

Descent 41

Chapter 41

Leonel's pupils constricted. To his side, Aina tensed up. It was only then he registered that this person had spoken in English.

"... Who are you?"

"Me?" The old man replied. "I'm a nobody. Just a curious old man. I guess it's not very polite to ask a question without answering one first, so do you mind answering mine now?"

Leonel's gaze narrowed. Something was wrong with this place. He didn't quite understand it, but Force was far more dense here than it should be. In the 1400's, the amount of Fourth Dimensional Force should have been minuscule.

But this wasn't even close to the most important point. Who was this person and how the hell did he know his and Aina's true identity?

The old man sighed. "There's no need to be so tense. Us three will be here together for a long time. Isn't it best if we get to know each other...? I spent all that effort learning that ugly... English, they call it. I'd like for it to not be useless, if possible."

The gray-robed old man slowly stood, pushing a chair that seemed it might collapse at any moment back and grabbing a bulbous wooden cane head.

When he turned to face them, his slumped back straightened with a crack. It was like his formerly frail appearance was just an act. Such a simple action caused the air around him to speed up before settling back down. PANDA-NOVEL.COM

The lower half of his face was covered in a gray mustache and beard that swept over his collar bone. However, his upper half wasn't as wrinkled as one might expect. It seemed that if he took the effort to

shave, he would look no different from a normal 40 year old man. Even Leonel's own father only seemed to be a bit younger than that.

"I guess we got off on the wrong foot. I believe my name is pronounced ... Nicholas, in your English. I can't say I hate this tone of address, though, I prefer the original Nicolas. I'm sure you've heard of me."

Leonel inwardly cocked an eyebrow, though he remained deadpan. There probably were famous Nicolas's in history, but Leonel would be lying if he said he knew who this person was. Was he supposed to know?

Nicolas stretched his limbs. It seemed the cane he held in his hand was just for show.

"... You want to keep us here?"

"Of course. I can't have you ruining my plans."

"Your plans?" PANDA NOVEL

"I might decide to tell you after you can no longer interfere. Won't be long. I'd say, uh..." Nicolas stared at blank space for a while. "... about a month. Probably two just to be safe."

Leonel frowned. He didn't understand, what could possibly be done in two months.

It would probably take at least that long before Charles was officially crowned, but so what? According to the true timeline, that was meant to happen.

Wait, maybe he was thinking about this all wrong. According to history, Paris wasn't captured either. But, it was their hidden quest to reverse that course. In fact, they would be greatly rewarded for it. So maybe the measure they should be measuring their success against is how much they did change as opposed to how much they kept the same?

Leonel's brain spun, he couldn't grapple with the conclusion he needed.

Was it really Charles coronation this Nicolas wanted to ensure?

Just as Leonel's ability was working in overdrive, a subtle shadow appeared by Nicolas' side. However, no matter how subtle it was, Leonel was too alert at this point to miss it. His senses latched onto it instantaneously. p???(???????)

'Huh? Isn't that Joan's ability?'

"Ah, Pierre. You shouldn't be here, if you're gone for too long it could be a problem." Nicolas said casually.

"These Invaders are a danger to you, Sire. I cannot leave them to you alone."

'There was another of them? So it wasn't Joan's ability at all, but rather someone else this whole time...'

Leonel sent a gaze toward Aina. She seemed to look this calm all the time now, he hadn't seen her shy expression for a while. But once again, it seemed that his one sided decisions had put them in danger again.

Nicolas sighed. "You're always too overzealous, Pierre."

"Sire by the hand of God gave me strength. I am simply doing what I can to return what should be returned."

Suddenly, something clicked for Leonel.

'The weird concentration of Force... The month timeline he set... His words to this Pierre...'

Leonel's eyes widened. "Aina, my spear!"

Aina reacted quickly, pulling an impossibly long spear from an impossibly small pocket. Even as she threw it to Leonel in a swift motion, she pulled out two smaller battle axes. Her main ax couldn't fit, however, in order to pretend as though they hadn't taken their weapons with them, she had had no choice but to leave it behind.

"Tsk..." Nicolas frowned. "... How unexpected."

Leonel finally understood what was happening.

A year from now is when Joan's fabulous reign would finally come to close. This concentration of Force was no different from the concentration of the future Earth's. Then, Nicolas warned Pierre that he couldn't come here or else he might be gone for too long.

Leonel was certain. This place no longer had a ten to one time dilation and a month was exactly what would need to pass in order for a year to go by outside! And, he was sure that if he turned around now to attempt to open the wooden door, he might not even find it, let alone open it.

PANDA-NOVEL Did this make Joan an ally? No. Leonel had already settled his heart into killing her.

This might confuse others. A month was about the time it would take a year to pass in the world outside that latched wooden door. And, a year would be what it took for Joan to be captured by the English and then executed. So, why was Leonel in such a hurry? If he planned to kill her anyway, why was he in such a rush?

It was because Leonel had realized something. What mattered in these Zone quests wasn't the end results, but rather the process.

Why were there side quests to kill such-and-such number of enemies? Why was the main quest to kill a woman who had already been killed later anyway? Why was the hidden quest to recapture a city France would eventually recapture in the future? Everyone knew that Paris had been a part of France up until the 21st century, so obviously they had taken it back at some point...

It was then it all clicked for Leonel. It wasn't just what they did that mattered, but when they did it as well. These Sub-Dimensional Zones were ticking time bombs!

“Don't hold anything back.” Leonel said with a fierce light in his eyes. “Go all out.”

Leonel flashed forward, taking control of the vanguard with Aina holding her twin axes to his back. All he had on his mind was taking them down and escaping this place before Joan could leave to lay siege to Paris for the first time.

Whatever it was that happened during that first siege which ended in her first failure, had set in motion a history that was detrimental to their future.

The hidden quest wasn't just a completion addicts dream... Just like Leonel thought, this wasn't a game. Everything had a purpose. The hidden quest was a clue!

## Chapter 42

Leonel's decisiveness caught Pierre and Nicolas off guard. They had been observing Leonel for a long time and had never expected that he had this side to him.

Their surprise informed Leonel of another important point: it was impossible for them to know of the mission requirements. If they knew that he was tasked with killing Joan, they would also know that much of the front he put on was an act. Taking it even further, they wouldn't have let her lead him and Aina here alone either.

Thinking to this point, this whole situation made much more sense. They didn't know what they were trying to stop him from doing, so their best response to was to lock them away to avoid any unwanted variables.

But, that begged another question... why had they waited for so long?

“By the power of God, I beseech you energies of the world! Rage of wind!”

Unfortunately, there was no more time to think.

“I’ll handle the shadow.” Aina’s voice drifted to Leonel’s ears. PANDA-NOVEL.COM

With a nod, the two hit another gear. Leonel had already seen through the stats of Pierre and was more than confident in her ability to handle him. As for Nicolas, he was more difficult to manage as all spirit based entities were. But, the current Leonel was nothing like the Leonel of the past.

