

Descent 561

Chapter 561

Elorin continued to battle as though nothing had happened, brandishing a machete no different from his grandfather's. Even as he battled, his lips moved almost imperceptibly, but it seemed that even the youths right by his side that continued to fall to the strikes of the enemies or even the soldiers that fell to his blade couldn't hear a single word he was saying.

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Not far from Elorin, there was another familiar group of youths. But, these few were so ragged and beaten that even with his senses, Leonel might not recognize them at all.

Among them, there was Roaring Black Lion, Seer, Falling Leaf, Thunderous Clap and many more. By now, though, they hardly looked like themselves.

Roaring Black Lion had deep gashes through his blackened body. His lion's roar continuously rocked the battlefield, debuffing their enemies and strengthening his squad. But, every time he bellowed, ignoring his injuries, blood would fly from the bloody gashed tracing along his enormous body.

Chasing Wind and Flowing Wind, two opposite sides of the same coin, did their best to protect him alongside Thunderous Clap. They knew well that if not for Roaring Black Lion helping to level the playing field, they would have fallen long ago.

“Hoho, are these the geniuses of Earth? I've heard so many great things about you all, but to think you'd be put in such a pitiful position against a mere few foot soldiers.”

Raynred's voice drifted into the ears of the youths.

Without having to worry about Hutch, crossing the battlefield to reach this point had been almost too easy. Raynred curiously eyed the youths on their last legs, his eyes no different from a predator eyeing his prey. PANDA-NOVEL.COM

Jilniya and Wilas had gone off to other sections of the battlefield already, so he felt quite happy that he had this place to himself.

“Tell me, have you heard of a talent by the name of Aina Brazinger? Where is she? If you answer in a timely fashion, I won’t mind taking you in as servants. After all, once Earth is conquered, we’ll need quite a few sows and studs so I can’t possibly kill you all, right?”

Raynred’s eyes scanned over Chasing Wind and Flowing Wind, his eyes especially locked onto Flowing Wind’s scantily clad body. He had to say, this fiery young lady truly knew how to entice a man.

Though they still wore their masks, Raynred believed in his intuition. This was definitely a beauty.

Not a single person answered Raynred, their steely gazes locked onto him like ravenous wolves. They had never heard of this Aina Brazinger before, but even if they had, they wouldn’t sell her out to this piece of shit.

“Not answering?” Raynred’s voice gained a tinge of murderous intent.

The sudden change to his aura made the battlefield freeze over. The soldiers of Terrain had long since known to stop attacking so as to let their Young Heir have his fun, but even they couldn’t help but shiver.

Raynred’s strength was undeniable regardless of his character flaws. His rage alone seemed to slow the Force in the region to a crawl. PANDA NOVEL

However, the youths remained silent, their jaws clenched.

“Hohoho’!” Raynred chuckled.

Just when it seemed that Raynred would have to take action, a woman’s voice called out anxiously.

“We’! We’ve never heard of her, I swear’! Please don’t hurt me, I’ll be a servant!”

The nervous, chattering of the voice cut through whatever momentum and solidarity the youthful group had.

Numerous gazes snapped over to the one who had been responsible for making them all seem so weak, only to find another familiar face on the end of it all: Pisces.

Looks of disgust colored Roaring Black Lion and the others’ faces.

A few months ago, they got word that Leonel had defected from the Slayer Legion and was now a wanted criminal by their ranks. He even appeared alongside several Ascension Empire officials they were previously tasked to kill. ρ??C??????

When they found out the reason that he ended up being chased away, they learned that one of their Supremes had asked him to hand in a treasure of his. This all left them baffled because they were certain that the Supreme had never personally laid eyes on the treasure because not only was Leonel not a part of their district, but he had also only recently joined their Legion to begin with.

Leonel had only been able to participate in two events, one of which was a tournament and the second of which was Project Hunt. Since he hadn’t used the dictionary during the tournament and had only brought it out to save their lives on the Island, that could only mean that it was someone who told the Supreme about his treasure.

After reaching this point, they ran into a dead end. There were dozens of them who had survived, finding out which one it had been was almost impossible. But’!

Among the group of surviving youths, there was a young man with a deduction ability. According to his calculations, there was a 97% chance that the traitor who divulged Leonel’s secrets was none other than this Pisces right before them.

Unfortunately, there was nothing they could do about it. They couldn’t reprimand a Supreme with their standing’! The best they could do was ostracize Pisces and make their displeasure known.

But, who would have known that it would come back to bite them? Pisces was among the most powerful on this battlefield due to her water-related abilities, but she hardly raised a finger to protect anyone but herself. Her selfishness caused their casualties to be far beyond what they should have been.

And now, she was betraying them all again. Even if they didn't know who this Aina was, they felt it was a matter of principle and Pisces had spit in the face of it again.

“Oh?” Raynred tilted his head, curiously observing Pisces. Seeing that her figure was also enticing, he couldn't help but lick his lips.

“Come over here.”

Pisces trembled, but eventually moved forward, allowing her chin to be caressed and her mask to be slowly removed.

“Ah, a beauty indeed.” Raynred grinned, lightly playing with Pisces' blue hair.

“You don't know an Aina, huh?”

“N'! No'! I've really never heard of her, she isn't one of us.”

As she spoke, Pisces became more determined and firm, allowing Raynred to do as he pleased and even inviting him to do more.

Pisces was just a small talent. She didn't know the truth behind the Slayer Legion so she had no idea The Empire was on their side. All she saw was a devastating losing battle being fought against a world many times more powerful than them. She had no intention of going down with the ship.

“Mm.” Raynred dragged a finger along Pisces exposed collarbone. “If not her, have you heard of a certain Leonel Morales?”

Pisces and the others froze. Originally, Leonel had used the name Indomitable. But, in order to make them trust him more and allow things to go more smoothly, he had both removed his mask and exposed his name to them.

Pisces' lip curled into a sweet smile. "Yes. Yes I have heard of him."

"YOU –!"

The pent up rage everyone had for Pisces' actions boiled over. But, before Roaring Black Lion could even finish his words, his throat gurgled, filling up with blood.

He looked down toward his broad chest, laying eyes on the bloody hole that appeared where his heart should have been.

Flowing Wind shrieked as the others watched on with wide eyes.

Roaring Black Lion fell into the waters.. Dead.

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Somehow, even compared to the other bodies constantly falling on the battlefield, Roaring Black Lion's was especially resounding. Maybe it was because his body was so large, maybe it was because he was their previous beacon of hope, or maybe it was because he was the first to die in such cruel fashion.

There wasn't a long drawn out battle, no final valiant words, no last gaze of defiance' † There was nothing but a wave of a hand and an abrupt gurgling noise.

Then, there was the splash. They had never thought that a sound so benign could ring through their souls with such harshness.

His body slapped against the ocean waters, his blood pooling into a fog of liquid violet. But this time, the change to the waters didn't seem keen on dispersing so quickly. It continued to thicken, growing dense

to the point the violet turned toward red before reaching a dense blackness that perfectly suited the call of death.

“Noisy.”

