

Descent 391

Chapter 391

“Is something the matter?” Leonel asked.

Leonel couldn't really understand why Anared had come here with such an aggressive stance. He couldn't remember offending Anared before. Yet, the latter was wearing an even colder expression than he usually did.

“What do you mean by this exactly?” Anared replied coldly.

“! What the hell are you talking about?”

Anared stared at Leonel for a long time.

“It seems you want to die.”

Leonel's gaze grew cold.

At that moment, Aina also reacted. A slight red light flickered within her almost golden irises. It seemed as though she might pull out her sword at any moment.

“Big brother, what are you doing?” Syl's voice suddenly cut into the conversation. But, Anared didn't respond to his sister.

He looked from Leonel to Aina and back.[PANDA-NOVEL.COM](http://PANDA-NOVEL.COM)

“You'll leave her if you know what's good for you.” Anared said coldly.

Leonel suddenly took a step forward. There was nothing that could get him riled up quicker than matters related to Aina.

In a single bound, he already stood less than a foot from Anared. With his height, he stared down from above, his gaze reflecting a slight violet hue.

Anared's sword began to vibrate wildly to his back as though sensing a threat. But, Anared didn't take a step back, his white robes billowing beneath Leonel's aura.

"I don't know what story you've woven for yourself," Leonel began with an icy tone, "But, I'd suggest you watch your words. The only reason I chose to join your Keafir family's quota was to find her. I'm sure you're intelligent enough to understand what that means without me spelling it out for you."

Leonel's meaning was clear. Why would he choose the Keafir family over Aina? He would rather fall out with them at this very moment than give up on Aina.

However, his words only enraged Anared more. Others took what Leonel said at face value, but all he heard was that Leonel toyed with his sister's emotions for the only purpose of finding another woman. And, now that he had found her, he couldn't be bothered to care about his sister anymore.

SHING! SHING! SHING!

"BROTHER!" Syl all but screamed out. PANDA NOVEL

Anared frowned and looked toward his younger sister.

"You're embarrassing me! Step back!"

Anared was taken aback by his sister's words. This was the first time Syl had ever raised her voice toward him. Whether it was out of respect or fear, she never had.

"You'!"

“You misunderstood.” Syl continued. “It was sister-in-law that made it look as though we were involved. Leonel never made any advances on me.”

Anared’s frown deepened. “It doesn’t matter. He must take responsibility regardless.”

“Brother!”

“I don’t care.” Anared continued coldly. “Since he can use our Keafir family, he should be able to take responsibility for it.”

Anared looked back toward Leonel. He was the only one that seemed to match Leonel’s aura without taking a step back. In fact, his battle intent soared as though he couldn’t wait to cut Leonel down right where he stood. ρ???(???????)

The red in Aina’s eyes slowly faded as she seemed to catch an inkling of what was going on. Her eyes shifted toward Syl for a moment before looking away.

Unfortunately, no one was in position to stop this face off because the three leaders of this trial were having a heated debate of their own.

‘|

“What the hell’s going on Sael?” One of the two men questioned.

“ ‘| That kid’s family name is Morales.”

The expressions of the two changed.

The alter's abilities were mysterious and abstruse. It had the ability to delve into one's mind and find the truest form of address for a person. So, they had no doubt that whether he was a part of that family or not, Leonel's name truly was Morales.

“ ‘| You sure it's not a case of a lower plane taking on a name they shouldn't? That happens all the time' |”

Sael shook her head. “‘| His' | He has a Quasi Grade Six Empty Spear Embryo and a Perfect Grade Six Variant Earth affinity.”

The two men were left speechless once again.

At this point, Sael wanted to shed tears. Only she knew that this wasn't the end of it. The more she thought back to Leonel's list of talents, it made her want to ram her head into a wall. Was this the pain of comparing yourself to another?

‘Complete Bow Embryo at 18 years old' | What kind of nonsense is that' |’

“Then what should we do?”

The three fell into silence before one of the men stood.

“This is stupid. Why are we hiding away in a corner talking amongst ourselves. Isn't that man himself over there? Sael, you go talk to him and we'll handle these preliminary rounds. Maybe we're missing something important.”

The three of them hesitated.

Usually, Heirs like this were quite eccentric. What Heir to a Seventh Dimensional family would come down to the Fourth Dimension to chase an ugly woman? If this wasn't eccentric, then what was?

Who knew, maybe Leonel wanted to keep a low profile and would lash out at them if he was exposed. Knowing this, Sael couldn't help but glare toward the male who spoke. Since you were so confident, why don't you go?

The male coughed. "The fairer sex has a better chance of dealing with such things. Just look at your'!"

The male's gaze shifted toward Sael's ample bosom, taking a gulp. How such a thin fabric held back such a'! bountiful harvest was beyond him.

" '! Yup'! definitely'! he wouldn't be able to bear doing anything to you'!"

Sael's glare intensified. But, thinking of where they were and the image they were meant to project, she decided against slapping her colleague upside his head.

'!

"Leonel Morales'!"

A voice suddenly interrupted the heated stare down between Leonel and Anared.

It hesitated for a moment before continuing.

" '! And Aina Brazinger. Come with me, please."

Leonel's gaze didn't seem to want to leave Anared. But, there was a strong tug at his robes that pulled him back.

Aina all but dragged Leonel away. It seemed that her strength was still ridiculous'! No, it had gotten even more ridiculous.

“Alright, kids! Line up! Papa Ely is going to eliminate 90% of you!” One of the two remaining men stepped up somewhat too enthusiastically.

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Leonel gave Anared one more look before turning away and following Aina.

He realized that he was even more sensitive about Aina compared to how he usually was. Of course, he somewhat understood why this was and inwardly kicked himself. The more he acted like this, the more subconscious Aina would be. He wasn't doing her any favors by being like this.

If others heard Leonel's thoughts, they would realize that he seemed to be far more introspective about himself in relation to Aina than he was about himself alone. It was quite an interesting phenomenon, but Leonel, of course, wouldn't notice this.

Sael led the two away. Somehow, likely through a teleportation pad, they disappeared and reappeared in a hidden room that oversaw the first floor. However, Leonel was certain that no one could see them as though they were standing behind a one-way viewing pan of glass.

Once they reached this point, Leonel subtly put up his guard. This had long since become a habit of his. In truth, if he could have refused Sael's invite, he probably would have.

Unfortunately, the environment only became more constrained over time because Sael didn't speak immediately. In fact, she seemed to be hesitating.

After a while, she somewhat awkwardly puffed out her chest as though gathering her courage.

“! Be honest with me, why have you come here?” [PANDA-NOVEL.COM](http://PANDA-NOVEL.COM)

Sael looked right at Leonel, ignoring Aina. In truth, the only reason she had called Aina here was because she hoped that whatever feelings Leonel had for Aina would cause him to go easier on her.

“Uh ‘|”

Leonel stood in confusion before he suddenly ‘understood’.

“‘| I know I’m from Earth but I didn’t hear anything about being unallowed to participate because of this. Was I not allowed?”

Sael froze.