Before, he had struggled with the C-grade Mayan Priest more than even a B-grade Invalid. But now...?

Streaks of pressurized wind shot through the air. Leonel realized that this ability was nearly identical to the that of the Mayan Priest. It was a reality that brought his antennas up, however there was still a difference between this time and last.

Whereas before he could only faintly sense them, now, he could very clearly see them streaking through the air. And, with all of the mystery gone... they even looked crude and uncontrolled.

They were fast, but not uniform in width. Their shape was similar to an earth worm with irregularly sized segments. If Nicolas had better Force control, this 0.90 points of agility his attack had would easily be over 1.00.

Leonel’s head ducked to one side, slipped by one worm-like wind projectile, sliding past another, and leaping over the last. PANDA NOVEL

His movements were fluid and confident, his gaze filled with a calm stillness to them. The Leonel of today was already a far cry from the teenage boy who first stepped into the Mayan Temple.

Though he had been surprised, Nicolas was still greatly confident in his God given ability. However, he had never expected Leonel to deal with them so calmly and so easily. It was to the point where Leonel didn’t even consider using his atlatl. He truly didn’t feel like he needed it.

“By the power of God, I beseech you energies of the world! Shield me!”

'So it was a one way facing shield? In that case...'

Leonel closed the rest of the distance to Pierre and Nicolas in less than 20 seconds, his gaze flashing with a dazzling light that made his pale green eyes gain a life to them they didn't usually have.

Leonel's speed exploded as Force surged through his body. ρ???)???)???)

[Leonel Morales]

[Strength: 0.99; Speed: 0.99 (+0.1 – nullified); Agility: 0.99 (+0.1 – nullified); Coordination: 1.15; Stamina: 1.10-1.20 (+0.05 – nullified); Reactions: 1.15; Spirit: 0.40; Force: 0.20]

Leonel's sudden burst caught the two opposing him completely off guard, allowing him to slip between them and to Nicolas' back in a swift sliding motion.

At that moment, Aina, in perfect trailing position, followed up with two swings of her dual wielded axes, cutting off Pierre's path toward supporting Nicolas. Her teamwork with Leonel was seamless, without even communicating, she was able to take cues from Leonel's dodging to deal with Nicolas' attacks just as easily as he did.

Leonel set his feet, his arm flexing as he pulled his spear back tightly against his body. He pierced forward with enough momentum that his attack caused a sharp whistling noise to sound as his blade cut through the air.

Nicolas' back was completely exposed. There simply wasn't enough time for him to react.

The attack was flawless, controlled, and perfectly aimed toward his heart.

CLANG

A strong reverberating impact shook Leonel's arm as Nicolas was sent flying into his own energy shield.

Violent coughs racked his lungs as the wind was knocked out of him. The painful groans of his body slamming against his own shield made Leonel certain that he had broken at least his nose, if not something far more substantive.

“The lord will protect me from all harm! By the power of God, I beseech you energies of the w—.”

Leonel hardly reacted to his failed attack. He had conditioned himself long ago to be prepared for setbacks. It was impossible to predict everything that would happen on a battlefield. Those who ended up on top were those who could read and react to anything. And unfortunately for Nicolas, he didn't seem to be one of these people.

There was another thing that seemed to be identical between Nicolas, the so-called Bishop and the Mayan Priest: they both chanted before using their Force. The only difference between then and now was that Leonel could actually understand what was being said and didn't tune it out.

‘[Call of the Wind].’

This chanting might have been part of their fanaticism, or maybe it had a purpose that Leonel couldn't see through, but regardless of the reason, it made timing the next attack far too easy, and countering... even easier.

PANDA-NOVEL A glow coated Leonel's spear as he pierced forward once more. Before Nicolas could even finish his next words, a sharp wind traveled across the distance between them, leaving a bloody hole in his forehead.

As he fell to the ground, Leonel understood that Nicolas only placed him on his radar after he met Joan. Leonel had displayed this very attack on the way to Orleans, yet Nicolas had clearly been completely unprepared for it, confident to the very end. Even Leonel couldn't have guessed that things would end so easily.

When he turned around to check how Aina was doing, there was no chance to see Pierre's shock, because he had already fallen, hacked to pieces by the savage red glow of Aina's axes.



Leonel sent a gaze back toward where the two of them had come from, only to be disappointed that the wooden door didn't reappear.

He took a deep breath. The first task was done, but he had a feeling that leaving this place wouldn't be so simple... If they failed to find a way out through these maze of tunnels, they would be stuck in this Zone until the last of their days...

"... You should take a look at this." Aina suddenly said.

Aina threw over a black book she took from Pierre's body.

Chapter

43

Leonel, who had still been thinking about the best method to get out of here, blinked and looked over toward Aina. He caught the hefty black book in the air, surprised by its weight. Just what could make a seemingly normal leather bound book so heavy?

"I can't understand what's written in it." Aina said. "But I do feel a sense of familiarity from the diagrams. They feel like Force Art."

Leonel's brow raised. "Force Art, are those different from Force techniques?"

"Force Art are a type of Force technique, so not really..." Aina explained lightly.

Seeing that she didn't seem to be in a mood to talk, Leonel didn't ask more questions despite having them. He just made the assumption that what separated these Arts from normal techniques were these diagrams Aina mentioned.

PANDA-NOVEL Leonel had seen diagrams in [Dimensional Cleanse], but they were of the human body, nothing like the diagrams Aina was speaking of now.

Aina struggled a bit seeing that Leonel was having trouble getting anything out of what she was saying, so she couldn't help but say a bit more. PANDA-NOVEL.COM

"Force techniques are split into internal and external. Your [Call of the Wind] is an internal technique. Force Arts are external techniques. The difference is that one originates from the body before it can be projected out while the latter can be formed outside of the body. Force Arts are rarer and more difficult to learn and control... I don't know why something like them would appear here, it doesn't make sense."

Leonel couldn't help but smile when Aina continued to explain unprompted. He could tell that she wanted to keep her distance from him, so he hadn't pressed her in the last several weeks.

But he had learned that Aina was incredibly soft-hearted, a side of her he was quite fond of. She would often get that very same guilty look on her face whenever she felt she was being too harsh with him. So, he didn't mind shamelessly taking advantage.

"I see..." Leonel mumbled. "I would have thought that [Call of the Wind] was an external technique due to its original nature, but I guess this is a case of instincts being incorrect."

Though Leonel felt he would need some time to wrap his mind around this, he knew that this wasn't the time for this. There were far more pressing questions, even aside from how they would get out of this place. Namely... just who were these people?

Not only did they know that he and Aina were from their future, but they also had access to Arts which even Aina spoke of as a rarity. PANDA NOVEL

The formerly ignorant — well, more ignorant — version of Leonel would think this was incredulous. However, the current him who was now aware that the future could apparently change matters of the past was much more interested in just what was going on here.