Raynred shook his head, cleaning out his ears with a finger. Roaring Black Lion’s voice was indeed booming, especially with his ability. Unfortunately, it was grating on the ears. Raynred didn’t have the patience to deal with it.

The youths looked at Roaring Black Lion’s corpse, their bodies trembling. It felt as though their hearts were being ripped out from their chests. PANDA-N0VEL.COM

Compared to the other youths of the Slayer Legion, this group was especially close. They had all survived the events of the Force Eruption together. They had learned to lean on one another for strength and companionship.

Even though they had had some clashes between each other back then, it had ultimately brought them closer.

And yet, someone they had just been fighting side by side with was dead. Just like that.

His body swayed in the waters, his bestial form slowly shrinking back to reveal the face of an ordinary young man. He had dark skin and thick hair. His face had gone slack in his death, but it was enough to accentuate his sharp features and charismatic aura.

This was the first time any of them were seeing Roaring Black Lion’s face. The last time his mask fell off after a transformation, it was Leonel who helped him cover up before others could lay eyes on him. But, somehow, seeing his face now hit them all harder than a truck.

He just looked so’ | Normal. PANDA N0VEL

A young man of not even 20 years of age, dead on the whims of a madman.

“You’ve heard of him you say? Where is he?”

Raynred turned his attention back to Pisces. Though he spoke these words, his eyes continuously scanned her body as though he couldn’t be bothered with the response.

In truth, it really didn’t matter much if he found Leonel now or later, the result would be effectively the same. There was still time before Valiant Heart Mountain’s admissions activated and it was highly unlikely Leonel would be able to leave Earth.

The tickets to other worlds might be an easy matter for well established worlds. But, to fledgling worlds like Earth, their value was no less than that of a Tier 9 Black Treasure.

According to reports, as expected, Leonel had relied on Terrain’s teleportation channels to make it back to Earth, which meant whatever talismans he had used to come to Terrain in the first place were used up. If not for this, why would he risk entering a city of Terrain? It would have been safer to not do so if he could help it. ρ???(???????)

Ultimately, there was no place for Leonel to run. He would land in his hands one way or another soon enough along with Aina.

Pisces hesitated.

“This’ | I’m not exactly certain of where he is. He was expelled from our Slayer Legion and placed on our wanted list.”

Raynred frowned when he heard these words. Wasn’t this as good as telling him nothing at all? What was the use of saying she knew him, then?

Sensing the change in Raynred’s mood, Pisces panicked somewhat, a cold sweat matting her back. She wracked her brain, practically flipping it over again and again as though to wring out the dregs of her memory.

Luckily, her efforts paid off. Her eyes lit up, something finally clicking.

“I know! I’m not sure if he’s there now, but I heard that he once caused a big commotion at Royal Blue Fort. He used to be a famous football player and was well known in the Province. In all likelihood, he has some close ties to the people in Royal Blue Fort.”

Raynred’s expression softened. “Oh? Is that so?”

Pisces nodded hurriedly, she was practically as obedient as a kitten.

“Royal Blue Province? We received some information about that Province’ ; How convenient, it should be really close to this location.”

Raynred mused, rubbing his chin and looking across the battlefield.

Seeing Hutch in such a sorry state and how everything seemed to be turning in their favor, he realized that his services probably wouldn’t be needed on this battlefield for much longer. Soon, he’d be able to take his own personal troop to this Royal Blue Fort to see what was happening. If he could find Leonel, then good. Aina probably wouldn’t be far away. But, if he couldn’t find Leonel’ ;

Well, this little girl made quite an interesting point. Since that Province was his home, there probably weren’t a small number of people who had connections to him over there, right?

After Raynred finished his musings, he looked toward the remaining youths. They stared daggers at him, each of them with hearts filled with endless fury.

However, as furious as they were, Raynred’s next words made them feel as though they had been plunged into the depths of hell.

“Well, there’s not really a point in any of you existing any longer, right?”

Raynred flicked out with his fingers again, causing several more geniuses of the Slayer Legion to fall.

Flowing Wind stood frozen in time, a bloody smile hanging on her lips. Though it was a smile, it was filled with bitterness.

‘You know, if this was a movie, you’d be swooping down right about now. Don’t you think you’re a bit late, handsome’?’

Flowing Wind’s consciousness slowly faded to black, her last thoughts being of Leonel’s face.

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“’ So what are you trying to say, exactly?”

Elorin swung his blade down again, a mark of complete indifference on his face. He reaped another life with ease, the bloodiness of the battlefield seemingly having nothing to do with him.

“I’m saying that it’s not yet time. You’re a smart boy, do I really need to repeat myself?”

“It isn’t that I don’t understand what you’re saying. It’s more so that it doesn’t make much sense. If now isn’t the best time, then when else could possibly be?”

Looking at the state of the battlefield, Elorin thought that the caller on the other side must be pulling some sort of practical joke.

The casualties the Slayer Legion had tallied up to now numbered in the several thousand and these were among their elites. These sort of warriors couldn’t just grow on trees. To make matters worse, Elorin was certain that The Capital was on its last legs as well.

The last reports they received detailed the three cities having all the momentum in the world to storm their way to the third layer, having already breached the second layer. By all rights, if this wasn’t the appropriate time to act, then when was? Were they supposed to wait until Earth already fell into the hands of another?

“The time isn’t right.” The voice responded.

“If you’re abandoning me just say so.” Elorin said plainly, his expression not even fluctuating. “There’s no need to beat around the bush like this. PANDA-NÓVEL.COM

“I hope you remember that you all are the ones who approached me first. With or without you, I will accomplish my goals. This is a new world order and there’s an entire universe waiting to set the stage for talents like me. I don’t need fair weather ‘helpers’ who won’t show their faces.”

The voice chuckled, clearly not minding Elorin’s words.

“You’re misunderstanding, Elorin. Also, you sound very mighty currently. But, you seem to have forgotten that you weren’t the first to complete their Zone, you were second. And, that’s just of this generation. As Earth continues to grow and evolve, and things settle down to the point people begin to have children again, the talents birthed with each successive generation will only grow more and more talented.

“So, before you begin puffing out that prepubescent chest of yours, you should remember that you aren’t even the best on your own world. It isn’t quite time for you to be thinking of the expanse of the universe just yet.”

Elorin didn’t seem to be enraged by these words either, his expression completely even keeled. He didn’t seem to be insulted in the slightest. In fact, at the moment, he felt that he had already said all that needed to be said. There was no need to continue this conversation.

Just as he was about to hang up, the voice spoke again.

“The young are so impatient, but sure, I don’t mind tossing you a bone.

“We aren’t abandoning you. We aren’t making a move because it truly isn’t time to do so just yet. You forget that we have talents of our own that have hardly stepped onto Earth’s stage. According to our analysis, Earth hasn’t quite reached the brink just yet, at least not for another few hours’! PANDA NÓVEL

“Only when our victory is guaranteed will we move. Until then, sit tight and don’t die.”

After saying these words, the voice cut the call, leaving Elorin to his own thoughts.

Not long later, Elorin looked up, his machete reaping another life.

