

Descent 571

Chapter 571

Leonel flew backward at an astonishing pace, but he simply seemed to glide through the air at the end, sliding across the ground on his own two feet when he made contact with the earth.

His eyes still vacant, Leonel looked down at the hole in his stomach. It hadn't gone all the way through and with the sturdiness of his physique, he could flex and keep his inner organs from spilling out. In fact, after perfecting his Metal Body foundation, his vitality had reached inhuman levels. Even if the wound had gone all the way through him, he would likely still be able to fight.

His mind went through several indifferent calculations before a spark lit his free hand. He pinched at his wound, searing it closed as though he was welding metal rather than his own body.

Without looking up, Leonel sidestepped, illusory golden wings seemingly forming to his back.

BANG!

The Puppet Master landed to his side, its expression flickering between thirst and rationality. Eventually, thirst won out and it surged toward Leonel again.

A flurry of exchanges erupted between the two, the Puppet Master sending out four or five strikes for Leonel's every one. But, as though he was playing a game of chess, Leonel's dodging would always put him in the perfect position to counter come the fifth strike.

Unfortunately, the moment he did attack, he would be sent flying once again, the wounds on his body accumulating at an alarming speed.

Leonel picked himself up from the ground again, searing a wound on his shoulder closed.

His spear spun in his hand, suddenly swinging backward.

What once were his vacant eyes lit with fury once again.pANDA-N0VEL.COM

The Puppet Master swatted Leonel's spear aside, causing a violent, rebounding upsurge to travel up the latter's arm. It felt as though his arm might shatter at that very moment, but he stood his ground, his hips fighting against the momentum and completing his turn to face the Puppet Master.

Reacting quickly, the Puppet Master sent a palm strike at Leonel's chest. But, Leonel managed to cross his left arm across it first.

The horrible sound of a bone splintering in two sounded as Leonel's forearm bent beneath the pressure.

However, as though he didn't notice what happened, Leonel raised his right arm into the air, striking down with his spear with all the strength he could muster.

Unfortunately, a kick of the Puppet Master found him before he could even make it half way. The difference between their speed of attack was simply too drastic.

Oddly enough, it felt like Leonel's combat experience was greater. But, in the larger scheme, even that didn't matter.

As though watching the replaying of the same movie, Leonel was sent flying again. His body twisting in the air to protect Aina.

"Interesting, interesting. I believe I understand now. Your ability must be mental as well... it's no wonder you protected yourself from me... well, no. Even then, its still quite baffling. I can only say that the people of Earth have more talent than even I previously guessed..."

The blood lust within the Puppet Master's eyes had long since faded. After several exchanges, it felt as though it was tightening a noose around its own neck. Battling with Leonel was like sinking into a quagmire, your every step only brought you deeper into his world.

It was quite ironic. The Puppet Master had lived in the Mountain Sands Range for most of its life, a place known for this very ability. But, it still felt like Leonel was far more deserving of such a title. PANDA NOVEL

“But it doesn’t matter much. You’re too weak. Why you chose to come here is beyond me. And, even if you had the strength to face me...”

The Puppet Master’s foot stomped down, its body accelerating to a break neck pace. Its body alone seemed to arch like a bow and crack like a whip, streaking through the broken rubble like a comet.

The speed the Puppet Master touched upon now seemed to be a completely different level to before, as though it was simply toying with Leonel previously.

In a blink, it appeared to Leonel’s back, a sinister light in its eyes.

“... Wouldn’t i just need to target my Queen?”

Another flicker of rage crept by Leonel’s once vacant gaze.

Helplessly, he could only spin his body once more. But, having lost the initiative, it only took two exchanges for him to be sent flying once again.

However, seemingly intent on not giving Leonel any room to breathe, the Puppet Master accelerated again, appearing to Leonel’s back once more.

As though bouncing him around an illusory sphere, the Puppet Master hit Leonel back and forth between itself, every strike causing the red light of its eyes to glow fiercer.

The sight of Leonel being beaten and battered seemed to reverberate through the hearts of the Eartheners. Their gazes glazed over with rage, causing them to charge with greater fervor, but the distance was simply too great. PANDA NOVEL

‘Dammit, do something!’

Noah roared in his mind. For the first time, he doubted his grandfather. Why was it that even now he refused to act?

Noah had always known that his grandfather cared little for his life. But, he had always accepted this.

As his grandfather had said back then... his father wasn't as good as Leonel's mother... his mother couldn't even look up to Leonel's father... and he wasn't as good as Leonel...

At least that had its own explanation... It was logical. He simply wasn't worthy enough.

But then what reason was there to not help Leonel? Was he still not good enough?

“Why?!”

Noah's furious roar rang through the battlefield, his body expanding to over five meters tall.

His skin shimmered like diamond, his blue blade swinging about madly.

BANG!

The Puppet Master landed a heel from above, practically ignoring the single arm defense of Leonel's spear and sending him spiraling toward the ground.

BANG!

Leonel foolishly landed on his feet. A sharp pain traveled up his legs, almost shattering his knees.

His body reflexively knelt, his knees heavily slamming against the ground.

A massive crater was dug out around him, his right fist landing before him to stabilize his body as his left arm hung limply. At that moment, he could barely hold his spear within his palm.

A violent cough took what seemed like another liter of blood from his body, his hair hanging heavily before his face, completely hiding his expression.

The Puppet Master descended from the air, landing no more than ten meters from Leonel. Considering his speed, such a gap was no more than the blink of an eye.

By all measures, Leonel was at the end of his rope.

