

Descent 421

Chapter 421

The tent was massive, reaching 10 meters into the sky and 20 in every other direction. Though it couldn't be considered to be lavishly decorated, everything was neatly arranged and not even the fibers of the beast skin carpets swayed out of proper order.

The lights were dim, but warm and a smell of harmonious nature hung in the air.

In truth, it seemed more like the abode of a war lord than an Empire's prince. But, it exuded an air of dominance and demanded absolute obedience at the same time.

Numerous young faces all turned toward Noah at once and rose from their seated positions. Not a single one showed even a hint of disrespect. In fact, some of them looked on with trepidation.

Noah maintained an even pace as he made his way to the head of the table. It was only after he sat that the others followed suit, a heaviness reigning over the atmosphere.

This wasn't the first time Noah had led an expedition. With their talent, many of them had entered Zones and Invalid clearing teams with him in the past. They knew how he operated and how meticulous he was. Stepping out of line wasn't acceptable.

This was why the tent had been completely silent before he entered and, even after he did, it remained as such.
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Noah glanced toward the three dimensional map that spread out across the table.

This map was actually the representation of top of the line nano technology. Under normal conditions, it would blend into the table and be invisible. However, after observing a target, it would perfectly replicate a scaled version. In fact, if fitted with all the bells and whistles necessary, it could even provide live observation of a target.

Unfortunately, they had only been able to deploy a small portion of this technology. Unlocking the full scope of its abilities would require deploying Force Disruption Towers all across this second moon. But, that obviously was not possible for now.

After a long while, Noah finally spoke.

“What is the report on their strength?”

“According to our scouts, they are infinitely close to a Fourth Dimensional world in strength, Your Highness. The main targets to look out for are those they call the ‘Demon Lords’, the ‘Knight of the Round Table’, and the ‘Three Star Magi’. Aside from this, the most powerful existences on this moon are characters they know as ‘King Arthur’, ‘Queen Guinevere’, ‘Lancelot’ and ‘Mordred’.” PANDA NOVEL

The youths looked toward each other with weird gazes. Did they get dropped into a fairy tale or something?

Though they had been briefed on the truth behind the appearance of this second moon, it was still too hard for them to accept. How could stories become real? And if stories could become real, where exactly was the blurred line between reality and fiction?

However, considering the identity of the young woman who had spoken, none of them dared to make jokes about it easily. If Noah was the one they feared the most, this young lady was very much a close second.

She had a slender little button nose and short cropped hair that made her look quite adorable. That coupled with her short stature of barely 5’4” and her petite frame made her seem like a treasure everyone wanted to protect...

That was until you heard her cold voice and saw those piercing blue eyes. She seemed to bore into your soul with her every action, shocking your system with ice.

This young lady was the youngest daughter of the Grand Prime Minister Scarlet family, Jessica Scarlet.
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Much like Governor Duke was a fusion of the Governor and Duke titles, the Grand Prime Minister was a fusion of the Grand Duke and Prime Minister titles. While there were eight Governor Dukes, The Empire only had two Grand Prime Ministers. And, while the territories of the Governor Dukes were out of the Capital, the Grand Prime Ministers had the most prestigious Province as their stomping grounds.

Jessica was too young to be in line for any hereditary titles and was technically not meant to gain much power from her family as a result, but her own abilities spoke too loudly.

Still, despite the fact she was more than worthy to fight for the position of Grand Prime Minister in the future, she had practically been a glorified secretary to Noah since she was 13 years old. Even now that she was almost 23, she hadn't deviated from this role at all.

In fact, the only difference between her past self and her current self was that she had swapped out her usual gray pantsuit for a flexible leather patched armor. From afar, she looked no different from a female sniper to assassin, even down to the numerous knives strapped across her body.

Despite her small stature, she had quite a good figure as well. This much was clear even when she wore those gray pantsuits. Not that anyone dared to look, anyway...

Maybe Jessica was the only one who could read out names like 'Mordred' and 'King Arthur' without bursting into a fit of laughter. It was clear that she found nothing funny about it. Or maybe she didn't have much of a sense of humor to begin with.

"Infinitely close to the Fourth Dimension?" A young man asked. "How did they manage to pull this off?"

The other youths nodded. They too were curious about this. From their understanding, this world shouldn't be so strong. After all, it came from an SS-grade Zone.

"It's impossible to tell so early on." Jessica replied coldly. "Our best guess is that their Force seems to be several times thicker than the norm. It is likely that they have a technique able to thicken Force beyond the normal limits. This much has also been partially confirmed from other avenues of intelligence."

After allowing the youths to murmur amongst each other for a while, Noah finally spoke again.

“Our target is the Demon Empire. What are the main pitfalls?”

“The first is their numbers. The second is our ignorance. The last is their terrain advantage.” Jessica replied efficiently.

“Their numbers aren’t only made up of Demon Lords, but also large hordes of demonic beasts. They seem to have some methods of controlling these hordes, though not with great accuracy.

“Secondly, we are ignorant of much of their methods. They seem to employ a branch of Force Arts for what they call ‘magic’ or ‘Mage Arts’. We are still gathering information on this. I suggest that we send a few ambassadors to their Kingdom and form friendly relations.

“Lastly, the terrain. Their so-called Demon Empire’s core is located within a mountainous region. It’s almost impossible to launch a large-scale attack.”

Noah nodded, tapping lightly on the table. His mind spun quickly, his gaze locking on to the mountainous regions Jessica mentioned.

A suffocating aura exuded from the young Prince. At that moment, many around him could hardly breathe. Seemingly used to such a thing, they could only clench their jaws, waiting for it to pass.

Finally, the tapping stopped.

“Forming diplomatic relations is not a bad idea, but it will take too long. Imperial Grandfather granted us three months at most to complete this mission, we can’t afford to waste it.

“Since there is no path of attack through the mountains, we will make one. Implement the detonation plan of 2097.

“Jessica, you will lead your squad to deal with the demonic beasts. The more you pull into our control, the better. You have two weeks.

“Finally, send an ultimatum to this King Arthur.. It’s either he helps us to level this Demon Empire, or, after we’re done, he’ll be next.”

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A sudden flash caught the patrolling guards by surprise.

The location was a dark castle hidden within the depths of a mountainous region. It was designed so well that it seemed to blend into the jagged structure of the mountains around it, giving off a dark and sinister vibe.

It was safe to say that such a region rarely, if ever, received visitors. And, those who could use this teleportation platform were even rarer.

However, the guards were even more shocked when they realized that their two guests were’| humans?

Any other guards would likely lash out with an attack by now. But, these guards were so used to doing nothing that they were stunned for a moment, not knowing how they should react.

