

Descent 831

Chapter 831

Leonel took deep, heavy breaths.

As the domain faded and Little Blackstar hopped back to his spot on his head, the last shards of sparkling crystals shattered and collapsed before the barrel of the sniper rifle.

Firing with enough Force to kill a Tier 2 Fifth Dimensional expert was really almost too much for him. It wasn't even necessarily the Light Elemental Force, but rather the construction of Earth Elemental Force he needed to use.

Leonel shook his head, his face a bit pale.

He looked toward Manson's corpse, seeing the large hole through her heart. He could only say that he was quite lucky to have Little Blackstar.

The reason the old gentleman had never mentioned the little mink wasn't because he underestimated Blackstar. This was a man who had spent precious moments pouring over the footage for even the smallest detail. He would never forget to mention an odd little mink that seemed capable of sitting completely still even in the face of so many Fifth Dimension experts.

The real reason was because the old gentleman had never seen Little Blackstar to begin with.

Little Blackstar liked to be in his incorporeal form. This form allowed him to continue to benefit from his Shadow World, continuously growing stronger with every moment.

When one was in the presence of Little Blackstar, you could see him in this form, anyone could. You could even hear him should he choose to allow you to. The issue, though, was that... cameras couldn't.

Had the old gentleman questioned the miners under his charge or those who had personally gone to the arena, they might have been able to tell him that Leonel was followed around by an odd little mink. However, how could he know to ask such a thing? Especially when time was already so tight?

The result was the old gentleman being completely unaware of Little Blackstar, leading to the group being caught completely off guard.

Of course... It also helped that Little Blackstar was already at the Quasi Fifth Dimensional level. The little guy might not have had as much battle experience as Leonel or Aina, but he definitely had far more raw strength.

When this was paired with Leonel directing him in battle, the duo wasn't to be trifled with. In fact, Leonel believed that he had almost neglected the little guy too much.

Blackstar was still an infant, yet he was growing so fast. If it wasn't for a cap in resources caused by Leonel's absence these last two years, the little guy would have already entered the Fifth Dimension. Leonel understood that he definitely needed to direct Blackstar's growth with more purpose and caution.

Leonel smiled lightly, scratching Blackstar's little head. He tried to use his talisman, but once again, it didn't go through.

'Let's move from this place... That panda-eyed man's ability won't be very useful to Little Blackstar in the future. But, it's decent for now.' ρ??∪??????

There were too many weaknesses to Panda's ability. If not, how could Leonel have dealt with it so easily? Had he not been saving his Domain and his stamina, he could have blown that fake 'domain' away, and anyone with a strong comprehension of Universal Cycles could do the same.

The good news was that the ability was more powerful in Little Blackstar's hands, but not enough to make it lamentable to give up in the future.

Leonel gazed toward the corpses around him and shook his head. Their abilities weren't worth taking either.

With a flash, he disappeared down a corridor, finding another location to finish his ship.

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By this point, the planet was completely surrounded. Ships of massive proportion hung around in a silent orbit, all focused on a single task.

They all understood their task well. Failure would not be allowed. The prestige of the Milky Way Guild was on the line. To fail to capture the young man that had so publicly slapped their faces would be a failure of epic proportion. It could not be allowed, and they all knew it.

Within one of these ships, in a luxuriously decorated cabin, there was a different atmosphere. While the others might have been filled with a horrid weight, this one was filled with rivalry, youthful vigor, and most important, condescension.

“Even in death that little bitch couldn’t do anything right. First she brings home some Fourth Dimensional piece of trash, and now she causes all of this trying to get revenge for him. I swear if I could, I would dig her up just to bury her again.”

The voice came from a snarky young woman wearing a fiery red dress. She would have had the elegance Heira had when she was alive if it wasn’t for the perpetual sneer that upturned her bright red lips. It was hard for one to decide whether they wanted a taste of her beauty, or if they would prefer to just punch her in the face.

Her two elder brothers, though, didn’t seem to want to correct the attitude of their little sister. In fact, the look between their brows seemed to suggest that they wholly agreed. This time, Heira had really screwed them.

The Milky Way Guild wasn’t exactly in a precarious situation. In fact, they were stronger and more powerful than ever.

The trouble was that any decline in all of history was almost invisible to those at the top. Their father, Guild Head Ovilteen, had drilled this into the minds since their minds since a very young age. The more

powerful they were, the more the weak would want to ban together to knock them down a peg. The only way to avoid this was by being so powerful that no one dared to do even that.

Their father was on the verge of entering the Sixth Dimension. Once he did so, they would finally move forward with the next of their plans and bring the guild to a bigger stage.

And yet, just when they were on the cusp of an even greater height, this happened.

It was simply unacceptable.

Chapter 832

Gretta Ovilteen.

As annoyed as the many guards of the Milky Way Guild were at the prospect of being assigned to Heira in the last two years, it was less annoyance and more dread when the target of protection was Gretta.

As abrasive as she was now at a seemingly 'unique' situation, she seemed to find any number of reasons to act like this on a day by day basis. If it wasn't Heira who became her living, or rather dead, target, it would have been someone or something else, without a doubt.

However, there wasn't much that could be done about this. Gretta, unlike Heira, was a great talent valued by Guild Head Ovilteen. It might seem from the situation in the luxurious holding room of the flying ship that there were only four Ovilteen siblings, especially with how they ragged on the now deceased Heira, but this couldn't have been further from the truth.

Guild Head Ovilteen had just one wife, but dozens of women he frequented. Unfortunately for those women, 'frequented' was the best word to be used to describe their relationship as the Guild Head never gave them any status, not even a lesser title like concubine.

Of the three siblings here, only the eldest among them, Tobyn Ovilteen—a young man whose standout feature were his blazing green eyes—was from the only wife of the Guild Head. The other two, including Gretta, were from these 'frequented' women.

It could be said that the only thing somewhat special about Heira was that she, too, was birthed from the Guild Head's wife. But, it was also because of this that she gained an extra hint of spiciness from Gretta's ire.

