

Descent 471

Chapter 471

Mordred felt slightly panicked.

Obviously, this wasn't because she feared Nile's strength. Whether it be by her own opinion or by the fact of reality, the truth was that there were very few on the current Earth that could match Mordred in power.

The issue was that this wasn't a situation she could brute force her way out of. Even if she easily deflected the advancement of these wolf riders, what would she do about the thousand strong army to their back? And even if they somehow managed to repel them, what would happen to the situation with White City if they suddenly began to infight?

Even though The Empire seemed to be helping now, Mordred and Arthur alike were very much aware that Camelot wasn't their home ground. The Empire could easily choose to retreat and focus on Earth and come back.

But could they do the same? They could technically find a place on Earth, but what could their millions of citizens do? Where would they place them?

Unlike on Earth where many if not most had some level of combat prowess by now and had tempered themselves over a year of hardship, the people of Camelot were still lagging behind in this aspect.

Even as they awakened to their abilities, they were completely unused to using them and would be even more useless on a battlefield.

To make matters worse, Camelot didn't have a monitoring system like Earth did, so rounding everyone up would likely take months. By then, how many more would they lose?

"Boy, I think that's enough."PANDA-NOVEL.COM

At that moment, King Arthur took a step forward.

The sight of his valiant air and white lion engraved armor was something to behold, indeed. Despite having chosen to yield to The Empire, that kingly air of his hadn't diminished in the slightest.

He only stood there, before his daughter and Aina, yet it felt as though the beasts engraved onto his white armor had come to life, causing the black wolves Nile and the other rode to tremble slightly.

They might have been demon beasts, but just how many of these beasts had Arthur killed in his life? He had long since lost count.

Nile frowned. "Are you sure that you're aware of what you're doing?"

"I'm well aware of what I'm doing. I have no idea what laws of your land this child has broken, but what I do know is that she's been fighting for our and your sake all this time. Is this what your Empire does to those that fight for them?"

Nile's expression grew cold. "Are you questioning The Empire?"

"I have yet to become one of your people." Arthur replied just as coldly, taking a step forward that forced the shivering black wolves into an even sorer position. "In fact, I believe that in your minds, I am still nothing but a fairy tale, is that correct?" PANDA NOVEL

Arthur scanned the five before him and even sent a glance toward Noah in the distance.

Despite meeting Arthur's gaze, Noah remained unmoved. A clash of royal air shot through the battlefield making the atmosphere several times heavier.

"I may be just an inconsequential fictional character in your minds, but you shouldn't forget that you're currently standing on my fictional lands, breathing my fictional air, and are in my fictional presence.

“Until the day Camelot cedes to The Empire, this will still be the case. If you want to take people under my protection beneath my nose, you’ll have to taste my blade first.”

The black wolves reeled and whined, kicking up to their hind legs. If it wasn’t for the strength of their riders, Nile and the others would have definitely been kicked off.

Nile didn’t seem to notice the poor performance of his black wolf. His eyes remained locked onto Arthur as though he was prepared to attack at any given moment.

“Nile, return.”

Noah’s cold voice rang through the battlefield. His words alone seemed to dispel Arthur’s aura, calming the black wolves down in an instant. The contrast was so drastic that even Arthur himself narrowed his eyes. p??(???????)

Nile didn’t hesitate to follow Noah’s orders, clicking his heels against the coat of his wolf and dashing back to The Empire’s troops.

Mordred looked toward her father’s back with a complicated glance.

On one hand, Mordred knew that this had always been her father’s character. He wasn’t a man who took kindly to others looking down on him. But, by the same token, over the years, he had begun to somewhat allow others to trample over him.

It seemed as though Arthur was overly prideful, but hadn’t he allowed The Church and the thoughts of the nobles to dictate his own thoughts for a long time? There was no doubt that he had been hypocritical in this aspect in the past’ ;

But now, he managed to hold his head high even after choosing to submit to The Empire. This was in stark contrast to the him of the past. It even brought a smile to Mordred’s face before she could even reel it back in.

It was at that very moment that Aina suddenly collapsed completely.

“Aina!” Mordred was shocked.

She had been propping Aina up from the very beginning, so she immediately realized the change in the weight she had to uphold.

When Aina could no longer support her own self, Mordred was at a loss because even she herself almost collapsed.

‘What the hell is this weight? This girl!’ Mordred sent a glance toward Aina’s great sword and the massive curved box on her back.

This was a level of weight that even a Three Star Grand Knight wouldn’t be able to carry around, let alone do battle with. What the hell was this little girl thinking?!

Mordred took action immediately, doing her best to pry the sword out of her hands and the package off her back. But, Aina’s grip was so steely that Mordred found she couldn’t budge it in the slightest.

Aina’s face flushed red before draining into a sickly pale color. Her breathing became short and somewhat hurried, her lips slightly parted.

Mordred’s eyes widened.

“Fa ‘” Mordred hesitated. But, luckily, Arthur turned back in time to see his daughter’s pleading gaze. “Please heal her.”

Arthur’s gaze became serious as he nodded. But, just when he was about to take action, The Empire’s troops moved.

“I’m greatly disappointed by your choice, Arthur.”

Noah's black wolf stalked forward, the army to his back moving as one.

"I'll give you another chance."

An oppressive aura surged out from Noah, a blue bladed saber appearing in his hand.

The moment it did, the black wolf beneath his feet collapsed, its spine snapping in half beneath the weight. Yet, Noah's steps didn't falter in the slightest, his aura only growing with an added bloodthirsty air.

Arthur's gaze became serious as he turned back.

But, no one expected for the situation at that moment to change once again.

"HAI!"

Beating war drums and blaring horns sounded from the distance.

A woman with short hair, dressed in black robes accented by white flexible armor and wielding a massive two headed hammer stood at the helm of an army, her battle aura towering.

Chapter 472

The battlefield was suddenly thrust into an unseemly situation.

Camelot and the Demon Empire faced off against The Empire, but now there was White City who had suddenly inserted themselves into the mix.

Arthur, Mordred and Noah could immediately tell with absolute certainty that this army of White City's was much different than it had been in the past. Its aura was more oppressive, its momentum much more frightening, and the commander at its helm was on a completely different level.

Noah's sharp gaze swept toward City Lord White's direction. They were still over a kilometer away, but by the time they broke out into a charge, it wouldn't even take a few minutes for them to cross over the final distance.

"Meralda!"

"Yes, Empress?"

The moment Mordred called out, a succubus demon stepped forward.

"Take Aina to the back line. Take some help with you to carry her things."

Meralda blinked in slight confusion. Did she really need help for this?PANDA-NOVEL.COM

But, her expression changed when Mordred passed over Aina's unconscious body.

Succubi were known for their strong Spirit Pressure. But, as demons, they also had bodies stronger than the average human knight. And, Meralda in particular, was a hand picked protector for the Demon Empress, so it wouldn't be a surprise if she was many times stronger than the average succubus. Yet, even she nearly collapsed.