At that moment, Leonel’s vision cleared and he locked eyes on the two demon guards before him. Both of them were women dressed a bit too’| scantily for a normal teenage boy to ignore. Of course, that was only if these teenage boys weren’t Leonel Morales.

The two guards had pale violet skin and twin horns that came out from their seemingly delicate foreheads. As though that wasn’t enough to complete the picture, they both had thin, devilish tails.

No matter how one looked at it, these two were a pair of succubi. Leonel couldn’t imagine how Mordred thought to receive good quality protection from these two.

Leonel looked toward Aina and back before clearing his throat. PANDA-NOVEL.COM

“Hello, I’m Leonel. Mordred asked to see me?”

Leonel rarely felt awkward socializing with others, but this was simply too much. Was this how he should be asking to see a Demon Empress that was feared by so many? Why did it sound like he was checking in at a doctor’s appointment?

“Ah’!” The two demon women looked toward one another, seemingly communicating about whether they should be attacking now or not.

Luckily, large doors off to the side of the quiet room suddenly opened, revealing the figure of a voluptuous woman with pale skin. It seemed as though the only hint of color on her body were her red lips. As for everything else, they seemed painted in black and white.

Who else could this person be if not the Demon Empress Mordred?

Mordred smiled, opening her soft lips to speak. But, she suddenly paused when she noticed Aina, her lashes fluttering as she blinked, a curious light in her eye.

Looking from Aina to Leonel then back, a sudden amused light colored her eyes.

“Leonel and Aina, correct?” [PANDA NOVEL](http://PANDA-NOVEL)

Leonel was stunned for a moment, then he remembered that Mordred had seen his life from start to end like he had hers. Even though this Aina didn’t match up to his memories, with some context clues and an intelligent mind, it wasn’t much of a problem to draw the proper conclusion.

Leonel smiled. “Demon Empress.”

Mordred giggled. “You don’t have to call me that, just call me big sis or Em.”

Leonel coughed lightly. “Em it is, then.”

Mordred only laughed more at this reaction.

“Come with me, I’ll show you to some accommodations. I might as well act as a proper host.”

Mordred left with Leonel and Aina under the stunned gazes of the two female demons.

Was this really their Demon Empress? ρ??(???????)

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“Alright, you two can have this room.”

After travelling through what Leonel could only describe as a dreary and dark castle styled after Earth’s Victorian Era, Mordred finally stopped at yet another massive door.

This castle had a severe lack of normal sized doors. All the ones they had come across to this point were ten meters tall at the smallest and all had elaborate archways.

Seeing this door, however, Leonel began coughing again.

“ ‘| Just one room?”

Mordred sent Leonel a glance as though she was looking at an idiot. Even if someone was going to say that, shouldn’t he have waited for Aina to speak first? Who was the real man in this relationship?

Aina didn’t say much as she walked into the room, leaving Mordred staring at Leonel and shaking her head in disappointment.

Leonel went to scratch his head out of habit, but accidentally interrupted the nap of the little mink. In return, he received a strong swipe that left his hand aching.

Mordred pursed her lips and shook her head.

“Big Sis knows a lot about getting women. Stop being a pansy.”

Leonel watched as Mordred walked away, completely speechless.

How was he a pansy? In fact, he sometimes felt he was a little too bold. How many people would confess so many times?

” | Maybe that wasn’t so much of a good thing.’ Leonel coughed silently to himself. If one had followed him for the last day, they’d probably assume he had a cold of some sort.

Leonel walked into the room after Aina, his head swirling with confusing thoughts. Was he really a pansy?

“Have a nice rest!” Mordred’s voice came from the hallway. “We can talk about the rest tomorrow morning.”

Leonel felt the door lightly click behind him. He didn’t need to think to know that this was Mordred taking action again.

The first thing he saw was a massive bed. It was at least three meters in width and five in length. It was covered with a canopy that partially hid the other details at the same time.

The colors of the room were quite warm and much less bland than the rest of the palace. Mostly deep reds, violets and blues. It was quite easy on the eyes.

A light scent of roses hung in the air. It wasn’t too overpowering, but definitely not subtle either.

All in all, it felt like a meticulously sculpted room'! for a couple.

Aina didn't seem to react much to this. She simply walked to the master bathroom and locked the door behind her, leaving Leonel to his own thoughts.

By the time she walked out half an hour later, Leonel was still standing in the same spot, trying to understand.

After a while, he looked up and smiled. "Need help drying your hair again?"

Hearing these words, Aina blushed slightly thinking about the last time.. But in the end, she still nodded.

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The next morning, Leonel and Aina entered the Demon Empire's war room. Compared to the sweetness of the past day, the atmosphere was much tenser. In fact, even Mordred's playful attitude had completely vanished.

She sat upon a chair with a tall back, staring intently at a massive map before her. It detailed everything about Camelot and the Demon Empire even down to the smallest and most inconsequential rivers and hills.

Mordred was so lost in her own thoughts and worry that she didn't even notice the arrival of Leonel and Aina.

Others of her Empire might have been more enthusiastic about their odds, but Mordred had personally seen Leonel's memories, she knew exactly what kind of monster she was facing.

She never knew that it was possible to wield such power without magic or Internal Strength, but now she could no longer deny the possibility.

The #1 Demon Lord Crakos and the other Demon Lords sat around the massive map, all of them equally as silent. Even though they thought they were in a great position to defend, especially when the demon beasts and the mountainous landscape were taken into account. However, they were all influenced by the emotions of their Demon Empress and didn't dare to say much of anything.

It was only after the doors clicked closed behind Leonel and Aina did some begin to notice their presence.

Mordred looked up, squeezing out a smile. But, it was clear to all that this was the last thing she wanted to be doing. She knew exactly how dire the situation was, and she also knew that it would be even more dire if others didn't understand the kind of threat they were facing. PANDA-NOVEL.COM

If even the Demon Lords didn't quite believe her, then what about their subordinates? And the subordinates to their subordinates?

The more carefree and careless an army was, the easier it would be for them to collapse. By the time they realized that these things should be taken seriously, it would all already be too late.

This was honestly the largest part of the reason Mordred had no choice but to call for Leonel's help. The only one she could think of that might have a way of turning around this mentality was Leonel himself.

Mordred brought Leonel and Aina to sit by her.

"Three days ago an envoy of the Ascension Empire came. They established relations and also made it clear that the only course of action was surrender and complete obedience or war." Mordred briefly explained.

Leonel nodded. He wasn't sure what he as a single person could do about this. Honestly, he felt that it might be better for the Demon Empire and Camelot to simply surrender. In his opinion, they didn't stand a chance.