From Earth? What was that supposed to mean?

‘Wait, I think I’ve heard of Earth before’ ‘| it’s a new world the higher ups are really invested in, but what does that have to do with this Heir? What kind of game is he playing here?’ PANDA NOVEL

Aina stood the side, quite invested in Sael’s answer as well. After all, she was from Earth too.

The truth was that the reason she had a ticket to Terrain in the first place was because she heard about Brave City.

It had to be remembered that the only reason Leonel would ever come to Terrain was because of Aina. And, the only reason Aina was sent to Terrain by Leonel in the first place was because she had the ticket to begin with.

If she couldn’t join the organization behind Brave City, she would have to change all of her plans.

“You’ ‘| really want to join us?” Sael was speechless.

Leonel frowned. He really couldn’t understand what Sael was getting at.

In truth, he didn’t want to join any organization. Every single one he had to this point had left a bad taste in his mouth. Plus, he had just rejected Old Hutch’s offer just a few months ago with the excuse

that he didn't want to be under someone else's umbrella. If he joined another organization so quickly after this, he would feel a bit bad. ρ???

That said' ;

Leonel looked toward Aina.

“You want to join them?” He asked.

Aina blinked before nodding.

Leonel smiled. “Then I do too.”

His reply was simple but it held quite some sharpness to it. It was very obvious that he was only doing so for Aina, yet it also seemed this was enough to firm his resolve to an immovable degree. It sounded like even if Sael tried to reject him now, he would fight her to the death for standing in his way.

Sael was stunned for a moment before her eyes glowed.

‘Could it be about that? Of course, how could I not think of that’ ;’

Sael looked away and began mumbling to herself like a madwoman. She nibbled at her red lips, lost in her own thoughts.

‘If it really is about that then this could either be a great opportunity or a catastrophe’ ; I can't make this decision on my own’ ; Forget it, when the time comes, this will have little to nothing to do with me, anyway. I might as well reap some benefits now and worry about the trouble that might come later.’

Sael took a deep breath.

“Alright, here you both go.”



Aina and Leonel started as they caught two glistening pieces of metal out of the air. When they flipped over their palms, they found that these metal pieces were actually two rings.

Leonel looked down in confusion. "Spatial ring? What's this?"

"These rings have everything you need to be officially inducted as one of our members. Our uniforms and your identification tokens are all in there.

"But, I should tell you that until you've gone to our headquarters with your tokens and have been properly registered, they are blank. So, make sure to keep them safe until the time comes."

Leonel was stunned. He sent his senses into the ring and as expected, he found everything Sael spoke about.

There were a pair of harem pants, a cloth that he assumed could work as the belt those three wore, and a heavy piece of neckwear also reminiscent of what those three wore.

The only difference was that the belt cloth he received didn't have the embroidery those three had. In addition, his neckwear was a solid black that almost look like unpolished iron.

But'

Wasn't there supposed to be a long trial?

He half expected that he would have to put his life on the line several times just to get an invite to this organization' all for them to piss him off for some reason or another in a few months to eventually force him to leave them.

That seemed to be the story of his life to now. Struggling just to earn some more struggling.

He had never been expected to so suddenly be handed what all those geniuses of Terrain were fighting tooth and nail for' ;

What the hell was going on?

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Leonel was quite speechless for a long while.

Aina looked down at the ring in her hand before looking toward Leonel's side profile. Though she could sense how surprised Leonel was as well, she also felt that this had to do more with him than her. It left her feeling quite curious.

But, when she suddenly remembered Leonel's words from earlier, she blushed and looked away as though unwilling to acknowledge the fact that she had been curious in the first place.

"Oh right, I also forgot to mention the last thing. The ring also asks as a life saving treasure, but it won't be activated quite yet. The first time it will activate is when the recruitment process is over. When that happens, the ring will glow.

"Once it begins to glow, you have a day to prepare. Within that day, you can activate the ring at any time and be transported directly to our Core World. That's the place you will register.

"After the registration process is over, the ring will be able to function normally. As long as it's charged, or depending on the level to which it has been charged, it can teleport its wearer to either a random location within range or to a set location."

Leonel was still quite absentminded during this explanation, but he understood the gist of it.

Regardless, for now, the abilities of the ring were useless to him until the registration process ended. Only then would it activate and begin to work normally.

“Is there no set date for the registration process to be over?” Aina asked.

“Ah, about this’!” Sael sounded somewhat embarrassed. “‘! I will be honest. Normally, a place like Terrain wouldn’t even be worthy of gaining one of our recruitment stations. But, we’ve been forced to widen our net recently due to various circumstances. It’s much easier on us if we bring everyone in at once’! the cost is much less.PANDA-NOVEL.COM

“So, until we meet a certain number of new recruits, we won’t activate the formation. It will probably take between one to three years before the next mass teleportation.”

Sael coughed slightly and looked toward Leonel. It was only after seeing that Leonel didn’t react much to this that she sighed a breath of relief.

‘It seems that he cares more about this Aina’s opinion than anything else. I should tell the higher ups to focus on pleasing her, then’!’

“Oh!” Leonel’s eyes suddenly brightened. “Can you help me get rid of this thing? There must be certain privileges in being one of your members, right?”

Sael was stunned for a moment. When she focused on Leonel’s forehead, she finally noticed the monitoring brand hidden slightly behind his Emperor brand.

When she realized what Leonel was talking about, her expression became a bit weird.

They dared to mark a member of the Morales family? They overestimated themselves a bit too much, didn’t they’! ? If one of those behemoths became enraged, who would take responsibility for it, exactly?

Sael shook her head. ‘He probably got into a bit of trouble. But, it makes sense he couldn’t get rid of the brand, he’s still a bit too weak to do that.’

Leonel was right. Even members of the organization behind Brave City couldn’t be so casually branded without adequate reason, let alone a member of the Morales family. PANDA NOVEL

But, Sael seemed to 'understand' that Leonel was hiding himself away, likely to appear 'humble' before Aina and not try to flaunt his status. So, she simply nodded and her Force surged.

Regardless, since he was practically one of them now, it shouldn't be a problem. Since they only monitored Leonel to begin with, it shouldn't be a matter of life and death anyway.

Leonel's pupils constricted when he felt Sael's strength. He was truly shocked for a while.

In the blink of an eye, Leonel felt invisible shackles that had been around him shatter. Leonel suddenly felt much lighter and better than he had in a very long time.

He took a deep breath. It felt as though all the Force in the surroundings surged toward him as he smiled brightly.

"Thank you."

This had been a looming darkness over Leonel for a long while. He suddenly felt much freer.

Aina watched to the side with a puzzled expression. She wasn't sure what the monitoring brand meant. She also wondered how Leonel managed to get into more trouble than she did.

Aina had quite literally slaughtered her way out of cities and hadn't ended up with such a brand. It could only be said that Leonel was truly unlucky.  $\rho??\int??????$

Leonel smiled cheerfully. "I only have one more request, can you help us leave this place secretly?"