Heira stood atop the Keafir City walls, indifferently looking down. This time, she didn't speak. There was no need to say any words. The result was clear.

'In this world, having too much before you have the strength to protect it is also a sin.'

Anared had similar thoughts, having long since left the region of the battle to avoid the Puppet Master's rampage.

A heavy atmosphere hung in the air as Leonel continued to look at the ground.

By now, he couldn't afford to use his Dreamscape Battle Sense any longer without wringing himself dry, his body was on its last legs, seemingly ready to collapse at any moment, and he could hardly even push himself up to stand.

Yet even now, there wasn't even the slightest speck of dust on Aina's body, let alone an injury.

"I think that's about enough. I hear tenderized meat is exceptional and you are most definitely ready..."

The Puppet Master licked its lips, a slight intoxication on its face.

“4 minutes and 58 seconds.”

The Puppet Master frowned.

“4 minutes and 59 seconds.”

The Puppet Master’s tongue paused, a hint of Leonel’s blood sliding down its chin.

Leonel raised his head up, a cold indifference that Heira and Anared would never forget gripping their souls.

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The Puppet Master froze and looked into the skies. But, by the time it wanted to move, it was already too late.

Its thoughts were maybe just as confusing as the situation itself.

“... A city?”

Before the stunned gazes of those watching on, the ground around Leonel and the Puppet Master glowed for just a moment.

A strong seal of space locked down the region, rendering the Puppet Master completely immobile. It could only stand in place, its eyes fixed onto the skies.

A city appeared, but it didn’t fall. It hovered in the skies as though it too was locked in space.

The spatial fluctuations of the two cities, one above and one below, pushed and pulled against one another as though they were magnets, sealing an entire expanse of tens of kilometers.

Leonel coughed, his body moving with incomparable slowness. However, the fact he could move at all made Anared and the Puppet Master's eyes widen. PANDA-NOVEL.COM

No matter how hard they pushed and pulled, they couldn't move a single inch. This situation made Vice's ability seem like nothing more than child's play.

As though this alone wasn't bad enough, those outside this two cities couldn't seem to approach either. It was like a massive barrier of space had completely locked the region down. Even Anared, who stood on the city walls, just a few meters from freedom, couldn't seem to cross the final steps.

However, it was only after one looked at Leonel that they realized something was off.

On Leonel's chest, a crude breast plate had appeared. In fact, one would be hard pressed to call it a breast plate at all.

It was incredibly thin and was filled with perforations as though it was chain mail rather than a true breast plate.

If one looked even closer, it would be possible to see that these perforations were actually intricate and delicate patterns. If it had to be described, it was like someone cut out all the veins of the human body and displayed it in its usual three dimensional structure.

If other Force Crafters had been there, they would have been shocked and awed by the spectacle. If it wasn't for the blood and grime ruining the image, this would have maybe been the most beautiful Craft they had ever laid their eyes upon. PANDA NOVEL

Leonel pushed himself up to stand, his body quite weak. He even swayed, seemingly about to fall over any time now. From afar, he truly seemed to have reached the very end of his limits. Yet, he continued to walk, his spear scraping along the ground.

The grating sound of metal played through the silent city. In fact, the entire battlefield had come to a grinding halt, everyone's gaze completely focused on the two cities.

However, Leonel didn't seem to notice.

He made his way to the Puppet Master, his visage expressionless. Even seeing his own blood dripping from the latter's lips, he didn't even have the slightest reaction.

His right arm flexed, his spear beginning to slowly draw runes into the ground around the Puppet Master.

The Puppet Master struggled, its veins bulging along its neck. But, nothing it tried to do seemed to work.

Even though there was no effect on its ability at the moment... what use did that have against Leonel?
p??∫???????

The runes completed and the Forcd Art lit up.

A scorching flame suddenly erupted around the Puppet Master.

The Variant wanted to scream, feeling its body being slowly cooked from the outside, in.

But, as though he couldn't see a thing, the tip of Leonel's spear lit up with another flame, lightly piercing into the Variant's body.

His movements were slow and deliberate, the muffled cries of the Variant freezing over the hearts of those who watched on.

Black smoke began to emit from Leonel's lips as though his inner organs were being charred. But, once again, he didn't seem to notice as he pressed into the Invalid's body with yet another scarlet flame.

From start to finish, Leonel didn't speak a single word. Even when the Variant Invalid had been burnt to ash, leaving nothing but a pile of black soot, he remained completely indifferent as though these matters had nothing to do with him.

Motes of light suddenly appeared above the pile of ash. They were so large that they far outstripped even Leonel's own body.

After a moment, they swept into him, giving the young man who seemed to stand at the center of the world an even more dazzling radiance.

With a flip of his palm, Leonel's spear vanished, a surfboard appearing to his feet before he slowly rose into the air.

With movements as nimble as he could muster with just a single arm, he brought Aina down from his back, a light smile gracing his features.

Aina buried her head into his chest. She had so many words she wanted to say, but none of them seemed to want to make themselves known. She simply held onto him with all her might, her small hands clawing at his exposed back.

Leonel used his one good remaining arm to pat her on the head, his heart filled with warmth and affection.

Leonel controlled his jet black surfboard, gliding to the edge of the City. Whether by accident, or intentional, he slowly passed over Anared's head.

Even now, the Heir couldn't move. Leonel could see the look of the Keafir family City Lord in the distance, a gaze that could very well kill. He could see the fear and horror coloring the gazes of those three women who stood upon the Keafir family city walls as well. However, a single cursory glance was all he spared them.