However, he also understood how hard such a truth would be for them to swallow. No one would like the idea of something they built with their own hands being taken away by another just because. PANDA NOVEL

In truth, no one was in the wrong. It wasn't Camelot's fault for appearing within Earth's territory, nor was it Earth's fault for wanting their territory to be under the sole control of themselves.

"You don't have to do too much during this meeting," Mordred continued, "I only want your opinions on certain things. Though I have a small understanding of the kind of existence the Ascension Empire is, I can't be as certain as you."

Now that she thought about certain things, Mordred began feeling somewhat guilty about calling Leonel here. Was she asking him to betray his people? Or, even worse than that, had she brought a seed of this Empire she wanted to repel into her den?

Though Mordred thought these things, she trusted her gut feeling. And, most importantly, she trusted what she had seen from Leonel's life. She knew exactly how he felt about The Empire. In fact, he probably hated it even more than she did at this current point.

Leonel nodded again. So Mordred wanted a consultation of sorts. This was easy enough to accomplish.

Leonel took a backseat, silently listening to the meeting as they began to debate strategy. But, the more Leonel listened, the more his brow furrowed.

Their thinking was too strict, their scopes were too narrow, their understanding of their enemy was far worse than Leonel believed The Empire's understanding of them was. ρ???(?????)

The more he listened, the more Leonel came to realize where Mordred's feelings of unease came from. If things continued like this, let alone repelling The Empire, their Demon Empire would collapse in a matter of a few days. Then, soon after, Camelot would follow.

" 'I suggest we leave Serpent's Path unguarded. We only have a limited amount of resources and the enemies aren't fools. Who would march an army up that hellscape?"

"It would be a waste of resources, indeed. Other than leaving some scouts there in case of trouble, I think we can leave it be and focus out defenses elsewhere."

Just as the next Demon Lord wanted to chime in, a sudden sigh sounded.

Leonel stood, placing his palm on the map on the table. His eyes closed as he imprinted it all in an instant. Then, his Force surged, calling forth a strong surge of Earth Elemental energies.

In the blink of an eye, the landscape bloomed. Under the astonished gazes of all those present, a perfect representation of the map was created, even down to the smallest imperfections of the mountain range they currently sat within.

“This is your world.” Leonel said plainly.

Leonel’s hand waved again, quickly forming another landmass. But, this one hovered above, held there by Leonel’s Force.

BANG!

Leonel dropped the newly created landmass on the one he had just formed. His actions caused a sigh of pity to spread throughout the room. The three dimensional construct had really been too perfect.

After lamenting it for a while, the Demon Lords looked at the new landscape, their eyes colored with shock. This new structure had such elaborate mountain structures that it put them to shame. Compared to the mountain range of their Demon Empire’ it was like an adult versus a newborn.

“This is just half a continent on Earth that was once called Asia.” Leonel continued just as emotionlessly.

The pupils of the Demon Lord’s constricted. Just half a continent was already larger than their entire world?! Just how big was Leonel’s world?!

Looking at the ease this ‘Asia’ flattened their lands with, a bit of trepidation crawled into their hearts.

“When the Ascension Empire had yet to unite all of Earth, Asia was the final continent that remained standing. This wasn’t only because of their intelligence and ingenuity, but most importantly because of their terrain, the centerpiece of which was a country once known as China.

“China is surrounded by sea and islands from one side and completely protected by endless mountains from another. Attacking them was almost impossible and most attempts ended up in failure.

“Do you know what the Ascension Empire did?” Leonel asked coldly.

The Demon Lord shivered, their hearts clenching before Leonel’s gaze. They lost focus on who was the human and who was the demon for a moment.

Leonel lifted a finger, causing a small ball of fire to appear. It was only the size of a fingernail, but the heat concentrated on it made all of their hearts beat wildly.

Leonel flicked his finger toward his construct of ancient Asia.

BANG!

A hole was blown through the mountains, flattening them to the ground.

The Demon’s shuddered. Was this power a civilization should have? How could it be possible to flatten mountains so large?!

However, the next words Leonel spoke made them all freeze. It was as though a reaper had grabbed onto their throats, suffocating them from the depths of their souls.

“This happened in 2097, just the 21st century.. It’s currently the 25th century. What do you think they can do now?”

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Leonel's words caused an eerie silence to overwhelm the war room.

Much like Mordred before, these Demon Lords had never been aware that there could be power outside one's own bodily strength. Even mages who might as well be known as the nukes of the battlefield in their world couldn't even compare.

But, to hear that this was not only possible, but had been possible over 300 years ago by the very same society aiming for their lands now caused many of them to pale.

At this moment they were no longer the demons that terrorized the lands of Camelot. They looked toward one another, not missing the trepidation in each one of their eyes.

"Then... What should we do? How do we beat such an existence?" The #1 Demon Lord Crakos finally spoke, his deep rumbling voice filling the once silence environment.

Leonel raised his palm from the table, causing the Earth Elemental Force to disperse. PANDA-NOVEL.COM

After a moment of silence, he shook his head causing their hearts to sink.

"The Empire is more powerful than you could imagine. If it wasn't for the restrictions the Metamorphosis placed on them, even destroying your entire world wouldn't be an issue."

Leonel's words weren't exaggerated in the slightest. Even back during the start of the 20th century, Earth already had technology capable of wiping out cities. By the end of the 21st, they were able to wipe out whole mountain ranges. Now, as they neared the end of the 25th century, destroying a moon wasn't a matter of if they could, but only if they were willing to pay the price and deal with the aftermath.

"I don't want to sell you all a false dream. Though I have a strong dislike for The Empire, I also know that I must be realistic. As much as I would like to paint you a pretty picture, the odds of you winning aren't close to zero, they are zero. In fact, though it might be hard to hear, I wouldn't be surprised if The Empire was using your world as a training field for their youth."

The atmosphere only grew colder the more Leonel spoke. PANDA NOVEL

“If you want my suggestions, in my humble opinion you only have a few options.

“The first is to fight back. Inevitably, you will lose. Once that happens, everyone in this room will be sent to Dark Cloud Prison to live out the rest of your lives. Your citizens will be assimilated into The Empire and become people of Earth.

“Your second option is to form an alliance with Camelot. Should you do that, you might repel a first wave. But, inevitably, you will lose. Once that happens, everyone in this room will be sent to Dark Cloud Prison to live out the rest of your lives while your citizens are assimilated.

“Your third option is to display your usefulness. If you manage to do this, it’s very possible that you can gain a hereditary title in exchange for your knowledge. If you use proper hard and soft tactics, you may allow your world to be recognized as the tenth Province of Earth.”

The room fell into silence. PANDA NOVEL

Leonel didn’t mince his words in the slightest. He needed them to understand that this was an impossible war to win.