Without a choice, Meralda listened to her Empress' words and quickly shuttled Aina away with the help of several others.

Aina's breathing continued to grow more erratic, her body becoming almost scolding to the touch. Despite the fact the temperature of Camelot was quite mild, her body billowed with steam as though she might erupt at any moment.

Meralda wasn't sure what she could do about this. She wasn't a healer. All she could do was move Aina to the backline and hope the medical professionals could do something for her.

Noah and Nile watched as Aina was being taken away, but they didn't say a word. This already wasn't a situation where they could continue to push their luck.

Arthur's gaze narrowed.

Their armies were currently facing Noah's. To face City Lord White, they would have to maneuver and shift their vanguard around, but doing such a thing was easier said than done. At the very least, Camelot didn't have such good military structure. In such a situation, even a well disciplined army would face issues. PANDA NOVEL

To make matters worse, they had all just come out of a long, hard fought battle. The battlefield itself hadn't even been properly cleared yet.

This was completely unlike White City's previous pattern. Usually they would only levy one attack a day. It was clear in hindsight now that they had done this on purpose.

The good was that this army seemed to only be built of 500 or so men and women. The bad news, however, was that not only were all their ground units riding mounts, but they also had an aerial unit of more than 50 men and winged beasts.

The combined army of Camelot, the Demon Empire and The Empire numbered almost 3000. But, White City wasn't made up of fools.

Though it could be argued that the appearance of The Empire on this battlefield should be an unknown variable for White City, there was no way White City didn't have forward scouts, and, as such, it was equally impossible that they wouldn't already be aware of The Empire's presence. Yet, they chose to charge forward regardless.

Arthur unsheathed his sword, causing a shimmering blade to dance beneath the high sun.

"KNIGHTS! ON ME!"

His roar shook the battlefield. p??U??????

‘[Holy Road]!’

Arthur’s Spirit Pressure surged as his knees bent. The land beneath his feet cracked as he rocketed forward, a road of golden light following him as he arched across the skies.

In a single leap, he crossed into the no-man’s land between Camelot’s armies and White City’s.

His actions spoke louder than words ever could. If The Empire still chose to attack them in situation, Camelot was all but finished.

Noah watched this in silence, his gaze slowly shifting toward Mordred. But, it seemed as though Mordred didn’t have any intention of taking the same actions as her father. She continued to face Noah, waiting for him to make a decision.

Noah remained silent as though he couldn’t feel the rumbling ground and the growing oppressive aura.

Without a word, his slow charge toward Mordred shifted directions, cutting an angle across the battlefield and toward White City’s charging presence.

At that same moment, the remaining six Knights of the Round Table reacted to Arthur’s call. They had to give the demon army and Camelot’s army enough time to change face.

“Empress!”

Mordred shifted her gaze away, looking toward Meralda who had come rushing back.

“What is it? Is the little girl alright?”

“Yes, yes. I’ve already passed her along to the medical units.”

“Then what is the problem?”

“This’l I.” Meralda sighed. “White City is also attacking for Perveaux Barony as well. I just received a voice transmission report, we’re under siege.”

Mordred’s jaw clenched. In truth, she didn’t need to hear this report to know that this would happen. The moment The Empire came here, she knew that her Empire was in danger.

Though Mordred had returned home and regained a semblance of family, she couldn’t just abandon the demons that had allowed her into their fold. The Demon Empire might not be her home anymore, but it was definitely theirs.

A flicker of rage passed through Mordred’s pupils. Did they really take her, the Demon Empress, so lightly?

“What’s the situation?”

“Your Majesty left Crakos in charge. He predicts that he can last about half a day before they have to retreat into the mountains once again. According to the report, there are at least ten White Knights on that battlefield.”

“Ten?” Mordred’s brow furrowed deeper.

According to what they knew, there were only 16 to begin with. One of them had been killed by Leonel, so there was only 15. For ten to be on that battlefield, it was clear that this was all planned out from the very beginning.

The worst part of all of this was that it couldn’t be forgotten that this moon was a sphere. If White City conquered The Demon Empire, it would be as good as gaining two footholds to demolish Camelot with.

A dark aura surged around Mordred, causing Meralda to shiver.

At that moment, Meralda's talisman glowed once again.

"Leave it to me, Em."

Mordred's rage suddenly dissipated with the wind. That voice, wasn't that Leonel? He was on the Perveaux battlefield? Why was he there? Did he already predict this?

"Don't worry, I'll send them packing soon."

Mordred could almost see Leonel's grin through the talisman, his air of confidence hanging palpably in the air.

Chapter 473

Mordred hesitated, a slight air of guilt hanging around her.

She knew, almost better than the man himself, how much Leonel cared about Aina. She felt like she should tell Leonel about Aina's current condition. But, at the same time, she knew that Leonel was about to do something foolish again. If he was distracted by other thoughts, his life would definitely be in more danger.

Unfortunately, due to the fact Mordred hesitated, Leonel had already disconnected before she could make a final decision, leaving her at a loss.

"Empress!"

Meralda's call woke Mordred from her stupor.

At that moment, Noah and Arthur were already about to clash with the frontline of White City's army.

Mordred's lost expression became steely, a baleful aura swirling around her. Vast amounts of Dark Elemental Force surged, her black dress fluttering in the wind.

Her slender fingers wrapped around a wand as her figure rose into the air.

She walked toward the clouds as though the shadows were her stairway to heaven. If Leonel had been here, he would have recognized this ability as being near identical to Little Blackstar's own! Maybe it shouldn't be a surprise that the Demon Empress had become Shadow Sovereign' ¦ PANDA-NOVEL.COM

Whether or not she was a true Shadow Sovereign or not remained to be seen. But, what was most definitely true was that she had tapped into the same magic system as the little mink.

Still, if the outside world knew that Earth had potentially produced two Shadow Sovereigns in the same generation' ¦ Who knew how they'd react?

"Those that can fly, with me."

Mordred's voice wasn't as booming as her father's. In fact, it carried the delicate touch of a woman. Yet, it felt no less imposing and grand. It felt as though her commands were irrefutable.

At that moment, several demons with bat-like wings shot into the skies under the behest of their queen, tearing a path toward White City's aerial units.

Though fatigue was clear in their demeanors, the strength their Empress displayed gave them a second wind. They were prepared to follow her to the death.

Meralda took several deep breaths on the ground, squeezing her long legs together tightly. Her expression seemed completely inappropriate for the occasion, but what else could you expect from a succubus.

She licked her lips, watching Mordred's bottom sway as she stepped into the skies. PANDA NOVEL

'The Empress is truly too enticing. These damned White City warriors' '!

Meralda felt frustrated. She wanted nothing more than to ravage the Empress right then and there. But, with this battle underway, she had no ability to do so.

It seemed that her only choice would be to wipe this army and their City Lord out first.

"Demonic Heralds of Darkness, charge!"