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Not long later, Leonel and Aina walked side by side out of Brave City. So many were focused on the proceedings that no one would notice until the preliminaries ended that two of the participants had disappeared. But, by then, several days would have passed.

“Do you have any plans until the ring activates?” Leonel asked Aina, his smile never leaving his face.

Aina shook her head lightly. Her main goal had been to join this organization. Now that she had, she planned to just wait patiently. Even if she did so on Terrain, it was unlikely anyone would bother her. After all, the status the two of them now had was quite high.

“Return to Earth with me.”

Aina’s steps paused for a moment. Her heart was a bit hesitant. Not only did she not like Earth very much, she also didn’t know how she felt about getting so close to Leonel again after she had just resolved herself not to.

Though she now knew that Leonel could hold his own and that maybe his background wasn’t so simple, this had never been the reason she tried to build a wall between them in the first place.

But, before she even went through a logical progression, she still found her head involuntarily nodding before she quickly shifted to shaking it.

“ ‘| | ‘| I just broke into the Fourth Dimension. I can’t return to Earth by normal means.”

After saying this, she sighed a breath of relief. Yes, this was a very good reason.

Hearing this, Leonel was slightly disappointed. He needed to return to Earth to deal with the Royal Blue Fort. He couldn’t allow things to just continue like that without stepping in. He was still worried about what might be happening to his teammates’|

Leonel looked down at his ring and slipped it onto his finger, walking aimlessly forward.

He couldn’t just ignore the lives of his teammates just to follow beside Aina. There was a limit to how much he could place her as his first priority.

Suddenly, Leonel froze.

He looked down at his ring. He remembered, when he looked inside of it, its space was much larger than his spatial bracelet.

When Leonel came to Terrain, he noticed that his bracelet went from having a two cubic meter space to one. But, this spatial ring had a ten cubic meter space.

” | The Segmented Cube should be able to fit inside of it even if there’s a human inside.’

Leonel’s eyes glowed and he explained his idea to Aina.

“ ‘| How about it?’”

Leonel looked toward Aina expectantly.

Aina’s heart trembled beneath Leonel’s gaze. For some reason, she couldn’t bring herself to say no. In fact, she felt somewhat warm inside.

A treasure that could house a person? Just what level of secret was that? But, Leonel didn’t even hesitate to divulge it.

Looking down toward the ground, her head nodded ever so slightly. Even with Leonel’s senses, he almost missed it. But, when he confirmed what he had seen, his grin took up half his face.

“Okay, let’s go. We can pay them back for putting us in this mess to begin with.”

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Leonel had no idea that while he was feeling the happiest, Shield Cross Stars had noticed the disappearance of his marking brand.

## Chapter 394

“What happened? How is that possible?” Fin abruptly stood, almost knocking his office table over.

During the past several months, he and Thorn had been wracking their brains, trying to figure out a way to pin Leonel into a corner. However, the longer they observed Leonel for, the more troublesome this matter seemed to become.

By some magic, the refugee they had singled out suddenly became a vassal of the Keafir family and even entered Brave City. Though their organization wasn't necessarily afraid of the powers behind Brave City, Scithe's hidden meaning during his talk with them already made it clear that they couldn't so boldly use the strength of Shield Cross Stars.

On top of this, even if they had the freedom to do as much, entering Brave City during the first phase would enrage all the powers of Terrain and entering during the second phase was all the more impossible.

When they learned that Leonel had done this, they realized that their only chance was to wait for him to leave and then set a trap for him.

The truth was that they didn't consider a possibility of Leonel being accepted as a member of this organization at all. After all, in the history of Terrain, no one had ever managed to pass over the final hurdle. And, those who had the best chance were on their second and final attempts like Syl's elder brother and the other Heirs.

They thought that even if Leonel was talented, he would at least need a second attempt. But, with their influence, he likely wouldn't even live to see it.

Unfortunately... just as they had calmed themselves with this narrative... Leonel's monitoring brand vanished.  
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“Someone find out for me as quickly as possible what happened in Brave City!” Fin barked.

Due to Scithe's warning, Fin and Thorn didn't dare to get too close to the situation. As a result, they didn't even dare to personally monitor the situation of the third phase. Even sending someone to scout the situation was risky, but at this point, they no longer had a choice.

Thorn met Fin's gaze from across the room, both of them holding a complex look on their visages.

In order to get rid of that Brand, someone exceptionally powerful within the Fourth Dimension or someone of the Fifth Dimension, in the very least, would have had to act. There shouldn't be anyone powerful enough on Terrain to accomplish this feat. If there was, they were all old recluses that didn't casually travel out.

This meant that the likeliest explanation was that Leonel had gotten help from those behind Brave City. And, if that was the case, that made things much more complicated.

Under normal circumstances this wasn't a big deal. There was no need for that organization to communicate with them before freeing one of their own from monitoring. Since they hadn't labeled Leonel with having committed any egregious crimes, they were perfectly in the right.

Suddenly, their hope of keeping these matters low profile had come back to bite them. PANDA NOVEL

Hours later, Fin and Thorn received the report they were waiting for, only to read it silently with ever increasingly ugly expressions.

Thinking back to their disdainful dismissal of Leonel, especially in the case of Fin who sneered as Leonel was forced to sign his name, their jaws clenched.

The two looked at one another. They knew they had no choice but to bring this to Scithe...

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Scithe read the report Fin and Thorn brought him silently. But, this very silence felt like a mountain weighing heavily on their chests. The longer Scithe remained like this, the greater this pressure grew.



A long while later, Scithe placed the documents down.

“Have you two noticed anything interesting about this world?” ρ??∫???????

Fin and Thorn looked toward one another, confused about the question. Wasn't this supposed to be about Leonel? Why were they suddenly talking about Terrain?

“... Please enlighten us, Commander Scithe.”

Scithe's head tilted slightly as he observed the two before him. It didn't seem like a normal human quirk at all. When his pale skin and sunken eyes were taken into account, he looked like a predator watching his prey.

His black eyes darted between their vital points as though always calculating the fastest way to kill them. The feeling was like a coldness seeping into their veins.

“If you two really have no idea, I would be greatly disappointed.”

Fin and Thorn shivered, their teeth chattering. For some reason, it felt as though the temperature in the room had plummeted.

“Tell me, why is it that you detained this Leonel Morales in the first place?”

“We... We detained him because of a tip given by a teleportation station attendee. Our organization's motto is to be a Shield across the Stars, but in order to do so we need to work together with the local governments. The officials of Terrain were worried about the sudden activity of a few fugitives, so we began to monitor anyone who looked suspicious.”

Thorn explained quickly. In fact, her response was so textbook that she forgot to take out things that Scithe obviously knew already. But, it just went to show just how nervous she was feeling.

Scithe looked back toward the documents on his desk casually. But, his subtle action took a world of pressure off of the two of them... Until he spoke his next words, that is.

“ ‘Work together with the local government’, huh?... For a small fee, though, is that right?”

Thorn and Fin froze, beads of sweat pouring down their faces and backs. All the words they wanted to speak got lodged in their throats, unable to form into proper sentences.