He looked down at Aina who was still buried in his chest before speaking to Anared who was straining to look up at him from below.

“There are some words that should never be spoken. Because no matter what, you'll have to pay the consequences for them.”

Heira's expression changed. Leonel's words were soft, but everyone seemed to hear them, just like everyone had heard Anared speak of killing Aina.

"Leonel!" Heira's words practically came out like a screech. "Be very careful with your next actions, there are some people you can't afford to provoke!"

Leonel continued to stroke Aina's hair as though he couldn't hear the shrill cries.

"You all like dropping cities, right?" Leonel replied softly.

Leonel glided out of the range of the two cities, standing high in the skies as he towered over the masses.

Under the horrified gazes of the people of Terrain, the floating city began to descend, accelerating until the wind pressure alone seemed capable of ripping them apart.

Anared watched as the city fell upon his head, his indifferent expression finally giving way to despair in his final moments.

BANG!

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Anared's death was like a sledgehammer to Heira's mind. Even after the city fell, an irrational part of her wanted to believe that it was still possible for him to be there, still possible for him to appear before her just fine.

It couldn't be said that the two were a normal couple by any means. Anared was so focused on becoming worthy that he hardly spent any time with her and Heira was too prideful to ask for more of his time.

But, at the end of the day, they were fiance and fiancée, two people tied to one day be husband and wife.

For Anared, it might have been an uphill battle to claim her hand. But, he had already been so close to the peak, so close to gazing at the horizon from the other side of the mountain.

But reality was cruel.

Just when he was nearly there, just when Earth was about to fall, just when he had almost earned the right to call her his wife... Leonel appeared.

He stood indifferently in the skies, his entire focus ironically on a woman of his own. He hadn't even spared a thought for Heira's threat.

At that moment, Heira's roar suddenly sounded through the battlefield. It carried a pain that cut deep, the kind of wounded cry that could only appear from a beast wrestling its death throes. PANDA-NOVEL.COM

However, in maybe the greatest irony, even that was drowned out by what happened next.

The city gates of White City were suddenly slammed opened, their loud BANG reverberating through the battlefield.

"Knights of Camelot! CHARGE!"

King Arthur's voice resounded, Excalibur pointing to the skies as he urged his white steed forward.

Syl and Rie collapsed to their knees, tears falling like an endless rain down their cheeks. They stared toward where their brother had been just a moment ago, completely shell shocked.

To Leonel, Anared was an annoyance that didn't know his place, a man who threatened the life of his Aina more than once.

However, to these women, he was a protective brother and husband. He was a man who confronted Leonel because he believed he had done his sister wrong. Even in his final moment, his thoughts of killing Aina were only to seek revenge for Rie's true mother. PANDA NOVEL

But this was the way of the world. Two opposing viewpoints could make an enemy of two innocents. And for Leonel, with how much he cared for Aina, he simply couldn't bother to listen to Anared's reasoning. Anyone who wanted to harm a hair on her head... deserved to die!

Heira glared hateful toward Leonel in the sky. Strong bursts of energy seemed to swirl around her, but something even stronger restricted her body.

She bit down on her lips so hard blood dripped down from her fair chin, staining her once white dress with droplets of crimson.

Before Leonel could even think of turning his blade toward her, she crushed a bracelet on her wrist, vanishing.

Leonel finally sent a glance in that direction, his brow not even furrowing.

If she wanted to target him, that was fine. It was just that she should know he didn't like to lose.

if she wanted to target Aina, however... he wouldn't mind sending her to the same place her fiance had gone. ρ???(???)

Leonel gazed toward the Palace and then the battlefield below before aiming his surfboard toward the distance. He had done enough. Now, he just wanted to check on his friends.

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The war for Earth completely flipped on its head. It was the kind of sudden change one read about in fairy tales. But, unlike such tales, the deaths were very much real.

Some died without graves, their families having long since left them and their names forgotten to history.

Some died valiant deaths, protecting what they cherished to their backs and leaving the earth with heads held high.

Many of these were people even Leonel had come to know. As astounding as his victory was, the deaths of those like Roaring Black Lion and Flowing Wind couldn't be reversed. They would rest for all of eternity.

...

A certain figure rushed over the ocean waters, his breathing coming out in huffs and puffs. Every heave he took seemed to come with another drizzle of blood pouring out from yet another hole in his body.

Fear colored the face of this figure, whatever arrogance he had once had vanishing with the wind. All he could think of was running for his life.

Despite the fact that there was nothing over his shoulder, he kept looking, panic evident in his eyes. Whatever had caused him to feel such fear had clearly left a shadow over his heart that wouldn't be disappearing anytime soon.

If Leonel or Aina had been there at this very moment, they would have easily recognized this young man as Raynred, the Young Heir to one of Terrain's Powers. As for why and how he had ended up in such a state, maybe only those on the ocean battlefield could have given the answer to that.

"Land!"

Raynred's eyes lit up.

All this time running across the ocean's surface, he had felt as though he was rushing across pins and needles instead.

The ocean was so wide and expansive, but there wasn't a single place to hide. At least on real ground, there would be forests and caves to make use of. All he knew was that he had to get away from that monster.

Raynred had no idea the situation on the battlefield had changed. The truth was that he had run away long before Leonel forced the Puppet Master out of its hiding spot.

'... I'm not running... right, I'm just allocating my services to another battlefield... That's right...'

Raynred shuddered when he thought of the deaths of Jilniya and Wilson who had come to help him.

