aura coming from Alexandre. At that moment, he didn't dare to take out the dictionary. He primed his entire body to be prepared for battle and could only think about this himself.

Leonel's jaw set as Alexandre's manic laughter only grew more pompous.

Nothing about Alexandre's actions made sense. If he had such power, why is it that he would allow things to reach this point? If he didn't have such power and this was nothing more than a façade, why was he wasting time laughing like this?

All signs pointed toward this man having fallen into madness, but why did Leonel feel a cold, murderous and calculating intent constantly locked onto him? The feeling was both chilling and sticky as though ice stuck to his skin was being forcibly peeled off.

It was then that Leonel saw Alexandre's eyes. With a single look, he understood where this feeling was coming from.

Alexandre's mouth was peeled open, his laughter ringing out to the point Leonel could even see his tongue vibrating. However, none of it seemed to reach his eyes. His irises were drenched in a cold fury as though his laughter was out of humiliation rather than humor.

It was exactly at that moment that Alexandre's aura shattered and reformed itself. His entire being seemed to transcend.

Leonel's pupils constricted. 'Fifth Dimension.'

Nothing seemed to make any sense anymore. This was supposed to be a Quasi Bronze Zone, how could a Fifth Dimensional threat appear here? Was it a Unique Zone? But where was the outside interference?
p??J??????

Leonel had done too much research, too much due diligence in the past two years to have possibly missed an outside influence. He would have noticed it long ago. That, he was absolutely certain of.

This aside, even if there was going to be an outside interference, they would have had to take some sort of action in order to cause this Zone to evolve, but where had this action been taken? Leonel hadn't sensed any outside Forces, no foreign energies, not even an unexpected change to the battlefield.

On top of all of this, this was supposed to be a Variant Zone. The fact that Leonel had had to slave away for two years and still hadn't seen any sort of reward yet was already outside the norm, so how could this also happen as well?

It couldn't be that all the variables had piled up to the point things reached this level of unpredictability? Was it even possible for him to fight a person on such a level?

Before Leonel could even think about it any longer, he found that Alexandre had appeared before him.

A fist that felt like it could collapse worlds drew closer, swimming through a sea of dense Spatial Force with a speed that felt like it should be impossible.

Leonel dodged to the side, barely using his Divine Armor's warped Domain to leave unharmed. However, he instantly felt the drain, his body feeling like a fish out of water.

Fueling his Divine Armor to slow the movement of a Fourth Dimensional existence was one matter. But, to try to do that same against a Fifth Dimensional existence was almost a fool's dream.

Alexandre stood in the air where Leonel had been, not moving an inch as the latter rose higher into the skies and made some distance between them. He seemed quite shocked that his blow hadn't landed.

His manic laughter seemed to still hang in the skies, echoing through the slowly accumulating and greying clouds.

He rolled his shoulder, seemingly stretching it out or getting used to his new strength.

After a moment, he clenched his fist, causing all sorts of energies to begin rolling in from all sides.

First it was World Force. Then Leonel sensed Universal Force. Then there came a neutral Force.

The three together caused the space around Alexandre to quake as the images of four dark seasons began to form around his body.

The skies quaked, a rumbling, low growl of thunder accumulating momentum.

In that moment, a single drop of rain rebounded off of Leonel's armor. To him, it almost sounded like a pin drop... And yet, it resonated through his mind like the roar of a lion, resonating through his armor with impunity.

Then... Alexandre's fist shot forward again.

Chapter 776

Leonel roared, his spear vibrating with large amounts of Spatial Force as he met this golden fist.

Sparks flew, what looked like arcs of black lightning contrasting against a sparkling gold.

Leonel was continuously pushed back, his anchor in the sky and his strength not being nearly enough. Just to fly, he had to use the Spatial Force around him to his advantage. But, after just a single exchange with Alexandre, it felt as though he could hardly bring forth this strength anymore.

Just as Leonel was struggling with just a single one, Alexandre appeared in the skies above him, his fist sending out a second strike.

Leonel's pupils constricted, his arms trembling as he fought back. But, whatever small leverage he had had facing one completely collapsed in the face of the second.

Without suspense, his body practically crumpled, his armor threatening to shatter beneath the might of the two strikes.

BANG!