“... Some corruption is inevitable in such a large organization. In fact, I would argue that it’s necessary in many cases. But, that doesn’t give you license to be stupid. Such a big secret is looming over your heads and you don’t even realize that you’re being used to keep it as such.

“Disappointing. Truly disappointing.”

Scithe closed the documents once more and stood. By this point, Fin and Thorn were trembling uncontrollably. It felt as though there was only a thin string dangling from the tops of their heads to the ceilings above, stopping them from collapsing to their knees.

“There’s no point in explaining these things to you. Since you haven’t understood it by now, it will only be a waste of my time.”

Scithe crossed his arms to his back and looked out toward the blank wall. His actions seemed to be out of habit, but the fact there was no view to see made it all seem somewhat odd.

However, with the amount of fear the two officers were feeling, they didn’t even pick up on this detail at all.

“The recruitment process of Valiant Heart Mountain won’t finish for another one to three years. By then, there will be plenty of chances to complete what needs to be done. I’ll have you two complete some preparations, I only hope you don’t disappoint me again.”

Hearing these words, the two could no longer stand it and collapsed to the ground, gasping for breath as Scithe strolled out from the hidden underground room.

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Leonel was shocked by how easy it was for him to return to Earth. He had been looking over his shoulder the whole way, yet not only did no one stop him, but the experience was surprisingly pleasant.

Compared to what he experienced when he was branded like a slave, the difference was like night and day. He easily found the closest city by following the roads and avoiding danger using his vastly improved Internal Strength. Then, after paying a hefty fee, he was able to buy a ticket to use a teleportation platform.

Leonel didn't have Urbe Coins, but, he did have a large amount of Urbe Ore. This was what he relied on to constantly refine his body toward the Perfection Stage. Thankfully, the process of trading in Urbe Ores for Urbe Coins was exceptionally easy, there were a few government trade posts he could find within any city.

Leonel was a bit surprised to find that Urbe Ore was actually more valuable than Urbe Coins. But, after some thought, this made sense.

Urbe Coins were usually only used by low level worlds to make things convenient for their weaker citizens. In higher level worlds, and especially in high profile markets, auctions and the like, most trades were completed with unrefined Urbe Ores. In these cases, rather than using individual coins, the denominations were in kilograms of Urbe Ore.

Thankfully, in regards to those of Third and Fourth Dimensional worlds, Leonel was considered semi wealthy. So, buying a single ticket to Earth wasn't a problem and also didn't even make much of a dent into his financial situation. If anything, refining his Metal Body was by far the largest expenditure.

At Leonel's current level, even absorbing ten kilograms worth of Urbe Essence hardly budged the needle anymore. It seemed that reaching the Perfection Stage wasn't as easy as he thought it would be. [PANDA-NOVEL.COM](http://PANDA-NOVEL.COM)

Leonel wondered if he should try and trade up to Bronze Grade Urbe Ore to try and make a final breakthrough. But, in the end, he decided against it. His recklessness had already almost killed him once

this year, he didn't want to give the fates a chance to take him to the next world again. Not so soon after the last time, anyway.

Of course, if others heard Leonel's thoughts, they would think he was a madman. If he really thought he had only tempted fate just once, he was crazier than even he knew.

...

Leonel disappeared into the teleportation formation with no one realizing that he was a wanted criminal. The process for leaving a world was obviously much less involved than coming to it. Whatever problems he posed would be the issue of that world to deal with.

Unfortunately, Leonel's good mood didn't last very long. He had forgotten one very important thing in all his excitement...

Earth didn't have any teleportation pads. PANDA NOVEL

When Leonel appeared, he blankly stared at his surroundings.

Wild winds whipped around him, black clouds rumbled above, thunderous booms and crackling lightning shook the skies. And...

He was falling from the skies.

Leonel hardly reacted. He simply looked toward the black ocean waters he was hurtling toward at inconceivable speeds.

This was the look of a defeated man. A man who was so used to his bad luck by now that he could only sigh.

What were the odds that he would appear in the skies above the ocean? If Leonel thought about it, the likelihood was actually quite high. After all, 70% of Earth was nothing but vast waters. But, it probably

wasn't the smartest thing to do to tell a man down on his luck that his situation made sense. ρ??∫???

Luckily...

Leonel reached out toward his spatial ring with a thought. In the blink of an eye, a black object appeared beneath his feet like a floating surfboard.

Leonel smiled wildly. He had been waiting for an opportunity to use this treasure. Unfortunately, he didn't dare to use it on Terrain for fear that he would be the subject of someone's greed. After all, this treasure was of the SSS-grade and happened to be the ride Leonel had asked Uncle Montez for.

The treasure had two modes, but both were only built for a single person to use.

The surf mode, which Leonel was currently in, had the greatest degree of freedom for movement. It was nimble and shifty, but it sacrificed topline speed in return.

The second mode...

Leonel poured his Force into the surfboard as his fall slowed to a floating hover.

Soon, the black board shifted, becoming a one person shuttle. Leonel sat down, reaching out his hands and grabbing onto a butterfly steering wheel. Even if he wanted to, he didn't think he'd be able to stop the grin from spreading across his face.

The shuttle mode was where the real speed lay. It took a minimal amount of Force to output tremendous speed. If Leonel used normal Force, he could probably round Earth in six hours at most. If he used Light Elemental Force, that time plummeted to half of that.

Of course, the shuttle lost nimbleness as a result. But... in return it was blazingly fast.

Leonel pressed down on the pedal. The instant he did, a strong G-force tried to rip him apart, but his smile didn't fade. With the strength of his body, he could still handle it.

A black-gold light streaked across Earth's water as the laughter of a teenage boy sounded beneath the rumbling clouds.

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Leonel easily made it to Earth's main continent. Aside from being a transportation vehicle, the shuttle could project a rough map of the world. Though it didn't have anything as detailed as city locations, it had enough about the geography.

With Leonel's education, the geography was all he needed to find his way back to Royal Blue Province in just over an hour. In fact, he was a bit disappointed that the trip was so short.

Leonel found a secluded region away from Invalids. Due to the speed of the shuttle, any that sensed the Force he used to propel his shuttle had long since been left behind, but he was still cautious.

After burying himself deep underground, Leonel entered the Segmented Cube.

"Aina?"

Leonel didn't find Aina where he thought he would. But, his sharp senses soon caught the sound of moving water.

'She's in the bathhouse?'

Leonel's heart skipped a beat.

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Leonel willed himself to calm down and he entered his own room, leaving Aina to herself.

Now that he thought about it, he really had left her alone for quite a while. It made sense that she would find something to do. Who knew when the last time she had a time to relax was?

Leonel couldn't help but smile.

Back in the Joan Zone, Aina never needed to bathe due to her military-type uniform. Its self-cleaning function made sure she wouldn't need to worry about it. So, this was the first time Leonel had experienced this sort of feeling.

What started as him forcefully suppressing the lewd thoughts of a young man became him appreciating the sound of the moving water in a silent but sweet peace. It had become less about the fact Aina was washing herself and more about that she trusted him enough to do so.