Meralda's half excited voice caused the blood of the male demons to surge, her hypnotic suggestion being several times more powerful now than they would be in any other situation.

As though maddened beasts, the demons roared into the skies, their savage bearings clashing against White City's momentum.

And then, the armies met.

** ρ???ϕ???)???)???)???)???)

" '! Are you sure that you can battle?"

Crakos' deep and oddly intellectual voice drifted to Leonel's ears.

"Huh?" Leonel's head snapped up as though he had just woken from a nap. But, his reaction only made the #1 Demon Lord even more anxious.

Unlike what his confident voice had projected out before, the current Leonel was in a sorry state.

He wasn't injured at all. In fact, his body didn't have a scratch on it. But, other than that' '! he looked terrible.

Not only did he smell awful, something that was quite surprising to someone like Crakos who had grown up around demons all his life, the bags beneath his eyes were so heavy that they almost formed new layers of skin all to their own.

Rivaling even the worse demons in poor hygiene was one matter, but the young man couldn't even keep his eyes open. How exactly was he going to battle?

It even seemed like he had sapped up all his remaining energy projecting that confident air to Mordred. After that, he had nothing left to give.

“Oh, yes, yes.” Leonel nodded almost too slowly. “Everything will be fine.”

Crakos' brow furrowed.

At the moment, the demons had only one advantage: the terrain.

Whereas Camelot, The Empire and Mordred's troops were currently fighting on endless plains, Crakos had made the decision to retreat to the first line of mountains between no-man's land and the Demon Empire.

But, even with this advantage, it might not be enough. According to the scouts, there were more aerial units coming. And, whereas the army led by City Lord White was only made of 500, this one numbered 2000. They simply weren't properly equipped to deal with such a thing.

Leonel's head nodded and he almost fell over before he caught himself, shaking his head awake again.

“Here.” Leonel shoved a spatial ring at Crakos' chest. But, due to their difference in height, Leonel's hand landed on Crakos' abdomen instead. “Take these and distribute one of each to the army.”

“This' !?” Crakos' expression changed after his Internal Sight swept throughout the ring.

He was initially going to say something, but he was once again distracted by the state of Leonel's hands. If it wasn't for the fact he was sure Leonel was human, he would have thought that he was actually a zombie demon. Were these really the hands a healthy teenage boy should have?

Crakos cleared his throat and peeled Leonel's hand off of his abdomen by pinching two of his fingers around Leonel's wrist.

“ ‘| I know that you're a growing boy, but you should really take it easy on the ‘| extra curricular activities. Her Majesty has plenty of willing demonesses you can choose from that have quite a favorable impression of you.”

Leonel didn't even hear Crakos' words, his head nodding to sleep again before snapping awake.

“Huh?... Yes, yes, you're right, whatever' |” Leonel mumbled.

Crakos sighed and walked away.

“Youths these days' |”

Chapter 474

“They've already retreated?”

An army of 2000 strong marched forward. Despite the lack of enemies before them, their formation remained neat and organized. In fact, other than the unique sound of synchronized footsteps, the army had been completely silent until this point.

At the helm of it all, the warrior who spoke wore black robes accented with white flexible armor. He rode on a scaled horse Leonel would easily recognize as the steeds Heira and the other members of the Kaefir family had been using when they first ran across him.

Of course, the ten individuals who headed this army were the White Knights of White City.

Each of them rode upon one of these scaled horses, their demeanor stoic. It almost seemed out of place for any one of them to speak at all.

Among them, four were women and the remaining six were men.

“They’ve likely retreated to the first line of mountains.” Another White Knight replied indifferently.

“Where they’ve retreated to doesn’t matter. Their death is imminent.”

The White Knights continued forward as though none of them had spoken a word to begin with. With barely a shred of communication, they shifted the direction the army was headed in, making a straight line toward the first line of defense.PANDA-NOVEL.COM

It was not even a couple hours later that the first line of mountains came into view for the White City army.

...

Sitting atop a mountain peak, Leonel’s head nodded to sleep every so often.

“Yip! Yip!”

The little mink lightly clawed at Leonel’s face, waking him up.

“Oh? Are they here?” Leonel asked.

Leonel’s gaze seemed somewhat sharper. Though the fatigue was still there, it seemed that he had at least rested his mind a bit. But, whether it would make much of a difference still remained to be seen.

Leonel looked over the horizon. PANDA NOVEL

Though Camelot's lands had been dispelled of the perpetual rain, no-man's land and the Demon Empire still had heavy dark clouds hanging over it, a very familiar light drizzle of acidic rain pitter pattering ever so softly.

From Leonel's vantage point, high up on a mountain peak, he could see the grey, cracked lands White City's army marched through.

Leonel stood a bit too quickly, causing his head to spin.

'More than 30 hours of sleep wasn't enough?' Leonel grasped onto his head, sighing lightly.

It had technically only been two hours of sleep. But, split between his minds, thanks to Dream Sense, it should have been the equivalent of more than 30. Unfortunately, it seemed that Leonel had underestimated just how much time he would need for his mind to recover.

'This state should still be more than enough to deal with them.'

Leonel's gaze grew cold, a calculating indifference reflecting in his eyes.

... p??(???????)

"Hold."

The acting commander of the White City troops held up a palm.

She gazed calmly toward the looming mountains without an ounce of panic. Though they had been constantly sending canon fodder to the battlefields up to this point, that didn't mean their elites were standing idly by. In fact, they had already thought through their plan of attack thoroughly.

Facing this mountain, the acting commander, White Knight Farialice, already had everything mapped out in her mind.

However, the mark of a true commander wasn't so simple.

Generals all began by studying the battles of their predecessors before they got the chance to come to the battlefield on their own. But, Generals who restricted themselves based on what they had read on what were ultimately dead pieces of paper would be forever destined to not reach the pinnacle of warring masters.

Farialice immediately felt that something was off just by laying her eyes on the mountain.

There were three paths up this mountain and there was no easy way to travel between them, at least not in large groups. The advantage of the demons was obviously being able to prepare in advance and having such great terrain to work with. But, the advantage for White City was that the demons would have no idea which paths they would pick.

The obvious choice for the demons, then, was to destroy two of the paths. Due to their narrow and not very safe to begin with structures, this task would have been very easy. This way, they would easily eliminate White City's first advantage by forcing them down a single path.

This would have been the perfect plan. Destroying all three paths would have shot the Demon Empire in the foot as well. After all, they also needed a path out. So, two was the perfect balance of hurting the enemy while helping themselves.

Of course, White City had already been prepared for this. As a counter, they had hidden mechanisms within their supply units that would actually allow them to fly over the mountains entirely and assault the Palace from the skies.

Though the mountainous structures appeared to be terrible from the outside, the location of the Demon Empress' palace was actually a flat of the mountainous land and, not unlike a castle, acted as its own city.

But, the problem was that the obvious action the demons should have taken by destroying the two paths... hadn't been taken at all.