The truth of the matter wasn't as one might expect. The Guild Head didn't only marry a single woman for the sake of showing some symbolic loyalty to her. In fact, it could be said that the Guild Head's wife, Emerra Ovilteen, was a dime a dozen.

She had delicate and beautiful looks, even as she entered the later stages of her life. Her talent was decent, having entered the Fifth Dimension, and even having reached its higher tiers, but having no chance at entering the Sixth. Her family background was not too weak, but also not too strong...

If she had to be described she was akin to a trophy in a display case, but one that could easily be glossed over in favor of the larger trophies sharing the same shelf.

The reason Augustus Ovilteen chose her was because she ticked just enough boxes without ticking too many.

As for why he had done this? People had their own speculations. But, maybe only Augustus himself knew the truth.

All that mattered to his children, though, was that even if Emerra's role was just superficial and lacking in weight, the children she birthed—two, to be exact—would still given this same respect, albeit also superficial and lacking in substance.

Heira, simply by virtue of who she was born to, might not have been able to hold any true power in her life, but at the very least, she wouldn't have to bite, scratch and claw for every chance she was given... She could live a life of leisure and without worry. There would always be as much wealth as she could spend, as much food as she could eat, as much entertainment as she could consume...

She would never be wanting for anything.

Isn't that why Gretta resented her so much? Even with her talent, how many piles of bullshit did she have to crawl out of just to stand here? p??J???????

But to Gretta, that was just the tip of the iceberg. What made her truly resent Heira was that the bitch didn't seem satisfied with what she was given. She started to fight and jockey for position with the rest of them as though she had to, and the methods she chose made Gretta feel as though her skin was crawling.

She was so weak, so frail, but just her face irritated Gretta to an extreme. And yet, unlike with everything else that pissed her off, Gretta couldn't just punch a hole through Heira, or else everything she had worked to build up would come crumbling down.

Gretta would never admit it to herself but...

Even in death, she could still see Heira's elegant bearing, the noble air of her gait, the perfect measure of her smile. She was a woman who was refined down to the last detail. Even though she might have been weak, when it came to matters of character and intelligence, and even looks, she was perfect beyond compare.

And what was even more infuriating was that she had almost succeeded.

Was if that Fourth Dimensional trash of her really managed to conquer Earth? Wouldn't they all have to bow at her feet?

To be born with something she couldn't have like status, Gretta could accept. But, to be born with such a thing and still be superior to her...

That, Gretta could not accept.

The only thing that infuriated her about Heira's death was that she couldn't do it herself.

As enraged as Gretta was, though, Rollo had long since gotten over the fact he was lesser born and didn't hate Heira nearly as much. Maybe a part of that was due to the fact Heira was a woman and he

felt ridiculous being jealous of a little sister of his as a grown man, but what he did know was that he didn't like this situation at all.

Tobyn would be just fine regardless. But, failure on Gretta and his part would likely mean years of work just to return to the favorable light they had right now. It was like suddenly being met with a pop exam that was worth 90% of your grade all because someone you hardly knew was snarky with the teacher. How could he not be pissed?

Regardless, this was just the life of the child of a 'frequented' woman. He had long since become used to having to prove himself day in and day out.

Suddenly loud blaring noises sounded as a ship rocketed out of the atmosphere.

The siblings raised an eyebrow simultaneously. 'What an idiot...'

"Shoot it down and let's go home." Tobyn said carelessly.

His words hardly fell when beams of energy fell from all sides. Such strength... It could turn a Fifth Dimensional moon to rubble.

Chapter 833

The moment the small ship was locked onto by several behemoths, as though a rock out of a slingshot, its acceleration suddenly doubled.

Sparks and explosions rang through the quickly thinning atmosphere, and yet they only seemed to propel the small ship faster as it squirted out of their encirclement.

The lights were so bright and the ship was so tiny in proportion to everything else that it was immediately assumed that the operation was successful. But, if it was so easy to fool such high tech, why would the Guild have ever invested however many billions they had to build them?

However, what left the siblings at a loss for words was that the moment the ship used the momentum around it to shoot by the last thinning layers of the atmosphere, runic patterns exuding a magnificent aura bloomed like a halo.

At first, the runes were etched right onto its sleek, silver surface. But in the next, they became animated, wiggling about as though life had been breathed into them.

They rose from the surface, forming a protective disk of flickering silver that grew brighter and brighter until it rivaled even the second barrage of beams headed right for its small frame.

Tobyn's eyes widened.

"RETREAT! EXECUTE EVASIVE MANEUVERS, NOW!"

Very few seemed to understand the purpose behind Tobyn's orders, but their job wasn't to understand. Even though some of the Guild Head's children saw themselves as less than, any one of them that was known to have such a connection wouldn't be easily crossed. On top of this, Tobyn wasn't like them, he was born from the Head's legitimate wife. His orders were even less likely to be ignored.

It wouldn't be long, though, before they realized that Tobyn had saved all their lives.

The rippling silver runes reached an unspeakable peak, touching upon a level of brightness that seemed to rival the sun in the distance.

And then, everything seemed to collapse.

A black hole that was of miniature proportion and devastating impact ripped through the Fold of Reality. The orbit of the planet was shaken, tilted off its axis. The moons in the distance were warped, threatening to be slung into the ether as they trembled to maintain the path they had followed for billions of years. And the ships that had once surrounded them all fell into chaos.

Some of the ships were simply too close.

Their front hulls were smashed to pieces, warped beneath the twisting space. What once were behemoth-like ships the size of large asteroids suddenly became scrap metal.

Sparks flew and blood floated through the air. Whether by irony or simply as a display of the cruelty of this world, the latter was nothing more than fleeting droplets amidst the carnage, the much larger ship parts making them difficult to even notice.

The ships that were further away were a bit luckier, but the result was still them losing control of their steering.

The end was devastating.