Could it be that Earth's metamorphosis had changed history so drastically? Was it maybe instead that history was always this way? After all, even the Mayan Priest had a Force weapon that he had no business having. Or, was there maybe some other unknown reason Leonel didn't have enough information to reach?

All Leonel knew was that this was big. Bigger than maybe his current self had any right to even think about, let alone deal with.

Frowning, Leonel finally opened the front cover of the black book. Every second here counted, and if he was correct, it actually counted for ten times what it should. There was no time to waste, or else they would fail this quest and be stuck here until their deaths.

[Shadow Manifestation]

‘So it wasn’t an ability but a technique he was using?’ ρ??∫??????

The more Leonel read, the deeper his frown became. This technique, or rather, this Art was gruesome. It required etching the Art into one’s skin with deep gashes to the bone. Pierre was most definitely a fanatic for putting himself through this.

However, this also explain something else to Leonel. It was no wonder he had seen multiple shadow figures. Each of them probably had an Art etched onto their bodies, giving them this ability.

Leonel described what he found out to Aina, causing her to frown. At first, Leonel thought she was just grossed out by the methods, but when she spoke again, he realized that this wasn’t the case at all.

“Something’s wrong...” She said faintly. “... From what you describe, this Pierre should have been much weaker. But, his abilities were far more wide ranging than what that book describes.”

Though Aina still defeated him easily, that said more about her abilities than it did about Pierre’s. At the very least, she gave him more credit than the book did.

“Could it be that he maybe had more than one Art and he stacked them?”

Aina frowned for a moment before shaking her head.

“I don’t think that’s possible. All of his abilities seemed to fall under the same umbrella and were all related to the shadows. In addition, external Arts that fall under the Body Art category like this are still limited by the physical fitness of the person in question. With this person’s level of constitution, it should be impossible for him to handle more than one etching without imploding.”

Leonel raised an eyebrow, what exactly was Aina getting at?

“Where does the book say it’s best to do the etching?”

“Well... It says that the best place is directly onto the heart, but that’s next to impossible. Its secondary suggestion was to compensate for lack of quality with size and draw as large of an etching as possible. So... The back.”

“Can you...” Aina blushed slightly.

Leonel understood her instantly and went over to Pierre’s corpse. Holding down his feelings of discomfort, he flipped the latter onto his back and ripped his robes apart. He believed that Aina most definitely had a good reason for asking him to do this.

But, he was stunned to find that there wasn’t a single scar on Pierre’s back. In fact, it was so pale that one could even see greenish blue veins pumping with the last of his life force.

Leonel tilted his head in confusion. ‘Maybe he couldn’t handle drawing such a large Art so he drew on a lesser body part?’ He thought to himself.

“... It’s as I thought...” Aina’s voice interrupted his words to himself. “... Someone studied Pierre’s awakened ability and converted it into a Force Art, allowing it to be passed down, in part, to others...”

Hearing these words, Leonel was left speechless.

Chapter 44

[Bonus chapter for reaching 100 powerstones. Next at 200]

“Something like that is possible...?”

“No... It should be completely impossible. I can’t fathom what level of intellect it would take to do something like this. It’s even more impressive that this person managed to keep the final product simple enough that it could be used.”

“If even you say it’s impossible, then how are you so sure? How did you even guess at all?”

“I’m very sensitive to things related to bodies... abilities, even if they manifest with the same or similar result very rarely have the same process. I might have superior physical strength, but the reason that I do is because my true ability is related to an innate sense I have for what the body needs and what changes it has undergone... It’s a bit difficult to explain in a few words, but it’s ultimately the reason I was slotted in as a Five Star health professional.”

Leonel’s brows raised. This was the first time he had heard of Aina’s profession.

When it came to the Gene Assessment and its results, the more general the title you were given, the more talented you were. To be named as a ‘health professional’, this was about as general as titles came, while ‘quarterback’, in Leonel’s case, was about as specific as you could get.

Simply put, anyone who birthed a child like Aina was basically guaranteed to rise up in the world no matter what their original standing was. That said, considering the wrist watch on Leonel’s arm had informed him that it understood less than 5% of his DNA, how accurate could his own Assessment have possibly been, then?

“Thanks to my ability, I subconsciously know the best way to train my body. It’s because of that that my physical stats are so high. The limitation of my ability, though, is that it doesn’t seem to carry over into Force.” PANDA-NOVEL.COM

Though there was nothing special about Aina’s words, and even despite the life or death situation they were currently in, Leonel couldn’t help but smile. He just liked learning more about her and liked it even more when it was her speaking to him about it.

“... What are you smiling about?”

Leonel coughed lightly. “Nothing. Nothing at all.”

Aina quirked her head in confusion, but gave up on finding a real answer from Leonel.

“What should we do?” Aina asked.

Leonel took a deep breath. “I can sense that if we blindly try to leave through these tunnels, we’ll only fail miserably. I feel that we’re stuck in a cage right now and the power backing this cage won’t fade for a long while. But, staying here for just a week would allow more than two months to pass in the outside world, by then, it might already be too late...”

Leonel sighed. “I’m sorry, this is my fault... I should know better by now. If I don’t change —”

“Don’t!” PANDA NOVEL

Leonel’s words were abruptly cut off by Aina. He couldn’t help but look toward her with shock hardly concealed in his eyes.

“... Just don’t say that.” Aina’s voice became soft. “Let’s focus on how to leave this place instead, okay?”

Leonel’s mouth opened and closed several times before he finally nodded.

Taking another deep breath, he walked toward the only things left to analyze in this place.

First, he picked up Nicolas’ staff, weighing it in his hands. It was a shame that Nicolas died before truly using this cane’s power. It left Leonel in the dark about how it actually worked, but it was more important to defeat him more quickly so as to avoid any unwanted variables.

It was odd. Leonel felt that this cane was different from the Mayan Priest's sacrificial dagger somehow.

After sensing everything he could at a surface level, Leonel walked to the small desk at the end of the sewage tunnel, his eyes narrowing at the sheets of loose tan colored paper.

"These diagrams... Are they Force Arts as well?" p????J???????

Aina gaze narrowed when she heard this, swiftly making her way to his side.

"It really is... What do these say?" Aina looked toward Leonel's side profile.

PANDA-N0VEL "Is it not possible to understand Force Arts from the diagrams themselves?" Leonel asked curiously.

"Remember the analogy about writing?" Aina answered with a question.

Leonel's mind spun. "You're saying that Force Art is akin to a Third Dimensional existence writing in the 2D?"

"Yes, Force Arts are rare. Those who can draw Force Arts are rarer. And, those who can create Force Arts for others to replicate are even rarer than that. I've only seen a few Force Arts. On top of that, the language that this Nicolas uses is very different from anything I've ever seen."

Leonel's eyes flashed as he suddenly thought of something.

In what seemed like an act of madness, he brought Nicolas' cane over his knee and powered his leg up hard, snapping it in half.