Since it wasn’t yet time, it seemed he would have to put in some effort. After a while, his eyes landed on Raynred. With every flicker of his fingers, another young elite fell no matter how hard they fought.

It wasn’t that this batch wasn’t talented. If it wasn’t for the suppression of the Puppet Master, three or four of them would have been enough to take on Raynred to a standstill. But, with the sluggishness they were experiencing, not even the several dozens of them that there were could even put up a fight.

By now, among those that remained, Flowing Wind and many others had already died. Of those that Leonel would even recognize, only Thunderous Clap and Chasing Wind remained. But, it was clear that if they were any more unlucky, their lives would be next.

‘Hm, I guess you’ll do.’ Elorin thought indifferently, flickering across the battlefield.

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Hutch took long, steady breaths, blood drizzling out between his lips. By now, the normally bouncy old man was pulling himself thin.

When facing those weaklings, the suppression on his abilities meant little. He could still reap their lives with ease. But now, it became obvious that his weapon mastery wasn’t allowing him to ignore the suppression. Rather, he was siphoning some of his strength away in exchange for a smaller amount of suppression.

This was effectively still weakening him considerably, but there was nothing he could do about it. If he didn’t defeat these three before him, the Slayer Legion was finished.

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As bad as the situation on the Slayer Legion's battlefield was, the situation at The Capital was far worse. In fact, the three cities had already bulldozed their way through the second layer. They were so comfortable in their position that the cities had been teleported forward once more.

From the base of The Capital, the Cities moved to the second layer, laying upon the thick branches of the ancient tree-like space.

The youths continued to fight, but the death of Nile was still fresh on their minds. To make matters worse, more than just Nile had died to this point. It felt as though their own legend was crumbling before their very own eyes.

Noah protected Jessica to his back, a stoic expression on his face. Every time Jessica tried to step forward, he would send another glare in her direction.

“You can control beasts from here.” He would growl, his face showing about as much emotion as he usually would over the course of an entire year.

Noah breathed heavily, his blue saber laying across his chest as he blocked the blow of three sword strikes at once.

His knees wobbled. It wasn't because the strikes were too heavy, but rather because his legs were simply too tired. This battle of defense had already been fought for over a half day. Even with his stamina, he was simply reaching the end of his rope.

In the distance, he locked eyes onto Jefrach who was slaughtering as he pleased, swinging around two hammers like a madman. Every body that made contact burst into a rain of blood and gore.

‘I need to take out the strongest of them’! To give everyone a chance.’ Noah took a deep breath, trying to find a second wind somewhere deep within.

He was the Prince of an Empire. This was his world. He wouldn't allow them to trample upon Earth as they pleased.

Noah looked up. As the legend went, there wasn't a single place in The Capital one couldn't see the Palace from. But, even now, it remained completely unmoving. Was his grandfather going to wait until they charged through the gates to finally do something?

Noah dug deep and roared, pushing the three swordsmen back before slashing them apart.

He looked up one last time as though trying to find the courage he needed to face this enemy. But, what he saw this time was completely out of his expectations.

In his line of sight, blocking his view of the Palace, a young man had suddenly appeared in the skies, a young woman wearing a blue veined mask strapped to his back.

He stood silently, but somehow, the eyes of most on the battlefield couldn't help but drift toward him, his cold eyes sending shivers down their spine.

Leonel didn't seem to notice how many eyes were on him. His gaze swept through the second layer, landing on Hargrove City.

Without a word, his figure flickered, appearing above the city walls in a flash, landing atop the gates with a resounding BANG!

Before anyone could react, the City's gates crumbled before erupting into a pillar of flames that shot into the sky, lighting up the battlefield.

A single man stood amidst the wreckage, his gaze filled with a furious light.

Flames shot into the skies, lighting up the darkening battlefield as though the sun was rising from the North today.

The battlefield seemed to pause, shock coloring the faces of everyone present.

Destroying the Gates of a city wasn't so simple. Let alone the materials needed to construct it, the Force Arts protecting it alone would be enough to give a headache to even the most powerful City Lords among the people of Terrain.

Even if that was ignored, the sudden appearance above the battlefield and the subsequent almost suicidal actions left everyone in a daze. However, they hadn't even been able to register all that happened before a roar shook the skies.

“GET THE HELL OUT HERE!”

Leonel's infuriated bellowing resonated in the ears of everyone.

It was only at that moment that everyone came to a subtle understanding. Leonel wasn't here to be a savior. Someone had pissed him off and that person happened to be within Hargrove City's walls.

It was only at that moment that whatever few guards of Hargrove City that remained finally reacted to the change.PANDA-NOVEL.COM

The truth was that with their charge, the elites of the City were currently on the frontlines and no one had been paying attention to the skies. Even if they had been, Leonel's appearance was simply too sudden. Without the slightest sound, he had crashed down from the skies, obliterating their defenses as though they weren't there.

How could the flaws of Terrain's Force Arts escape Leonel's notice?

Warriors converged on Leonel from all sides, what remained of the archers that hadn't toppled from the walls aiming their bows toward him.

He could simulate the world in his mind, he had precision the likes of which even computers of the 25th Century could only dream of, but who said he only had to simulate reality? Why couldn't he dig into the recesses of his mind, tap into the fantasies of a man, and force creations that could shake the world into being?

Who said he couldn't forge weapons on a battlefield? Who said he couldn't fuse Light and Fire Elemental Spell Arts into one? Who said a single man couldn't bring a city to its knees?!

Even as thousands of soldiers converged onto Leonel's position, gorgeous javelins began to form around him. They used the metallic base of the city's gates and fused the Flames of [Fire Spear] into its foundations, strengthening the already powerful One Star Magus Art. Its blade resonated with a golden halo, formed of an illusory golden sword that twinkled beneath the darkness of night.

In one breath, there were just three of them. In the next, the number doubled, then doubled again. In the blink of an eye, there were dozens, then hundreds. They floated in the skies beneath Leonel's control, waiting for his orchestral rhythm to reach its peak.

“Since you insist on being in my way... Die.”

The blazing spears of fire and light tore through the night sky, leaving streaks of flames and gold in their wake.

The warriors charging toward Leonel suddenly found themselves pierced through. The bolts were so swift that they hardly felt a thing before their innards were completely burnt to ash, shock coloring their faces even in death.

But, as though that wasn't enough, even after claiming one life, the deathly spears didn't pause, reaping more lives before suddenly erupting into a cacophony of explosions.

Each bomb was so resounding that the very foundations of the City quaked, taking hundreds of lives with every tremble.

Leonel stomped down his feet hard, violent surges of Earth Elemental Force erupting from his body as he forced the trembling grounds to concentrate their attack, splintering the earth and causing the deaths of thousands more.

His every action was cold and indifferent, his calculations so deadly that even it seemed capable of directing every ounce of energy toward the death of more.

Leonel stood like a God amidst the carnage, the crackling of flames sparking around his body as though to reflect the synapses of his mind.

Those watching on couldn't believe what they were seeing. The Gates of Hargrove City stood in complete carnage, a single man having reaped the lives of thousands in what didn't seem to be more than just a few minutes.