Some of the ships plunged toward Planet Vincero below, painting what looked like beautiful swirls of white, green and blue from the outside with heart trembling explosions and the blood curdling sounds of groaning and whining metal.

Some of the ships were flung out of their orbit, drifting into the depths of space with off kilter propulsion that wrestled and fought against their control.

But, the most devastating were three ships that crashed headlong into one another. The resulting devastation was even more furious than that of the ships that had been too close. At least in the latter case, it ended as soon as it started. But, in this one, it seemed to continue into infinity. Whenever the explosions had seemingly come to a stop, another chain was let off.

The skies were filled with fireworks and smoke, but it wasn't the kind one could enjoy on a national Independence Day. Rather, it was the kind that made one's ears bleed, one's gaze dazed, and etched their minds with the memory of every shake and tremble they experienced. p??ú??????

Many years later, when this matter became a case study for the history books... It would become known that the Milky Way Guild had suffered such devastating losses targeting a ship that didn't even have their target on board.

In fact... the ship wasn't related to their target in the slightest.

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On board the silver ship, tunneling through space to a location unknown, one could find three women.

One wore a stoic expression, taking control of the steering before passing it on to an AI. The second wore a look of confusion, seemingly wondering how it is she had gotten caught in this mess while her heart was lodged in her throat. And the last was in a daze, blanky staring at something on her wrist without a word. In fact, from her demeanor, it seemed that she might not speak for a very, very long time. And maybe if you pried into her mind, you would find that she might not have had the intention of speaking ever again.

Who else could these three be if not Yuri, Savahn and Aina?

It was quite an irony that an action Leonel could very well abhor with all his heart and soul... Had all but guaranteed his safety.

What no one realized, though, was that half a day later, it wasn't only a small ship that covertly slipped through the cracks left by the Guild's defenses. There was another protected vessel that seemed to have been doing the same. And, oddly enough, these two left from completely different ends of Planet Vincero and headed in direction opposite to each other.

The first held Leonel who was shocked by the ease of his escape. He had been certain that he would need to use almost all of the trump cards he had planned. Had he known things would be like this, he could have left within the first hour.

As for the second...

The vessel meandered through space. It looked like a small glass orb traveling through the darkness, not being even half the width of a palm. Obviously, it was impossible for it to hold a person, and its speed was on a level that put Leonel's own vessel to shame.

Weeks later, this vessel descended onto an obscure, desolate planet.

It tore into the almost none existent atmosphere, following a path into a hole so small even a fist couldn't fit down and through an elaborate set of complex and steadily widening tunnels that looked more and more manmade with every trek forward.

And then... It appeared in a large lab setting covered wall to wall in silver metals, complex glassware, and thick, forearm sized wires, all of which could be found in one aspect or another upon the centerpiece of the whole thing...

It was a large tube... filled with fluid up to the very brim.

Around it, three men and women sat monitoring it, their expressions serious.

When they noticed the vessel, they sighed a breath of relief. It seemed that everything had been successful. They could finally begin. Though they knew and understood the ability of their patron, the logistics of this mission had seemed far too complex to accomplish. But, none of that mattered. In the end, they had succeeded.

The vessel entered a special compartment, finding itself floating with the glass tube... Along with the body of the half naked girl that hovered within.

The moment the vessel touched this girl, a light pulse rippled and she opened her eyes.

The three men and women smiled as the young woman stepped out, her body dripping with thick, viscous liquid.

“Welcome back, Miss Heira.”

Chapter 834

Heira's body and hair dripped with the thick, light blue liquid. Two women quickly stepped forward, helping her to dry off and slip a robe onto her shoulders. The liquid was a bit difficult to work with usually, but it was clear that they had long since been prepared for this.

Heira remained silent for a long while, but none of the three said a word to rush her. After all, she had just experienced her own death, it would take some time for anyone to become used to such a thing. The fact she wasn't having a visible mental breakdown was already enough of a testament to her fortitude.

It could be said that Heira's ability was quite unique and fell under the Soul Manipulation Ability Index. The existence of this ability was exactly why many referred to Soul Force as such, despite the fact it would usually be more accurately described as a Mental Force or pressure.

Despite Leonel's talent, he had never seen any sort of manifestation of his soul. He didn't see any miniature version of himself nor could he find a center of his consciousness. As far as he knew, there was no tangible form of the soul, or at the very least, there wasn't one for his.

Heira, though, was different. Those with her ability were capable of not only seeing this form, but also making use of it. As for the Ability Index itself, it too was split into five levels.

Seed. Root. Form. Manipulation. Immortality.

The first Seed level refers to the most immature form of the soul. It is a step beyond what most would have and is usually available to only those with either this ability, are from a special race, or have a special Lineage Factor.

At the second level, this Seed takes Root. This represents a growth in the soul's strength and also an increase in its sturdiness and durability.

Finally, at the third level, the Root takes Form. The most common form is a representation of the person, usually a smaller, more ethereal image of the body. However, this doesn't always have to be the case, especially for those who reach the fourth level.

Upon reaching Manipulation, not only can the Form of the soul be changed, but it can now exist completely independent of the body without penalty. One who has touched this fourth level could live just as long as they would with a body as they would without one.

Finally, Immortality, reserved for Savants. At this stage, the soul gains a lifespan as long as the planets and the stars. Even if the body decays and wilts, the soul will last far beyond this.

No one is sure if this is true Immortality or not, but what is guaranteed is that you will far outlive those of your Dimension and even higher Dimensions.

All of this mostly explained the form the soul would take at each stage, but otherwise, it seemed like a useless ability unless you could reach the fourth or fifth levels. But, this is far from the case. ρ??∪???????

Those with the Soul Manipulation Ability Index have many abilities outside of taking control of their souls.

They are more intelligent than most, they are more perceptive and sensitive, their senses are otherworldly, and when paired with the right techniques, their soul, thanks to added durability compared to others, could display quite devastating prowess. Meeting someone with a Soul Manipulation ability, who also had the techniques to pair with them, was amongst the bravest things a person could ever do.