Leonel's body was forcefully tunneled into the ground, two fist imprints layering over one another to drive him further and further into the dirt.

A silence hung over the battlefield as the small drizzles of rain became more frequent, picking up momentum until a constant rattle rang in all of their ears.

Leonel shot out from the ground, his armor looking as pristine as when he first produced it. And yet, the state of his inner organs told a completely different tale. If it wasn't for his Metal Body and Divine Armor working as one, he might have been half dead already.

But, even then, he already found it difficult to stand.

Leonel took deep breaths, his gaze locking onto Alexandre and his grip holding on tightly to his silver, double bladed, spear.

'Dreamscape Battle Sense.'

A strong Dream Force suddenly swept over the battlefield. As though a scanner sweeping a probe, everything was reflected in Leonel's mind.

'Dream Sense.'

Leonel's mind split almost 200 ways, each taking control of a different section of his body as though he was a machine to be operated rather than a human being.

Leonel's body began to move with an extreme amount of precision. Even in cases where his muscles couldn't meet the mark, Leonel used his Earth Variant Affinity to take control of his armor and forcibly pull his self to the proper position.

In this state, he had the greatest control over his body and the absolute clearest mind.

If Alexandre wanted a battle, he would get one. Even at this moment, Leonel could sense the heavy gazes on his back.

He could see Gertrude's tearful eyes. He could see Rollan's steeled jaw. He could see Goggles' clenched fist, Castello's warped polearm, Miles' bleeding lip, Austin's quivering knees...

There were hundreds, thousands, tens of thousands of people reflected onto his mind, each and everyone looking toward him with a light of hope.

The burden was heavy. So heavy that he felt it might sink his knees, crush his shoulders and shatter his back. ρ??∪??????

And yet, he stood tall, his spear pointed forward.

Leonel raised his foot, the space beneath him quaking. In the next instant, he vanished, appearing before Alexandre.

Yet, rather than attack, he took a step to the side.

As though having read into the future, Alexandre's fist punched at empty air, entering a space that would have run through Leonel's chest completely.

The air shook, a deep trench tearing through the city below and causing explosion of dirt.

Leonel's cold eyes flickered beneath the visor of his helmet, his spear sweeping upward in a motion to slice Alexandre's arm off.

A shield of Force manifested once again. However, Leonel's spear didn't even connect. It shifted through space, continuing toward Alexandre's arm as though no shield had been there to begin with.

The sight of blade contacting skin played in all their minds. Yet, before anything could happen, Leonel vanished again.

In his place, a blast of energy rocked the air, causing concentric circles of energy to radiate out.

Leonel appeared again at Alexandre's opposing side, his expression, hidden beneath his silver-black helmet, completely unfazed.

He had already seen through Alexandre's skill as a close combat expert. After entering the Fifth Dimension, one's ability to control the Force in the air around them, as opposed to just the Force in their bodies, reaches an all new level.

In that split instant, Alexandre had used the jetting out of his elbow to counter Leonel. But, only the slightest twitch of the muscle was needed for Leonel to see completely through it.

By the time Alexandre understood what had happened, Leonel's spear descended again, slashing down on his left arm with full force.

PCHU!

Leonel's blade cut through Alexandre's skin, only to be stopped by his flesh and bone. His spear which had a sharpness he was keenly aware of, couldn't even take an arm off any longer.

Leonel understood the problem. His stamina was already running low, he couldn't afford to fuel every attack with Spatial Elemental Force. At the same time, the stamina he needed to upkeep the use of his Divine Armor at his current stage didn't allow him the right to use other Elemental Forces.

In the end, he could only rely on his Spatial Force in this state, but it was simultaneously the most draining Force he had.

Leonel dodged out of the way of yet another strike, his labored breathing causing puffs of fog in the steadily increasing rainfall.

Alexandre's figure flickered, completely moving out of the way of Leonel's snaking chain blade. It was clear that he had given up on simply staying in place as the wound on his left arm rapidly healed before their eyes.

Alexandre didn't say a word. The rumbling Universal Force around him grew more fervent.

Leonel vanished once again. Without a word, Alexandre had appeared in the exact location he had been in, his fist eviscerating a quarter of his castle to dust without a care for the nobles that might have died inside.

"I wonder... How much longer can you keep that up...?"