From the outside, this seemed to be a good thing. It should have meant that their enemies were more foolish than they thought. But, was this really the case?

According to their intelligence, the demons were no less intelligent than humans. In fact, even if they weren't, their Empress was a human who should have easily been able to think of this.

'Could it be that they want to begin the battle on the next mountain range? Did they retreat further back than we assumed?'

Farialice thought that there was a good possibility that this could be the case. After all, this initial mountain pass only led to the main mountain range the Demon Palace could be found.

However, if this was the case, their plans would definitely be less effective as the Palace would be heavily guarded. Compared to Camelot, the Demon Empire had many more aerial options available to them thanks to the variability of demonkind.

'Interesting...'

Farialice's lip curled.

"Begin phase one. My troop, Roah's troop, Cannon's troop... and Bourg's troop will not participate, we'll be going up the mountain on foot."

"HAI!"

White City's warriors got to work immediately, not doubting Farialice's judgment despite the fact it went against everything they had prepared for.

Soon, massive platforms that almost looked like enlarged hot air balloon baskets soared into the air, each carrying dozens of warriors beneath the beating wings of massive birds of prey.

At the same time, Farialice led a troop of the remaining thousand on the ground and toward the middle mountain pass, her heart thumping with a will for battle.

Chapter 475

“So that’s their choice?”

Leonel watched this all happen from afar. It seemed odd that he could see things happening from tens of kilometers away so clearly, but it didn’t seem like a problem for him in the slightest.

“Crakos, lead your men down the middle pass of the mountain.”

Leonel seemed to speak to empty air, there wasn’t a single soul on the mountain peak except for himself. Yet, in the instant he spoke, Crakos’ men had moved out under his command.

“There are five White Knights in the group you’re headed for. All five of them have strength surpassing your own, so be sure to follow my orders to a point.”

Farialice thought that the demons were planning something secretive due to their odd actions’! When the reality was that Leonel didn’t have a large overarching plan. What he did have were many trump cards he was ready to deploy at a moment’s notice.

The first of these trump cards was’! Leonel’s own personal Force Disruption Towers.

To everyone, including those of Terrain, Force Disruption Towers had become impossible to use. This only made sense. As the world evolved, the laws of physics that governed it would also fundamentally change.

By the current age of technology, the pieces of engineering the people of Earth relied on were inextricably linked to concepts of chemistry, complex studies of physics and, even in some cases, biology. PANDA-NOVEL.COM

In such a case, as these laws changed, the technology created to make use of them also became useless. Unless Earth adapted to the new changes with new creations of technology every time they evolved, tech would only become more and more useless as time went on.

However, Leonel wasn't restricted to Earth's technology at all.

Just two or so months ago, Leonel had witnessed the engineers of Royal Blue Fort attempt to piece together a Force Disruption Tower. Though they had failed to complete it in the end, Leonel had already taken note of all of the Tower's pieces.

With the level his mind had reached and the fact the Towers were created based on Third Dimensional constructs, memorizing everything with a glance was as easy as breathing for Leonel.

After witnessing everything, it only became a matter of reverse engineering it all' ;

However, even then, Leonel didn't need to go so far. What he needed wasn't a true working Force Disruption Tower. After all, they had become nearly useless after Earth entered the Fourth Dimension.

No, what Leonel needed was just a framework, a push in the right direction, a small light at the end of the tunnel' ; That would be enough to bring the warriors of White City hell.

' ; PANDA NOVEL

Farialice led the vanguard through the mountain pass.

Rock walls surrounded them from all directions almost as though they had entered a dark valley rather than a passage up a mountain.

Though the passage was considered 'narrow', this was only in consideration for an army of a thousand strong. The truth was that there was still 20 meters of clearance between the walls of the mountain pass.

Still, with an army of this size, such a reality made quickly retreating almost an impossibility.

But, Farialice wasn't a fool. She was already prepared for any unexpected situations.

The reality was that whenever you were an army laying siege, losses would be inevitable. She entered this pass knowing very well that it might be a trap, but she was prepared to suffer whatever consequences might come with it.

This was the philosophy of the White City Knights. They as commanders road in the vanguard. They as commander took the brunt of the pressure on their shoulders. They as commanders would face all danger that came their way.

It was this top down philosophy that bred the fearless army of White City. ρ???)???)???)???)

When your commanders dared to lead the charge, what right did they as subordinates have to cower?

Farialice's gaze narrowed. The ground only shifted a bit, but she sensed it. Her sensitivity to such things was beyond normal limits, not only due to her experience as a commander, but most importantly due to her ability.

This was the second reason she dared to enter this narrow passageway.

Farialice's ability made her exceptionally sensitive to vibrations through the ground. But, what shocked her wasn't the fact there were vibrations'! but rather that these vibrations were so'! normal.

This rhythm, it could only come from an advancing troop.

Farialice internally sneered. It couldn't be that they wanted to meet on this battlefield, right? Had she really overthought it? Did the demons just overestimate themselves?

Though the reports said that the demons were just as intelligent as humans, it also said that they were quite hotblooded as well. They may very well be like their City Lord White, but completely lacking in the strength City Lord White had.

Still, though Farialice thought this, she went on her guard, stopping the army at one of the many winding paths.

'This is the best location to meet them.'

The current location had the White City army still moving uphill, which put them at a slight disadvantage. But, in return, the bend in the path more than made up for this.

The vast majority of people were right-handed, this was the case across the universe and across races. The position Farialice chose to stop at gave those with a dominant right hand the advantage. But, this was only a small part of the puzzle.

The main reason Farialice chose this location was because the demon army would have to curl around the path to meet them whereas White City's army could meet them head on.

If the demons were really as hot headed as they seemed, they would easily fall into this small trap.

Farialice pulled out a sword while unsheathing a dagger with her left. This was her in her optimal state. A meter and a half length sword in her right and a short sword in her left. She had lost count of the number of enemies she had slaughtered with these two blades.

'Hm? They stopped.'

Farialice's gaze narrowed. It seemed she was correct to be cautious.

A battle intent exuded from her body. Without a single word, the warriors to her back felt her excitement, their blood beginning to boil as well.

‘|
|

“Activate it now.”

Leonel’s expressionless voice shook Crakos’ heart. Was this the same boy he had just been with?

But, without hesitation, Crakos gave the hand signal. In unison, the demons brandished their weapons, pouring all the Force they could muster into them.

In that instant, the quality of the air seemed to shift. The mountain pass gained an abnormal stillness.

“Charge.” Leonel commanded.

**

A long distance away, in a military recovery tent on the Camelot battlefield, Aina tossed and turned, her breathing short and ragged.

Strong pulsing veins coursed through her body, bulging throughout her neck.

The military tent soared past 100 degrees Celsius and seemed to still be climbing.

Chapter 476

City Lord White held a combat prowess those of Earth had simply never seen before. If it wasn’t for Arthur, the Knights of the Round Table, Noah and Jessica all surrounding her at once, it felt like she could solo the entire battlefield on her own.