Heira had reached the third level, the Form stage. At this level, her soul couldn't exist indefinitely without a body like it would be able to at the fourth level, but it could still last several months to even years without one. This had given her more than enough time to make it to this lab and take over this vessel that had been prepared for her.

This 'vessel' was actually a clone of her original body with its face modified just enough that those familiar with her wouldn't be able to recognize her.

The issue with clones is that they had short lifespans and were usually far different in personality from the person they had been cloned from. But, they weren't difficult to prepare. After all, even the people of 21st Century Earth, a mere Third Dimensional land, could accomplish this. So, how could Heira not with the resources of the Milky Way Guild?

That said, the issues clones faced were all erased when it was paired with a Soul Manipulation ability. As long as her soul was intact, Heira could do this as many times as she pleased. In fact...

“You’ve made this body to my specifications?”

“Yes, Miss Heira! We spared no expense. The weaknesses of your former body are no longer present. This body has the strength of someone at the Peak of the Fifth Dimension and we’ve also given it the Light Elemental Innate Node Miss requested.”

“Which Light Elemental Innate Node?” Heira asked.

“We weren’t able to procure anything high level. Integrating an Innate Node into a clone proved to be far more difficult than we thought. It is only an unranked Light Elemental Innate Node.”

“I see..”

Heira seemed neither disappointed nor happy about this. Though, it was hard to tell if this was because she didn’t care one way or another, or if it was because she was still getting used to using the facial muscles of her new body.

Preparing powerful clones like this had been a technology available for thousands of years already in the Milky Way, probably even longer than that when the scope of the entire Dimensional Verse was taken into account.

The issue was that it was far too expensive for a soldier that would only last a year if you were lucky. It could be said that Heira’s ability was simply perfect to take advantage of this and was quite reminiscent of a certain special race of people who built their own bodies after birth...

“Good.” Heira clenched and unclenched her fists. “What’s happened in my absence?”

Chapter 835

“... So he survived.”

Heira's voice carried a level of monotony that bordered on robotic. If it wasn't for the fact her voice flowed smoothly, it would be easy to mistake her for an AI. But, as time passed, she seemed to warm up—not toward a happier emotion, but rather just toward feelings in general.

"We cannot be sure, Miss. According to our analysis, the flying ship that caused the commotion originated from the main base. However, the last sighting of Leonel Morales was at mining site 102A where the corpses of Drunken Kicks, Shadow Rat, Double Shot, and Panda were all found.

"We have cause to believe that the flying ship did not have Leonel Morales on it. But Planet Vincero was thrown into chaos soon afterward. So, it is impossible to tell if he is still on the surface or if he has long since left."

"He has left." Heira confirmed expressionlessly.

The three scientists looked toward one another but didn't bother to ask for an explanation. They had been working with Heira for long enough to know that she would provide an answer if she wanted to. If not, there was no use in asking.

Heira took a deep breath and her body suddenly relaxed. In what felt like an instant, her usual demeanor had returned. The subtle elegance of her movements, the intelligent twinkle of her eye, the calming rhythm of her breath... As though something had snapped back into place, her personality was back.

"Took a bit longer than expected." Heira shook her head. "That isn't all that happened, right?"

"Right. Gretta Ovilteen and Rollo Ovilteen have suffered quite some backlash due to their failure.

"Second, the four organizations who had participated have returned to their territories but have entered a state of near seclusion. Their movements are limited, and much of the movement that there is has been turned finding Leonel Morales.

"Thirdly, the Old Gentleman seems to have Havoc in hand as expected. It seems that he still feels as though there is a piece of the puzzle he is missing."

Heira nodded. "That old man has always been sharp. If not for this, he wouldn't be put in charge of such an important asset. However, it doesn't matter how sharp he is if he doesn't have enough information."

"... Miss, is it safe to trust that Havoc merchant?"

"It doesn't matter." Heira said without care. "He too doesn't have enough information to make a change. One way or another, the Milky Way Guild will fall to its knees before me."

Did Heira love Anared, her late fiancé? The answer was yes. But, the reason why might be surprising to most.

Those with the Soul Manipulation ability were incredibly sensitive. They experienced emotions at a much higher high than most and were natural empaths.

Heira originally saw Anared as a light along a path toward her ultimate goal. However, that easily blossomed into a true infatuation, very quickly. It didn't help that Anared's feelings for her were as clear as if she could read a book on his thoughts.

To her, the death of Anared was both the loss of a loved one and a setback that ruined plans she had been laying for decades.

Still, she was Heira Ovilteen. Failure was something she had long since become accustomed to...

The truth was that she hadn't expected to die in this way. Though she had assigned a small probability to it, it could be said that Leonel had surprised her once again, something he had quite the habit of doing. But, she still felt that this outcome was even better than the one she had planned.

It was so surprising and out of left field that no one would even have an inkling that she had staged it. That made it perfect.

"I'll kill him soon enough... But in this case, I have to thank him. I'm one step closer to overthrowing that so-called father of mine." ρ???(???????)

Things would have been easiest if she could have Earth in her back pocket. Had she succeeded, it would have only been a matter of time before the Guild Council would be completely on her side.

However, she felt that this method might taste even sweeter than her original plans.

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It took Leonel even longer than it had Heira to reach a planet he could disembark upon. Unfortunately, he had invested most of his Craft's utility in escaping the immediate surroundings of Planet Vincero. This was why he leaned so heavily into Wind Elemental Ores. He had been planning on making use of the volatile winds to give him an added boost the people the Milky Way Guild wouldn't be able to match.

What he hadn't known at the time was that there wouldn't be any of the defensive nets he had been expecting to find. In fact, there was nothing at all. He soared away from the planet as though he was on a simple commute.

When Leonel managed to land on this mostly uninhabited planet, he didn't even step out of his ship. Instead, he took out his communication talisman and began to modify it with his Crafting Quill.

By now, he felt that Aina should be back on Planet Valiant. So, using the connection already established between the two talismans, he would teleport to her location. This would also help just in case they were someplace unexpected, that way he wouldn't make a trip without reason.