'Is this the real him...?' Noah's gaze flickered, his expression impossible to read.

However, all this said, Noah still felt that something was off. Rather than being content with such an achievement Leonel seemed to be... growing angrier?

"You've... brought my Queen to me..."

The voice easily swept over the battlefield despite not seemingly being very loud. It was as though this man was whispering into all their ears.

Leonel was so infuriated he grinned, his smile carrying a darkness that swallowed his surroundings.

"I'm going to enjoy killing you."

Shackles that seemed to be weighing Leonel scattered, a bloodthirsty aura washing over The Capital.

Leonel's murderous intent seemed to fuse with his domain of flames, causing a mere rise in temperature to suddenly become a land of red.

Following the Puppet Master's voice, the rumbling of the earth suddenly grew as giants rose in the distance.

Their bodies were completely nude, but they had no reproductive organs to speak of. It was difficult to tell if they were puppets formed of corpses like the rest or if they were artificial beings hand crafted by the Puppet Master itself.

These giants crashed through the city, seemingly not minding the carnage they were causing in the slightest. There were most definitely normal citizens of Hargrove still remaining, but their lives weren't considered for even a moment. In fact, in his fury, Leonel didn't even pause for a moment to think of them.

With a thought, the debris around him was formed into spiraling spears once again, launching toward the slowly walking giants.

BANG! BANG! BANG! BANG!

A deluge of explosions erupted across the bodies of the giants, causing them to stumble and slow. However, the damage was negligible. Let alone suffering injuries or being impaired, Leonel's attacks didn't even leave behind any scorching marks.

Soon, 12 Giants appeared, each of them standing over 20 meters tall, their steps heavy. They had no eyes, no ears, no clothing. Their skin was a dull brown color and other than their humanoid forms, there didn't seem to be anything else that was human about them.

However... each and everyone one of them carried a stifling aura. Even those several kilometers away, barely able to observe the situation, felt as though their hearts were being weighed down heavily. They couldn't help but wonder... if these giants had stepped onto the battlefield, would they even stand a chance?
PANDA-NOVEL.COM

Each and every one of them exuded the might of Demi God, standing on the precipice of the Fifth Dimension. Their hollow faces and steady gait even in the face of so much damage sent shivers down one's spine.

Compared to the Elemental wolves and knights, these giants were on a completely different level.

The soldiers of Hargrove City that managed to survive Leonel's initial barrage backed away in fear, many looking on in horror. However, many unlucky ones could do nothing as they watched the large feet of the giants stomp toward the ground.

The air pressure of their feet descending alone sent the warriors tumbling into the earth, pinned down and left without a choice but to watch on as their deaths approached from above.

Some weren't even so lucky. Pinned down with their faces against the ground, they could only cry in agony, trying their best to move. Their pitiful struggles only made their inevitable deaths worst. Sometimes hope only bred more pain.

By now, the elites of Hargrove City had reacted to the situation. Many had thought of turning back, but after seeing the response the Puppet Master had in store, they paused.

Was there even a need to act any longer? Even one of those monsters could wipe out The Capital on its own, let alone 12 of them.

Jerach's hammers had long since come to a stop. With his strength, it was a simple matter to lay eyes on Leonel from so far away. PANDA NOVEL

He didn't know when, but that indifferent back had begun haunting his dreams, so much so that he hadn't even needed to see Leonel's face to know it was him the moment he appeared.

Back then, when he dedicated his life to Leonel over their bet, he had every intention of following through. But, he soon learned that his resolve wasn't as strong as he thought it was.

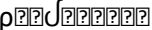
Yet, instead of taking his life or even cursing him, Leonel simply didn't speak another word to him. He had cut off their relationship so easily it was as though they had never met, as though they were strangers.

Jerach's nerves steeled, his fists clenching around his hammers.

They were enemies now. Leonel's death was in his best interest. In fact, the sooner Leonel died, the better.

Remembering the horrible pressure that emitted from Leonel that day Jilniya laid a hand on Aina, the reaper's skeleton hand seemed to grip at his throat.

However, none of that mattered. The legend that was Leonel would come to a close right here and now.

Leonel stood amidst the carnage, facing the pressure of 12 giants. His knees couldn't help but creak and whine beneath the pressure as though they had every intention of bending. 

However, his back remained ramrod, his cold gaze not even looking toward the 12 giants making their way toward him.

If others could see anything but his back, they'd be able to realize that Leonel had hardly spared the giants a glance from start to finish. From the very beginning, his gaze was locked onto the center of the City, every fiber of his senses latching onto the City Lord's mansion in the distance.

With every passing moment, the stomps of the giants grew more frequent and harsher. It felt as though the whole world might collapse at any moment.

But, all Leonel could hear was the thumping of his own heart, the flood of his own blood, the crackles of his own bones.

No, there was something else he could hear.

He could feel Aina's heart against his back. He could feel its erratic beating, its trepidation, its fear...

Leonel knew Aina well. He might not understand the smallest details of her quirks, but he understood her character.

What she feared wasn't the strength of the Puppet Master. His Aina wasn't a coward who needed to be carried into battle like this.

What she feared was the lack of the control, the loss of the pursuit of her destiny, the idea that someone else could snatch her autonomy away without even giving her a chance to fight back.

What she feared wasn't the Variant. What she feared was her own weakness.

Leonel had no doubt in his mind that if the Puppet Master allowed Aina to move at this moment, her fury would be no less than his, the carnage she wrought would be no less blazing, the blood she spilt no less unending.

However, right now, she couldn't move. That right had been snatched from her by a bastard who still didn't even dare to show its face.

Since that was the case, he would show her. With him around, even if she was too weak, even if she was on her last legs, even if she couldn't move. She would never have a thing to worry about.

BANG!

The 12 giants stepped into a range not even ten meters from Leonel. The force of their steps sent off a wall of wind in his direction, nearly tearing the clothes from his body.

But, he remained completely unmoving.

For the first time, Leonel looked away from the City Lord Mansion and locked onto the Giants, his cold gaze sweeping by them with a world of indifference.

“Piss off.”

The words shot through the silent battlefield, resonating with the hearts of all those who heard them.

At that moment, the ground the giants stepped upon suddenly warped and twisted.

Just as they were about to take another step forward, this time to reap Leonel’s life, something snapped.

The world trembled, space itself bending and squeezing into a self imposed eruption.

In the end, all that was left was a hole with edges so smooth one could see one’s own reflection.

Leonel stood amidst the carnage, his back still straight, his gaze still piercing.

Not a single giant was in sight.

Chapter 566

Silence.

There were many kinds of emotion silence could portray. There were comfortable silences, stunned silences, even murderous silences. But, when one was faced with a sight they never thought they would see in their entire lives, it was then that a silence that marked the soul for a lifetime was bred.

This was the kind of silence that grasped at one’s thoughts and laced one’s dreams, the kind of silence that refused to be forgotten and couldn’t be ignored.

And at the center of it all, there was a young man with fury lighting his eyes. To his back, there was the person he cared most for, the light of his path forward being lit by her emotions.