Aina was shocked by his actions, but after seeing what was inside of it, she suddenly understood.

The wooden cane was completely hollow. After angling a candle to light its insides, it was possible to see countless small etchings of Force Arts on the inside. And, judging by the fact that aside from inks and pens, Nicolas' desk also had several pen-shaped knives, Leonel and Aina could easily deduce that they were drawn by him.

"This style, or language, is identical to what's in the black book." Leonel said.

"You can tell?" Aina's eyes lit up with a bit of surprise.

"Can't you also? You just said this language was different from what you were used to... I assumed by that that you could tell the difference."

Even though Leonel couldn't read Japanese, Chinese or Korean, he could easily tell the difference between their characters. It wasn't just him, it was a pretty easy task for any person who was even somewhat familiar with them. He felt that these diagrams were the same. Even if he couldn't understand them, he could still see through the fact they had the same basic foundation.

"... I can't." Aina replied. "Force Arts are shrouded in an energy that makes them hard to observe, it's part of what makes them so hard to comprehend and use, and even harder to make. I only know that they're not the same because I can't see through that shroud. If it was a similar language to what I'm used to, it would be easier for me to do so."

Leonel's brows arched with understanding. But, there was one part he was still confused about. Why was it that he didn't feel a shroud impeding him at all?

Once more, Leonel could only toss these things to the back of his mind, unable to provide an answer to Aina's curious gaze.

"... Why do you think that Pierre would have a book like this but Nicolas doesn't?" Leonel suddenly said after several hushed moments filled with nothing but the sound of rustling paper.

Aina frowned, not knowing what Leonel was getting at.



“I have a feeling that drawing these Force Diagrams is Nicolas’ ability. But...”

Leonel’s gaze flickered with a blazing light. He walked back to Nicolas’ corpse, stepping through the leaking blood and tearing open the back of his robes.

Leonel stood to his full height as his jaw set. There it was, the massive etching mutilation they were looking for. Except... It was on Nicolas’ body.

Somebody had given him this ability.

## Chapter 45

Leonel’s expression gained a bit of dignity. They hadn’t been here for long, yet so many inexplicable things were unfolding before him.

Gritting his teeth, Leonel made a decision.

“I know how we can get out of here.”

Aina was just as intelligent as Leonel was. Though her thinking speed fell several steps behind him after he awakened his ability, when given enough time, her conclusions wouldn’t be much different from his own. This was why when she heard this, her expression immediately changed.

“No. No. Absolutely not. We can think of another way. You have no idea what kind of side effects there might be. I won’t let you.”

Leonel smiled bitterly.

“I wish I knew more about this world, but unfortunately I don’t. This is the only solution I can think of, and considering the current abilities of my mind... That’s saying a lot.” [PANDA-NOVEL.COM](http://PANDA-NOVEL.COM)

Aina's eyes involuntarily reddened.

Leonel walked to Nicolas' desk and picked up one of his pen-shaped knives. He looked at it before a moment, hesitating. He didn't even notice when Aina's small hand crossed his field of vision and clamped down on the palm he held it in.

"It's too risky." Aina tried to steady the trembling in her voice. "We don't understand the diagrams to begin with, who knows what it will do to you? For all we know, Nicolas didn't even have his own will."

Leonel's jaw clenched. Sure enough, Aina had thought of the main danger as well.

PANDA-NOVEL Leonel was certain that this place was being held together by a large scale Force Art. The problem was that neither he nor Aina were experts in the matter. Walking around blindly could land them in an even worse situation than they were already in.

Though it might be possible for him to try and deduce the mysteries through Nicolas' countless notes, he had no confidence in doing so in a short time. PANDA NOVEL

However, if he drew this etching onto his body, he should theoretically gain the ability Nicolas had, allowing him to comprehend these Force Arts quickly. With the processing power of his mind, as long as he had this starting point, deducing what he needed to know to get them out of here would be the simple part.

This sounded all well and good, but he might have a frightening price to pay for his ignorance. Joan worshiped Nicolas more than she did even the Catholic Church. Yet, they had very clear evidence here that his strength was handed to him by another. Who knew what the goals of this person was and what contingency plans they had left behind?

Leonel's heart had been unable to settle itself. Knowing that the destination ahead only had one path, yet it was fraught with danger, left him in a steadily darkening state. But somehow, Aina's hand, despite being so much smaller than his own, completely dispelled those thoughts.

He suddenly smiled warmly, his back straightening.

He lifted Aina's hand from his palm, his gaze flickering when he noticed that the sharp etching tool he had been holding onto had cut into her.

Almost somewhat on instinct, he ripped a piece of cloth from his linen shirt and carefully bandaged her hand. p??J??????

“Of the two of us.” He spoke lightly as he worked. “I am the best option to do this. With my ability, I’ll be able to make the best use of it. Plus, I won’t need to draw it as large as he had to to achieve a better result. It’ll be fine.”

Aina's hand trembled beneath Leonel's tender actions. Then, she could only watch blankly as he set her hand down and drew the first slice of flesh across the back of his left hand.

Leonel's memory was frightening after awakening his ability. Without a single pause, he drew the complex Force Art across his skin, the only sign of his pain being his tightly clenched jaw.

Force Arts could be made stronger with both depth and size. However, the Art Leonel drew was barely deeper than a usual paper cut and was a fraction of the size of Nicolas'. But, Leonel was confident that his own ability could amplify this Art's would-be potency, while also mitigating the risk he put himself in.

Even so, blood flowed continuously from Leonel's hand, dripping down and ricocheting off of the stone beneath their feet. The dull echoes rebounded across the walls of the underground sewage system, giving the atmosphere an eerie and damp feel.

Leonel's coordination stat was exceptionally high. It took him not more than a few minutes to etch the Force Art into his skin.

He had been expecting a grand showing when he finished, but the reality didn't have much fanfare. There was a faint wisp of light and a subtle comprehension clicked in Leonel's mind. What was once gibberish became as clear as a text of English to him.

‘So that's how it is... Aina was right. Drawing Force Art is like an author writing down a story. But that also means that if you want to influence a Dimension, you must be applying pressure from a higher Dimension. This isn't just good news... It's excellent news!’

Leonel grasped on a very simple fundamental concept like it was his last beacon of hope.

The bad news was that whoever it was truly had placed some failsafes in place, failsafes that made Leonel tremble to his core. He didn't know exactly what they were, but his analytical mind could already see through the parts of this Force Art that contributed nothing to its main ability of passing down this power of understanding. It didn't take a genius to figure out that these parts were where the hidden danger lied...

The good news, however, was that this Force Art was an attempt of the Fourth Dimension to influence the Third. However, Leonel's body was a half-step above the Third Dimension and was on its way to evolving toward the Fourth due to Earth being in its Metamorphosis and him having lit his first Force Node.

As a result, the contingency plans this mysterious person left, had barely a portion of their effectiveness left.