Aina's half already had a built in protective measure that would alert and send him over should someone other than her use it. So, piggy backing off of this mechanism wasn't difficult.

'I should hide the fluctuations and maybe add some concealment on the other end. It would be pretty ridiculous if I teleported over just to be chased again...'

...

In a rented room of a restaurant, a heated debate that had been going on for weeks already was still raging on. It most definitely didn't help that there wasn't a single ounce of estrogen in sight. From what

could be seen, no one would expect that these were a group of brothers that had been together for ages.

“... We can’t do that! I still think we should just tell him she went to see her dad and will be back!”

“You want to lie to him?!”

“It’s not lying! It’s the truth!”

“When in her words did she say she would be back?! Why are you defending that woman?!”

“I’m not defending her! But she clearly had her own reasons!”

“I don’t care what the reasons are, they’re all bullshit! We need to tell Cap the truth!”

Another volley of testosterone filled insults and roars was about to be levied when an amused voice suddenly and easily cut through it all. Its volume wasn’t even particularly loud, and yet it caused them all to turn their gaze toward the very same location.

“Tell me the truth about what?”

Leonel appeared with a smile, canceling his concealment since it didn’t seem to be necessary.

His gaze drifted across the room before it landed on the table. A stack of objects immediately caught his attention, causing his smile to freeze and slowly fade.

Chapter 836

“Cap!”

The voices all called out in unison, drowning out even the volume they had been arguing at before. And yet, Leonel didn't seem to hear them. His gaze was expressionlessly locked onto the items on the table.

The Segmented Cube. The blue veined mask. The talisman. The necklace.

His eyes almost carelessly swept through them all, his expression giving nothing away. Still, it was as though he was standing in a parallel dimension, a space he shared with the items on the table. He couldn't see, hear or even smell anything else. The floor beneath his feet might as well have been nothing but an endless void he was freefalling through.

The room fell into silence when they noticed the direction of Leonel's gaze. They all suddenly felt that it was ridiculous that they had been debating this topic for so long, only for Leonel to see through it all due to a slight carelessness.

They could have never expected that Leonel would suddenly appear in this fashion. Even if they had wanted to hide the items, they never had a chance to.

"Cap?"

Joel stood from his position, approaching Leonel.

None of them had ever seen Leonel get emotional. Even when he felt rage, he would instead enter a state of coldness that made even them uncomfortable.

These group of brothers had been together for more than ten years, not including the time they had spent apart. They had grown together... From the time they were five years old, putting on their first football pads, to the time they were all 17 year old seniors.

As long as they had played together, they had, of course, lost their fair share of games. However, not a single one of them could ever remember losing when Leonel got like this. It was as though they were all forced into a hyper tense state, their minds and bodies on full alert like they were awaiting orders.

Joel stood before Leonel, but the latter seemed to look right through him. It was the most uncomfortable Joel had ever felt in his lifetime.

Leonel didn't divert his gaze, he didn't crane his neck or tilt his head to the side. In fact, Joel felt as though a hole was being torn through his throat.

"Is that everything?" Leonel spoke.

His voice didn't seem to carry much hurt. In fact, it was quite soothing. It was the kind of voice one could listen to when falling asleep.

Leonel's voice wasn't normally like so. It wasn't too deep nor was it too high. It had a mellow, carefreeness to it that drew those around him in. But at this moment, the soothing nature masked a sort of coercion that demanded an answer... it was the kind of question anyone hearing it was compelled to answer, the kind of question they couldn't lie in answer of even if they tried.

"Yes, that's everything." Joel responded.

"I see."

Leonel fell into silence and the room followed suit. The eyes of all his teammates focused on him, worry marring their brows. However, none of them spoke a single word. They knew that at this moment, nothing would get through to Leonel as he stepped into his own world. It was just like it had been in the beginning. He wouldn't even be able to hear them. ρ??√???????

And they were exactly right.

Within Leonel's Dream World, a Dream Clone of himself stood. Before this Dream Clone sat a golden balance. On one side of the balance, there was a near perfect replica of Aina but it was possible to see right through it. On the other, there was a perfect replica of Leonel that could also be seen right through.

Leonel's Dream Clone waved a hand. Replicas of the blue veined mask, the talisman, the necklace and the Segmented Cube manifested, falling onto Aina's side.

The golden balance shifted, falling heavily to one side. A booming noise reverberated through the white walls of the Dream World, sending wave after wave of trembling sounds in every which direction. However, Leonel's Dream Clone hardly reacted, even as the heart of Aina's replica fell.

Grasping at air, the Dream Clone began to form motes of light. After each one of these motes was formed, they would gently float to the side of Leonel's replica.

Leonel grasped at air, forming another mote of light. Within, an image of him first meeting Aina played. One could see her short cut hair and shy smile.

Leonel lightly tossed it forward before forming another. Within this one you could find his first ever confession to Aina. One would have thought that her first reaction would have been that flustered runaway everyone had become used to. But, Leonel's recollection was different.

That day, she beamed a smile so bright it was etched onto his heart forever. It was only after that that she seemed to panic and run away...

Leonel tossed the mote of light forward. The balance shifted slightly, but it wasn't nearly enough to balance things once more.

One after another, the motes of light continued to build. Every memory, every emotion, every first time, every experience.

However, even after the last memory landed, the balance hadn't been balanced.

Leonel stood expressionlessly. There were no memories left. He had placed down everything from the seven years he had known Aina. Yet, all of it wasn't enough to outweigh those four items.

At that moment, it was almost as though scissors hovered above Leonel's heart, ready to snip at something that had been with him for what felt like a lifetime. However, just as the shimmering blades

glistened, prepared to snap close, a memory hovered into Leonel's view, dancing upon the side of his replica.

It was an image of Leonel kneeling on all fours over Aina's body. The bottom of her legs had been blown off, charred beyond recognition. His own face was covered in soot and grime, rage painting his expression.