Leonel took a step forward. He crossed through the barrier of fluctuating space as though he couldn't feel the danger, raising up into the skies as though a deity looking down on Earth. For a moment, he seemed to overshadow even Ascension Palace, standing on a plane that superceded thought.

“GET THE HELL OUT HERE!”

Leonel's booming force shook The Capital, the earth beneath him quaking.

Buildings trembled and fell, collapsing in on their own structures as though autonomous beings shaking in fear.

Leonel's palm flipped over, a bow appearing. PANDA-NOVEL.COM

His back flexed, gaining a strength no weaker than treated metal.

He pulled back, crackling streaks of light and whistling winds surrounding him as his self crafted glove poured strength into his strike.

Three streaking arrows tore through the skies, sending a barrage toward the City Lord's mansion.

BANG! BANG! BANG!

The outer walls shattered and collapsed, the once majestic abode crumbling in on itself.

But, Leonel didn't seem intent on stopping. Universal Force swirled around him, fueling his every strike. Every twang of his bow string shattered the sound barrier, sending harsh winds whipping about.

It was a relentless assault from above, a completely one sided slaughter. Every guard tasked with protecting the mansion couldn't seem to do a thing. Even if they weren't directly pierced through by Leonel's strikes, the aftermath wasn't something they were equipped to handle. Many of them had only barely stepped into the Fourth Dimension, what chance did they stand against the Four Seasons Realm?

Leonel surged forward as though a one man army. It was hard to pick out just how bloodshot his gaze was beneath the violet hues of his irises, but it was there nonetheless. PANDA NOVEL

Aina's story replayed in his mind again and again. The torture she experienced was like a knife skinning the surface of his heart, peeling away layers of his humanity.

Just as Leonel was about to enter the range of the mansion, his senses locked onto an impending danger. Rage lit his heart to a new level. Even now, others still planned on interfering?

In that case, they could die too.

City Lord Hargrove tore a path back to the city the moment he saw the 12 giants being so easily controlled. However, even then, he didn't manage to make it back until his mansion was long since destroyed. Had he not made it in time, the Puppet Master really would have had to move. Once that happened, the situation on the battlefield would have completely flipped.

Even though this wouldn't be the end of it, after all, with the Puppet Master's strength, dealing with a singular Leonel shouldn't be a problem. Hargrove wasn't off put by Leonel being unaffected by the Puppet Master's spell in the slightest. With the way the Puppet Master manifested its ability this time, it relied on the blood of Eartheners, as long as one of Leonel's parents or even just a single person in his lineage wasn't of Earth, the hold the Puppet Master had on him would severely weaken. Though this might be a small surprise, it wasn't too much so with how many had been eyeing Earth all this time.

As far as Hargrove was concerned, this didn't matter. If the Puppet Master personally set sights on Leonel, he wouldn't be able to escape being controlled. The only reason he didn't want the Puppet Master to step out was because it would then be obvious who was causing the people of Earth to feel so weak. Even though the Puppet Master could easily regain control after going back, it would become more of a headache.

At this moment, they were still reliant on Earth's ignorance. The tide of battle might shift if the people of Earth knew to focus on the Puppet Master.

Simply put, this kid had to die. $\rho \int \sqrt{\rho \rho \rho \rho \rho \rho}$

Hargrove flipped a palm, causing a javelin to appear in his hands. His body bowed and his arm whipped forward.

BANG! BANG!

The air seemed to shatter as the weapon tore through it to reach Leonel.

The accuracy of Hargrove's throw was spine tingling. It felt that no matter how Leonel turned to dodge, it would still cause him to suffer.

This was none other than Hargrove's ability. He called it Stunning Accuracy. His every javelin throw would land in a spot so perfect it would feel impossible to deal with.

On this battlefield, he had already lost count to the number of lives he had reaped with his marksmanship. He had earned his right to be amongst the four strongest City Lords of Terrain.

However, what happened next made him feel as though all his pride was being trampled by a pair of cold, violet eyes.

Leonel grasped at the air, causing three arrows to appear. He nocked them simultaneously and fired them all at once.

Two arched oddly in the air while one flew mind numbingly straight.

The first collided with the tip of the javelin. It was so perfect that neither weapon deviated, clashing head on in the air.

However, after no more than a split moment, the arrow shattered, its strength far too weak. In fact, the collision was so brief that it seemed to have been instantly obliterated.

In the next moment, the remaining two curving arrows met the point of the javelin together, forming a tri point in the skies.

But soon, they too were instantly shattered.

One would think that Leonel would be flustered by this point, but he hardly reacted, his next arrow already nocked.

This time, he fired two in quick succession, but neither seemed to be as perfect as the first three, barely missing the tip of the javelin and gliding along its side.

However... it was these very strikes that sent a cold shiver down Hargrove's spine.

The path of the javelin deviated, gliding by Leonel's head.

Just when it seemed that Leonel would allow it to go, he retracted his hand from his bowstring, and grasped at the flying javelin, barely grabbing the end of its pole arm.

Leonel looked toward Hargrove from above, the piercing nature of his gaze seemingly bearing the latter's soul for all to see.

Bow in one hand, javelin in the other, his torso flexed, his right arm cocking back.

The energies of the world seemed to sing, Universal Force bearing down.

SHUUUUUUUUU! BANG! BANG! BANG!

Leonel flung the javelin downward, concentric circles of exploding air nearly ripping its body apart.

In those final moments, City Lord Hargrove could only think that this was the first time he was truly seeing Stunning Accuracy.

[Check comment section for explanation on sudden change of schedule]

Chapter 567

Just when Hargrove felt as though he had no choice but to accept his death, a streaking sword light tore its way through the skies, clashing against the descending javelin and forcing it off its path. It was clear that compared to Leonel who needed several arrows, this sword Master only needed one attack.

Even after he had been saved, Hargrove stood frozen in place, unbelieving of what had just happened.

In that instant, Leonel hadn't suppressed him with strength. Objectively, even with the help of Universal Force, Leonel's strength was at most approaching his, but it most definitely didn't surpass it.

It was as though he had stretched out his neck asking to die. For some reason, he acknowledged Leonel as a superior and felt that going against him was no different than blaspheming a God.

The realization made him burst out into a fit of cold sweats. Just who was this boy? And what was this aura that perpetually exuded from him?

Leonel shifted his gaze toward the source of the sword light. His patience was running as thin as it could. Every time he was close to accomplishing what needed to be done, someone else would interfere. And, every time it happened, his bloodthirst would reach deeper into a hellish abyss, digging toward a level of murderous intent that solidified beneath the night sky.

Anared raced across the battlefield as his sword zipped back to his side. A flicker of a frown graced his usually indifferent face. However, after a moment, his jaw steeled.

In a flash, he made it to Hargrove's side, looking up toward Leonel who was still in the skies.

In the distance, Noah's frown deepened.

"We need to help him." PANDA-NOVEL.COM

Nika, one of the few surviving members of Leonel and Noah's troops whispered, her voice almost coming out like a whimper.