And then there was that damned old man. He was on his last legs but he actually managed to stop his father from splitting away to help him.

Raynred grit his teeth.

They were just delaying the inevitable in his eyes. A single person couldn't possibly change the tide of this war. Earth was finished!

Finally stepping on land, Raynred's sharp senses grasped onto the sounds of battle from tens of kilometers away.

Checking his surroundings, Raynred quickly climbed up the side of a dilapidated building to lay eyes on a massive domed fortress in the distance.

A sinister glow lit his eye.

That was right.... wasn't this that Royal Blue Fort that Pisces where spoke of?

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Leonel and Aina soared through the skies. Though it would have been faster if the surfboard entered its shuttle mode, Leonel decided against it.

For one, the cockpit was too small for two people and he didn't feel alright leaving Aina alone at this moment. And, secondly, even though they might be able to squeeze in with how small Aina was, he wasn't confident in driving that monstrosity with just a single arm.

With its speed, even a half degree of deviation would fling them off course by tens of miles.

So, Leonel sat cross legged on the surfboard, gliding through the air with Aina balled up in his lap. Even now, she hadn't said a single word.

Leonel gripped an Urbe Ore in his good remaining hand, greedily absorbing its Essence.

The good news about his Metal Body was that he could heal himself even more effectively now just by absorbing the Essence of metals.

Since the foundation of his body had been built upon Urbe Ore according to his father's instructions, for now, only Urbe Essence had this healing effect on him. But now that he could branch out, whatever metals he used to build himself up from now on would expand his repertoire of healing Ores.

It had to be remembered that the most powerful ability of Metal Body wasn't in the astounding defense it provided to the user, but rather in the boost to affinity.

Members of the Morales Clan were able to absorb various Ores and fuse them with their very being. Essentially, if Leonel really wanted a Wind Affinity, he only needed to absorb enough Wind Elemental Ores.

Usually, humans could only accomplish this feat with a very select number of extraordinarily rare Ores, but Leonel and those with his Lineage Factor didn't have this restriction.PANDA-NOVEL.COM

In fact, as mentioned previously, [Dimensional Cleanse] spoke of one such Vein Type Ore to use in strengthening Nodes and Nodal Passageways. But, Leonel could take his own path in this regard. In fact, his current Nodal System was far beyond the strength of what was theoretically mentioned in [Dimensional Cleanse].

Of course, there were still weaknesses to this ability. For example, if Leonel only absorbed Fourth Dimensional Wind Elemental Ores, his abilities would be capped at that level. In addition, he couldn't just skip levels and absorb a Ninth Dimensional Ore unless he wanted to die an early death.

If he wanted to build an affinity, he had to slowly and steadily absorb Essence of increasing rarity and strength.

This, however, was where the Morales Clan Divine Armor ability came into play...

Unlike with Metal Body where one had to steadily build a foundation, the Divine Armor didn't need such forward thought. Leonel could build an armor of darkness now and just as easily build one of light at another time. The only restriction was in his bodily strength.

It was these two abilities in tandem that made the Morales Clan so powerful.

Leonel had already settled on his first Divine Armor. It would be centered around his Spatial Type Domain Ore. As for the forward progress of his Metal Body, Leonel had no intention of doing something as silly as building a new affinity for himself.

According to his father, the best use of Metal Body wasn't in creating new affinities, but rather in leaning into the ones you already had.

Leonel suddenly coughed lightly, wisps of black smoke coming out from his lips again. PANDA NOVEL

Aina's eyes reddened at this sight, her lips moving with a sound beneath her mask.

Eventually, she finally squeezed out a word.

“... Idiot...”

Leonel was stunned for a moment before he began to laugh uproariously. Unfortunately, that laughter soon followed with coughing so harsh it seemed like he might cough out a lung at any moment.

“A very cool idiot though, right?”

Leonel grinned, his usually white teeth covered in soot. Considering that such blackness could only come from his charred inner organs, the sight alone was enough to send a shiver down anyone’s spine.

“... A little.” Aina finally whispered.

Leonel smiled so hard it seemed his skin might splinter.

“Still... don’t do it again.” p??J??????

“Aiya, I can’t even show off a little bit without getting reprimanded? Is this what that old man called married life?”

Aina blushed profusely, but it was all hidden beneath her mask before rolling her eyes.

“Where’s my husband, exactly? I can’t seem to find him anywhere.”

“Agh... My heart...”

Leonel grabbed at his chest. This blow, it was far more fatal than anything the Puppet Master landed.

Aina giggled.

At some unknown time, her mask slipped off and she planted a kiss on Leonel’s cheek.

Seeing it come off, one could finally lay eyes on her face. Though they had long since dried, one could still see the salty streaks her tears had left behind.

She hadn't said a word during Leonel's battle, but that didn't mean it hadn't felt like every blow that landed on him had instead landed on herself.

As much as she wanted to, she couldn't move. All she could do was watch.

Maybe that was the Puppet Master's way of playing a sick joke. Even in those final moments, he never released his control over her.

Leonel's pain faded into another smile. But, when he wanted to dive in for more, Aina dodged, causing his attempts to also land on her cheek.

"We're in public. Have some propriety." Aina reprimanded.

Leonel coughed on his own breath, looking down at the expanse of empty land beneath them. When had his Aina become so cruel?

Aina's laughter filled his ears. She snuggled into his arms, a content smile on her face.

However, before she could get comfortable, she realized that there were some uncomfortable bumps on what should have been Leonel's bare chest.