Without a word, Leonel's hand grasped at air once again. This time, it wasn't a memory that formed but rather an item. Compared to the other items, it was shabby and even cracked in multiple places. And yet, it weighed heavily in Leonel's hand.

It was a bracelet, a mere C-grade Treasure.

Leonel tossed it forward.

When it landed, the balance trembled, finally shifting until both platforms were perfectly level.

Chapter 837

Aina sat in silence, having not moved in the weeks they had been on this spacecraft. Despite her usually large appetite, she hadn't eaten anything. And, completely out of character, she hadn't lifted a single finger to practice or train.

She simply sat there, staring at her wrist the same way she had been for ages already.

On it, an old, cracked bracelet lay. She couldn't drum up the courage to hand it over with everything else. She convinced herself that Leonel didn't need it. After all, he had so many valuable things, right? He wouldn't miss a C-grade Treasure... right? It would be fine if she kept it, it wouldn't be a big deal. He's probably already forgotten about its existence...

Aina blinked, causing a discomfort to surge through her body. The dryness of her eyes almost made her feel as though something was scraping along them, making her shiver.

“Aina, you need to rest...”

Savahn tried to convince Aina to take a rest again. She had lost count of the number of times she had tried already. Even for someone within the Fourth Dimension, it most definitely wasn't healthy to remain awake for so long. Even Leonel who had Dream Force within the Fifth Dimension still felt the need to sleep at least once a week, let alone Aina whose Soul Force was only in the Fourth Dimension.

Before Aina could once again give her a perfunctory answer about being just fine, Yuri's Force suddenly surged. Aina couldn't react before she found her eyes closing involuntarily.

“Ah...”

Savahn reached her arms out and caught Aina before she could slump out of her seat.

The ship didn't have a lot of space. There was Yuri up ahead who took the helm and there was just enough space for about four people to sit facing each other in pairs toward the back. The seat could also recline to allow a decent sleeping experience and there was a compartment in the back with plenty of preserved food.

Savahn helped put Aina's seat into a reclined position and let her sleep.

She couldn't help but sigh under her breath. She had witnessed a lot of breakups in her lifetime. After all, she had once been a high school student. But, this clearly felt like it was something beyond that.

Unfortunately, she didn't have any personal experience in such matters. She had never fallen for a man, so she didn't understand any of what Aina was experiencing.

But she still couldn't wrap her mind around it all. If it hurt you so much, why did you do it at all?

“We will be crossing from a Fifth Dimensional Fold of Reality into a Sixth Dimensional Fold very soon.” Yuri's voice came from the front. “You should prepare yourself. The jump from Fifth to Sixth is the

Savahn didn't really know how to respond. She didn't think she was hated, it was just that these two had shared a secret that she wasn't privy to. It was like finding out you were the third wheel in a relationship formed for two. If she was honest, this was a good portion of the reason she had pulled away as well.

The irony of it all, though, was that back then, she had drawn a line between herself, Aina and Yuri because Aina killed Conrad so viciously. But, Aina had done that for Leonel's sake. And now, it was a matter between Aina and Leonel that once again brought them together.

"Savahn, I am a child that Miss Aina's father adopted. I have an obligation to protect her above all else. However, none of this means that I never saw you as a friend."

Savahn was stunned into silence, not knowing how to respond. But, her gaze glistened with unshed tears, her lips curling into a slight smile.

"... Thank you, Yuri..."

"Ah, what are you thanking me for? I need some support to deal with the Miss's mood swings."

The two girls giggled, crossing through the depths of space with a small bit of warmth.

**

"Alright."

Leonel's gaze regained their focus as he smiled lightly, patting Joel's shoulder.

"What's wrong with you, you look like you've seen a ghost."

"Ah... Cap...?" Joel didn't know how to respond to this.

One second, Leonel was completely expressionless. And, in the next, he was smiling warmly. What the hell was going on?

“Oh? It looks like everyone’s here. That’s good.”

Leonel suddenly released a fiendish grin.

“How about we stir up some trouble?”

Chapter 838

“Cap? You’re alright?”

Leonel blinked. “Why wouldn’t I be?”

Joel was speechless. He knew that Leonel’s EQ wasn’t this low. Was he just pretending? Or did that brain of his finally short circuit? He didn’t even know how to respond to all of this.

Leonel smiled knowingly but didn’t say anything else. The way his own logic worked wasn’t something that he wanted to take the time to explain. The number of calculations—one part rigorous, and another part arbitrary—that went into his final decision was so large that he would have to be here all day if these guys insisted on him explaining it all.

To make matters worse, they might not even understand and assume that he was simply forgiving Aina because he was lovesick... When he was probably the only person in this world who wouldn’t be guilty of such a thing.

Did Aina’s actions hurt? Of course they did. Did Leonel understand why she had done so? He understood that as well.

He knew that Aina had abandonment issues. He knew that she suffered severely from panic attacks and anxiety. It was because of this that he didn’t want to look at her during those final moments. As much as

he cared for her, he simply couldn't ignore the life and death of his brothers for the sake of her emotions, right?

It was harsh when he put it that way, but it was the truth.

Maybe Leonel's greatest disappointment was that he had left Aina behind expressly so that she could protect his teammates from anything unexpected. Yet, from what it seemed like here, she had left before they were in the clear. The irony of it all wasn't lost on him in the slightest.

The second greatest disappointment was that she didn't believe he could come back alive. That lack of trust stung almost as much as anything else. It stung so much that Leonel knew he had made those memories far lighter than they should have been.

He had told Aina a long time ago that the one thing he would never tolerate was her losing trust in him. This time, she was barely within a threshold he could accept. If there was a next time, though, the golden balance might be even harsher than it was this time around.

Either way, the best case scenario right now was to pretend as though nothing had happened. At least that way, the boys would think that he just didn't want to talk about the topic and avoid it. He knew that they had likely said their fair share of harsh words about Aina in his absence, but since he had already made his decision for now, he didn't feel that that should continue.