This also meant that the knowledge Leonel was gaining was also severely hampered, but it was a worthy trade-off, especially considering Leonel's calculative abilities!

“LEONEL!”

Leonel snapped out of his thoughts, his head sharply turning toward Aina.

“Don't scare me like that!” She pounded the side of her fist into his chest, a move that would have likely sent him flying in the past.

Leonel grinned. “Aina... That's the first time you've called me by my name...”

Aina blinked for a moment then blushed profusely, turning her head away.

Leonel's expression turned more serious with Aina distracted. He could feel the subtle workings of energy chains trying to worm their way from his left hand into his body. He had no choice but to send a steady stream of Force to crush it time and time again. The drain on him was immense.

'We need to finish this mission as soon as possible. Only by going back to the present will this Force Art completely lose its effectiveness...'

## Chapter 46

[Bonus chapter for reaching 200 powerstones. Next at 300. Take advantage of this, because judging by how things are going now, I'll probably have to increase the requirements next week lest my fingers fall off]

Leonel pushed these worries to the back of his mind. He refused to allow Aina to worry. She was still in a precarious state though her symptoms hadn't flared up in a while. Though he wasn't certain what might cause her to sink back into that state, it was best if he kept her calm right now.

Even aside from this, there was something else on his mind as well. He wanted to make this Force Art on his body as useless as possible as quickly as possible, but that didn't mean he didn't want the knowledge within it.

If he relied on the Force Art entirely, then as soon as it lost its ability, the knowledge would go along with it. However, if he went out of his way to make this knowledge less instinctual and root it into his memory, then regardless of this whether it continued to work or not, the knowledge would become his.

Whoever it was who created this Force Art most definitely had a devastating ability. Leonel couldn't fathom what kind of power someone who could translate numerous abilities into Force Art wielded. However, no matter how much of a great genius this person was, they had ultimately miscalculated this time.

Leonel's ability couldn't be considered a counter to this mysterious person's. But, what it was, was an ability capable of exploiting a weakness. And that was exactly what Leonel intended to do. PANDA-NOVEL.COM

After taking a deep breath.

“Give me half a day. Half a day is all I’ll need to organize all of this information.”

Aina nodded solemnly. She knew that half a day was already worth five days to the world of their quest. By then, Charles would already be crowned and the French would begin marching toward Paris. However, she knew that it was useless to try and rush Leonel. If he couldn’t do this, then they wouldn’t be getting out of here at all.

Without hesitation, Leonel leaned against a stone wall and crossed his legs, his mind entering a deep state that seemed almost like slumber.

Compared to the abilities of others, Leonel’s really seemed too lacking. He didn’t have a flashy amount of strength, nor could he erect energy barriers like James or control things through the air like Yuri. However, only Leonel knew just how truly formidable his ability was, and the next few hours would prove this. PANDA NOVEL

PANDA-NOVEL Nicolas had spent his entire life integrating the knowledge given to him by that unknown person he worshiped like a God. He had lived over 60 years before the time of his death and over 50 of those had been spent in diligent study.

However... Leonel had confidence to surpass him in just half a day!

The first and foremost reason Leonel chose [Dimensional Cleanse] was because he instinctually felt that it could raise the potency of his ability. He hadn’t even known about the so-called Star Cleansed Bodies before.

Now, though, he knew that these Star Cleansed Bodies unlocked levels of potential your body would never have otherwise. Even without having formed his First Star yet, Leonel felt that his ability was far stronger than it had been in the past. And he knew... That he could make it stronger.

A strong surge of Force erupted from Leonel’s body, causing Aina’s expression to immediately change. She wanted to rush forward and stop Leonel, but it was already too late. She no longer dared to stop him for fear of harming him. ρ??∪??????

'You idiot!' She roared in her mind.

A faint wisp of a smile curled Leonel's lips as though he could hear her thoughts. And maybe it was due to that, but the anxiousness in Aina's heart faded.

There was truly nothing to worry about. This time, Leonel wasn't putting his life on the line. Even with those Force Chains trying to wiggle their way through his body and take control of him, Leonel didn't have the faintest drop of worry in his mind.

In the last few months he and Aina had been here, the reason they hadn't wasn't due to the fact they hadn't accumulated enough. Leonel could have formed his second Force Node a very long time ago. In fact, he could have likely formed his fifth or sixth by now had he not been obstructed.

The only reason he hadn't was because he didn't want to be found out by Joan. Aina had similar reasons for not forging her Seventh Node.

That said, in this time, Leonel hadn't been idle. Not only had he calculated the perfect locations for up to his Eighth Force Node, but he had simulated their creation hundreds of times in his mind.

This was the first true tangible ability Leonel awakened after forming his First Force Node. When he entered a deep sleep like the one he had just now, he was able to think at a speed even several times that of his wakeful state. In addition, he could perform incredibly realistic experiments as well.

Leonel felt that these experiments were only about 70% aligned with reality as he still hadn't reached a level of being able to simulate everything perfectly, but this 70% was already more than enough, especially when Leonel ran the simulations of the same events countless times over.

If there ever reached a day where he could simulate the world perfectly, then just one simulation would be enough!

Leonel called this ability Dream World. With it, he could perfectly calculate how to rearrange his cells to make room for a Force Node in advance, allowing him to complete the real thing with not only

exceptionally high success rates, but also at speeds others could only — somewhat ironically — dream of!

Aina could only stand in a daze as she watched Leonel swiftly form his Second Node. It took him no more than half an hour! And in her shock, she almost didn't notice he had begun forming his Third Node... And it too only took him half an hour!

A rush of Force surged toward Leonel from all directions. The torrent was so furious that Aina's lovely hair whipped about wildly, almost like the waters of a waterfall crashing to the rivers below.

The momentum of the birth of Leonel's First Star was far beyond his expectations. In his shock, he realized that the Force that was holding up the surroundings was actually being sucked dry!

One of the reasons Leonel had dared to do this was because the Force in this place was actually somewhat denser than even Earth. But, even if it was, it was almost a fraction of a fraction the size of Earth.

Then, there was a dull BOOM. It almost sounded like a bag of sand hitting the ground, and following it, the Force in the surroundings all but vanished.

Leonel's eyes opened with a bright flash, his body glowing as layers of skin fell from his body. It wasn't just skin that fell, but even his hair did as well, leaving him completely bald. As if this wasn't already enough, but a foul odor came from him as dense brown-black liquids were forced out from him at the same time.

However, he didn't have a mind to think about any of this because he met Aina's shocked gaze with a shock gaze of his own. Then, he could only smile bitterly.

If he had known he only needed to breakthrough to leave this place... Why would he have etched this damnable Force Art on his hand?

To make matters worse, after destroying this pseudo Fourth Dimension during his breakthrough and returning to the Third Dimension, the ability of the Force Art to exert its strength multiplied, causing the Force Chains attempting to latch onto Leonel to grow several times in power.