She looked, only to find that odd breast plate still there.

"What is this?" She couldn't help but ask.

“Oh, this?” Leonel snapped out of his second bout of hurt. “This is the skeleton for my Divine Armor. It’s actually pretty fragile, I probably should have put it away, but it was so comfortable I almost forgot it was there.”

Aina raised an eyebrow. What about that looked comfortable?

Leonel smiled meaningfully. If it wasn’t for this armor, he would have never locked space like that using the pull and repulsion of two teleportation arrays. If he didn’t have it, he would have been just as helpless to move.

That was just one of the weaknesses of his plan. The second weakness was the five minutes it took to implement. If White City didn’t appear in the perfect location, the spatial lock would have never come into effect.

The calculations were so complex that even for Leonel, they took five minutes to accomplish and he had to experience Hargrove City personally.

Well, technically it took closer to seven minutes, but he had fought those giants first.

“I’ll show you the finished product in a few weeks.” Leonel said, his eyes lighting up with anticipation.

Just as Aina wanted to respond, her head snapped toward the distance.

Leonel’s gaze narrowed, the sound of battle drifting to his ears.

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“Fuck! Young Miss Swan, how can your Swan City be this useless?! You’ve made no progress at all?!”

Raynred appeared on the battlefield, cackling. He didn’t have a flying treasure like Leonel, nor did he have any ability to do so on his own, so he could only stand atop one of the Province’s many collapsed buildings, using laughter to push away the very fear he had been feeling for so long.

He had no idea about the changes to Earth's people and his only knowledge of them was in battling them in a weakened state. So, seeing the mighty Swan City struggle so greatly against a single Fort that wasn't even comparable to half The Capital gave him a great sense of amusement.

Of course, a portion of his hearty laughter was reserved due to the fact Young Miss Swan had rejected his advances many years ago. So, seeing her struggle despite the fact the Swan family was supposedly so powerful left him in a good mood.

Knowing Raynred, though, it was obvious things weren't so simple. A union of a City and a Power would never happen. So really, he had only wanted to have some... immoral fun with Young Miss Swan. And, as the young Heiress of such a City, how could she allow her purity to be tainted in such a way?

Raynred may have twisted the matter in his mind, painting her as a stuck up bitch. But the reality was very far from this.

Still, Raynred wasn't exactly the picture of gentlemanly ideals. Was it really so surprising he had such thoughts? PANDA-NOVEL.COM

Swan City had always been a rival to Keafir City. Although their current City Lord wasn't a match for the dead Anared's father, Syl and Young Miss Swan were always at a head. In fact, Leonel had witnessed this personally.

With such strength, it was no wonder Swan City was tasked with handling Earth's third ranked Province, Royal Blue.

Unfortunately, what was previously an easy battle had suddenly become difficult to even keep a foothold in. In fact, it didn't seem like it would be long until Swan City was being sieged rather than the other way around.

Young Miss Swan's attention had been focused on her father who was battling valiantly below, wearing his signature white armor. But, hearing Raynred's voice, many on the battlefield couldn't help but look in his direction.

The young Heiress frowned.

'When did the Powers get to Earth?' PANDA NOVEL

Down on the battlefield, Milan, Joel and Raj stood valiantly. Having been given positions as generals by the Secretary Marquisette, they filled their roles in better than anyone would have thought.

Of course, if they were asked why, their simple answer would be that whenever they were stuck, they'd only have a single thought... "What would cap do?"

This simple minded approach had actually placed them among the most effective generals of Royal Blue Fort.

That said, their success was also in large part due to the cooperation of the nobles. After Code Black was implemented, they no longer dared to hold back lest the titles their families had fought to keep hold of for centuries suddenly vanish under their leads.

"Who's this dumbass?" Raj's booming voice suddenly caused his troops to erupt in laughter. Their morale was already extremely high at the moment to begin with. Hearing such jeering right now made them feel as though they were on top of the world.

Raynred was too far away to hear these words since Raj hadn't enhanced his voice with Force. So, the latter kept boisterously laughing in his own world. p??U??????

After a moment, he calmed, sneering as he looked down on the battlefield.

"I'll give you all one chance, hand over all those with affiliations to Leonel Morales and I'll consider letting the rest of you live!"

Raynred's gaze lit with murderous intent. He had been humiliated more today than he ever had been before. He needed something to vent, and this Leonel would have to take the brunt of his rage.

At that moment, numerous figures on the battlefield suddenly halted, their fiery gazes all landing on Raynred at once.

In that instant, Raynred felt as though he had been plunged into a vat of ice. Several hundred meters separated him and the battlefield, yet it was as though a blade was being held at his throat.

Raynred froze.

By the time he recovered and shook his head, his fury had lit once again. Who the hell were these bastards to make him feel fear?!

Raynred suddenly growled, Force surging around him in tidal waves.

“It seems the Swan family is so incompetent that they’ve allowed you to grow arrogant! I’ll kill you all the same way I killed that black lion and the other bastards of the Slayer Legion!”

“You killed who?”

It was then the battlefield came to a grinding halt. Compared to when Raynred spoke Leonel’s name, this was like a completely different animal. Let alone the soldiers of Royal Blue Fort, even those of Swan City felt like all the oxygen had been sucked away.

In the skies, a surfboard with two individuals sitting upon it appeared seemingly out of thin air. They hovered above Raynred, the coldness that suddenly pervaded the battlefield emitting from them.

If before Raynred froze, this time he couldn’t even stop his body from trembling. His knees grew weak, almost collapsing completely.