Maybe he was just overthinking it. There was always a chance that he was. But, the thought still brought him peace of mind.

"Oh' ¦ You're back, I hope you don't mind I' ¦"

Aina's voice woke Leonel from his odd peaceful state.

He looked up toward her and smiled. The slight embarrassment on Aina's face made his smile somewhat brighter. He could see that she hadn't really thought about it before choosing to bathe here. Knowing Aina, if she had thought it through, she wouldn't feel embarrassed in the slightest.PANDA-NOVEL.COM

That realization only made him happier. It was like an unconditional trust even she wasn't aware she had for him.

Leonel's brows raised as he stood from his bed and walked to the door he had left open.

"The swelling, it's gone down. Were the waters helpful to you?"

Leonel realized this immediately. Before, the swelling and inflammation of Aina's scars was quite bad. It was to the point that it seemed they might burst with a foul liquid at any moment. In fact, he could hardly see the features of her real face because of this.

What Leonel didn't know was that this always happened after Aina used the effect of the curse to help her training. The impact was even more exaggerated after she ingested the Fifth Dimensional Abyss Panther blood.

Usually, it would take months for the swelling to eventually die down. But, this time, it didn't seem to want to go away at all and left her in a perpetual state of pain and itchiness. Surprisingly, though, the Cleansing Waters of the Segmented Cube's Abode Setting quelled this swelling almost immediately.

Aina lowered her head, avoiding Leonel's gaze.

“¡ Mm.” PANDA NOVEL

Leonel didn't mind this much at all. In fact, he was even happier that he could be of help.

“All of the water in the Segmented Cube comes out as Cleansing Waters, take as much as you want to bathe or drink.”

Aina's eyes widened. “¡ I can't do that, it's too valuable.”

Leonel raised an eyebrow. “Is it? This Abode seems to make an endless supply of it.”

Aina was speechless toward Leonel's ignorance.

She looked up with a glare Leonel was familiar with seeing. Usually, she only used this look when she was reprimanding him.



“Cleansing Waters are incredibly rare. It can only be produced by a person with a very special Innate Water Force Node. Even for such a person, it’s a hard task to form even a single cup of it. Other than that, it can only be produced naturally at the convergence of Seven Purities.”

Leonel blinked, not really understanding what much of that meant, especially the Seven Purities part. All he knew was that he used this water for everything from taking a bath to brushing his teeth to drinking a glass of water. p??∫??????

In fact, though he didn’t check for obvious reasons, he was pretty sure his toilet water was made of it too.

Leonel waved a hand. “Never mind that. Seriously, take as much as you want. There’s no need to suffer in silence when I’m here.”

Aina’s glare became somewhat vacant for a moment as though she was shocked to hear such words.

She stared blankly at Leonel, getting lost in her thoughts for a moment.

Leonel met her gaze as though trying to convey his meaning and determination through his eyes.

After the swelling lessened, Leonel could see the true structure of Aina’s face. He burned the image into his mind, not only because he was infatuated with her looks, but because this was the first time he was truly seeing the real her.

This was the woman, in all his madness, that he had sworn to hitch his life to.

Maybe to this day he still didn’t know the exact reason. But, didn’t they say that in this new world the future could influence the past? Leonel liked to believe that maybe he was less crazy than many believed and that an undying devotion his future self felt was what drove him now.

However, this only gave Leonel motivation. What shook him to his core was maybe if it wasn’t a future love that caused his current feelings, but a future regret’ ;

What if he lost Aina in the future? What if the feelings of hurt, anger, and helplessness were so powerful that they pierced through the veil of reality and returned to his younger self, driving him to not repeat the same mistake again?

This was probably the first time Leonel even admitted these things to himself, but something was screaming to him that it wasn't just love that drove him to this level of madness.

He had said it himself before, hate drove far more than love did. Negativity fueled more than positivity, evil disseminated far more than good.

For Leonel to feel this way, he knew that it wasn't a simple matter of love.

Leonel reached a hand toward Aina's face. The action shook her from her stupor. Her body involuntarily trembled as though wanting to take a step back. But, for some odd reason, her feet seem rooted in place.

Leonel smiled a somewhat sad smile. It carried a weight that was far beyond his years and an emotion that was far more complex than he was willing to feel. Seeing it, Aina felt as though she too had been thrust into an all new world, one she also wasn't quite ready for.

Leonel's hand brushed by Aina's face and touched her flowing black hair.

A slight rush of Force surrounded the two and Aina, who had become completely lost in Leonel's smile, barely registered the fact the air had grown much hotter all of a sudden.

In the blink of an eye, Aina's wet hair became dry and Leonel retracted his hand.

"Wouldn't want you to catch a cold, right?"

Leonel grinned, his normal childish look returning. Whatever weight his gaze once held vanished, making Aina's knees feel somewhat weak. Out of her control, she fell forward only to be stopped by Leonel's broad chest.

Leonel was stunned for a moment, but he didn't let her escape like she wanted to.

His arms wrapped around her back, enveloping her small frame.

Aina froze for a long while. But in the end, her small hands gripped the sides of Leonel's shirt.

A peaceful silence took hold of the Segmented Cube.. As the clouds continued to rumble and Earth seemed to become ever more chaotic, the two seemed oblivious.

### Chapter 397

Leonel almost couldn't refrain from laughing as he watched Aina run away like a frightened rabbit. Even a while after she had disappeared into the room she chose, he could still feel the softness of her frame.

Behind the closed door, Aina slipped down to the floor, her face a beet shade of red. Her heart beat wildly and completely out of her control. It made her breathing seem somewhat erratic and anxious.

The last time she had been so intimate with Leonel's; her legs had been blown off. So, it was safe to say that she wasn't really thinking about how embarrassed she should or shouldn't have been.

But this time, there wasn't such a looming elephant in the room. It was almost too much for her to bear.

It was only a long while later that Aina's heart finally calmed. Ironically, it was because she could hear the same moving waters Leonel had just moments ago. Just listening to them made her feel the same peace Leonel had.

Aina reached a hand toward one of her military pockets and pulled out a cracked bracelet.

It was quite funny. Considering all the treasures she had, a mere C-grade defensive treasure was practically useless garbage. But, other than her ax, this had been one of the only things she managed to hold on to in her injured state back then.

She looked at the bracelet until the sudden end to the rushing waters woke her up. She quickly put it away, the hazy look in her eyes clearing. PANDA-N0VEL.COM

At that moment, a knock came from her door. Unsurprisingly, it was Leonel. He was the only other one in the Abode Setting to begin with. But, what Aina hadn't expected was that when she opened the door a black blur would suddenly pounce at her.

Her first instinct was to reach for her ax, but she instantly realized that she had taken it off her back. She felt safe in this place so she wasn't constantly on her guard.

It wasn't long after that she realized that even if her ax had been on her back, she wouldn't have been able to get to it in time. This black blur was simply too fast.

A strong force collided with Aina's chest, causing her to take a step back. But, when she looked down, she found an adorable little mink using its small claws to latch onto a few of her countless pockets.