And, truthfully, even if his decision had landed on the other side, rather than constantly hearing about how terrible she was, he would prefer if all thoughts of her were simply frozen out.

"What trouble are you trying to stir up, Cap?" Joel asked, seemingly realizing something. Since this was what Leonel wanted, who were they to not oblige? After all, it wasn't their relationship and it wasn't they who had invested so many years of their youth into it.

Leonel grinned, scanning the room. Right now, there were far more than the four that had come as seeded geniuses. Though many of his teammates had died during the Metamorphosis, it seemed that eight still remained. He couldn't help but feel genuinely happy seeing all their faces like this.

"Joel." ρ??ϕ???

“Yes?”

“If I said that I want us to rise to the top of the Dimensional Verse and stake our control over it all, what would you say?”

Joel’s eyes glowed. All nervousness he had felt about Leonel’s demeanor vanished with the wind. His back snapped straight and his chest broadened. One could almost feel the sharp aura of his ability whistling around him, leaving blade streaks in the air.

Was this it?

Looking into Leonel’s pale violet eyes, he could see purpose, ambition, determination... It wasn’t as though he had never seen the last of the three in Leonel before, but they had always been aimed toward short term goals. This was the first time he had ever seen the first two aimed toward something other than Aina.

If the team had to pick out their greatest fear in this whole ordeal, it wasn’t in the fact Aina was leaving Leonel at all. Objectively speaking, they had always believed that Leonel could do better. And, even with how beautiful Aina had become, wouldn’t it be too ridiculous if she was the only being with that level of beauty throughout the whole Dimensional Verse?

With their Captain’s qualifications, why wouldn’t he be able to find another?

No... What they had feared the most was that without Aina, the man they all respected and admired so much would suddenly become aimless once again... An arrow with untold power flying toward an endless abyss without target.

But now...

Joel began to laugh. His boisterous laughter was even fuller and rounder than Leonel’s own.

His dark skin almost glowed with an aura of its own. Even Leonel was slightly surprised to see that Joel had suddenly gained a slight violet tint to his energy that most definitely came from Leonel, himself.

Looking around the room, Leonel found seven more grinning faces looking back at him, each one of taking a portion of Leonel's violet energy for himself.

A warmth couldn't help but bloom in Leonel's heart. They hadn't asked any questions, they didn't want to know how or why... They simply took the leap because they trusted him.

And, for Leonel's violet energy to react on its own, taking it upon itself to share his King's Might with them all, that could only mean one thing...

Leonel trusted them unconditionally.

These were his brothers for a lifetime. These were the warriors that would stand by his side to the very end. These were his Generals.

Chapter 839

Joel. Milan. Raj. Drake. Franco. Arnold. Gil. Allan.

[Author's Note: No need to remember these names. I'll mention them so often in the future and with small reminders of who they are that they'll become your brothers too, lmao]

"Are you sure about this, Cap?" Joel asked. "After what happened on Planet Vincero, even though we're talented compared to their normal students, they're pretty much drawing a line between us and them. Something like taking them over from the inside would be difficult with how cautious they're being."

The group nodded in confirmation. Even while they were here, they were likely being monitored by someone or something. The only reason they weren't worried enough to warn Leonel was because they were sure that he wasn't stupid enough to come here without any sort of plan or counter to that.

That said... Leonel's next words made them question themselves.

"Oh right! Speaking of which, where are we right now?"

The group looked toward Leonel as though he was a madman. He had just escaped the pursuit of Fifth Dimensional entities, and it could even be argued that the only reason he managed to do so was because of the element of surprise.

Now, however, whoever came to track him down would be prepared and likely even more informed about all his abilities. He wouldn't just be able to wiggle his way out of this again so casually.

The fact he didn't even know where they were currently was a huge red flag. But, seeing how careless he seemed about it all, they were too speechless to reprimand him.

"... This is an Allied Planet, Cap." Gil spoke out.

Gil was Leonel's favorite receiver outside of James when they were on the football field. Rather than playing tight end like James, though, he played wide receiver. And, in fact, he was the one who caught the game winning touchdown in the final play after coach subbed James out in a rage.

He was a tall man, only an inch or two shorter than Leonel. But, he was quite lanky. In truth, his body composition and poor posture was eerily reminiscent of Apestus. It was just that Leonel knew quite well that Gil wasn't nearly as jacked as Apestus was. He had always said muscle training messed up his hand-eye coordination.

"Allied?" Leonel blinked, he had never heard this term before.

"Yeah. A lot of worlds are under joint ownership like this. They also double as pretty good entertainment centers and trade hubs. After this, we should definitely hit the strip club."

Gil's usually lanky and lazy appearance lit up when he reached this point. Leonel had wondered why the usually laid back brat had so graciously decided to explain things to him. It seemed that this was his purpose all along.

In their group, it could be said that the second biggest pervert outside of James was definitely Gil. Who knew how many hearts he had broken in Royal Blue Academy with that casually handsome face of his. That 5 o'clock shadow he could never bother to shave completely off and his swooping dirty blond hair left those poor girls not standing a chance.

Leonel chuckled. "Maybe later."

"Ah!" Gil almost leapt from his seat. "Did someone take over your body, cap?! Lemme check!"

Gil almost leapt across the table, expressing his shock in the most ridiculous of ways. But, he couldn't get very far before Franco palmed him in the face. p??J??????

Seemingly knowing exactly what was going to happen next, Arnold, who sat between the two of them, put a hand to both of their chests, keeping them apart.

"Are you trying to go, Elephant Ears?!" Gil snapped, his sharp nose leaking droplets of blood.

"Can't you see there's food on the table, Quasimodo? I don't want your BO stinking up my meal."

Gil and Franco had a... Love-hate relationship.

While Gil played wide receiver, Franco played cornerback, the latter of which was meant to defend against the former. It could be said that they were at war during every practice. One would think that they were enemies rather than teammates.