Among the geniuses, her ability was the least conducive to battle, but that ironically left her somewhat better off. After all, she was used to battling from the weaker position.

But now, seeing Leonel alone in the distance and noticing that more were suddenly converging in that direction after acknowledging his threat, she still felt that they should risk it to do something.

Unfortunately, even as she said the words, she knew how foolish it all was.

The reason Terrain could continuously send reinforcements to Hargrove City was because the city was to the back of their charge. It was one thing to send people backward, but if they wanted to help Leonel, they would have to cross the defensive line of all these armies.

It was simply... impossible.

Plus, even if they could reach Leonel, could they even afford to do so? The battle had slowed to a crawl due to the commotion, but that didn't change the fact they were in a terrible situation. It didn't even make sense to think of helping Leonel when they couldn't even help themselves.

At that moment, many more were converging onto Hargrove City, peeling away from the frontlines and going to provide support.

Even if Anared and Hargrove had gone, there was still City Lord Black and Anared's father remaining. These two alone had already been giving The Capital more than they could handle. PANDA NOVEL

Still, at that moment, there were three familiar figures watching on from Keafir City. Compared to Hargrove City, their walls were the picture of peace without a single Eartherner within several kilometers.

Syl and Rie frowned when they saw their brother going off to battle Leonel. Compared to the past, this confrontation was much different. It was very likely that one of them would die.

Normally, they wouldn't think Leonel would stand a chance. But, the death of the 12 giants was seared into their minds, refusing to let go.

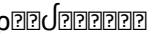
Among the three, the only one that remained indifferent was the Young Mistress, Anared's fiancée.

"There's no need to worry. There's no suspense to this battle." Heira spoke simply.

"Sister-in-law?"

"You're worried about the attack that took out the giants?"

"Yes... will brother be alright?" Syl clenched her teeth.

If she had to choose between Leonel and her brother, wasn't the choice obvious? Plus... 

Syl looked toward the girl strapped to Leonel's back...

Hadnt he made his choice very clear too?

"There's no need to worry about that attack, its very circumstantial and requires preparation. I didn't expect Leonel to be so skilled in Force Arts, but unless he has another earthquake-like event to rely on like in his initial attack, he won't be able to do as he pleases. And, even if he did, Anared should have long since seen what I've seen. He won't allow him what he needs to succeed."

It was only after hearing these words that Syl managed to calm, looking back toward the battlefield with her hands gripped against her chest.

Rie stood by her side, her gaze twinkling. But, no one knew what was going through her simple mind.

“If you leave now and agree to marry my sister as you were meant to, I can give you a path for survival.” Anared said plainly, the rhythm of his heart extraordinarily steady. “However, that woman on your back needs to die.”

Leonel didn't respond for a long while, looking down toward Anared with a gaze just as steady, an expression just as indifferent.

Eventually, his gaze shifted back toward Hargrove.

The City Lord still seemed shaken by Leonel's earlier display, the beating of his heartbeat having yet to slow.

“With me here, you won't be able to kill him. Why even waste your time?” Anared continued to speak, his habit of saying too many words for a supposedly cold person seeping through again.

“This is the third time.”

Leonel's voice carried a bone chilling cold to them. His aura was decidedly dark, carrying an oppression that was almost tangible in the air.

“The first time you insulted her, you were saved by the attendants of Brave City.

“The second time you insulted her, you were saved by the Savants of Earth.

“And this third time here... who do you think will be able to save you this time?”

CLANG! CLANG! CLANG! CLANG!

Before anyone could understand what Leonel meant, his bow had been swapped for a spear.

Even more quickly than that, a siege crossbow appeared, hanging in the air as though it had always been there.

Anared's expression changed but it was already too late. A siege crossbow appearing at near point-blank range was devastating.

He dove out of the way instinctively, his body rolling along the ground and completely losing his indifferent aura.

SHUUUUUUUU!

Anared scrambled along the ground, the shackles on his strength being loosened one after another. Without a choice, he released all of his trump cards, his aura climbing to a level even faintly surpassing the 12 Demigod level Giants.

However, the results were completely outside of his expectations.

The crossbow blasted through Hargrove's body.

For a moment, the City Lord looked down at himself, an incredulous expression plastered on his face. But, in the next moment, his body imploded, the force winds of the bolt tearing him apart from the inside out.

The last thing the City Lord saw was Leonel's flickering silhouette, ignoring both him and Anared as though they weren't even worthy of his attention.

He appeared above the City Lord Mansion, his aura billowing, his presence Towering.

“This is the third and final time I’ll say this...

“GET THE HELL OUT HERE!”

Leonel’s roar sent rippling waves through the skies, more than 50 siege crossbows appearing in the sky around him as he bombarded what remained of the once proud Mansion.

BANG! BANG! BANG! BANG! BANG! BANG!

Chapter 568

The moment Leonel’s barrage began, the atmosphere seemed to shift.

As though the earth had cracked open and demons from the depths of Hell were clawing their way forward, a pervading coldness hung in the air, latching onto their veins and making them feel as though their blood was rapidly freezing over.

A massive illusory hand of crimson shot up from the ground, tearing through the debris like it was nothing but scraps of paper.

The hand charged for Leonel, causing him to have to cross his spear across his body to block.

Leonel was sent flying, his body arching through the air for over a hundred meters.

His internal organs shook, his stomach caving in and his ribs cracking. Blood flew from his lips, his eyes bulging.

A violent fit of coughs rang out from him, but as though of it mattered, Leonel reoriented himself in the air, landing heavily on his feet so that Aina wouldn’t be harmed.

As he wiped the blood from his lips, the section of ground the mansion once stood upon split under the strength of the hand, making way for a man tainted by blood to make his presence known.

The Variant Invalid was completely nude, the only coverings of its body being the blood trickling down its skin. PANDA-NOVEL.COM

Its bare feet landed on the ground softly, but even that seemed to resonate with the hearts of all.

Their minds and bodies seemed to separate from one another. It was an out of body experience that made them feel as though they were third party viewers of their own lives, watching on from a bird's eye view.

But, rather than being awed by the realization, most felt their chests gripped by fear.

This man, dripping of blood... was a nightmare.

It was only then that the people of Earth suddenly found their minds shooting back into their bodies. A bout of dizziness took hold of them before they realized the sluggishness they had been experiencing completely vanished.

Jessica's expression changed.

"Your Highness, my body."

Noah, who had been completely focused on Leonel, frowned. But, when he turned back to see a sea of pleasantly surprised faces, he couldn't help but be taken aback. PANDA NOVEL

At first he was confused. But soon, thinking of something, his gaze lit up.

'Could it be...?'

All across Earth, Eartherners who had felt as though their bodies were out of their control suddenly began to exhibit their true strength.

Noah's gaze toward Leonel's back, even as the latter wiped blood from his mouth, turned several levels more complicated.

There were no fools on this battlefield. They all understood that this was no coincidence.

Even as the expressions of the people of Terrain turned ugly, the momentum of the people of Earth flipped on its head.

Noah took a deep breath, the second wind he was looking for suddenly filling up his chest. It didn't take him but a moment to realize that this wasn't just psychological. The healers and buffers of Earth had regained their strength, extending their range of effect by several fold.