In that moment, over the horizon, the galloping of three pure bred horses charged through the rain, entering the battlefield as Leonel and Alexandre faced off.

Chapter 777

Leonel took heavy, deep breaths.

When he first created Dreamscape Battle Sense, he never thought that there'd come a day where he would become so proficient at it that his body would give out before his mind did.

It almost felt like the greatest irony. Even now, facing a newly advanced Fifth Dimensional entity, he was able to read, predict and react to his actions without much issue. And, even though it had already been several exchanges, and even though he was using Dream Sense and splitting his mind and senses almost 200 ways, he had barely used 10% of his Dream Force stamina.

But, every time Alexandre moved with his Spatial Domain, every time he threw a punch and forced Leonel to slow him down, it was like another chunk of Leonel's life was taken.

If his Divine Armor was removed now, it might look as though only a skeleton remained. Even his so-called 'heavy' breathing was only heavy to him. By now, he hardly had the strength to take anything more than shallow, quick breaths.

To make matters worse, the injuries he had suppressed after getting hit by Alexandre the first time seemed to want to flare up again.

Leonel's senses had long since locked onto the three Oryx approaching from the distance. In fact, he had sensed them long before they even came into view. But, he really didn't know what to do about it. He couldn't even find a path to deal with Alexandre, if these three decided to attack his army, he wouldn't be able to help even if he wanted to.

A strange helplessness overtook Leonel as he was forced to dodge again.

He coughed violently. Though no blood came out, it felt like searing hot coals were being plunged down his throat. His lungs felt as though they had been lit on fire.

Despite his worry, Rollan, too, noticed the charging Oryx. Realizing that the problem could become bad, he immediately took charge.

Sending numerous signals, the left wing of the army did an about face, grasping their weapons as they faced the oncoming assault.

“ALEXANDRE!”

The booming voice rolled over the thunder that quaked the skies. It was deep and held an undeniable majesty to it that resonated with one’s heart and soul.

Completely ignoring the army before him, the King of the Oryx leapt from his steed, bolting through the air with his two Generals in tow.

‘... World Force...’ Leonel smiled bitterly.

He had already guess that the King of the Oryx would have the other half of this world’s World Spirit. But, if he really had to deal with two World Force users, he would really be finished. Could it be that he would never be able to step foot outside of this world? Was all the blood, sweat and tears he had poured into this meaningless?

Leonel could almost feel the hearts of his army constrict. Then, as though madmen completely forgetting military law, the entirety of the rebel army surged toward the Capital without thought for their safety.

“GENERAL!”

It didn’t matter who it was. Whether it was Rollan all the way down to even the cowardly Goggles. They all seemed to have lost their rationality in that moment. ρ??∪???????

When Leonel saw such a scene, he wasn’t sure how to react.

With happiness? With rage? The bitter sweetness made him feel as though the weight on his back was still growing heavier. By now, it was heavy enough to make him feel suffocated to an extreme, his heart pumping with a continuous pang.

However, Leonel could have never guessed what would happen next.

Just as he was preparing for a battle that would likely be his last, the Oryx King and his two Generals appeared before the indifferent Alexandre.

As though he had already expected such a result, Alexandre punched outward.

Eyes steeled with determination, Everard stepped in its path, his mouth sputtering with blood as Alexandre's fist shot through his chest.

A wild grin painted the Oryx General's face. His claws stretched out, latching onto Alexandre's arm as though his life depended on it, the only thing holding him up in the air being the Oryx King's World Force.

Alexandre frowned and was about to pull his arm back, but the Oryx King appeared before cutting down with all the force his halberd could muster.

Reacting quickly, Alexandre shot a palm forward to block, only for Richeut to step in its path.

Though his face didn't carry the same wild, bloody grin Everard's had, his eyes had the glint of a madman. This glint, even after his chest was completely pierced through, even while Alexandre glare back at him... Even while his King's halberd split his head in two on the way to Alexandre's...

Never faded.

Leonel's heart trembled as he watched the Oryx King's halberd pass through his own General as though he wasn't there.

Everything felt as though it was moving in slow motion. Leonel could see the trembling of the King's hand, he could see the sadness reflected in his eyes, he could see the pain trembling through his soul.