## Chapter 47

Just when Leonel was feeling truly regretful at his lack of knowledge, his expression changed when he realized that the odd cage they were in was rapidly converging energy to reform itself.

“Aina, do you have a big enough pocket to keep all of this stuff?” Leonel pointed toward the desk filled with loose sheets of paper. “Never mind, we don’t have time. Come on.”

Leonel grabbed Aina’s hand and sprinted with all his might, even activating his Force without reserve.

Aina seemed stunned at that sudden contact. But, she was even more stunned by Leonel’s speed. Was this really someone who had only formed three Force Nodes?

In a flash, the two had crossed the 200 meter distance to the location of the wooden door that had appeared once more. With a single movement, Leonel swung it open, shocked at how impossibly heavy it was.

It didn’t take him long to understand. This was a door designed to be easy to open from the outside, but extremely difficult without special methods from the inside. It was precisely this door that, when closed, completed the Force Art that created this space.[PANDA-NOVEL.COM](http://PANDA-NOVEL.COM)

A roar escaped Leonel’s lips, his arm bulging with ghastly veins as he pulled with all his might, ripping the door from the hinges.

Only when this happened did he finally relax, his breathing steadying. As expected, the surging feeling he had had before came to a stop.

One might argue that he shouldn’t have been so panicked since he only needed to break through to shatter this space again. However, even though he knew where he should place every node up to the Eighth, he couldn’t form them in quick succession without regard.

After forming his Third Node, Leonel faintly felt that his body was like a bulging balloon that was about to burst. If he had used his Dream World to simulate what would occur during the formation of his Fourth Node, it would likely be that he would implode.

In addition, he realized another thing. The closer to the Fourth Dimension he became, the more difficult simulating things became. He could simulate matters related to the Third Dimension with over 90% accuracy. In his previous state, he could simulate matters related to his body with 70% accuracy. pANDA NOVEL

Now, though, despite the fact forming his first Star had greatly strengthened his ability, he felt that his accuracy was only 73%. However, since the improvement in his ability was far more than just a mere 3%, that meant that simulating the matters of his body had actually increased in difficulty.

It seemed that this path of his wouldn't be perfectly linear. There would definitely be some give and some take.

He needed a few days to allow his body to acclimate itself to his Third Node, only then could he attempt to form the fourth. And, though Joan only died a year from now, there were countless events that happened between now and then. Without delving into the gritty details, what's important was that she might very well be marching toward Paris in just a few days.

He didn't have the time to slowly improve his strength, and he wouldn't have such a perfect environment to do so like he just had either. To make matters worse, if the formation of his Third Node took so much Force, how much would his others take? No, that wasn't right. It was the formation of his First Star that had taken so much energy.

Suddenly, Leonel felt a strong tug on his hand. p??J??????

Looking down, he blushed slightly in embarrassment as he let go of Aina's hand.

"Sorry." He said apologetically.

Aina's little nose wrinkled. "You stink."

Leonel smiled bitterly. This was already the second time since he had known Aina that she had said such a thing to him. But it couldn't be helped, what exactly was he supposed to do about this? He hadn't expected that forming a One Star Cleansed Body would have such results.

In the past few months, he had noticed that Aina was most definitely a clean freak and he also deduced that the black military outfit she wore that was filled with pockets definitely had a self-cleaning function, because he hadn't seen her take a bath even once but she still somehow smelt so good.

Of course, if he knew that this clean freak he liked so much had helped him clean up while he was unconscious all those weeks ago, it was unknown how he would react.

“What should we do now? I really didn't expect that we would escape so soon.” Aina said softly.

PANDA-N0VEL Hearing her, it was only now that Leonel realized that she wasn't certain that they would have escaped at all. Not only did this make Leonel feel more guilty about putting them in such a situation, but it warmed his heart at the same time. Because despite feeling this way, she still hadn't wanted him to risk etching this damned thing on his hand.

Thinking of the Force Art against, Leonel gazed at his hand to find that it had healed during his breakthrough and formed faint bumps that looked like a brand.

“We were lucky.” Leonel said after taking a deep breath. “We were only in there for a little over an hour, so barely half a day has passed. Joan will likely be setting out either today or in a few days toward Paris. This is a good opportunity.”

“You want to get there first and prepare?”

Leonel nodded. “Without adequate preparation, we'll definitely suffer major losses. I can't believe this is a Zone they designated for two people.” Leonel continued, feeling aggrieved. “I believe you, this has to be a Unique Zone, that's the only explanation.”

“...” Aina's mouth opened for a moment before she muttered in a small voice. “... Sorry.”

But, she had spoken so softly that Leonel didn't catch her words.

“Let's rush to Paris. We'll definitely make it there first. We can scout out the situation and wait for Joan to arrive. It will also give me a chance to digest the information in this Force Art.

If it was really so easy to get rid of a Force Art, Leonel would just endure and shave a layer of skin from his hand. But, it obviously wasn't so easy to deal with it or else Aina wouldn't have been so worried, he could deduce at least that much.

Since now he had to use half of his Force to keep these chains at bay, he might as well gain some benefits from them, or else they really might have no chance of clearing this Zone.

However, just as Leonel was firming up his resolve, Aina said something that almost made him fall to the ground.

“... Do you know how to get to Paris from here?”

## Chapter 48

[Bonus chapter for 300 powerstones. Next at 400]

Maps, especially during the middle ages, were incredibly expensive. Even a simple map would be worth hundreds of gold coins. Obviously, despite having been here for a long while, neither Aina nor Leonel had such funds.

If they didn't have a map, they would have no choice but to follow Joan's army from a distance. But if they did this, then the advantage they had in movement speed would be nullified and they'd lose their chance to prepare in advance. If this happened, their chances at changing history and capturing Paris would end in failure.

Leonel almost slapped his forehead. How could he forget something so important.

After frowning for a moment, memories gradually surfaced in his mind.

During his studies, since he had chosen French, he had of course seen many historic maps. It was just that the maps in these textbooks were incredibly crude and simple and would at most point him in a general direction.

After a while, Leonel shook his head. This wasn't good enough. A single mistake could throw them hundreds of miles off course. PANDA-N0VEL.COM

"We're going to need to raid the military camp." Leonel suddenly said.

Aina nodded seriously. This really was the only choice.

There were probably cartographers in such a large base, but did they have the time to find out where they were? And even if they did find them, they would be within the city walls, something that would put them at a great disadvantage.

At the very least, the military camp definitely had what they were looking for. In addition, if they were found out, it would be comparatively easier to leave the military camp as opposed to a fortified castle.

PANDA-N0VEL "I couldn't leave my ax behind regardless." Aina said.

Leonel grinned. "Let's do it, then." PANDA N0VEL

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"Big sister, where are Leo and Aina? We'll be setting off tomorrow morning and our chances at victory will be much better if they're with us."