Yet, even with so many working together, she didn't seem to be even slightly disadvantaged. In fact, she even held the upper hand, her strength causing the skies to tremble and the earth to quake.

City Lord White swung 'Clara' with a single hand, sending King Arthur flying backward.

Arthur's feet dug a deep pit in the ground, his body sinking down into a strong horse stance as he held Excalibur across his body.

City Lord White's irises glittered somewhat. She was inwardly shocked, not because of the strength of the enemies she faced, but rather because of the quality of their weapons.

Logically speaking, it was impossible for such a fledgling world to have such powerful weapons. Their weakness should also come with an appropriate lack of resources. Yet, this wasn't the case at all. In fact, if it wasn't for White City being severely outclassed in weaponry, this war might have come to an end long ago.

Just as an example, there was the sword in Arthur's hands. It shouldn't have been able to survive even a single strike from her before shattering. Yet, not only did it not show any signs of collapsing, it was even faintly putting pressure on her double-headed weapon.

As though that wasn't bad enough, there was Arthur's white armor. Though City Lord White wasn't a weapon's expert, she could still tell that Arthur's armor reinforced his Force and deflected almost 10% of her attacks. If it wasn't for her sturdy build, City Lord White would have suffered a great deal.
PANDA-NOVEL.COM

If it was just Arthur, things might have been fine. But, there was still Noah's saber and Jessica's whip, in fact, even the Knights of the Round Table all had weapons and armor superior to her own. This was especially the case for Lancelot and his golden lance. It felt that if she was even a little careless, she would be pierced all the way through.

On Terrain's, such weapons simply didn't exist. Though worlds could have heirlooms they passed down at this quality, and, being in her position, City Lord White would definitely be in position to have one such weapon, it had to be remembered that Terrain was deemed as a world without talent.

As a result of this, Terrain never received the support of higher Dimensional worlds and as such never received rewards for their Zones. The only 'benefit' of clearing Zones for Terrain was helping their world to survive another day and maybe the training they could receive by putting their lives on the line.

This was the reality of the world. There was no such thing as fairness.

Terrain didn't receive the support of higher Dimensional worlds because they weren't talented. By the same token, these higher Dimensional worlds had no obligation to help Earth either.

Like this City Lord White faced enemies with Tier 9 Black and Quasi Bronze treasures all around while she herself only wielded a Tier 7 Black treasure she treated like her own child.

Yet, despite the situation, a maddening grin hung across her attractive face. Her slender arms bulged with strength it shouldn't have, blasting another two Knights of the Round Table away. PANDA NOVEL

"Come! Show me more! I haven't bled in a long time, can you let me see the color of my blood?!"

City Lord White's laughter rang throughout the battlefield. Her voice was like a beacon in the darkness for her men, constantly fueling their momentum.

How could their blood not boil? Even when so many faced their Commander at once, they were simply no match for her.

Noah brandished his blue bladed saber. If those who weren't aware of his abilities saw him now, they would be stunned.

Normally, Noah was just around two meters tall. But now, he stood at over five, his body exuding the valiant air of a god descended from the skies.

His blade increased in size with him, swinging down at City Lord White with a might that made the wind tremble.

“Good!” City Lord White flicked her wrist upward, easily deflecting Noah’s saber as though it was no heavier than a feather. ρ??√???????

She reset herself, looking to swing at and shatter Noah’s knee, but Jessica reacted quickly, causing several demonic beasts to pounce at the City Lord.

However, City Lord White’s sinister grin only grew wider. As though it put no pressure on her wrists at all, she easily shifted her aim with a thought, shattering the skulls of three beasts with a single flicker.

Noah felt as though his arm was about to shatter beneath the she-devil’s counter attack.

His ability wasn’t as simple as gigantification. He could increase the size of his body and any object he so chose, but he could also control density along with this ability.

Everyone knew that volume increased by a cubic while surface area increased by a square. This meant that there was a limit to how large the human body could become before it collapsed in on itself.

However, Noah could bypass this by increasing the density of his bones several fold at will. Even making his bones as strong as diamond wasn’t impossible with his current ability. In the future, making himself as durable as a Fourth Dimensional or higher metals would just be a thought away.

This was all to say that Noah could make his own weight increase to an inconceivable degree and he would also be able to proportionally increase his muscle density to have the strength to back it up.

Yet’| City Lord White deflected it all with a flick of her wrist.

At that moment, King Arthur dug himself out of the trench he had slid back in, charging back toward City Lord White with the same valiant air.

Golden lights surged around his body, dancing along with his blade as he cleaved forward.

City Lord White's laughter sounded as she sent him flying once more.

In the blink of an eye, she appeared amidst the Knights of the Round table, forcing them to quickly defend themselves.

But the result was only to be expected. Blood flew from their lips as they were sent flying.

City Lord White shot forward, appearing before King Arthur, her double headed hammer already swinging downward, a manic laughter hanging in the air.

King Arthur's visage remained stoic, slamming a palm into the ground and flipping out of the way.

However, City Lord White's nimbleness was beyond his comprehension. With a twist of her wrist, her target changed like flowing water, aimed right for King Arthur's head.

Arthur's gaze sharpened, the scent of death hanging over him. He could almost feel the grim reaper whispering into his ears.

With the quickest movements he could muster, he rose Excalibur to his face, trying to block it.

City Lord White's laughter didn't pause for even a moment. She could almost smell the blood spraying into the air.

It was at that moment that a strong surge of magic shook the battlefield.

A shield of ice quickly formed in the path of City Lord White's hammer, causing it to slow and pause just for a moment before being shattered.

By then, King Arthur had already taken advantage of the opportunity to dodge out of the way, City Lord White's hammer just scraping a hair's breadth from his head.

In the distance, the blue eyes of Queen Guinevere shone like two sparkling sapphire gems.

The Queen of Camelot had stepped onto the battlefield for the first time in decades.

Chapter 477

Queen Guinevere's Spirit Pressure seemed to make the skies bow down. It was only at this moment that the people of Camelot and the Demon Empire realized that the strongest mage of Camelot wasn't The Pope, nor was it Arthur, nor was it even Mordred!

It was the Queen of the people. Guinevere Pendragon.

"Hoho! Good! The more, the merrier!"

City Lord White's laughter continued, brandishing her hammer to smash toward King Arthur again as though she hadn't sensed Guinevere's presence in the least.

Sharp, icy winds spun around the Queen, her black hair rapidly becoming coated in a thin layer of ice. In an instant, her tanned skin and black hair became as white as snow, her eyes becoming such a pale shade of blue that they too seemed to become white.

Several javelins of ice formed to her back, shattering the sound barrier as they shot forward.

The mages of Camelot immediately reeled in shock. They couldn't wrap their minds around how the Queen displayed such prowess without her wand.