He had felt this feeling before. That day when Jilniya battled Aina, he had sensed it then too. Back then, he didn’t even dare to breathe.

But now, Jilniya had long since died at the hands of that dark skinned, blue eyed bastard. There was no one but himself to take the brunt of this assault now.

Raynred's mind roared once again. This was the third time, it was already the third time he had been humiliated today!

He looked up and his gaze landed on a face he wanted to rip apart.

His fear gave way to a sneer. But it seemed that even he didn't realize his knees were still trembling. But, he had completely lost his rationality to his pride.

“That's right, I killed them. That whore Pisces was a nice help as I dug out their hearts. There was even some bitch among them who was mumbling your name even as she died, I bet you cared quite a bit for her, huh?”

“What are you going to do about it?!”

In Raynred's mind, these words had come out forceful and powerful. But, all everyone on the battlefield heard was a long drawn out sentence laced with trembling stuttering.. Even when he yelled with the last of his energy near the end, it was in a voice three octaves too high to have possibly come from a man.

Chapter 576

Leonel couldn't put his fury into words. Even seeing Raynred's pathetic display did nothing to make him feel better.

Just months ago, he had been with these young men and women, fighting to keep their lives, growing friendships, talking about life. Yet, no amount of anger would bring them back. Nothing he did to Raynred would appease him.

Leonel was so agitated that he began to cough violently, the injuries that had yet to heal from his battle with the Puppet Master flaring up.

Soot and char covered air surged out from his mouth. His coughing became so violent that blood began to appear once again, sending his body into complete disarray.

“Leonel!”

Aina worriedly placed a palm against Leonel’s chest, her expression warping.

The headpiece that had been in possession of the Puppet Master was burnt to ash by Leonel. He knew well that Aina wouldn’t want to have anything to do with a treasure tainted by that thing, nor did Leonel need it. It might have been a Quasi Bronze treasure, but it simply had no ability to boost the strength of Leonel’s mind which already had a Fifth Dimensional foundation.

Though it seemed as though the Puppet Master’s mental strength was beyond Leonel’s due to the range of its ability, this was a misconception. Leonel was well aware that the Puppet Master used a few tricks to accomplish such a feat. Plus, the current Leonel could create such treasures on a whim as long as he had the ores necessary.

This aside, Aina’s birthday present more than covered for her weaknesses. It allowed her to see the true state of Leonel’s body and the reality made her expression warp.PANDA-NOVEL.COM

To say that Leonel was injured was an understatement. And, maybe the worst part about it all was that most of it was self inflicted.

Leonel purposely made use of his Scarlet Star Force in those final moments. Without it, it would have been impossible to burn such a powerful existence to ash.

Unfortunately, even in such a measured and controlled fashion, the use had practically turned Leonel’s insides into a charred mess. Not a single one of his inner organs were spared.

If it wasn’t for the insane amount of vitality the complete Metal Body provided, along with the fact Leonel’s body had entered the Fourth Dimension, he probably would have formed a second pile of cremated remains beside the Puppet Master.

Leonel's body had already been in a terrible state, but he had practically pushed himself over the edge.

The overbearing nature of Scarlet Star Force wasn't just a legend.

Seeing Leonel's state, many began to realize something was wrong, especially with how his murderous aura seemed to have deflated.

Having regained much of the control of his body, Raynred suddenly realized that his previous actions weren't as valiant as he had thought. His temper flared once more, but this time he wasn't foolish enough to voice it again. He had already embarrassed himself enough today. Now... he just wanted to vent. PANDA NOVEL

Leonel looked up from his coughing, his eyes completely red.

He somehow felt that he should have been there, but it was simply impossible for him to be everywhere at once. He didn't even know the Slayer Legion was taking part in this battle. It was an irrational guilt that weighed even heavier on his consciousness than before.

This wasn't the first time Leonel had felt survivor's guilt, but this time still hit him like a sledgehammer to the chest.

Leonel's red eyes locked onto Raynred as though projecting the gaze of a wounded beast. It made one feel that no matter how injured he was, he would still find a way to take Raynred down with him, even if it meant having to rip the latter's throat out with his teeth.

The murderous aura came back like an endless tide. This time, it was tens of times stronger, Leonel's irises reddening entirely.

Flickers of flames licked across his body as though prepared to erupt at any moment.

"I'll kill you."

The words dripped with venom, frying the nerves and fraying one's senses. ρ??∫???

However, before Leonel could move, Aina gripped his wrist hard.

“Stay.” She said sternly, meeting Leonel's reddened gaze as though she couldn't sense his murderous intent. Even at this moment, she seemed to be the only one completely unaffected.

Aina leapt from the surfboard, her hand reaching out into empty space only for a golden red ax to shoot into her palms.

Raynred felt as though he was swimming in a quagmire, hardly able to budge an inch. But, seeing that it was Aina who actually dared to attack him like this, he roared, trying to expand his chest until his fear dissipated.

However, the Aina he knew before was completely unlike the one now.

Before Raynred could react, Aina had descended onto the building, her ax slashing downward.

An arm flung into the skies, followed by a shrill cry.

However, that wasn't the end of it. The mere blade wind of Aina's ax traveled through the building beneath their feet, splitting it in two.

Raynred fell to his knees, grasping at his empty shoulder socket.

“You ugly bit –!”

Raynred's cry was cut off by yet another arm flying, taking with it yet another slice of the collapsed building.

Just as Aina was about to finally land, her leg angled forward, the sole of her feet slamming Raynred's face into the steel and concrete below.