Little Blackstar, seemingly feeling a familiar intimacy with Aina through his connection with Leonel treated her like a playmate too. Unfortunately, though Aina was stronger physically than Leonel, her body's defenses were far weaker. So, what would be a playful nudge to Leonel almost knocked Aina's breath away.

"Little Blackstar." Leonel reprimanded.

There wasn't much he could do about the little mink. The little guy was simply too fast! It also didn't help that Blackstar treated Leonel like his pet rather than the other way around. This left Leonel feeling somewhat helpless. PANDA N0VEL

Aina took a deep breath to recover before looking down at the little mink. A light smile played her features as she slowly reached a hand forward to pat Blackstar's small little head.

"This is your beast partner?" Aina asked.

“Mhm.” Leonel nodded. “The little guy is pretty powerful but is too playful. I thought that he was growing more mature because he started to take more naps recently, but now he’s back to his usual antics.”

Aina blinked curiously, gathering the adorable little mink in her arms. Blackstar seemed to quickly realized that compared to around Leonel’s neck and the top of his head, Aina’s chest was the much more comfortable place to be. It wasn’t long before the little guy showed no intention of returning.

“How did you manage to contract him?”

“Well, I” Leonel scratched his head somewhat awkwardly. After some hesitation, he finally told the truth.

“” Pchu!” ρ??∪???????

Aina couldn’t refrain from laughing, her light giggle tickling Leonel’s ear drums.

“Hey, hey. Is there a need to laugh so hard? We share a relationship of equals.” Leonel said defiantly.

“Mhm, mhm.” Aina nodded but continued to play with the little mink, a happy smile on her face.

Leonel sighed as he watched this scene. It seemed that not only did he lose his beast partner to Aina’s chest, he lost Aina to the little mink. Life truly wasn’t fair.

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The next few moments between the two were quite peaceful.

Within the dining area of the Abode Setting, Leonel brought out some of the foods he had bought before leaving Terrain. However, Leonel was shocked to find that Aina didn’t only match him in how much she ate, but she even somewhat surpassed him.

Leonel had spent months within a Zone with Aina, but he hadn't noticed this before at all. After a while of thought, though, he understood. And when he did, he felt somewhat bad.

In the Joan Zone, he and Aina had always hunted for their own food. Since he was the long ranged attacker amongst the two of them, it obviously fell onto his shoulders. But, he always only captured one beast.

He would always take most of the beast and leave behind what he thought would fulfill Aina's appetite, not realizing that he was underfeeding her at all.

This time, however, because he was curious about Terrain's cuisine "" after all, this was the first time he was tasting another world's food "" he had brought back way too much, thinking he could just store whatever was left within one of the snowglobes to preserve it until next time.

However, what he had never thought of was the possibility that between the two of them, clearing out such a large amount of food was a simple task.

Learning this about Aina didn't make Leonel like her any less. In fact, he felt happy once again because he was learning more and more about her the longer he spent with her.

He didn't apologize for his mistakes in the past, he just etched this into his mind. He wouldn't make the same mistake again.

At the same time, he made a mental note to be more observant in the future. For whatever reason, Aina didn't seem to like to divulge such things openly. It would be up to him to decode this beauty.

“Hm?”

Aina looked up with a cute and innocent look in her eye. But, contrasted with the massive beast leg she held in her hand, Leonel couldn't help but smile at the adorable image.

Though the beast leg was larger than half Aina's body, Leonel was certain that it would probably only take Aina half an hour at most to wipe it clean.

Leonel shook his head.

"We should talk about the Fort and how to approach it." Leonel said.

Aina paused mid-bite. The truth was that she too wanted to take down Royal Blue Fort, she also had friends within. But, they had to think of the normal citizens as well. If things devolved the way it did last time, they would be doing more harm than good.

So, how should they do things this time?

## Chapter 398

Royal Blue Fort's situation was more complex than Leonel knew.

In truth, there were many things that Leonel hadn't thoroughly thought through until he had a conversation with Aina.

For one, what purpose was he truly trying to accomplish?

Acting against Royal Blue Fort, even if it was just to kill a Junior Governor Duke, was no less than an act of war. At this point, Leonel would be truly setting himself as the lifelong enemy of The Empire no matter how one looked at it.

Beyond this, after killing the Junior Governor Duke, how would things proceed from there? Who would take leadership of the people who would be left behind? Would The Empire treat them all as rebels if they chose to follow Leonel? Did Leonel even want to lead them?

It wasn't that Leonel was too unintelligent to think of these things, it was rather that he was still too immature. He cared more about paying the Junior Governor Duke back for harming Aina and slighting himself than he cared about the consequences his revenge would bring.

This was the true reason Aina wasn't as enthusiastic about Leonel's plans to begin with. She had even initially rejected Leonel's suggestions. But, for some reason, in the end, she couldn't bear to say no after Leonel brought up the Segmented Cube plan.

Still, she had no choice but to douse some cold water over Leonel's dreams. [PANDA-NOVEL.COM](http://PANDA-NOVEL.COM)

After talking some reason into Leonel, they decided on a plan.

First, they would scout out the situation. With their abilities, it wouldn't be a problem to observe the Fort from afar. Even slipping into the core of the city protected by the Junior Governor Duke's illusion ability wouldn't be an issue.

If they found that their friends and their families were struggling, they would use the snowglobes to take them in and escape the city. They would then bring them to another Fort in a new Province.

This last part of the plan was a bit more difficult to pull off. After all, The Empire had strict monitoring standards. But, they had the perfect excuse for this as well.

One had to remember the Right to Autonomy Amendment of the Ascension Empire. As long as they had a valid excuse for breaking the law, they would be in the right.

There was really no better valid excuse for escaping one's Fort than the fact one's Junior Governor Duke bombed his own citizens'!

Of course, Leonel still planned to kill the Junior Governor Duke one way or another. Even if he died, there were several other nobles there to take charge. It's just that he would be covert about his actions so as not to implicate his friends. [PANDA-NOVEL](http://PANDA-NOVEL)



With this more level-headed plan, Aina and Leonel made their way to Royal Blue Fort. However, they hadn't expected to find the scene they did after approaching' ;

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Since the appearance of Camelot in the skies, Earth's climate had taken a massive hit. The poles seemed to flip, the magnetic field was out of whack, and there wasn't a single peaceful inch of Earth left.

The common people didn't know what was happening, but the higher ups were shocked by the sudden appearance of a second moon.

Unfortunately, the only person who knew exactly what was happening "" Leonel "" had washed his hands of the matter. Luckily, there was still the Slayer Legion and the Adurna family who had an inkling of what was going on.

That said, being aware of what was happening wasn't quite enough. Earth no longer had the means to calm this situation.

Had this happened before the Metamorphosis, The Empire might still have some means of stabilizing the climate. But, with the interference of Force, not only was technology interrupted from functioning properly, but the weather was even more volatile than it would be otherwise. ρ??∫??????

Royal Blue Province was a coastal continent near the equator. As such, it experienced tropical weather all year 'round. But now' ;

It was buried beneath several feet of snow.