Aina sent a glance toward Leonel’s side profile, lost in her thoughts. She wondered just how much of Leonel’s words were his own objective analysis and how much of it was the indoctrination he had received since his youth.

Where had all of Leonel’s knowledge of the strength of The Empire come from? Wasn’t it all from his education? Hadn’t that education all been provided for, catered, and censored appropriately at the behest of The Empire?

Maybe even Leonel wasn’t sure about this. All he knew was that he was speaking the truth from his own vantage point and that he didn’t feel like he was lying.

But, when it came down to it, did those that had been manipulated always realize when they had been?

The Demon Lords looked toward one another. At the same time, Mordred fell into her own thoughts as well.

What was the reason she built the Demon Empire? Other than the fact she had become a tool for the machinations of Shield Cross Stars, it was because she hated the fact that she was ostracized by even her own parents simply due to her affinity.

Since they hated her Dark Element so much, she would become the spearhead for people like her and point her blade toward Camelot.

However, from what Mordred understood about Leonel's world, the same stigma against the Dark Element didn't exist. It wasn't an overly religious society, it didn't have a Church to worry about, and the most important case was Leonel who stood right before her.

Leonel didn't care about the Light or Dark Element one way or another. To him, it was simply something reserved for fairy tales.

If she thought about things this way, then what reason did she have to continue protecting this Empire? If a society that accepted her appeared, then maybe she could finally rest her head and place down this burden...

"Leonel, do you... believe that demons would be accepted?" Mordred spoke, her voice slightly weary.

Leonel looked back toward the Demon Empress, his expression somewhat surprised. He hadn't expected for them to accept this change so quickly. Truthfully, as long as Mordred spoke, the deed was practically half complete.

"... I can't be certain of this either. But, what I do know is that there are people all over Earth awakening abilities that make them look no different from you all, all the time.

"The Empire, if it was ever good at anything but conquering and control, has always been diligent in assimilating those of all races without discrimination. But, at the same time, this is a new world. It's

somewhat easier to accept others of the same species as opposed to a completely new people like the demons.

“Still... I ultimately think it’s worth a try.”

Mordred fell into her thoughts for a long time before she finally spoke again.

“Will you lead these negotiations, Leonel?”

Leonel raised his brows in surprise.. But, in the end, he slowly nodded.

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Leonel agreed to Mordred’s request, but there were a few things he knew had to be done first.

The first was to contact Camelot. It was impossible to accomplish this without putting up a united front. Camelot and the Demon Empire had to come together.

Of course, Leonel got a lot of pushback about this. But, he had to speak reason to them all.

The Empire would never allow civil war within its borders. One way or another, the two would have to assimilate. The question was whether or not they’d act first and get something out of it or if they’d wait to get conquered and receive nothing in return for their grievances.

When Leonel explained it this way, they managed to calm down somewhat and listen to reason.

It was only at this point that Leonel realized the demons seemed to hate humans as much as humans hated them.

While humans thought demons were bloodthirsty creatures who shouldn't be allowed to be a part of normal society, demons believed humans to be hypocrites that hid their true nature, only to reveal themselves to be far worse than the demons they hated so much.

Leonel's second suggestion was to present a shot of strength to The Empire.pANDA-nOVEL.COM

Negotiations were only possible for those with strength. If there was too large of a power imbalance, what would be the point? The one with the stronger fist would simply take what they wanted.

Even though it was clear that The Empire was by far the strongest between the two parties, they still had to put in some effort to level out the playing field. Only then would they be able to open up negotiations in good faith.

In the end, these talks boiled down to one fact... Mordred would have to take a trip back to Camelot.

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"Hm?"

Noah looked up from a map he was seriously observing, his expression colored with surprise.

"You said they sent someone? They want to negotiate?" pANDA nOVEL

Jessica stood before Noah with her usually cold expression, relaying the information she had just received.

"Yes. Their #9 Demon Lord made a trip down the mountain to relay this message. According to what he had to say, the Demon Empire was willing to open negotiations and want to understand more about what it would mean to submit."

Noah raised an eyebrow. "Are they trying to stall for time?"

“They arranged for the negotiation to occur in half a month. I have a hard time believing that they could prepare anything in this time. In addition, half a month was the time frame we set for our first wave attack to begin as well.”

Noah nodded.

He found all of this to be curious. From the information they had compiled, the Demons were most definitely not such a race. They were incredibly fond of battle and blood, something like surrendering before a single bullet had been fired was baffling.

Could it be that there was someone leading them? Their Empress should be a human from Noah’s understanding, maybe it was her who helped them see reason? ρ??∪???

Noah had never considered negotiations not because he was opposed to it, but rather because there were some cultural barriers that couldn’t be crossed with simple words. Instead of convincing Camelot how powerful they were, it was best to just show them. This would make everything much easier.

“Interesting...” Noah mumbled.

He fell into his own thoughts, a familiar aura enveloping his surroundings.

Jessica stood silently, her small hands gripping a clipboard.

“... We will accept their meeting, but continue the preparations just in case. We also need a proper display of force to set the tone for the negotiations.

“I will contact Imperial Grandfather to understand what our bottom line is.”

Jessica nodded and took Noah’s silence as a tacit dismissal.

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Mordred never thought there would be a day she would return to Camelot. The heavy rain falling against its tall stone walls seemed to be a reflection of her heart.

At the very least, she thought that when she returned, it would be as a conqueror. But the truth was that she never expected to do such a thing. If she wanted to overrun Camelot and destroy it, it was likely that she could have succeeded long ago.

The only thing that had kept the humans safe all this time was the disorganization of the demons. Mordred was the very person who fixed this fundamental issue, yet Camelot had still yet to be conquered. What reason could there possibly be for this if not a hidden softness within her heart?

Mordred silently gazed upon Camelot's gates.

Compared to how things usually were, the massive capital city was quite quiet. Ever since this endless torrential rain began, a dark fog had been hanging over their world as though everyone was waiting for the other shoe to drop. The appearance of The Empire just so happened to be that other foot...

Leonel watched silently from Mordred's side. To this negotiation, only he, Mordred, Aina and Crakos had come. Even if things went horribly wrong, Leonel was still confident in taking everyone out safely. Now, it was just a matter of Mordred taking that final step forward.

After gathering herself, Mordred took a step forward. But, what she hadn't expected was for a woman in a fluttering blue dress to suddenly appear before the gates. The only one who didn't seem shocked by this was Leonel himself who had long since grasped the energy fluctuations. And, it was even easier to understand after he recognized the woman to be Queen Guinevere.

Mordred never reacted when she saw her father. In fact, even with Leonel's senses, he would have never guessed that King Arthur was her father without having seen Mordred's life from start to end.