The entire building collapsed as Aina and Raynred followed it to the ground. But, unlike Aina who stood on Raynred's head, the latter had his face buried into the rubble.

BANG!

The distant armies watched this scene in apprehension. Was this the strength someone should have in the Fourth Dimension?

The only thing they had to comfort themselves was that though Earth had evolved, their buildings were still in the Third Dimension. They wouldn't have been part of the strengthened.

Aina could have crushed Raynred's head to a pulp. But, instead, she wrenched his head up from the ground by his long black hair, fury coloring her face.

Aina slammed her ax into the ground, running her free palm across its blade.

Her blood trickled like gorgeous rubies. Beautiful seemed like the last word you'd use to describe such a thing, yet her life's liquid truly reflected like the most pristine gems.

Raynred's face was completely destroyed. His nose was so bent it had gone flat, his teeth shattered like glass, and even his jaw seemed to have been dislocated.

He wanted to cry out in pain, but he couldn't even make a sound without feeling even more pain.

His moans came out in whimpers, his body trembling.

But, this was just the beginning of his torture.

Aina yanked his broken jaw open, half ripping it from its hinges completely.

Her blood fell down what remained of his throat, causing him to shudder.

She released her grip, letting him fall to the ground and watching on coldly.

Soon, Raynred began to writhe, his body violently convulsing.

Even without his jaw and much of his tongue, he finally found the strength to cry out.. However, his cries were distorted, reaching up into the skies as though he was a dying beast.

Chapter 577

Raynred's shrill cries bore into the soul of all those who heard them.

He wanted to claw at his throat, anything to get that foul blood out of his body, but without his arms, he had no ability to do so.

He wiggled against the earth, trying to use the dirt, gravel and concrete in place of his hands.

Blue veins surged through his body, crawling up his neck like grotesque worms wiggling beneath his skin.

BANG! BANG!

He bashed his head against the ground, his own face deforming even more even beneath the strain.

Aina picked her ax up from the ground, using the buildings as leverage to leap back up to Leonel who was still in the sky.

They both gazed down toward Raynred, but neither spoke a single word.

Leonel's teeth clenched hard. Even after Raynred accidentally pierced through his own throat with a sharp bit of rusted steel, he still didn't feel like it was enough. PANDA-NOVEL.COM

He watched with a cold expression as Raynred bled himself dry, his convulsions and gurgling cries etching themselves into the memories of all those who heard them.

Just as his life was about to fade, Leonel reached out a hand, a strong surge of Soul Force tearing into Raynred's mind.

At that moment, shrieks only Leonel could hear resounded. Even in the last minutes before his death, Raynred experienced pain the likes of which he never thought possible.

All of his pride and haughtiness had long since vanished. If he could have, he would have begged and pleaded.

Leonel closed his eyes, watching the final moments of those he once thought of as friends, knowing they wouldn't be coming back.

'Pisces.'

Leonel's heart trembled. He wanted to see blood.

** PANDA NOVEL

Hutch's body floated face first in the waters, three corpses pooling around him.

He struggled up, but his body was simply layered with too many injuries. Under the suppression, the pain he had experienced at the hands of these three was unimaginable. But, even then he managed to take one of them down even before the Puppet Master relinquished his control.

After Leonel succeeded in drawing that bastard out, the battle should have been easy. But, by then, the old man had already suffered too many injuries. He had no choice but to go all out near the end to eventually squeeze out a victory.

That final effort left him without anything left. He could hardly keep hold of his machete or even flip himself face up, let alone stand.

The old man flipped over eventually, his wounds spurting with blood. He didn't have the courage to look around, but he was sure that the death count wasn't small. Unfortunately, this battlefield didn't gain the support of The Empire like The Capital had.

'I'll just... take a nap...'

If the old man was honest with himself, he really wasn't sure if he'd wake up from this one.

"Grandfather." ρ??C???

"Mm."

Hutch continued to float in the water, facing the slowly rising sun. But, he didn't have the strength to open his eyes.

In contrast, Elorin was still wearing his pristine white tracksuit. There didn't seem to be even the slightest speck of dust on him.

His hands were buried in his pockets, looking up at the rising sun as though he was doing it alongside his grandfather. Whether he was aware that Hutch's eyes were closed or not was unknown.

After a while, Elorin crouched down, Hutch's weak snoring traveling to his ears.

He grabbed onto his grandfather's machete. Even in such a state, it took him no small amount of strength to pry it free.

Elorin looked from the blade to his sleeping grandfather. Though his arm and wrist were incomparably steady, his index finger's trembling gave him away.

He had always had a habit of holding onto a machete with just three fingers and his thumb, his index finger pointed parallel to the blade.

In his youth, his grandfather had tried to beat this habit out of him, claiming it destabilized his strikes. But, even after so long, Elorin had never managed to get away from this habit.

As he grew up, he found breaking out of this habit only became more difficult.

Elorin rose his grandfather's blade to the latter's throat, the trembling of his index finger only growing.

In all of this, though, he looked no different from a youth kneeling by his only remaining family. His face was expressionless, his gaze steady. However, the trembling of his index finger only grew.

The blade rested against Hutch's neck. Just a little pressure and one of the bodies most vital arteries would be cut.

As a veteran of war, it was simply impossible for Hutch to not sense something with the end of his life so near. But... there were two factors holding him back.

The first was that he was simply too tired, he had no strength to speak of left...

And the second... was that there were few people he trusted more than his own grandson...