The halberd killed an excellent General, only to be stopped by a shield of Force manifested through thin air.

“... Do you really think this is enough to kill me?” Alexandre said plainly, gazing upon the Oryx King's halted blade.

“No.” The Oryx King replied, his hands having grown frighteningly steady.

At that moment, Leonel felt the King's gaze lock onto him. He didn't know why this King would choose to look toward him at that moment... But, he saw none of the disgust, rage or blame he thought he would find.

Instead... All he received was a calm smile. It was the kind of smile that told him to relax... That told him that someone with larger, stronger shoulders than his own would take on this burden for him.

And then, the Oryx King erupted into flames. Everything around him from his halberd to his Generals, to even himself imploded in a massive cascade of World Force.

Leonel's heart came to a grinding stop.

Chapter 778

The fire reflected in Leonel's irises. He didn't know what was happening. He didn't know why or even how the Oryx King sacrificed himself. He didn't know if this was an ability of World Force, if it was a Lineage Factor, or even if this was the Oryx King's original ability being fueled to a new level by his World Force...

Even with all his intellect, even with all his senses, he just couldn't understand...

But maybe that was the way things were meant to be. When those at the top took on the greatest burden for themselves, wasn't it all to allow those beneath them to live on in ignorance?

The flames, despite never touching the city below, seemed to engulf it whole. Whether it was the heat or the moment, it was all ubiquitous. This was likely a moment they would never forget... And yet, maybe the greatest irony was that they had treated this man as an enemy just moments ago.

It was yet another bittersweet moment. But, it was one filled with an underlying respect that pounded through their hearts.

Maybe, though... Life wasn't filled with such fairy tales. Sometimes, even when the greatest sacrifice is made, even when all the tears are shed and all the hearts were broken... It still isn't enough.

As the fires even Leonel didn't dare casually touch began to die down, the image of a singular man still standing in the air became clearer and clearer. By the time the flames faded away completely and they saw what remained, a horror could only grip their minds.

There, Alexandre stood.

His skin was burnt black, flaking off to reveal bloodied, mangled flesh beneath.

Both of his arms were nowhere to be seen and his once handsome features had all been burnt away to the point that one could make out bits and pieces of his skull.

At that moment, the manic laughter appeared once again. As the rain sizzled and boiled, coming into contact with the supposed king, this laughter only grew.

"Kill me?! I AM THE APEX!"

Alexandre's voice boomed, the projection of his voice tearing a cyclone into the thick, black, cumulonimbus clouds coating the sky.

Arcs of lightning flashed and thunder boomed. It looked like a hellish descent coming to reap all of their lives.

“No!” Leonel suddenly roared, his body flickering.

But when he appeared again, he had traveled less than half the distance he had wanted to.

Completely out of his range, Alexandre had shot down from the skies, his armless body looking like an arrow through the rain as he appeared amidst the army.

His mouth opened wide, skin flaking and falling from his skull even as he bit down.

At that moment, from across the battlefield, Gertrude smiled. Even from so far away, Leonel could see it clearly.

She knew Alexandre was too fast for her to react to. She didn't even have time to raise her weapon.

Her final thoughts were quite simple, really. If she was going to die anyway, wouldn't it be nice to see his face one last time?

It was just a shame... that his head was covered in that damned armor...

Gertrude's throat was ripped out by Alexandre's teeth in that moment. As though a man dying of thirst, he sucked with all his might, leaving her withering until she breathed her last.

Alexandre's body flickered again, fiending for blood, needing that taste of life to grace his lips.

The reason he had been able to gain such great regenerative abilities was by sacrificing his own son. After having gone so far and with the unification of this world right at his finger tips, how could he die now?! ρ??∪??????

Leonel saw red, his body driving itself forward. Even if he couldn't use Spatial Force anymore, he still had his speed, he still had something.

Unfortunately, without Spatial Force, he plummeted from the skies, crashing into the buildings below.

Leonel allowed his Divine Armor to sink into his skin, bursting with whatever Light Elemental Force he could muster.

But, by the time he managed to leap over another building, he could only watch as Alexandre surged toward Rollan.

Leonel felt as though his heart was being ripped out. These last two years couldn't have been any realer to him. He could still hear every one of Rollan's laughs, he could still feel every time he patted his shoulder, he could still taste every meal they had had together.