Noah's jaw steeled. He had seen how powerful the strike that just landed on Leonel was. This was the first time in the battle that Leonel had suffered any sort of injury... this battle, they had to win it fast.
ρ??∫??????

Noah clenched his fists, suddenly roaring into the skies.

His chest expanded beneath his ability, his throat hardening under the same effects.

The blood of the warriors of Earth boiled. All this time they felt as though they could do nothing. But, gazing at that back in the distance, they felt as though the cold running through their veins had been replaced by burning lava.

“Charge!” Noah's voice boomed.

Within Hargrove City, Leonel wiped the last of the blood from his lips, spitting at the ground to clear his mouth.

He looked up, his cold gaze locking onto the Puppet Master. His spear's tip gently pressed against the ground, the chains jingling about as they dangled.

With a single swipe, more than half of his siege crossbows had been destroyed. Beyond that, it took just a single attack to injure him to this state despite the fact his body was forged of Tier 1 Fourth Dimensional metal.

But, as surprised as Leonel was, the Puppet Master was even more so. Though, considering its inhuman expressions, there was hardly a change.

The Puppet Master had expected to kill Leonel in a single strike. But, not only had it not, it felt as though it had just punched a steel fortress. In fact, its strength hadn't impacted Aina in the slightest.

Had Leonel been willing to allow the strike to dissipate naturally, he wouldn't have broken any bones in the slightest. But, he had no intention of allowing Aina to be harmed.

He would allow her to watch to the end as he buried this Puppet Master to the depths of hell it belonged in.

In the distance, Anared slowly picked himself up from the ground, a hint of humiliation coloring his features.

Even now, Leonel dared to garner himself more enemies when he was right here.

However, what he didn't know was that Leonel hadn't spoken those words to trick him. He had meant every last syllable. This time, he shouldn't dream of escaping.

Leonel's free hand flipped, causing an Urbe Ore to appear in his hand. Just as quickly as it did, it crumbled to dust, the Essence being absorbed into his body.

Leonel's cracked ribs mended in the blink of an eye, his body even growing a tick more powerful.

He let the ash fall between his fingers, watching as they were swept up into the wind.

CLANG! CLANG! CLANG! CLANG!

The tip of Leonel's spear, which had just barely graced the ground, suddenly sank into it. As though a hot knife through butter, the lightest touch left a scorching mark across the ground.

A dense Domain of black chains surged to life around him, its oppressive might reaching palpable levels.

Leonel gazed at the Puppet Master as though trying to sear its image into his mind.

“Five minutes.” Leonel said plainly. But, it was clear that he wasn't speaking to either one of Anared or the Puppet Master. “Five minutes and I'll wipe him from existence.”

Aina's cheek rested on Leonel's back and shoulder.. Hearing such words, she felt as though the erratic beating of her heart was finally slowing.

Chapter 569

The words stunned Anared. However, before he could even think of reacting, Leonel had shot forward, his spear ringing.

The Puppet Master felt as though its dignity was being tarnished. Or, rather, it had enough understanding of human nature to understand that this was how it should be feeling. But , whether it experienced emotion in this way or not was another matter entirely.

What it did feel, though, was that Leonel was wholly irrational. Even if its ability was set aside, just its strength of Force alone was enough to squash Leonel into a meat paste. The difference between them was impossibly vast.

Though it was surprised that Leonel had survived its initial strike, it was only that. That hit, even if it was being generous, was only casual. Plus, it had to make sure not to use too much strength to not end up killing Aina as well.

At this point, all the Puppet Master wanted to do was end things as quickly as possible. It had no intention of allowing this to continue. It could already sense that the tide of the battlefield was changing.

The headpiece the Puppet Master had stolen from Aina suddenly began to glow, strong waves of mental strength gathering.

The feeling was intoxicating, as though the whole world was at its fingertips. The Puppet Master couldn't help but close its eyes.

When Anared gathered himself, and saw Leonel's actions, he couldn't help but be baffled.

'Fool.'PANDA-NOVEL.COM

Leonel appeared just two meters from the Puppet Master, his spear shooting forward like an obsidian flood dragon. Its tip quivered ever so slightly, overloaded by Leonel's strength.

At that moment, the Puppet Master's eyes snapped open, the brunt of its mental prowess bearing down on Leonel.

"It's over." Heira said plainly.

Even from here, she could feel the fearsomeness of the Variant Invalid. To have an ability that could cover an entire world was the marker of a deity amongst men. To try and face such an ability without any protection to speak of was the epitome of foolishness.

The Puppet Master's gaze locked onto Leonel. It didn't even try to dodge the spear. In its mind, the spear would come to a stop at its own volition soon enough.

Since Leonel had such a sturdy body, it didn't mind taking him in as a puppet. Leonel would definitely be useful in this regard.

The priority now, though, was to regain control of the Eartheners. It had already exposed itself once, it couldn't allow such information to leak out.

If word that Terrain was working with an Invalid was released, the powerhouses of other worlds would finally have an excuse to act and this would no longer be a simple matter to deal with. The only good news was that Variant Invalids were so rare that not many could claim to have been in the presence of one. Without time to properly inspect it, the Puppet Master probably looked no different from a human powerhouse right now. PANDA NOVEL

Still, the sooner it returned to its hiding spot, the better.

'This should be over now, righ--?'

BANG!

The Puppet Master suddenly felt its chest caving in. A blade pierced through it about three inches, only to be stopped by the strength of its bones. But, it felt as though it had been hit by a train, its body bending into the shape of a U as it was sent flying backward.

The Puppet Master flew through the air in silence, its gaze flickering with astonishment.

What had just happened?

Anared and Heira went stiff, their eyes widening.

Leonel pounced after the Puppet Master, his face still the picture of rage. p??J??????

His spear descended from the skies, sending the flying Puppet Master careening into the ground below.

The impact was so harsh that a tsunami of earth spread outward with it as the center, collapsing buildings and homes in every direction.

Leonel dove down again, the fire in his gaze only growing with each strike. Despite the fact the sturdiness of the Puppet Master's body was enough to cause despair in anyone else, Leonel didn't seem to notice.

His spear whipped about the skies, the force of his strikes so great that it bowed beneath the pressure, curving and snapping back to attention like bamboo.

The Puppet Master's body became like a small sail boat amidst a raging tide, facing up against Leonel's fury as though he couldn't muster up any resistance.

Every time Leonel cut into the Puppet Master's body, he would remember another line of Aina's story. He was almost thankful that the Puppet Master's body was so sturdy. He didn't want it to die so fast. He wanted it to feel every ounce of pain and despair she had. He wanted it to grasp at hope where there was none, to sit on the edge of despair knowing that the only path forward was death.

The Flames of the world seemed to react to Leonel's rage. His affinity was so high that it poured in of its own free will.

In that moment, even a Three Star Fire Magus didn't have a chance at casting a single spell. All the flaming rage of the world seemed to kneel before Leonel.

Leonel roared, his hair being lit in a fiery blaze. If it wasn't for his astounding control, even Aina would have been burnt to a crisp.