Michael was seemingly the only one in the meeting of commanding officials who didn't have a solemn expression. All of them knew how difficult it would be to retake Paris, so obviously they weren't in the

mood to smile. As a result, while the nobles were off drinking and eating, celebrating the new crowned King's ascension to the throne, they were diligently planning.

A wisp of a complex emotion flashed in Joan's eyes, but she quickly hid it.

"They've been taken in by the Bishop. Their role is different from ours."

Surprised expressions appeared on all those in the room. ¶¶¶¶¶¶¶¶¶¶

Though they worshiped the Bishop, they had never actually seen him like Joan had. All of their knowledge of him was by proxy of their big sister. So, not only were they surprised, but they even felt a bit jealous.

That said, it couldn't be helped. They didn't have great abilities like Joan, Leonel or Aina. They had expected this result long ago. But, hearing it now made them feel a bit inferior.

"Forget these matters, there'll obviously come a day where you're all rewarded for your service. Is there a need to feel sad? The disciples of the Apostles never met Jesus, but did they mope around like you few? Keep your heads up."

"... We got it, big sister." Michael pouted like a child. "But won't Aina be needing her ax? How could she leave it here?"

Michael had no other intentions with his questions. He really was just asking innocently. However, there were others among their band that had weird expressions on their faces having heard this.

At this moment, Aina's massive ax was leaning on a wooden weapon rack at a corner of the military tent. But, this wasn't the most important point. The key here was that Joan had moved it from Leonel's tent to place it here. There wasn't anything inherently wrong with this action. After all, they would be heading out soon and Aina wasn't here. But, it just felt like there was something they couldn't put their finger on.

Just as Joan was about to try and dispel the awkward atmosphere, a voice suddenly came from the tent's entrance.

"Hello? Miss Joan? Can I come in?"

Joan blinked in astonishment, because the voice was actually Leonel's. What was going on?

Michael laughed happily. "Come in, come in! We were just talking about you, you lucky bastard."

Leonel's grinning face poked through the flaps to find the few of them having a meeting around a table. Since it was late, the space was illuminated by numerous candles. But, despite the fact it was a military tent, it carried a delicate fragrance that made it obvious a woman lived here.

"Leonel? Why are you here?" Joan asked as Leonel stepped into the tent.

Originally, Leonel had planned to use force to take what he needed. But then he shook his head. When had he become such a brute? The game of American Football seemed like a game of all brawn, but he'd lost count of how many times he had won a game with his mind instead of purely his arm. The National Championship was just another example.

Leonel made a gamble. He gambled that Joan, even if she knew that the Bishop's purpose was to kill him, she most definitely wouldn't want others to know this. Leonel was too well liked in the army for her to act against him openly. Even now, the solemn expressions of those commanders here had gained a wisp of a smile when he entered.

In addition, there was also the chance that Joan only had a feeling that the Bishop had bad intentions and no solid proof. In that case, she might even sigh a breath of relief that he had come back instead.

There were other possibilities as well, but they all ultimately led to the same conclusion: Joan couldn't do anything to him right now!

"I came to bid you all farewell." Leonel smiled brightly, casually sweeping a glance at the strategy maps spread across the table. "The Archbishop has given my sister and me a special mission."

A few expressions of sadness crossed the faces of those here, causing Joan's expression to change. Since when had Leonel's prestige become so great? However, hearing Leonel address the Bishop as Archbishop rested a rock that had been hovering above her heart.

Leonel laughed and exchanged a few words with the commanders, embracing the likes of Jean and Michael like they were friends separating from a long while.

A long while later, Leonel turned to leave before smacking a palm to his forehead.

"I almost forgot. If I left it behind, my sister would kill me. Thank you for keeping it safe, Miss Joan."

Under a chorus of laughter, Leonel hurriedly scurried to the back of the room, picked up Aina's massive ax, and left with an embarrassed expression.

## Chapter 49

"Sister, what's going on?"

Hours later, when the moon was high in the sky and darkness had enveloped the land, Jean was the only one left in Joan's tent.

PANDA-NOVEL "What do you mean by that. Jean?"

"Don't lie to me, sister. Why did Leonel say that the Archbishop had given him a mission?"

When Joan heard Jean emphasize the word Archbishop, her pupils constricted. That was right, Leonel had said Archbishop, but all of the commanders beneath her command referred to him as the Bishop. It was an incredibly small detail, but it was a detail someone as intelligent as Jean would never let slip by.



Did this Leonel do it on purpose? There were others just as intelligent as Jean under her command, it's just that only Jean was close enough to her that he would confront her like this. Or rather, it could be said that their relationship...

Jean's arm wrapped firmly around Joan's slender waist, holding her tightly to his body. PANDA-NOVEL.COM

"Jean." Joan said somewhat furiously, her glare seeming to hold an indescribable power behind them.

"I thought our relationship was better than this." Jean said with narrowed eyes, meeting her fierce gaze. "Do you think I'm a fool? What death mission did that bastard send Leonel on?"

"Jean! Watch your mouth —!"

She was about to scold him fiercely for his act of blaspheming the Bishop, but a pair of rough lips had covered her own, completely stifling her attempt.

"Joan, you are my woman. I don't know if this person you follow is really God or not, but this is one thing that I most definitely do know."

To these words, Joan's reaction was unexpected. Her gaze seemed a bit dim, it was completely unlike a woman who was supposedly in love. It was as though she was resigned to her fate. PANDA NOVEL

However, the situation was simply too odd. Joan's standing was clearly higher than Jean's, so obviously it wasn't possible for him to force her into such a relationship. Whether it was backing or individual strength, she left him behind by far. It could only be said that their relationship was almost impossible to understand.

"Joan, you are a woman too shackled by responsibility and the imaginary. You realize just as I have that there is no God in this world. Or, at the very least, even if there is one, it is most definitely not the God we grew up worshiping. Since things have reached such a level, why do you still allow yourself to be tied down?"

Seeing that Joan still seemed to have no intention of responding, Jean released her. Though there were flames lighting his loins right now and he also knew that Joan wouldn't resist if he took her to bed now, he didn't want to touch her when her eyes were so vacant.

"Do you know the reason I've allowed you to stay by that Bishop's side all this time despite my being certain that he was just using you? It's for no other reason than that I wanted you to see it for yourself. Would you have listened to me had I said it earlier?"

"But now you've seen it for yourself. He has no qualms about tricking a kind soul like Leonel. In that case, what do you think he would be willing to do to you?"

There was finally a change in Joan's expression. A wisp of complexity and sadness pervaded her gaze. However, no matter how she searched, she really couldn't find an answer. ¶¶¶¶¶¶¶¶¶¶

God was an important part of her life. This was something ingrained in her from youth. It simply wasn't possible to separate herself from that lofty entity.

How much pain had she suffered in her life? She was nothing but a teenage girl, yet she was leading groups of men in battle. How much burden was laid upon her shoulders? No one really knew but herself.

But wasn't that what faith was? Wouldn't her pain be repaid in the end? This was nothing more than a test of her resolve.