Though it wasn't bone chillingly cold, this made the situation far worse. The snow fell as an almost half water, half snow combination, making the layering of the white precipitation quite heavy. In addition, where it wasn't heavy, it was exceptionally slippery.

Sheets of ice covered everything. Even the tall Fort walls were covered with an ever-thickening layer of ice.

Caught completely off guard by the sudden changes, the Royal Blue Fort was scrambling.

The good news was that after several months of dealing with these conditions, the Fort had finally managed to find methods of combating this situation. The bad news, however, was that this wasn't the end of their problems.

It had to be remembered that the appearance of Camelot wasn't just a matter of climate change. The most important point was that Earth's path toward the Fourth Dimension had been accelerated by several times over.

The truth was that Earth had already cleared enough Zones. Leonel knew that Earth's progress had to be great because he didn't receive his usual reward for being the first to clear an SS-grade Zone. This meant that someone else had to have succeeded before he had!

This should have been a great thing, but it was very much not for two reasons.

The first was that The Empire had yet to finish consolidating its strength. And the second was that the activity of Invalids and beasts likewise skyrocketed.

When Aina and Leonel found a collapsed building to observe the Royal Blue Fort from, they were shocked to find a horde of Invalids surrounding it.

"That! Is that possible?"

Leonel's eyes widened.

Amidst the horde, Leonel picked out several SS-grade and SSS-grade Invalids. Each of them had strength he couldn't have hoped to match up against before he entered the Camelot Zone. Facing such a horde, he would have had no choice but to turn tail and run away as fast as he could.

In order to fight them off, Royal Blue Fort was using its tall steel walls and an endless barrage of bombs. If not for Earth's technology, the Fort would have long since been overrun.

But, this wasn't what shocked Leonel the most.

“ ‘! That's a Variant Invalid' !” Aina said softly.

In the distance, Leonel locked onto an Invalid dressed in all white. Its skin was as white as snow, its hair as white as bone, its robes as white as clouds. The only thing on its body that wasn't a blinding white were its piercing blue irises.

Leonel was shocked. From what he knew, all Invalids had white irises. But this one' !

A flood of memories were pulled from the depths of Leonel's mind.

Variant Invalids. They were Invalids who managed to recover their intelligence. However, due to the fact their awakening was so much more difficult, they were far more powerful than their human counterparts.

And, maybe the most shocking part of their abilities was that' ! they could lead other Invalids.

Leonel was so lost in his own thoughts that he didn't notice Aina's jaw clench tightly, her small hands trembling slightly.

Her reaction to this Variant Invalid seemed much too strong. Maybe only those who knew the legends of the Mountain Sands Range she had escaped from might know why' !

Chapter 399

Leonel frowned, his gaze landing on Aina.

Seeing her odd reaction, his heart constricted. One would have thought that her reaction was his own. To Leonel, though, Aina's happiness was practically linked to himself.

“Aina?”

Aina shook out of her thoughts hearing Leonel’s voice.

“What’s wrong?”

Aina shook her head and fell into silence, her body returning to normal. The little mink nestled closer to her, his little face rubbing against Aina’s.

In truth, Leonel almost didn’t notice Aina’s weird reactions. If it wasn’t for his connection with the little mink, he likely would have missed it entirely. The irony of it all wasn’t lost to him, especially when he said he would pay more attention to her.

Leonel’s frowned deepened. His gaze shifted from Aina to the Variant Invalid and back again. PANDA-NOVEL.COM

‘Is it that thing? But, Aina shouldn’t have met this thing before’!’

It could be said that with the exception of the time he spent within the Mayan Zone, Leonel had spent practically all his time on Earth since Invalids had appeared with Aina. In addition, when he was in the Mayan Zone, Aina had either been unconscious or within her own Zone.

Since Invalids didn’t appear within Zones, at least with Leonel’s current comprehension, it was impossible that Aina had met this Variant Invalid.

Of course, this was all deduced under the speculation that Earth didn’t have Invalids before the Metamorphosis descended. Leonel felt that this was a fine assumption to make, even when considering the fact Aina came from a hidden family of Earth.

Invalids were just humans who failed to awaken their abilities and thus lost their consciousness. Variant Invalids were just Invalids who managed to reawaken their consciousnesses. But, by then, they would no longer be the version of themselves they once were.

Unless' ;

'Does Aina know this Invalid from when it was a human?' PANDA NOVEL

Leonel pouted slightly, mostly because from what he could see, despite the odd coloration of its skin, this Variant Invalid was quite a handsome young man.

Leonel shook his head. This wasn't the time to be thinking of such things.

He looked back toward Aina. "Do you want to leave and come back another time? From the flow of battle, I doubt that this Invalid horde will be able to breach the walls during this wave. They'll likely need two or three more attempts."

Aina looked toward Leonel. She could tell that Leonel sensed something amiss about her reaction earlier and wanted to take some pressure off of her. But' ;

"No."

Aina's voice came out somewhat coldly. In fact, her demeanor somewhat shocked Leonel. She sounded as though he had said something to enrage her.

Aina looked away from Leonel's surprised gaze, not saying anything further. p??J??????

The little mink peeked over her shoulder as she faced away, sticking out his little pink tongue toward Leonel.

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Leonel was really at a loss this time.

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Miles Leum.

His life should have been perfect. He was the Heir to one of the few most powerful families of Earth. He was already given the Junior Governor Duke title by his father. He awakened an S-grade ability that granted him power and strength in addition to the status he was born with.

However, ever since that matter of several months ago, everything had been going downhill.

He had expected that upon reporting these matters to his father, he would gain control of the resources he needed to hunt Leonel down and end all of this. But, not only did he not gain the support he expected, his power in the province was restricted even more than it originally was.

As things stood now, Secretary Marquissette Maia was effectively the leader of the Province despite the fact she never seemed to be around. Despite this, she somehow managed to oversee everything and even the small tricks he tried to play to gain back power were snuffed out by her with a casual thought.

Miles could hardly believe it all. His father had actually chosen to abandon his heir in favor of an old woman masquerading as a young beauty.

Maybe the worst part about all of this was that he was slowly being ostracized.

Due to the matter of him bombing his own citizens, a scapegoat needed to be trotted out. Miles understood this, it was just that he never expected that the scapegoat would actually be himself.

The nobles painted him as an immature, rash individual who was too young to be fit to lead, or ever lead, for that matter. This caused him to lose a great amount of influence.

This would have been fine under normal conditions. After all, the title of Duke was hereditary, at least historically. The issue was that' ¦ The title of Governor Duke wasn't so simple.

During the transition of power between father and son, though Miles would have an inside track as his father's chosen heir, he would still need to fend off competitors. This blend of hereditary titles and democracy was how The Empire continued to breed talents.

Though one would be hard pressed to say that The Empire were the 'good guys', one thing you couldn't say was that it had incompetent nobles. Any family that raised incompetent Heirs would just as quickly lose their status as nobles.

Due to this, there were no shortage of prosperous, once-royal, families, looking to claw their way back up to the top. So, a position like Miles' was constantly being eyed.