PCHU!

Leonel's raised spear suddenly came to a grinding halt.

Amid all the scorching heat around him, he suddenly felt an ice cold chill sink into his body, piercing through his nerves and latching onto his mind, refusing to let go.

The Puppet Master laid on the ground amidst a pile of rubble, barely inclined upward. In fact, even its head was nowhere to be seen, covered by several slabs of rock.

However, its hand had still shot upward, piercing through Leonel's stomach.

Blood dripped down the Puppet Master's hand and arm as it slowly pushed itself up, its face shoving the heavy slabs away.

Even after its face was exposed, it didn't stand up immediately, looking toward Leonel who still had his spear raised and then at its hand's place within the latter's body.

It pulled its hand out, a geyser of hot blood following its motion.

A tinge of red colored the Variant Invalids gaze as though it had only now finally woken up.

It stood. Standing on the rubble, its body towered over Leonel, a hint of excitement on its face as it sniffed at the blood coating its hand.

It raised its head to the sky, a manic laughter shaking the night sky.

Its foot shot up, kicking Leonel away.

As though a bolt out of a gun, Leonel's body shattered the sound barrier, shooting backward like a comet.

The Variant Invalids laughter continued to ring, its tongue running across its bloodied arm.

“MORE!”

He howled into the sky, shooting after Leonel.

In the blink of an eye, he appeared above the streaking Leonel, his foot blasting downward.

BOOM!

A massive crater formed, waves of earth and clouds of dust rolling in all directions.

Chapter 570

Blood flew from Leonel's lips like a jet. However, he still spun before he hit the ground, crashing into the earth face first.

He slammed his fists downward, still keeping a tight grip on his spear as he tried to propel himself upward.

But, he still wasn't quick enough.

The air was kicked out of Leonel once again, the left side of his rib caving in as a foot found its way to his side.

He shot across the skies once again, slamming through several building.

Any human in Leonel's position would have long since been smashed into meat paste. The strength of the Puppet Master was simply beyond anything Earth had seen to this point.

Every step of evolution for an Invalid might have been several times more difficult than their human counterparts, but the result was a monster so powerful it held no weaknesses.

The Puppet Master might have had an ability that gave it great mental strength, but its body and Force usage was no less powerful. Even after thing all out, Leonel only barely managed to cause the Variant to suffer a few nicks and scratches. The truth was simply devastating.

Leonel coughed out another mouthful of blood. His bare chest was completely covered by his own blood, even more leaking out from the wound in his stomach. PANDA-NOVEL.COM

“What rich blood! So warm! So rich! So splendid!”

The taste of Leonel made the Variant feel as though it was walking on a cloud. It was like a strong wine, burning its throat and warming its belly. Its body seemed to be lit on fire, but it had never felt better.

Just a few mouthfuls already had it feeling like it could break into the Fifth Dimension at any time. It hadn't ever experienced such a feeling before, it had never felt that a breakthrough would be so easy either.

It had thought that it had tasted the peak of delicacies after sampling Aina's blood. But, it had never been so wrong before.

Now it wanted more. If Leonel's blood was so good, what about his flesh? The Puppet Master suddenly began to fantasize about gnawing on Leonel's tendons, stirring his bone marrow into a soup, spreading his brain matter onto a plate and using it as a dip for his fingers.

The more it thought about it, the greater the fire in its belly became, an excitement flushing its face completely red.

SHUUU!

The siege crossbows responded to Leonel's command. Of the original more than 50, not more than 10 remained. But, Leonel still used his Chain Domain to aim them, all firing for the Puppet Master's vital points. [PANDA NOVEL](http://PANDA-NOVEL)

The Puppet Master looked up, suddenly finding several bolts flying toward it.

But, it only stretched out a hand, an illusory arm of crimson energy forming once again, swatting at the air.

In the blink of an eye, the siege bolts that could pierce through the walls of even the most fortified cities were smacked away as though annoying flies.

Their flight trajectories were altered, whizzing and whistling through the night skies until they tore through what remained standing of Hargrove City's buildings.

Leonel coughed again, another mouthful of blood flying from him.

He weakly stood, his gaze somewhat vacant. He stretched out his spear before him, the rattling of his Chain Domain still ringing true.

CLANG! CLANG! CLANG! CLANG! CLANG!

In the distance, the happiness of the Eartherner army had long since faded into an almost rabid desire for success. They fought harder and faster, almost forgetting that they had already been fighting for a day. ρ??∪??????

Not many knew that Leonel was a Prince. After weaseling his way out of the ceremony he was supposed to receive for his achievements, what should have been his debut became hushed chatter amongst the nobles.

But, at this point, it didn't matter.

In the mind of all those who laid eyes on that back of his from the distance, all they saw was a young man fighting with his life on the line for their sake.

If Leonel's actions had really only been about getting revenge for Aina, is this the approach he would have chosen? At the very least, shouldn't he have dealt with Anared first so there wasn't a constant looming threat to his back?

It was obvious that despite his words, he had risked it all to bring the Invalid out sooner than it would have otherwise. Just those few precious moments saved hundreds more from succumbing to their fates.

Such a hero couldn't be left to die alone.

Noah clenched his jaw, the youths to his back fighting with more fervor than they ever had before.

They had to break through enemy lines. They had to reach Hargrove City.

Leonel gripped his spear, blood sliding between his fingers and coating its black body.

The drizzle of crimson snaked through the chains, dropping to the ground in small droplets.

Universal Force shook Leonel's surroundings, his vacant eyes seemingly gazing at empty space.

The Puppet Master's flushed excitement only grew.

Its feet stamped hard on the ground, crossing the final distance between the two in just a few breaths.

It rose a hand high up, clawing down toward Leonel. This single strike would not only take a large portion of Leonel's face away, but it would also hook into his collarbone, ripping the front of his body away from the back.

It was the kind of vicious strike that reaped lives with overwhelming strength.

But... Leonel sidestepped it, the flat of the Puppet Master's nails just barely grazing the tip of his nose as he struck out with his spear.

The Puppet Master reacted quickly, parrying Leonel's pierce with the back of its hand and reaching the other toward Leonel's throat.

With a flicker, a black chain darted out from Leonel's Chain Domain, rebounding against the Puppet Master's claw and giving Leonel time to lean his head to the side and sweep his spear for the Puppet Master's waist.

A scorching heat followed Leonel's sweeping motion.

The Puppet Master frowned, not understanding the changes going on before it. But, its reaction was swift.

Instead of dodging, it took a step forward.

In this range, the blade of Leonel's spear missed it as its polearm crashed into the Puppet Master's hip.

The strike should have been enough to shatter bones and splinter flesh. But, the Variant was completely unmoved, booming a knee directly into Leonel's open wound.

Leonel coughed up another mouthful of blood, his body curling as it flew through the air once again.

Even though Leonel had lost the quick exchange, the Puppet Master's head tilted, its eyes, which had once been tainted with hunger and blood lust dimming.

It was certain that it had wanted to devour Leonel right here and now. So, why did it kick him away again?