Thinking of how he could possibly explain his death to Elise, or if he would even ever get a chance to, tore him up from the inside out.

However, Leonel didn't see Rollan die. Somehow, what he saw instead shook him even more.

Just when Rollan's throat was about to be torn out much like Gertrude before him, Goggles kicked him out of the way, appearing before Alexandre with a dagger wrapped by both hands and plunging down with all the strength he had.

"Goggles!" Rollan roared.

"Shut up!" Goggles shout hid the trembling in his voice. "I won't let this bastard be the reason my Goddess cries!"

Leonel's world completely lost color.

All the times Goggles had gone on a convoluted rant played in his mind in a flash. And yet, this time, he hardly got to finish a single sentence before the rest was filled the gurgling sounds of blood.

Goggles' eyes dimmed as his throat was ripped apart by a shining row of white teeth.

Leonel plowed his way forward, his ears ringing with an eerie high pitched, monotonous sound. He couldn't see straight or think straight. Everything he had left was poured into running as fast as he could as though it didn't matter that Alexandre had already regrown his limbs.

Alexandre's laughter rang through the skies, a familiar silver tablet rising out of his body and exuding an endless pressure.

Leonel appeared before him, but could hardly swing his spear before a dome of Force blocked him completely.

Leonel wildly swung his spear at the dome, but none of what he did seemed to matter in the slightest.

"You know..." Alexandre laughed, his mouth bloodied with the flesh of Leonel's lieutenants. "... I once had a subject just as disobedient as you. Why don't I give you the same chance I gave him?"

"You want to save the rest of them, right?"

Alexandre picked up Rollan who had been sprawled to the ground by Goggles, lifting him up as though to make certain that Leonel could see his face.

"Bow down."

The dome of Force around Leonel constricted, plowing him into the ground and smashing his forehead against the cracked paved roads of the city.

"Swear your loyalty. Recognize the Apex. I, King Alexandre, will be the ruler of this world!"

Leonel's face was grinded into the dirt. He didn't even have the leverage he needed to stand up with his arms pressed flush against the ground, let alone the fact even if he did, there was no way he'd have the strength to shatter this barrier.

He couldn't crack this barrier even when he was at full strength, how would he do it now?

"If you do not... I'll make sure to kill each and every one of them. One by one."

Chapter 779

Leonel grit his teeth, his jaw clenching with such force that it might have been heard if it wasn't for the heavy rain falling from the skies.

Up above, a vortex of black clouds rumbled and sparked with lightning, becoming louder and more dangerous with every passing moment as though a tornado trying to touch down to the earth.

The moment Leonel heard Alexandre's words, a rage began to pump through his veins.

In the past, he hadn't cared about kneeling very much. It wasn't a devaluing of himself, but rather that he had never assigned the action as something that would grant or snatch such a thing as value from a person.

Having grown up in a world that was more monarchy than democracy, something like paying respects to the Emperor was a part of everyday life. It had never been a struggle to keep or hold onto a meaningless pride, especially when everyone around you had been indoctrinated in the very same way.

It wasn't until Leonel met King Arthur that he suddenly gained a revulsion toward kneeling. But, even then, it wasn't because of the action itself, but rather because he felt as though it was being used as a power play to elevate another at his expense.

Back then, King Arthur was meant to tell him to rise, yet purposely chose not to as a method of applying more pressure on Leonel. What he didn't know was that even someone like Leonel had their own breaking point, especially when they put as much emphasis on Respect as Leonel did.

Since that day, Leonel never casually kneeled. But at this moment, with his face being grinded into the ground, with the fury of his army billowing around him, he hated it even more.

Veins popped across his body. Even though his skin couldn't seem to sustain his Bronze Runes anymore, his eyes still pulsed with a strong red. But, at that moment, for whatever reason, the usual violet hue that curbed the murderous violence of the crimson was nowhere to be seen.

The barrier seemed to give way to Leonel. But, the moment he managed to rise high enough to make eye contact with Alexandre...

BANG!

Leonel's body was smashed into the ground once again. It felt as though the whole front of his skull was threatening to shatter. If it wasn't for the fact his Metal Body was stronger than the stone ground he was being forced into, his injuries would most definitely not be so light.