At that moment, City Lord White became more serious. She wasn't a well informed person. All she knew was battle. If it wasn't related to brandishing her hammer, she didn't want to hear about it.

But, what she did have were instincts honed over countless years of endless battle. So, though she didn't know the name of the exact Innate Force Node Queen Guinevere had awakened, she knew that it couldn't be a weak one.

“Ha!”PANDA-NOVEL.COM

City Lord White swung her hammer toward the incoming ice javelins. The shattering of ice resounded through the battlefield, gorgeous snowflakes wildly fluttering at the point of contact.

Under the astonished gazes of many, City Lord White took a single step back. Though it was just one, it filled King Arthur and the others with fighting spirit. This wild she-devil had finally shown a weakness.

In the skies, Mordred finally sighed a breath of relief. When Arthur almost died, she felt her heart seize. She never thought that she would have such a strong reaction to the almost death of her father. It seemed that blood was truly thicker than water.

Unfortunately, she wasn't able to come down from the skies. If she let the aerial units of White City run rampant, this battle would be over as soon as it started.

Luckily, her mother had come to the battlefield.

Under normal circumstances, King Arthur would never allow her to. In fact, the only reason he allowed Mordred to battle at all was because he didn't really have a choice. After all, she was the ruler of the demons. If she wasn't here, who would take command of them exactly? There was a reason Lionus couldn't be found on the battlefield.

Guinevere's appearance caused the landscape of the war to shift once again.

City Lord White was constantly placed on her backfoot, her hammer deflecting Guinevere's barrage of ice javelin's.

Guinevere's ranged assault put even Leonel to shame. To be able to put so much power into each strike, it was well beyond anything the current Leonel could do. It was hard to believe that Camelot still had such a trump card in the wings. PANDA NOVEL

It seemed that the awakening of Guinevere's ability made her powerful beyond belief.

Taking advantage of Guinevere keeping City Lord White pinned down, the others began to act as well, pincering the City Lord from all sides.

King Arthur activated [Light Domain], sending a barrage of light projectiles toward City Lord White as well.

Noah brandished his saber, using the openings Queen Guinevere created to send out strikes of his own.

In the blink of an eye, it seemed as though everything had flipped on its head. Even City Lord White's laughter seemed to have come to a grinding halt.

However, those who assaulted her didn't seem capable of relaxing even for a moment. No, it wasn't that they weren't capable, but rather that they couldn't. City Lord White's laughter may have come to a close, but the look on her face sent shivers down all of their spines.

Her grin became wider and wider, a sinister darkness cascading over her face.

The solemn atmosphere of the battlefield seemed to grow several fold. It was as though City Lord White's lack of laughter was even more of a sign than her actual laughter had been. And' the only ones who seemed to be in the dark about this were the experts locked in battle with her.

"Good. Good. Good. Now, I can finally go all out!" ρ???

In the distance, Niya watched on, a clipboard being hugged against her chest. She shook her head, lamenting the state of things.

'It would have been better if they were too weak, at least then City Lord wouldn't truly go berserk.' Niya sighed. 'How will we reel her in this time'!?''

Niya began to rack her brain. As far as she was concerned, this battle was as good as over. She only hoped that her City Lord didn't sink too far in this time.

“Blood! Blood! BLOOD!”

City Lord White’s cry almost manifested like a banshee’s. It was a shrill shriek that could cause one’s blood to curdle and one’s heart to stop.

At that moment, City Lord White’s short hair suddenly began to wildly grow. In the blink of an eye, it became like a river of crimson floating in the air.

What was even more shocking, though, was the change to her eyes. In a moment, the whites of her eyes became a blood red, while her irises became a murky grey. No matter how one looked at her, she looked like a demon incarnate’!

But, as though to ensure those who didn’t think so saw through to the truth of the situation, corpses from all around the battlefield trembled. Then, in the blink of an eye, they were completely drained, streams of blood from their dead bodies shooting into the air and pouring into City Lord White’s hair as though to nurture it.

“BLOOD! BLOOD! BLOOD!”

City Lord White’s laughter once again sounded, but this time, it felt as though three women were laughing at once, then it was four, then five. Very soon, it was impossible to tell that they were women at all.

When everyone realized what was happening, their eyes widened in shock.

It wasn’t City Lord White’s laughter anymore at all. In fact, other than the mad grin on her face, City Lord White’s mouth didn’t open at all.

The laughter’! it was coming from the blood’! It was the voices of the dead piercing through the veil of the living as though to remind them all not to forget.

City Lord White shot forward, her speed more than triple what it had been before.

In less than a breath, she appeared before Lancelot, her hammer swinging forth.

Lancelot reacted as quickly as he could, piercing forward and up with his lance. But, a vibrant red glow that pulsed like a beating heart appeared on City Lord White's hammer as it smashed downward.

At the instant of contact, Lancelot felt pain like he never had before.

The bones in his legs collapsed in on themselves, what remained of his knee piercing through his skin in gruesome fashion.

All the strength he had accumulated seemed to be no better than a child swinging with all their might at an adult. In all his life, Lancelot had never felt so weak, nor had he ever suffered through such pain.

“Lancelot!”

Arthur, Guinevere and the Knights of the Round Table all shouted in rage at once. But, City Lord White's laughter was like a melodious tune being plucked to their suffering.

‘

At that moment, within a military healing tent, the temperature had already skyrocketed past 200 degrees Celsius. The heart beat of the young girl had grown so loud that it could be heard even outside the flapping curtains’

It was in that instant that her eyes shot open, reflecting a blinding golden light.

“Blood’

The voice was soft, but it seemed to reach the ears of every person on the battlefield.

Chapter 478

~A year ago~

Aina stood from her seated position, power she had never felt before coursing through her veins. She had already expected that the blood of a Fifth Dimensional creature would give her a massive boost to her strength, but she was still somewhat surprised that it allowed her to directly shatter the barrier to the Fourth Dimension.

The Fourth Dimension was different from the Third. It could be said that both Planes of Existence laid a foundation, but the method in which they did so was much different.

In order to understand what this difference was, it had to be known that the minimum requirement for passing down a Lineage Factor was being an existence at the Fourth Dimension. Only upon gaining some mastery of this Dimension would one reach the necessary threshold.

The Third Dimension formed one's Force Nodes. The number one managed to form would remain unchanged, at least for the time being. This made one's success within the Third Dimension a direct predictor of one's success in the future.

The Fourth Dimension built upon this foundation. Not only did one transition for Third Dimensional to Fourth Dimensional Force, but one also began the process of body refinement.PANDA-NOVEL.COM

Though it seemed like Dimensions were just 'power levels', this wasn't the case at all. When transitioning between Dimensions, one was quite literally ascending to a new plane of existence. This was why the gap between Dimensions was impossible to cross.

The Third Dimension allowed one to create Fourth Dimensional constructs within one's body: the Force Nodes. While the Fourth Dimension was the process of dispelling what impurities remained of the Third and Fourth Dimensions to allow a smooth transition into the Fifth Dimension.