But, the moment this woman appeared, Mordred froze.

Tears flowed uncontrollably from Guinevere's eyes. Still, as though she was trying to respect Mordred's personal space, she didn't get any closer than a few meters.

It seemed that the reason there was no one to receive them was because Guinevere had insisted on doing it herself...

For some reason though, Leonel felt as though the energy of this world suddenly shifted when mother and daughter stood face to face. He couldn't quite grasp it, but he felt as though a small shackle had unlocked.

This meeting might be far more important than even Leonel knew.

Sparks flew within Leonel's Dreamscape.. But, once again, there wasn't enough information to draw the final conclusion.

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Leonel felt a complex swell of emotions when he saw Guinevere. Those eyes' ! That day when he fell into an illusion of Dream Force, causing his long-forgotten memories to resurface, he had seen them before.

Mordred wasn't sure what to say or do. She wasn't nearly as emotional as Guinevere, but she also wasn't indifferent. She was caught in an odd in-between, a mixture of awkwardness and hesitancy coloring her usually confident, womanly demeanor.

Guinevere shook her head, seemingly realizing that she had lost control of her emotions. She quickly composed herself, her tears drifting away from her cheeks in a magical sort of way. But, there was nothing she could do about the redness of her eyes. They acted like a constant reminder of the emotions she had just displayed.

"Welcome to Camelot, please come with me."

The Queen bowed lightly, regaining a professional air. However, anyone who knew about diplomatic relations between countries, kingdoms or empires would be wholly aware that something like a monarch bowing to another would never happen. Such a thing would be like a power admitting its inferiority to another.

It was clear that Guinevere wasn't a fool who didn't understand these simple and obvious customs. She acted not only out of emotion, but also so that she could let Mordred and the others know that she would stand by them.

To Guinevere, in comparison to the Kingdom, her daughter was worth far more. It didn't matter to her that Mordred was already a woman of over 40 years old. To a mother, her daughter would always be her little girl.

Guinevere rose from her bow, her back straightening to exude the elegance of a Queen. With a light smile, she turned and began to lead them all forward. PANDA-NOVEL.COM

From her back view alone, one could sense her strength and resolve.

Mordred blankly stared at her mother's back for a long time. She had expected either cold indifference or a flood of apology. But, she ended up receiving neither. And, somehow, this put her more at peace than anything else ever could.

"Empress!" Crakos' deep voice snapped Mordred out of her stupor.

"Yes." Mordred nodded and moved forward, her gait steady and even paced as she followed after her mother.

Leonel was about to move to follow as well when he suddenly realized that Aina hadn't moved from start to finish.

Aina stood in a daze, her fists clenched. She had come here to battle, she had never expected for things to boil down to a negotiation and she had definitely not expected to run into such a scene.

Her heart beat uncontrollably. She felt as though she wanted to scream out from the depths of her soul.
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How much had she wanted to see such a look? Would her mother also look at her like this if she was alive? Or would she run off like her father had?

Her petite frame began to tremble.

Her body held so much power in it. Even now, a massive, curved package was attached to her back. Maybe even Leonel would struggle to carry it with such ease. Yet, at this moment, she couldn't seem to control this powerful body of hers at all.

Aina suddenly felt a large hand slip over hers. She looked up to find Leonel smiling toward her.

Her heart didn't calm down for a long time, but she didn't push Leonel's hand away.

She lost herself in the size and warmth of his hand. Though his body might have been almost as tough of a Pseudo Fourth Dimensional metal, his skin still carried the security only a human's could give.

It was only several breaths later that Aina caught her breath and pulled her hand away, slight blush on her features. $\int \text{??????}$

Leonel smiled. "Let's go."

Aina almost imperceptibly nodded and followed along.

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For the second time in his life, Leonel entered Camelot's castle. But, this time he didn't feel the same awe he had the first time. If anything, it all felt somewhat superficial and weak to the current him.

He wasn't sure if this was because he had seen through King Arthur's real character now or if it was something else. But, regardless of the reason, the feeling was quite freeing.

Leonel sent a glance toward Aina who seemed to be looking around curiously. It seemed that despite the fact this was her first time, she didn't seem very affected by it all at all. Toward this, Leonel couldn't help but smile.

Aina always acted so shy, but when it came down to it, she was quite a bold woman. Leonel felt that the dichotomy made her so very interesting.

Though Aina always blushed profusely when he confessed, whenever they were interacting normally, she didn't seem off put by him at all. In fact, she had always been the only one who seemed to ignore how serious he got when he took tests or exams.

"What?" Aina looked toward Leonel, realizing that he was looking toward her.

Leonel grinned. "Nothing, you just look nice."

In return for his flattery, Leonel received a glare.

"Be more serious, we're almost there." She said softly.

Leonel felt a tingling sensation in his back hearing her voice. He swore Aina's various inflections were a lethal weapon. He didn't know if his compliment made her reply softer, but what he did know was that it was foul play.

Seeing that Leonel was in a daze, Aina tugged on his robes and pulled him forward. The others had long since entered the meeting room.

Leonel smiled lightly and let Aina pull him along.

When they entered the space, they found a well-furnished royal court.

There was a throne at the head and a long narrow walkway that splintered off into several seating arrangements. There were, obviously, reserved seating for Mordred, Leonel and the others. But, what was surprising was that there was another set of reserved seating.

In fact, this reserved seating was already filled.

The moment Leonel and Aina's gazes swept through the room, their killing intent erupted at the same time.

The already silent room was suddenly infused with the rage of two. The familiar red hair and red eyes could never be mistaken.

It was a member of the Brazinger family.

Chapter 427

When King Arthur saw Leonel walk in, he of course felt a complex swirl of emotions. For better or worse, he felt an even more visceral reaction than when he saw his daughter. But, maybe that made sense. After all, Arthur had clashed with Mordred many times before, it wasn't as though this was the first time he was laying eyes on his daughter in years.

In comparison, Leonel was like a beacon that awakened him in many ways. Of course, that was most exacerbated by the death of six of his brothers, but Arthur still felt that the initial catalyst was Leonel himself.

However, what Arthur hadn't expected was for Leonel to suddenly erupt with such killing intent the moment he stepped into the Royal Court.

At first, Arthur thought that this rage was aimed toward himself. But, he very quickly realized that from start to finish, Leonel had only swept a cursory glance over him. It was complete disregard, the very same disregard he felt when Leonel strolled out of his Kingdom without even attempting to hide his tracks.

Arthur couldn't help but feel an anger well up in his chest. As much as a person wanted to change, it was too difficult for a person to flip on a dime. It often took years of constant effort to undo what it took years to ingrain in the first place.