"Wrong answer." Alexandre shook his head. "I'll give you as many chances as you need, don't worry."

"GENERAL!"

Alexandre waved a hand, causing a barrier to block a wave of soldiers from charging through. However, it became very clear, very quickly, that he hadn't done this for the sake of his safety.

One man found himself flying through the barrier, his momentum not having stopped along with everyone else.

He seemed to realize instantly what happened, but a flash of madness took over his eyes as he continued to charge forward, his roar being drowned out by the increasingly heavy rain.

A splatter of blood rained down on Leonel, causing his trembling body to freeze.

The droplets of crimson sounded far heavier than the falling rain. As though an anvil hidden within a mountain of clouds, it crashed in waves against Leonel's heart. p??∫???????

At that moment, he felt the barrier around him loosen once again. Clearly, Alexandre was giving him another chance to stand, another chance to bow down.

Leonel didn't move. He didn't know what to do. The fury pulsing through his veins hadn't lessened, and yet he felt as though he should push it aside, that he should lay down his pride for the sake of a greater good.

The lives of these people here, was it worth less than his pride or the cost of his humiliation?

It Leonel had to be honest with himself, the truth was that the answer to that question didn't matter to him. The reality was that it was all too much. He wasn't willing to bear the burden of so many deaths, to have the lost lives of his men weigh on him for a lifetime.

Why did he try so hard? Why did he slave over every meticulous detail of their battles in the last two years? Why was it that he felt the need to be present at every battlefield? Why was it that he insisted on charging as the head of the vanguard no matter what the danger that lied ahead was?

It was all because he didn't want to feel that weight, that heaviness... The things he asked for himself, he couldn't ask from others. He wanted to protect, he didn't want to feel this gut wrenching guilt.

Leonel's fingers scraped along the ground, his strength causing it to shatter and leave shallow trenches behind.

Using his fists, he pushed himself up to his knees.

His hair hung over his face, dirtied by the mud and grime of the ground. It didn't seem to hold the same metallic sheen it always had anymore.

His face, partially hidden by his hair, was covered in a mixture of blood and dirt, his eyes having returned to their usual pale green. Yet, at this moment, it appeared to be far more grey than anything else.

His breathing was shallow and weak, his rib cage threatening to shatter into pieces with every gasp he took.

If it meant not having to carry this burden, what was his pride worth? If he felt even his life wasn't as valuable as theirs, why would the cost of his humiliation be any higher? He was just a bit luckier than they were... That was all.

Leonel began to lower his head to the ground, his entire army having fallen into complete silence. Their eyes turned red watching Leonel's back arch.

They knew that for others, it might take hundreds, even thousands of them dying before they broke.

However, for Leonel, the single death of a warrior whose face was forgettable was enough for him.

“King. Don't.”

Rollan gathered up all the strength he had left, his throat still being clamped down by Alexandre, to finally squeeze out these words.

Chapter 780

Leonel's head paused, his fists trembling. He didn't dare to look up. But, just as easily as he had been able to see Normand's face back then, he could just as easily see Rollan's.

He could see the reddening of Rollan's blue eyes, the tears streaming down his cheeks, the tight grit of his teeth. Leonel could almost see the reflection of Elise in Rollan's eyes, he could feel how heavy the weight of the words he had just spoken were.

They didn't just represent his willingness to die, they represented a willingness to leave his wife behind to a life of loneliness and pain. It was a weight of a completely different magnitude, it was the kind of weighted words no husband ever wanted to speak... no father ever wanted to say.

Leonel knew well that Elise had found out that she was pregnant not long ago. He knew well that Rollan knew this truth as well. He even knew that Goggles' had sacrificed himself knowing this about as well as any one of them did.

And yet, Rollan still spoke these words.

Leonel felt the burden on his back increase once again, his limbs quaking and tears threatening to fall from his eyes. He was so shaken that he completely didn't realize that Rollan's form of address had changed.

Alexandre didn't interrupt, a cold smile curling his lip. Interrupting now would only make them resolve themselves even quicker. He didn't want to push Leonel one way or another. He wanted Leonel to feel the weight of the decision himself.

He had already made his ultimatum as clear as it came. If Leonel didn't bow down, he would kill them all one by one. He didn't need to say anything more.