Franco was quite known for his overly large body parts. He had big feet, big hands and big ears. Somehow, it all came together for him in a pretty nice package. At the very least, he wasn't ugly. But, that wouldn't stop Gil from going at him.

Ironically, Arnold, who had stopped the two of them, had pretty much the same relationship with Milan due to on the field stuff. Arnold's gut was just as big as Milan's and his chest and arms were just as solid

and robust. The palms of his hands were probably even bigger than Franco's, completely stopping the two men from leaping at one another.

This was quite helpful to Arnold. After all, he played defensive tackle while Milan played center. Their battles during practice were quite infamous as well.

Leonel watched all of this with a smile on his face. How long had it been? It seemed that in his obsession with Aina, he had neglected his brothers. The fact they weren't blaming him now when he knew they had every right to do so only made him affirm his resolve to not forget them again.

"Of course, we can go later." Leonel laughed.

"No, Cap, for real. Did someone mess with your head?"

The entire group looked over. Since when would Leonel ever agree to go to a strip club?

This time, though, it was Allan who slapped the back of Gil's head. It was 'obvious' to him that Leonel was just trying to get over Aina. Why were you asking so many questions about it?

Leonel chuckled and shook his head.

"I once read somewhere that the places people are most vulnerable and open is a place like a brothel or a strip club. I wonder how much information is hidden in those walls?"

The group blinked as they looked at Leonel. Gil rubbed the back of his head, glaring at Allan. But, even he stopped and looked at Leonel when he heard this 'explanation'.

Go to the strip club for... 'information'? Riiiiight...

“Cap, it’s okay for you to join the ranks of us perverts. I won’t judge you.”

Leonel laughed at their reaction. He had been mostly joking. He didn’t ‘need’ much information right now. Or, more accurately, there wasn’t any information that he could suddenly receive from going to a strip club right this moment that wouldn’t be like a pie falling from the sky.

Leonel knew that the likelihood he would find something useful in such a case was minimal if anything. Rather, he only put forward the idea because he had something else on his mind: An information network.

During his time battling Alexandre the Apex’s Kingdom, Leonel had long since learned the value of not only having information, but subverting your enemy’s information as well.

The trouble with all of this was that even Leonel wasn’t exactly sure where to start with all of this.

As things stood now, he had... nine subordinates. His eight brothers here and Elthor who he had already sent to take control of the Oryx, a task that shouldn’t be too difficult for him to accomplish.

But, an information network, especially one that would need to cover the whole of a galaxy, at the very least, was far beyond his current self.

The ‘logical’ answer would be to make use of information networks that already existed. Leonel was sure that he would find multiple. But, the trouble with those information networks is that their ‘confidentiality’ only extended as far as their benefits did.

If Leonel started purchasing large sums of information related to the rise and fall of great powers—not to mention the fact he didn’t have the funds to do such a thing currently—there was no way that these information networks wouldn’t take advantage of this.

Of course, Leonel could use this to his advantage as well and walk a tight rope of painting a false image of what he truly wanted while siphoning away information he actually needed.

However, such a thing would only be possible if he already had a full understanding of the scope of many things... But if he had that, why would he need the information networks to begin with?

And just like that, he was back to square one.

After reaching such a dead end, many would feel despair, but Leonel grinned beside himself. This sort of challenge, how long had it been since he felt it? How could he possibly hold back his smile?

Unfortunately, when the boys saw Leonel's eyes glaze over and a 'creepy' smile spread across his face, they still thought he was thinking of the strip club.

Allan shook his head, shifting his glasses up his nose.

"Cap has already fallen." ρ??∪???????

"I think we might need to replace she who shall not be named soon before he falls into depravity."
Drake agreed.

Drake, unlike the others, played the same position as Leonel: quarterback. It was just that he was a rookie when Leonel was a senior, and given how good Leonel was, he never got the chance to play.

Still, he had spent most of his freshman year emulating everything Leonel did because Leonel was his idol. So, he had picked up many of Leonel's habits, including an overall disdain for all things women until he could find his own Aina. By now, what once was an emulation had become the true Drake, so he too felt an obligation to 'save' their captain.

As for Allan, he was pretty much asexual. He didn't find any fondness in women or men, he just liked his computer screens and programming. Unfortunately, rather than gaining a programming profession, he had been slotted in as a Five Star Safety and was forced to play football from a young age.

To make matters more depressing, the ability he awakened also had nothing to do with programming, leaving him even more depressed. It seemed the world didn't want him doing what he loved to do the most.

“Alright, alright.” Leonel chuckled. “Forget the strip club for now. In a bit, I plan on leaving for a legacy I’ve been putting off for a long time. It won’t be right to do anything until I can leave the Third Dimension and enter the Fourth and hopefully Fifth.”

Leonel knew that he would be able to blaze through the Fourth Dimension. Thanks to his Metal Body, his body was mostly tempered already. While it would take even most talents years, it should take him at most a few weeks to months. Theoretically, anyway.

But, in order to do this, he definitely needed the rest of [Dimensional Cleanse] first.

“You’re leaving again already?” Raj pouted.

For such a big man, the face he made was almost adorable.

Leonel smiled. “This time I won’t be away for long. In fact, I promise that every step we take forward from now on will be together.”

Hearing such a promise, the eyes of the group lit up. It seemed that Leonel realized he had been neglecting them too. Since that was the case, there was no need to say anything more. If there was anything they could trust in Leonel for, it was that he would never make the same mistake twice.

“For now, I think you guys are right. Trying to take down your organizations from the inside out will prove to be difficult. Rather than that, I only want you to monitor them and gather up information. Even things you all feel are useless, note them down and preferably, memorize them.

“Since I’m here, though, I won’t leave without giving you all something in return.”

Leonel scanned the room. He had left them all to grow and improve on their own for too long. If he wanted to be a King, his own combat prowess wasn’t the only one of importance. He had to make sure that everyone around him would grow as well.

And luckily, he had formulated a technique perfect for this based on the Ability Index.

Dream Path.