But, Arthur very quickly realized that this had nothing to do with him. PANDA-NOVEL.COM

At that moment, a man with blazing red hair and eyes just as crimson frowned, looking up to find the fury Aina and Leonel were looking at him with. But, in truth, he was quite confused. He didn't know who these two kids were at all.

This member of the Brazinger family wasn't the only one who had come. By his side, there was a blond and golden eyed man. And, by this person's side there was a green haired and green eyed woman.

The last person was another than Leonel would recognize. A blue haired and blue-eyed man by the name of Matteus Adurna. He was the very same man who had led Little Nana and the others into the Camelot Zone. Now it seemed like he was back for whatever reason.

However, Leonel didn't spare him a single glance. His palm had already flipped over, revealing a bow that exuded a deathly sharp aura. He immediately locked onto the red haired man, causing the latter's expression to darken even further.

"Leonel!" Arthur panicked slightly. PANDA NOVEL

He didn't understand what Leonel was doing and for what purpose. It was obvious that Leonel had some sort of animosity with this red haired man, but was it really so bad to take such immediate action?

Unfortunately, Leonel didn't even look in Matteus' direction, leaving him quite stunned. Much like Arthur, he thought that Leonel might have some animosity toward him as well, but the reality was likewise outside of his expectation.

The little mink reacted just as violently. Jumping from Aina's arms, it found its spot at the top of Leonel's head, its fur standing on end.

“Leonel!” Arthur roared, standing from his throne.

Even though Arthur was even somewhat thankful for Leonel, he couldn't allow a diplomat sent by another nation to be killed in his Royal Court. At least, this was how he saw those four. Regardless of what reason Leonel had, he couldn't allow him to act on them. ρ??∫??????

Leonel flipped another palm. As though he couldn't hear Arthur at all, he nocked an arrow, his senses locking onto the red-haired man.

It was only now that the man began to feel some pressure.

He stood from his seat, his heart thrumming. But, this wasn't out of fear. He simply activated his Lineage Factor, feeling his blood course through his body as he raised his strength to its optimal levels.

He didn't know why Leonel was targeting him, but he didn't care. He wouldn't allow himself to be killed even if there was a good reason.

“Leonel...”

Compared to the other voices calling out his name, this was by far the softest. Yet, it was the only voice capable of making Leonel's aura completely disperse.

Leonel looked over and down toward Aina, only to find her having regained her calm. She stood there, shaking her head.

“We came here to help Em, don't ruin things.”

Leonel's brow furrowed when he heard this.

That was right. If he killed someone here, even if he had a good argument, it would be difficult to persuade Arthur to their side. Even though Guinevere was on their side, if her word was really final, Mordred wouldn't have been ostracized in the first place.

With what Leonel knew about King Arthur, he was already unlikely to agree with their proposal to begin with. If he didn't something to push him further away, things would only become more difficult.

Leonel's arm relaxed slightly, his gaze coldly locking back onto the red haired man as he lowered his bow.

Without a word, Leonel put his bow away and made his way to his seat. After taking his eyes off the red haired man, he didn't look his way again as he tried to calm the raging tide that was his blood.

But, a heavy aura hung around him. Aside from Aina who seemed unaffected, everyone else was, making it difficult for them to begin discussions.

A heavy silence hung over Royal Court. Many gazes were on Leonel, trying to figure out the reason for his previous outburst, yet the subject of their observation sat silently staring in no particular direction. However, judging by the look in his eye, it felt as though he could lash out again at any time.

King Arthur's face went cold as he sat back down on his throne. It hadn't escaped his notice that his wife hadn't sat by his side and had instead chosen to sit by Mordred. And now, Leonel had completely disregarded him.

It felt as though this throne he sat on was weightless. What the hell had he spent his whole life building? Was it really all meaningless?

Chapter 428

A silence continued to hang over the Royal Court. For a while, it seemed as though no one would speak at all until it was that King Arthur finally composed himself, regaining his bearing.

"Today it seems that two parties have come to negotiate turns with our Camelot, one of which was more of a surprise than the other." Arthur began to speak, sweeping a gaze over the hidden families.

Though the appearance of Mordred and the others was planned, these hidden family members appeared out of nowhere. However, after hearing that they were a power that could oppose The Empire, Arthur became intrigued and allowed them to enter.

He couldn't be certain of what Mordred's purpose here was, but as an intelligent man and a ruler with many years of experience, he could make a good guess. Initially, even though he was unwilling, he thought that he might have no choice but to accept Mordred's propositions, especially with the current actions of his wife, but the appearance of this third party left him feeling pleasantly surprised.

It seemed that King Arthur was still unwilling to relinquish his power. As much pain and suffering as this Throne had brought him, wouldn't it make all that hardship meaningless if he were to just give it up now?

Matteus cleared his throat, trying to settle the atmosphere down. He sent a side glance toward the red haired man before he opened his mouth to speak.

"Yes. We came here today to encourage Camelot not to fall prey to the intimidation of The Empire. Though we won't deny that they are powerful, what we can say is that they are not the only ones who are so. This universe is very big and its scope is endless. In the grand scheme, The Ascension Empire is just a speck of dust floating in the winds."PANDA-NOVEL.COM

King Arthur and the other court ministers were quite intrigued by these words.

This concept of a 'universe' was one they had never heard of before. Yet, it was a word that filled them with awe and thoughts of grandeur. Before, they hadn't even been aware that a world outside their own existed, but now they were learning about so much more.

Among these 'ministers' were a few characters Leonel recognized, namely Lancelot and the young prince Lionus. Neither had participated in the Merlin Trials, so they were of course very safe.

From their facial expressions, it was difficult to tell what they were thinking. But, the two sat on complete opposite sides of the room, not interacting with one another.

“Your words are quite honey-coated.” King Arthur said with a laugh. “But, what does the vastness of this universe have to do with us? If anything, it might be safer to have a sturdy wing to take cover beneath, don’t you think?”

Even though King Arthur didn’t mean these words, he still spoke them. He wasn’t a fool. Negotiation was about leverage and why would he give up his own so easily? PANDA NOVEL

Matteus smiled lightly at these words. Clearly he was very much expecting them.

“To answer your question I think we should give a bit of background on Earth itself. The Empire might be considered the main power beneath the sun, but it is only that. Within the shadows, there are several other rivals to it.

“For one, there is the Slayer Legion that The Empire has not been able to weed out all this time. And, with the Descent of the Metamorphosis, the Slayer Legion is only growing more powerful.

“However, I would say that the true hidden strength of Earth would be us so-called hidden families. I don’t particularly like this term. Rather than saying that we are hiding, it’s more accurate to say that there hasn’t been anything worth coming out for just yet.

“I can swear that if our families were to come out now, this so-called Ascension Empire would have no chance of survival.”