Seeing Leonel struggle, Rollan smiled, his eyes closing as the rain washed away his tears.

"We... have already made... our choice... King."

Leonel's heart trembled.

He thought back to that day Rollan and Elise marched through their small town and stormed the Lord's Manor. Despite being a feeble and petite woman, Elise held onto the heaviest weapon she could with both hands and walked side by side with her husband.

That day, neither of them knew what to expect. They had no idea what kind of strength Leonel had. For all they knew, that was the final day they would be on this earth together. Yet, they had still done it... together.

Leonel remembered asking Rollan how he had managed to hold together his emotions and make such a decision. As powerful as Aina was now, if there ever came a time where Leonel surpassed her by a large margin and had to enter a dangerous situation... He simply couldn't imagine taking her with him. He would rather face death alone and protect her to his back.

But, the response he received from Rollan back then was far simpler than anything he could have ever imagined...

'... I just asked her... I asked her if she was willing to share life and death with me... Then, I trusted her decision.'

The stone beneath Leonel's fists shattered, the chattering of his teeth growing to the point it seemed he just might break his own jaw clenching so hard.

His heartbeat rose, his blood surging through his veins like dragons. His skin sizzled and his eyes regained their green, two tear droplets finally falling and rebounding against the muddied ground.

"Are you willing?"

Leonel's voice was soft, but it held a penetrating power that seemed to travel through to all of their ears.

Rollan's smile grew wider as his eyes remained closed. Images of his wife and what his unborn child might have looked like swirled in his mind.

"I am willing, My King."

Those were Rollan's last words. Blood fell from the corner of his lips, his smile forever dipped in crimson that even the rain didn't seem capable of washing away.

His voice lingered in the air, echoing throughout the ravaged Capital.

Alexandre had never thought Rollan would do such a thing. Even though he hadn't taken action, he had known the most important information about all of Leonel's lieutenants. ρ???(???????)

Could it really be that Goggles could stop him from killing someone he wanted to? He was in the mighty Fifth Dimension, all those here were nothing more than ants to him. He had merely allowed Goggles to do as he pleased because he decided that the emotional damage would be far more if things happened in this way. He had even known of Rollan's wife and unborn child. Wasn't that why he was so confident that this wouldn't happen?

And yet... what was happening now?

Leonel gripped his fists, his hands and knees still on the ground and his eyes never looking up.

"I am willing."

Castello stood at the barrier, a wild grin on his face as he plunged a dagger into his chest.

"I am willing."

Miles looked up in the skies, his heart trembling as he used his Force to shatter it.

"I am willing."

"I am willing."

Leonel gripped his fists tighter and tighter, the weight on his back becoming heavier and heavier.

His arms and legs trembled, his body threatening to collapse to the floor. Every voice that sounded out shook him to the core. He just wanted to shout at the top of his lungs. He didn't care if it ripped his throat apart or if his chest burst beneath the pressure.

But he held it in, listening to each and every one of them and imprinting their voices onto his soul.

Castello laughed into the skies as his eyes dimmed, his burly body teetering back and forth.

“Farewell, My King!”

The bodies fell to the ground one after another, a sea of blood seeping through.

The rain fell heavier, washing the river of red onto Leonel's hands and feet as though to stain him for a life time.

When the voices finally faded, Leonel slowly looked up.

His every action seemed heavy. Even though it was true that his body was injured, it seemed to be more than that. Even his injuries shouldn't have made him reach such a point.

It felt as though it took several minutes, but Leonel finally stood to his feet, his gaze locking onto Alexandre.

An ocean of crimson around him, a mountain of corpses laying at his feet, and a burden the likes of which was so heavy he almost sunk back to his knees...

Yet, he stood, his eyes glowing a fiery violet light.

“This burden. I will take it.”

There was no one left for Leonel to speak to other than Alexandre.

At that moment, Alexandre's gaze flickered with rage. He felt a fury the likes of which made him want to tear the world to shreds.

Unable to control himself any longer, he roared and struck outward.

By the time he realized what he had done, his arm had run through Leonel's chest. However, all he saw in the latter's gaze was an eerie calmness even as his heart was shattered.

Somehow, even though he had won... Alexandre felt that he lost.

Leonel's corpse fell to the ground, drowned in a river of blood.