Joan's gaze became firm once more.

'This will be the last. This is the last test. Then, I'll be laid to rest and enter the Heavenly Gates...'

The times she had to go against her conscience? That was simply a test of her loyalty. The times others suffered due to the choices she made? That was simply the test of their loyalty. The world was that simple to Joan.

The God she had known in her youth, maybe he really didn't exist. But, there was a new God before her now, and he was real and tangible. She had seen it with her own eyes, the kind of power he wielded, the kind of power he could bestow.

'Bishop! I won't let you down!'

Despite seeing Joan's gaze regain their light, there was no happiness on Jean's face. In fact, the smile he held faded. And, seeing this, it was Joan instead who smiled.

"Jean."

Joan's voice was so soft that Jean felt that his knees lost their strength. Under the dull lights of the flickering candle light, she heard the clang of armor drop to the floor and a slender hand slip into his. He had hardly reacted by the time he noticed that he was being led toward Joan's bed.

It wasn't long before a softness that made his mind go blank enveloped him.

"Make me forget for another night." Joan placed her lips to Jean's ear, standing on the very tips of her toes as the last of her clothes fell to the ground.

Her hot breath carried a moisture with it that spread an uncontrollable warmth throughout his body. At that moment, he seemed to have completely forgotten about his complex emotions and enveloped Joan's soft bottom in his large hands, lifting her up from the ground and piercing through her without reserve.

A spine tingling moan was barely muffled as she bit down on his neck. Like a young girl swaying in the sea, she accepted all Jean had to give, holding onto his neck with her seemingly weak arms.

With each powerful stroke, the lust and resolve in her eyes grew.

But she had no idea that her 'God' had already died.

## Chapter 50

The Paris of the 21st century, before it was destroyed during the Empire's war for supremacy, was known for its romance and the Eiffel Tower. However, though it might still be possible for the France of the 1400's to be known for the former, it would still be 400 years until the latter was built. But, that didn't mean that Paris didn't have its grand sights, much to Leonel's aggrievement.

The grand sight this Paris was known for, unfortunately, was a massive castle that dwarfed both Leonel and even Aina's massive ax in size. It stretched almost as far as the eyes could see and its fortifications made the knees of its attackers weak.

Both Aina and Leonel stood a good distance from it, not wanting to alert the Englishmen of their arrival. Even though they had broken free of the French, let alone the English, even most of the French army was completely unaware of this. So, if they got caught now, there would definitely have to be a bloody battle.

"This is the city we're supposed to capture? What a death mission." Leonel muttered.

Aina stood by his side silently as they looked toward the tall greyish white walls in the distance. Though her expression had hardly changed, there was a trace of seriousness in her eyes.

Leonel sighed. "We're still lacking in information. What is Joan coming here to do? If her goal really is to capture Paris like history says it was, why is it our goal to kill her?" PANDA-NOVEL.COM

There were too many things the answer to this question hinged on. For example, if Joan's goal was the same as theirs, should they work with her at the start and only kill her later? What if her goal wasn't the same as theirs? Should they kill her as quickly as possible to avoid later variables and try to capture the city on their own? Could they even do that if it was necessary?

The longer Leonel spent in Zones, the more he realized just how important information was. If they had wrong or even incomplete information, it could lead them toward doing something irreversible and get them stuck in this place for the rest of their lives. Leonel still shuddered at the thought of what would have happened to him had he killed the Priest's sacrificial virgin back in the Mayan Temple. He would have never seen his friends or family again...

Leonel's gaze flickered. 'No matter what, my priority if we pass through this will be getting the best Zone Detector I can.'

"We don't know exactly what her goal is," Aina suddenly said, "But, it's still possible to make a guess."

"What are you thinking?" PANDA NOVEL

Aina bit her lip for a moment before continuing, her gaze still focused on the massive castle in the distance.

"First, remember that capturing Paris is just the hidden quest. We only need to complete the main quest to get the chance to leave."

"But...?" Leonel felt like she was leading him somewhere.

"But, there's a reason hidden quests exist. This isn't a game. Everything has a purpose and not completing everything perfectly has consequences. If it was a weak Zone, then the penalty for skipping over a hidden quest wouldn't be severe, but in a potential Unique Zone like this one, the consequences could be dire.

"The main reason it's best to complete a hidden quest is due to the fact hidden quests are lingering dangers. When left incomplete, they can bleed into other Zones, causing mutations that evolve them and multiply their difficulty. p??U??????

"Under normal circumstances, Sub-Dimensional Zones with higher Dimensional Grades than the world they're in will not appear. Meaning, since we are only in the process of evolving into the Fourth Dimension, Bronze Zones will not appear and only Black Zones will. However, if a hidden quest is left incomplete..."

Leonel broke out into a cold sweat. According to Aina's device, this was only an S-grade Zone. Even if it turned out to be a Unique Zone, its true difficulty wouldn't be too far from this. Yet, it had already almost killed them twice now. Once when Aina lost her mind and the other when they met the Bishop and were trapped.

If a mere S-grade Zone was already like this, what would a Bronze Grade Zone be like?

The worst part of this was that these things weren't entirely under their control. Even if they perfectly cleared their own Zones, what about everyone else?

At that moment, Leonel came to a sudden understanding.

"It's no wonder the Empire wants to gather everyone up. It really can't afford for everyone to work blindly on their own, or we could really be finished."

Aina nodded. "Now, think back to your first Zone, how were the hidden quest and main quest linked?"

"Originally..." Leonel smiled bitterly as he remembered how this damned wrist watch almost got him killed. "... Never mind. The main quest was to repel the Spanish and save the girl. The hidden quest was to kill the Priest."

Leonel had barely finished when his gaze suddenly brightened. As for Aina, she shuddered when she heard his mission requirements. Leonel had to fight the Spanish? In other words... An army not unlike this one? Alone...?

She shook her head to regain her bearing

"Seems you understand now. The missions never conflict with one another, but what might matter is the timing. For example, your main quest is vague. Which girl? The only way for you to know which girl is to find out that girl is linked to the Priest you need to kill."

PANDA-NOVEL "Then that makes things simple." Leonel said. "If they can't be contradictory, then Joan's goal is definitely not to save Paris. So, I should have just dealt with her earlier?"

"Not necessarily. Like I said, timing is important. Though her goal isn't to capture Paris, she still has a purpose in coming here. And, it's likely that even if her goal isn't to capture this city, she will at the very least attack it. That is beneficial to us."

Leonel took a deep breath. “So that’s it. We wait for her to attack while making sure she can’t accomplish her true goal, whatever that true goal might be.”

After saying this, Leonel’s heart steadied. This was most definitely not a simple task, but there wasn’t much of a choice left.

“Aina, help me cut down a few trees.”

There might have been a large mountain before them to climb, but Leonel had no intention of lying down. Since Joan had chosen to betray him, she was his enemy.