Matteus’ words were forceful and full of pride. However, King Arthur only shook his head after hearing them. p??J?????

“You’ve spoken many niceties and painted a picture in very broad strokes. However, you have yet to speak of how these things could help our Camelot. What difference is there in submitting to you versus this Ascension Empire? Though you say you are more powerful, these are just your words. How can we take them just as you’ve said them?”

Matteus smiled.

“I will give you proof then. Are you aware of the Dimensions?”

King Arthur frowned. This was a concept that had been foreign to him until the envoy of the Ascension Empire had come. It was only after that he learned about these ranking systems.

Seeing Arthur’s reaction, Matteus’ smile deepened.

“The Ascension Empire is the ruler of a Pseudo Fourth Dimensional world. Even after Earth breaks through once again, their power will still ultimately be considered to be within the Third Dimension. In fact, the truth is that their strength will diminish by several factors after the Descent of the Fourth Dimension is complete.”

King Arthur and the court ministers frowned. How could that be so?

“You all may not believe me, but the true backbone of The Ascension Empire is their technology. However, upon ascending Dimensions, the physics by which their technology is built upon is distorted, changed and flipped. This means that staples of their understanding will be overturned, thus making their technology useless.

“In fact, even in this Pseudo Fourth Dimensional world, they are already holding on by a thin thread. They only manage to use some of their prowess with a stopgap measure like their ‘Force Disruption Towers’, but these towers have no chance of working against true Fourth Dimensional Force.

“That being the case, what do you think will happen once the Fourth Dimension descends? They’ll essentially be a crippled power having lost their main source of strength.”

Matteus’ smile only seemed to widen the more he spoke.

“And, do you know what the best part about all of this is? Normally, it would take another decade or two for the first stage Metamorphosis to complete. However, due to the appearance of your world, the timeline has been accelerated. By now, there’s already less than a year left.”

Arthur’s gaze sharpened, his eyes narrowing. If this was true...

“Our proposal is simple.” Matteus began to hammer in the final nails. “We will protect you all until the Metamorphosis concludes. Unlike The Empire, we hidden families aren’t restricted to Third Dimensional entities and we aren’t fools who place our hope in garbage like ‘technology’.

“Once the Fourth Dimension Descends, that bottleneck that has been keeping you and your warriors and mages from advancing all these years will break. Then, not only will you grow stronger, but The Empire will grow weaker. By then, you’ll be on the same playing field as the rest of us.”

“And the catch?” Arthur asked with a raised eyebrow.

“It couldn’t be simpler.” Matteus said slowly. “All we ask for is an exchange of knowledge. Your world’s magic system, we would like to learn it.”

Arthur and the other ministers fell into silence. These conditions... They were very good.

Mordred clenched her jaw, her gaze icy. She didn’t spare a glance toward her father in the slightest. She wasn’t surprised by the fact he would make a decision before even hearing her speak. It wasn’t as though he had never disregarded her before.

“... Are you done now?”

A sudden voice cut through the silence.. Unexpectedly, it was the very same Leonel that had been the center of attention previously.

Chapter 429

Leonel wasn’t particularly angry at Matteus. Other than the time he ordered Little Nana to bind him, an action that almost cost him a spot to enter the Zone, his interactions with the man hadn’t been all too bad. In fact, Matteus had even extended an invitation for him to join the Adurna family.

The issue here was that Leonel wasn't in a very good mood. And, having to listen to Matteus spin a fanciful tale Arthur and the others just gobbled up left him even angrier.

Compared to The Empire, Leonel hated the hidden families several times more. Even if it wasn't Aina in particular that had suffered at their hands, he would be disgusted by their actions.

Ostracizing a little girl and her father. Killing that little girl's mother. And for what, exactly?

Even to this point, Leonel wasn't exactly sure. But, judging by the fact everyone else of the Brazinger had red hair and eyes while Aina did not, someone as intelligent as him could connect the dots.

It was Eugenics.pANDA-nOVEL.COM

Leonel had been surprised to see that all these families had the same eye and hair color initially. But, after a while, he came to understand just why this was.

Eugenics was a set of beliefs that ascribed to the idea of maximizing the gene pool quality of a population of people. They did this by massacring those not like them and ensuring marriages between those who could guarantee 'quality' children.

There were cases like this in ancient Germany with the Nazis and those with blond hair and blue eyes. There were cases like this from ancient America with White Supremacists. There were cases like this from ancient Africa with...

The list seemed endless and each instance was just as heart wrenching as the last. The practice was sickening. Leonel had this sort of visceral reaction he couldn't even control when he thought about it. He couldn't imagine deciding a person's worth by the way that they looked.

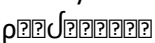
One might argue that it was more than skin deep for these hidden families. At least, compared to those ancient civilizations with disgusting practices, there was a tangible benefit to maintaining the purity of these families – that being their Lineage Factors. pANDA nOVEL

However, this didn't change Leonel's mind in the slightest. Hadn't Aina still awakened her Lineage Factor? Hadn't his two parents still managed to pass down their own to him?

And, even if they couldn't... so what? The worth of a person had to be measured by their strength? They couldn't have anything else worthy about themselves? They couldn't have anything else to give?

The longer Leonel spent in this new world order, the more it disgusted him and the more that budding feeling inside of him seemed to sprout and germinate.

Matteus frowned upon hearing Leonel's words.

"Kid," Matteus began, "Though I'm thankful for the things you've done, this is a matter where I must represent all of our 'hidden' families. Even if you'd like to be angry, keep it within. A lack of maturity won't help you in these negotiations." 

Matteus' words caused many to frown in Leonel's direction. His actions were indeed inappropriate considering the circumstances.

Mordred's gaze flashed with a hint of worry before she shook her head and sighed internally. She had already given up on her father, there was no need for Leonel to continue to try to stay within the arbitrary lines of political correctness. Since it wouldn't get them anything regardless, she might as well let Leonel do as he pleased.

Leonel nodded. "Painting me as a child who's in over my head is a good strategy. Maybe you could have used some of that intelligence before you were captured by Magus Aliard, or at the very least, you could have used some of your family's so-called great hidden strength."

Matteus froze, a hint of rage flashing within his eyes. He had never done anything too wrongful to this child, he didn't know why he was being so hostile.

In fact, originally, the red haired man was supposed to take the forefront and speak. Matteus took over this job to hopefully blunt Leonel's potential aggressiveness. But, what he had never expected was for it all to be meaningless. Leonel acted as though he didn't even recognize him.

As expected, the expressions of the court ministers somewhat changed.