At the Fifth Dimension, this was where the true powerful existences of the Dimensional Verse began to appear.

But, only upon reaching Tier One would one truly be considered a Fourth Dimensional existence.

As though all of this wasn't complicated enough, the universe seemed to hate making things neat and tidy.

By now, those with sharp minds would have realized that though forming large Force Nodes and reaching the maximum level of Nine gave one an advantage, it would also be easy to realize that this didn't restrict one from continuing to purify one's body.

Even if you only formed three Force Nodes and could already sustain Fourth Dimensional Force in them all, what was stopping you from continuing to refine and purify your body?

For example, compared to Leonel, Aina's Force Nodes were much smaller, not even close to Leonel's 100 cell size. And, though she had managed to form nine of them, her talent in energy manipulation was low due to her lack of talent with Internal Sight. Unfortunately, both of these things would be linked.

However! Compared to others Aina's talent in refining her body were leagues beyond. Leonel could only rely on his Lineage Factor to match her in this regard.

What did all of this mean? It meant that technically, one could have a poor showing and set a terrible foundation within the Third Dimension, yet still become an undefeatable existence within the Fourth Dimension.

Aina was one such person. Though her foundation within the Third Dimension couldn't be considered to be bad, it wasn't among the very best either. However, her talent for growth within the Fourth Dimension was beyond what most could fathom.

In fact, without having spent even a single minute within the Fourth Dimension, Aina had already cleared the requirements to be considered a Tier Two Fourth Dimensional existence.

Of course, this was mostly in thanks due to the Abyssal Panther blood she just ingested. That said, how many others could ingest Fifth Dimensional blood in the Third and live to tell about it?

Aina flexed her body, basking beneath the popping of her joints. Other than the discomfort her inflamed scars were bringing her, she had never felt more at ease in her life. Her blood thrummed and her heart gave out long and steady beats. She felt as though she could shatter the world with a single fist.

‘It’s time for me to find a path out of here. Though Tier Two Fourth Dimensional strength is good, they were at least at Tier Four or Five in strength!’

Aina’s Tier Two strength was likely worth more than a usual Tier Three existence on Terrain due to the size of her Force Nodes. Though she couldn’t compare to Leonel, that didn’t mean she lost out to those with such poor talent. But, leaping over any more would be troublesome, at least when she was facing so many of them at once.

Plus, there were other factors to strength than just one’s base powerful level like Styles and Embryos. Aina still needed to train herself more.

So, she traveled deeper into the cave, not knowing a thing about the horrible experience that lied in wait for her.

Chapter 479

The people of Terrain say that the Mountain Sands Range was a forbidden zone. It gained its name because according to legend, the deeper one traveled into this mountain range, the more difficult it became to leave.

Unfortunately, when she entered this mountain range, Aina had no idea about this. Due to her hasty teleportation, rather than being sent to a proper city like Leonel had, she appeared in the wilderness where she just so happened to stumble across a Variant Zone.

Due to the nature of a Variant Zone, Aina managed to claim rewards despite her competitors being several times more powerful. But, this made her escape all the more difficult.

Without a choice, she charged into the mountain range and eventually managed to find this network of tunnels.

Knowing it wasn't safe to go back the way she came, believing that those three Heirs were still chasing her, Aina instead decided to find a secluded location to breakthrough. Now, she was hoping to find an alternate exit.

Unlike Leonel, Aina didn't have perfect recall nor did she have a powerful mind. This wasn't to say that she wasn't intelligent, but rather that she wasn't as much of a monster in this regard as compared to Leonel. After all, Leonel's mind could probably put a supercomputer of the 25th Century to shame.

Without a choice, Aina could only travel forward slowly, leaving marks on the walls of the caves traveled through to remind her of where she had been and whether she was traveling in circles or not.

Luckily, Aina had the small sword she gained from the Variant Zone. It was much more convenient to use than her massive ax on in such small quarters. PANDA-NOVEL.COM

[Author's Note: Yes, small sword. Note that Aina's great sword has not appeared yet at this point]

By now, Aina had long since placed her sensory boosting headpiece on. Before, she had been hesitant to do so.

Compared to Leonel, she was much more informed about the situation of other worlds. So, she was very much aware how much of a draw a Quasi Bronze treasure could be. As such, she hid the fact she had one while within the Variant Zone. But now that she had become the enemy of those three anyway, even if she ran into them now, it wouldn't make much of a difference. After all, the blood of a Fifth Dimensional entity could be considered about equal to a Quasi Bronze treasure. In fact, to the right person, it would be even more valuable.

'The Force is getting denser?'

Aina's brows raised, a faint excitement in her heart. If Force was increasing in the direction she was walking, it was very likely that there could be treasures lying in wait. It wasn't rare for such ancient networks of caves to have untapped mines.

Aina continued to mark the walls she came across with arrows, maintaining her caution.

Usually, the most sensitive creatures to shifts in Force density weren't humanoids but rather beasts and Invalids. Though Invalids only cared about devouring humans, beasts were different. Whether it was humans or resources, they would be interested in both. It wouldn't be a surprise if a beast called this place home. PANDA NOVEL

As Aina approached the location of the increased Force density, she heard a faint scratching noise that caused her steps to freeze.

Though Aina's senses weren't very powerful, thanks to her strong body, what she did have was great hearing and eyesight. In fact, after absorbing the Abyssal Panther's blood, her ability to see in the darkness was no worse than her ability to see in the light which was very helpful in this dark environment.

'There's something up ahead' !'

Aina crouched, slinking forward as though she truly was a panther. The light in her amber eyes seemed to dim toward a darker hue and gained a more feline look to them.

Her black hair melded into the darkness as she quickly darted forward, making it to the small branching pathway the noise was coming from.

After peeking inside, Aina was stunned by what she saw.

'An Invalid!' p??c??????

Aina's heartbeat quickened slightly before she forced it to enter another slow and calming rhythm.

She was well aware that any Invalids that managed to survive this long on a world that had long since gone through its Metamorphosis wasn't an existence she could look down upon. But, at the same time, such Invalids would leave behind great stores of energy.

Whenever an Invalid was killed, they would become the purest globule of Force imaginable. When this was absorbed, it would be a great boon to a body. The stronger the Invalid was, the greater the benefit would be as well.

The only unfortunate thing, or maybe fortunate in this case, was that Terrain was a world without much talent. Though Invalids that survived this long would indeed be powerful, they still had a limit on just how powerful they could become.

Invalids had an exceptionally difficult time traveling between worlds for obvious reasons. So, if all they could devour were low talent humans, they'd be equally as pitiful.

Aina brandished her sword, prepared to strike at any moment.

'What is it scratching and claw at?'

Aina had never seen an Invalid act in this way. They would usually be placid and without emotion. Their only goals in 'life' was to devour other humans and evolve themselves. Something like an Invalid being so interested in a wall was unheard of, even if said wall had a treasure lying behind it.