It was no surprise then that Miles was wracking his brain, trying to find a way to claim back what was his. But, rather than good news, everything only became worse.

Just a few months ago, he learned that Maia was pregnant.

Back on 21st Century Earth, this would mean the end of a woman's career for at least a couple months. However, in modern times, it was as easy as breathing for Maia to have her embryo transplanted out of her body and into a machine that could nurture her baby far better than even her own body could.

This seemed like a useless tidbit of information, but Miles was almost certain that this child was his father's.

If his conjectures were correct, he was finished.

This reality left Miles, who once sat atop of the world, in a tailspin.

## Chapter 400

Children were rare. After the Metamorphosis, those children who had been born before it Descended were highly likely to die. And, during the Metamorphosis, who had time to have children?

Many were too busy fighting for their lives. And, even when they wanted to lose themselves in pleasure with a partner, who would want to bring a child into this world?

The contraceptive methods of these modern times were so good that 100% effectiveness wouldn't be an exaggeration in the slightest.

However, it was precisely because of this that many had forgotten one important detail.

As talented as the children born before the Metamorphosis were'! How much more talented would the ones being born after it be?

Miles had awakened an S-grade talent. His father was a Variant. Secretary Marquisette Maia had awakened an A-grade talent.

With the genes this child would have, Miles had little faith that this baby would be untalented. In fact, there was a good chance that this half-brother of his would be far more talented than himself.

Miles realized something else as well'!

Originally, his father was slowly fading out of his prime. It wouldn't have been more than a decade or two before he was forced to hand down his position. But, in this new world order, his father might even live doubly as long as he once would have.

Under such conditions, why would he have to rush to pick an Heir?PANDA-NOVEL.COM

All of these matters made Miles feel as though the walls were crashing down upon him. No matter what he did, he was forced into a deeper and deeper corner.

He lost contact with his biological mother. His father's conversations with him were short and detached. And, even his friendship with Simeon and the connection he had gained to the hidden families seemed strained now.



It was at his darkest hour that Earth suddenly descended into chaos and the Invalids began to attack.

At first they repelled them and thought that would be the end of it. However, a first wave became a second and a third.

It was then they realized that Invalids shouldn't have a concept of retreat. The only way for them to 'repel' a wave would be by killing them all, but obviously, they hadn't done so.

At this point, they came to the shocking realization that these Invalids were' | being controlled.

For the first time, Miles saw a lit pathway out of his current situation. The more chaotic it became, the greater chance he would have.

If he could use this opportunity to not only fix his image, but to also find an opportunity to find where Maia was hiding her embryo to kill it before it grew, he might have a chance at recovering in his father's eye.

Maia might have held all the status now, but her ability was absolutely useless in combat. All she could do was maintain her youthful looks, her combat prowess was worse than even someone with an F-grade ability. PANDA NOVEL

This sort of situation was the perfect time for Miles to seize control. But, he needed an opportunity. If he acted too fast and without cause, his actions would end up being more of an impediment to what he was doing. If he wanted to turn things around he had to be patient.

So, that was what he did.

Day after day, he waited, not lifting a finger. At this point, even those nobles who had expected him to make a move by now couldn't help but grow curious about what his plans were. But, Miles continued to bide his time.

From the actions of this Variant Invalid, he could tell that it wanted this Fort. As for the reason it wanted it, Miles wasn't sure. Maybe it wanted the population of humans within, maybe it wanted to use this

place as a base to consolidate its power, or maybe it was a combination of both. But, regardless, as long as this Variant was persistent, that was all that mattered to Miles.

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At that moment, during what was the third wave, Miles sat in his office. Even though he was safely tucked away near the core of the city, he could still hear the bombardment of the military units.

He sat silently, sipping a cup of tea.

“Come in.” He said neither too quickly, nor slowly.

Something about his demeanor breathed calm into his surroundings. Even when pressed into a corner, he still maintained the air of a noble. p??J??????

With a light click, the door opened to reveal a familiar young man. If Leonel was here to see his tall frame and playboy-like features, he would immediately recognize this young man as his former best friend, James.

“Do you have something to report?” Miles took another sip of his tea.

Though his words were measured and calm, there was a hint of warning within them. He was trying to maintain a low profile. Having meetings like this might be fine since both he and James were both youths of similar age, but if they happened too frequently and without reason, others would begin to raise their guards.

James calmly faced Miles. In comparison to Fin and Thorn who had been quaking before their superiors, he was clearly a large measure better in this regard.

“My father sent me here to report that the noble council is beginning to think of more unconventional strategies to deal with the horde once and for all. If things continue like this, the Variant Invalid will only continue to regroup and attack. During these discussions, the potential of using your abilities to set up a wide range illusion field came up.”

Miles' gaze sharpened. "Who brought this topic up?"

"There's no need to worry, Junior Governor Duke. It wasn't my father who brought this idea forward."

"Good, good." Miles' lip curled.

If it was one of his potential allies that brought this idea forward, there wouldn't have been much of a point in him lying low for so long. Allowing things to progress organically in this fashion was for the best.

"And Secretary Marquissette Maia's opinion?"

"She was once again absent of the council gathering." James replied.

Miles' brow furrowed slightly. He didn't know why Maia was always disappearing like this. But, this was ultimately good for him. He didn't know how she managed to keep a rein on power while being absent so frequently, but Miles was certain she wouldn't be able to replicate this indefinitely. Eventually, she would pay a price for her absence.

"Alright, leave things as is for now, don't push too hard unnecessarily. You can go."

James nodded and turned to leave.

"Hold on." Miles suddenly called out.

"The matter of Conrad Siegfried."

James froze but didn't reply, waiting for what Miles wanted to say.

If Leonel had been there, he would have immediately recognized this name. Conrad' ¦ He was the same man who almost dropped James out of a window and the very same man Aina killed with her own hands right before Leonel.

“We put a lot of effort to pull in that wastrel from the Siegfried family, but he ended up dying.” Miles said plainly. “In the past it didn't matter much. Becoming allies with the White Angel Province's Governor Duke family might have been a plus, but not a necessity. But now, it's far more important than it once was' ¦

“To now, the Siegfried family still doesn't know how their son died, right?” Miles asked slowly.

James shook his head.

They didn't know. To now, they probably still thought Conrad died in a Zone or beneath the claws of some Invalids.

But, it went to show how little they cared about this son. Despite knowing the Metamorphosis was coming, they didn't even stop him from playing in the National Championship game.

“You said that he was killed by that Aina girl the Simeon came to get, right?” A smile creeped up on Miles' face.

The Brazinger family wanted to abandon him, huh? Since that was the case, he'd spin a nice little web.

For such a powerful family, such a thing would hardly be enough to inconvenience them' ¦ In normal times that is. Miles knew some things many didn't due to his relationship with Simeon. He might as well use them to his advantage.

James nodded somewhat more stiffly this time and turned to leave again. This time, Miles didn't stop him.

Soon, the third wave ended and days later, the fourth began. Without a choice, the council of nobles called Miles forward.

The Junior Governor Duke took his first step toward reclaiming his lost status.