It was only at that moment that they remembered that it had been Leonel who killed that traitor. In fact, Arthur hadn't recognized Matteus before because he was a puppet under Pope Margrave's control back then, but now that he thought about it, this was indeed that man...

In an instant, all the bravado that Matteus had brought forth seemed to crumble. First impressions were everything... if the representation of this Adurna family couldn't even protect his own life without Leonel's interference, then how powerful could they really be?

Mordred's eyes widened. Back then, she had been the one to fight the puppets the Adurna family members had become. She had almost forgotten this completely. Compared to Leonel's overwhelming strength back then, they were... just average.

Of course, that might have been due to the Margrave's puppeteering taking away their strength. But, the fact that Margrave could enslave them at all spoke volumes.

"The situation is very simple." Leonel continued with a steady voice. "Even if everything they said is true, you will still fall before the Fourth Dimension Descends. They're only trying to prey on your ignorance.

"The 'hidden' families might have higher Dimensional beings, but none of them can come to help you. Entering a lower Dimensional world from a higher is very difficult. And, even if you manage to accomplish it, you will be forced to deal with all sorts of restrictions. If you aren't a native of the world you descend to, the restrictions are even fiercer.

"So, at this very moment, these hidden families can only send out strength on the level of them." Leonel swept a glance over the four. "At least, on any sort of large scale.

"Yet, they've said themselves that they don't rely on 'technology', which means that unlike The Empire, they don't have a method of bridging this gap in strength.

"But sure... If you want to hand over all your secrets in exchange for protection that won't last more than a week, please have at it."

Leonel's voice plainly concluded before starting up again as though he had forgotten something amusing.

“Oh, and a reminder that I already comprehend everything about your magic system, more than even most in this room, actually. So, you should ask yourselves whether you trust someone who wants something out of you more, or if you'll take the word of someone who's only here to help a friend.”

Leonel swept a pointed glance over Arthur. His meaning couldn't have been more clear.

Will you choose 'benefits' again this time? Or will you choose kinship?

Chapter 430

Leonel's words hung over the Royal Court. They played like an indifferent, systematic dismantling of everything Matteus had tried to build up. It felt almost impossible, yet every single one of his words were pointed and sculpted perfectly.

Honestly, it was a far cry from what many of them expected. But, how could they know Leonel's level of understanding when it came to human psychology? In fact, after he finished speaking, he didn't even feel the need to say anything else.

He shifted his gaze from King Arthur and fell into silence. It was as though he didn't care about the result at all. He had said his peace and whether or not Arthur wanted his help would be up to him.

From anyone on the outside looking in, it was as though it was King Arthur who had come to Leonel for help rather than the other way around. But, the truth was that in Leonel's mind, it was exactly like this.

From Leonel's analysis, Camelot didn't stand a chance if they didn't follow his plans. If they were more fond of being destroyed and losing any semblance of status they once had, then Arthur could feel free to choose against him.

At that moment, Guinevere's hand slipped into Mordred's, catching the latter off guard. The Demon Empress involuntarily trembled and even hesitated as to whether she should pull her hand away.

It was just a subtle action. Hardly anyone noticed, in fact. Even in such a silent Royal Court, the movement didn't make a sound. PANDA-NOVEL.COM

Still, there were four individuals this didn't escape.

The young prince Lionus. The King of Camelot, Arthur. Leonel himself. And, finally, the Knight of the Round Table, Lancelot.

Lancelot's reflective blue eyes seemed locked onto the hands of the two women. From the outside, there wasn't any change to his expression in the slightest. But in his heart, a wild tsunami of emotions was swirling.

Despite what some versions of the fairy tales might write, Lancelot had never shared a bed with Guinevere. As for the awkward interactions between he and Lionus, this was only because Lionus had found out how close his mother and Lancelot were getting and felt uncomfortable by the changes.

Lionus held a deep reverence for his father. He hoped to one day be as valiant and have his name resound in the ears of the people just as much as King Arthur did. So, when he stumbled upon his mother having a midnight conversation with Lancelot, his heart, too, was filled with all sorts of complex emotions.

He had listened in on their conversation back then for just a few minutes. On the surface, there wasn't anything sinister or immoral about what they spoke about. They conversed about the stars, their day, their hopes for the future. PANDA NOVEL

It was an innocent conversation without blemish, one that didn't carry any sense of infidelity in the slightest.

But, it was exactly this sort of conversation Lionus had never heard his mother exchange with his father.

Despite being young then and still young even now, Lionus felt uncomfortable for reasons he couldn't put his finger on. It only made it worse that the reactions his mother and Lancelot had when they stumbled onto his eaves dropping were riddled with guilt.

The three of them had a tacit understanding that day that what happened was wrong.

Since then, Lionus had hardly spoken to his mother and was incredibly awkward around Lancelot. At the same time, though, he never brought this up to his father either' ;

The truth was that he couldn't decide whose side he was on. ρ??C???

Back then, due to how much he worshipped his father, he felt an irrational hatred for his mother, causing him to pull away from her. But, as he grew up, the image of his perfect father also seemed to crack, but by then, it was already too late to grow closer to his mother.

Somewhere deep inside, Lionus knew. He knew that his mother and feelings for Lancelot. He knew that Lancelot had feelings for his mother. He knew that both of them knew they were wrong. But, what he didn't know was how he felt about it.

Seeing his mother grip his sister's hand in this way, he felt like this was a turning point.

The relationship between his mother and father had been growing distant for a long time. He often felt like his birth was meant to mend what they had lost after his elder sister was driven away, but he was never quite able to fill that void.

And now they were here.

King Arthur's heartbeat erratically.

Choosing to side with Leonel meant giving up all the power he had ever known. Though Leonel painted a pretty picture, he would have to expel all thoughts of sovereignty he had in his bones.

In the future, when he saw those of higher standing than himself, he would have to bow and politely greet them. In the future, when he wanted to direct the movement of his people, he would have to consider the opinions of others and swallow his grievances. In the future, when he swore loyalty to this Ascension Empire, he would have to kneel and lower his head, accepting another man as being his superior.

Just thinking about these things tore Arthur apart.

He was a legend, a young man who rose up despite not having his parents. He was the chosen heir of Merlin. He was the boy who pulled the sword from the stone.

How could he kneel to another? How could he swallow his pride? How could they ask this of him?

Arthur's hands trembled, grasping tightly to the arm rests of his throne.

At that moment, an audible crack resounded. With a blank look, Arthur looked down to find that his strength had splintered the arm of his throne.

For some reason, he couldn't take his eyes off of it. It was like the sound ricocheted throughout his soul.

Arthur closed his eyes and sank back into his seat.

He seemed tired, his lustrous blond hair and radiant skin paling by several levels.

“ ‘| Camelot will side with the Demon Empire.”