Aina shook her head and removed all distracting thoughts.

Invalids were incredibly sensitive to Force, so she didn't dare to use it. But, with her strength, especially after tempering her blood once, she didn't need to.

Just a single strike to the head. That would be enough to make sure this Invalid never saw the light of day again.

Aina's thighs flexed, her body crouching like a strung bow.

BANG!

The Invalid froze, its scratching coming to a stop when it heard the noise. But, Aina had already appeared to its back, aiming a blade at the back of its skull.

At that moment, the Invalid's head suddenly spun 180 degrees, its placid white eyes locking onto Aina's approaching blade.

Aina felt something grab at her heart as though trying to fill her with fear. But, her blade never stopped, shooting through the Invalid's skull in the next instant.

The Invalid's forehead was split by Aina's blade, but its eyes remained locked onto Aina as its lifeforce dimmed.

But, just as it was about to fade into motes of light, its jaw went slack, hanging open at an awkward angle as though a wooden puppet with a loose screw.

And then, it screamed.

The sound was so loud that Aina felt her eardrums shatter. But, she didn't have the time to linger on the pain in the slightest.

She felt that this scream hadn't been a normal scream; it was a signal and she was the subject of the information being sent.

Chapter 480

Aina pulled her sword out quickly.

She didn't quite understand what was happening. Shouldn't Invalids be creatures of instinct? They shouldn't have any intelligence or sense of comradery. Something like signaling one's allies was a distinctly human trait. Sometimes beasts of higher intelligence would engage in such matters as well. But, Invalids? That should never happen.

'It didn't become energy?'

Aina was shocked once again. The Invalid before her collapsed, but it didn't disappear into energy she could absorb. Just what was happening?

Aina's heart seized. Did she make a mistake? Was it not an Invalid at all?

No, that was impossible. Its eyes, its aura, its demeanor, it all screamed Invalid. So, what was happening exactly?

Aina didn't believe that she would make such a rookie mistake. Plus, what existence other than an Invalid could shriek like that even after having its head pierced through?

Aina was certain, it hadn't been a shriek of pain or unwillingness. It had no emotion behind it all, it was completely hollow and without conscience.

'I need to move.'PANDA-NOVEL.COM

Aina thrust these thoughts to the back of her mind, taking a glance at the wall the 'Invalid' had been scratching at.

If Leonel had been there, he would immediately recognize the Tier 5 Black Ore embedded into the wall. It wasn't very valuable, but it wasn't worthless either. At the very least, it could sell for a couple kilograms of Black Urbe Ore.

'I don't have time to dig it out and it doesn't seem like a very high level ore either.' Aina nodded to herself. 'Run.'

Without hesitation, Aina turned tail and ran. She felt it was unfortunate that she had placed herself in such a difficult situation for such a worthless Ore she couldn't even mine, but there was no time to cry over spilt milk.

Aina shot back in the direction she came.

She knew she didn't have enough time to run and create new markings on the wall. And, if she got lost in these tunnels, there would be no one to come out and save her. Therefore, her best chance was to follow her arrows in reverse.

If that screech was really a signal as she thought, then it likely meant that there were more Invalids on their way. If she was correct, then her arrows wouldn't mean much if anything to them. With their low intelligence, she didn't need to worry about being followed.

Aina rounded a corner with confidence, only to come to a grinding halt. PANDA NOVEL

There were three of them blocking her path, all of them with their backs facing her. But, they all simultaneously rotated their heads in her direction as though they were night time owls. It was the kind of sight that sent shivers down one's spine.

Aina hesitated, her jaw clenched.

Should she go forward? Or run back?

The former was the only way for her to continue following her arrows. But, the latter would force her to forget her initial plans entirely. There was no way she would be able to keep a mental map of where she was going and getting lost would be a near guarantee.

This network of tunnels simply had too many diverging paths. If it wasn't for this, there was no way that Aina would only meet these Invalids on her way back and never even sense them during her first trip down this passage.

Aina grit her teeth. 'Forward!'

She knew that this was the best choice she had. If there were Invalids on her way back, that only meant that she had been very lucky not to run into them on the way here. If that was the case, there might

very well be even more if she headed in deeper rather than trying to exit. Her only way out of this situation was to leave this network of tunnels entirely.

Aina's blood began to boil, a faint red hue covering her blade and her body. ρ??U??????

With a thought, she shot forward, brandishing her blade.

The three Invalids reacted all at once, but their reactions seemed disjointed. Though they were as fast as Fourth Dimensional humans, their joints would often bend at odd angles as though they were double jointed in all areas.

They moved less like humanoids and more like some alien species just learning how to walk on their own two feet thanks to bodies they had snatched.

The sight send a cold shiver down Aina's back, but this was a good thing for her. The less coordinated they were, the greater chance she had of leaving this place.

With a sweep of her blade, one lost an arm and a leg in quick succession. Without even bothering with the remaining two, she shot by the gap she created after the Invalid toppled over, nearly hitting her head on the ceiling of the cave as she soared by them.

Aina pumped her legs as quickly as she could, no longer minding the noise she might make. As long as the Invalids she came across continued to be so uncoordinated and slow, she just had to continue running with all her might.

She rounded several corners, almost lamenting her previous actions. Why couldn't she had traveled in a straight line before? What possessed her to take so many turns?!

Aina ran into several more Invalids. Many were alone, allowing her to easily bypass them. But, a few came in groups of two and three. Still, it wasn't beyond her means of dealing with.

However, she grew more anxious the more she ran. How were there so many Invalids here? Why did none of them become motes of light? Why were they all acting so weirdly?

She couldn't fathom how there were so many here. The more she ran into, the more she began to question how she had traveled so deeply without running into even a single one.

'Dammit!'

Aina rounded another corner, only to run into several more Invalids. But this time, they numbered almost a dozen.

Their odd interactions continued. As though they couldn't sense their comrades by their sides, they all tried to squeeze into the narrow tunnel at once.

They pushed against each other, shifting to their sides as they continued to press forward.

It should have been a comedic sight. Some of the Invalids had their cheeks pressed flush against one another, others even had their noses squished as though they couldn't kiss each other deeply enough.

But, their emotionless gazes and their indifferent expressions sent a shiver down one's spine. It was as though they would stop at nothing until they devoured Aina.

Aina clenched her teeth. She was so close. She could feel it. It had only taken her half an hour to travel as deeply as she did, but she had already been sprinting with all her might for almost five minutes. She knew that she must be closing in on the exit.

But, just when she had been, eleven Invalids completely blocked her path forward.

'Continue!' Aina wanted to press forward. She just had to get past this line and she would be free.

Unfortunately, reality was cruel. Just when she took a step forward, she saw another wave of Invalids coming between the cracks of the 11 that had squeezed themselves together.

If they combined into one, their numbers would exceed 20!

Aina's eyes flickered with a hint of helplessness.

Without a choice she shot into a diverging path, knowing full well that she was now lost.