At that moment, Elorin suddenly looked off into the distance.

A surfboard shot through the skies, a furious aura being carried along with it. The sea's surface alone seemed to boil beneath this might, the stilling water's surface suddenly beginning to churn once again.

Elorin's wrist shifted, placing the blade down on his grandfather's chest.

"Someone come and help my grandfather." He spoke emotionlessly.

In swift movements, what remained of the medical units made their way to the old man's side. It soon became obvious that Hacker Hutch had entered a deep coma, but his vitals were stable.

They couldn't help but look toward Elorin in reverence. There was no way the old man should be in such a stable situation. The only explanation was that Elorin had done something.

However, very soon, not many could focus on Elorin at all. Or, rather, it was as though their attention had been split in two directions, no one knowing who the main character of the current situation was.

The surfboard came to a grinding halt.

Leonel's fury bubbled forth.

"Pisces.. Get the hell out here."

Chapter 578

The appearance of Leonel threw the heavy atmosphere of the Slayer Legion off. Those who recognized him were already surprised enough, but those that didn't were shocked by the sudden change.

Was it another enemy? But if that was the case, why did he call out for a single person?

However, there was no person who reacted more violently than Pisces herself.

How she had managed to survive to this point was a story in and of itself. But, after Elorin joined their battlefield, playing the role of victim was easy enough.

The truth of the matter was that she hadn't technically betrayed the Slayer Legion. Neither Aina nor Leonel was a member of their Legion, so selling information about them didn't technically put her in the wrong.

Beyond this, most of the witnesses to her folly were dead, having died at Raynred's hands, there were few to even speak on what she had done in the first place. And, even if they did, she would have to be placed on trial according to the rules of the Legion.

By the time such a trial began and ended, even if she was found guilty, the punishment would be exceptionally light. Because, once again... she hadn't truly betrayed anyone of the Slayer Legion.
PANDA-NOVEL.COM

Pisces could just as easily argue she was simply trying to get Raynred to lower his guard for the sake of a surprise counter attack, while the counter attack itself was no longer useful considering Elorin's interference.

Even beyond this, the few surviving members that remained in Thunderous Clap and Chasing Wind might have bred a dislike for Pisces after what she did to Leonel, but... would the others of the Slayer Legion feel this way as well?

This might be evidence to them to be distrustful of her, but to the other members of the Slayer Legion, she had granted a great service. In fact, in their eyes, the evil character wasn't Pisces, but rather Leonel himself who refused to hand over such a treasure for the sake of the greater good.

And now, with Hutch having sunk into a coma, there wasn't even a person remaining to speak reason.

However, Leonel didn't care about any of this. It was precisely because he knew there would be no justice if he didn't appear personally that he had come here.

Thunderous Clap and Chasing Wind, who had had near dead expressions by this point, suddenly lit up hearing Leonel's voice. In some way or another, this young man had been in their thoughts for months since they last saw him. And now, he had suddenly appeared to redress their grievances. PANDA NOVEL

But... as soon as their gazes lit up, they dimmed down once more.

Even though the Slayer Legion had been decimated, there were still tens of thousands remaining on this battlefield. Beyond this, there was no way they would allow an outsider to kill Pisces before them all even if she was truly in the wrong, let alone the fact there was no real tangible evidence that she was other than their testimonies. And, even in that case, her actions wouldn't warrant a death penalty.

Now, Leonel's own life was in danger.

They didn't know how he had managed to learn of what happened, or if he was only here because Pisces had caused him to be hunted down, but regardless of what it was, this matter wouldn't end so simply.

"Leonel."

Supreme Monet slowly rose, nursing a limp left arm that had been thoroughly bandaged. But, even now, her gaze was lit afire, the air around her crackling. PANDA NOVEL

Her abilities had been severely hampered due to the environment. But, even now she remembered the humiliating words Leonel had spoken to her all those months ago.

In fact, because of how many had died under her command, her prestige in the Slayer Legion had taken a massive dip downward. Of course, how would she ever deem to blame herself for such a thing? In her mind, she had long since held Leonel responsible.

Catris pulled himself up, his empty arm sleeve waving about in the salty winds. He could no longer take out his rage on Hutch without becoming a traitor to the entire Legion, but that wouldn't stop him from taking it out on Leonel.

Badger's gaze locked onto Leonel, fury from Mayfly's death causing his silver wings to tremble.

The waters beneath his feet separated, strong winds spreading apart in all directions. It seemed as though if he was left to his own devices, he wouldn't be satisfied until a tsunami was formed around him.

The surprise about Leonel's arrival soon gave way to a surging tide of animosity as those who had grudges with him locked on. Any fatigue they felt was washed away with the low tide, seemingly prepared to pounce at Leonel at any moment. If it wasn't for the stifling murderous intent and Leonel's blatant disregard of them, maybe some would have already attacked.

At that moment, Pisces finally breathed a sigh of relief. She finally realized that she would be safe. So what if Leonel was pissed? What could he do in the face of so many elites? He had only brought two people and he himself seemed to be in a sorry state. His face was so pale that it seemed as though he might collapse at any time.

It was at that exact moment that Leonel's senses finished scanning over the battlefield and landed on Pisces.

Pisces felt as though her head had been dunked into a vat of ice. Her body shivered, goosebumps raced across her skin, her knees almost completely giving way as she nearly collapsed.

Leonel shot forward, his actions quick and abrupt. No one had expected for him to suddenly dive into an army full of hostility toward him.

However, just as Leonel was about to reach Pisces, a figure suddenly and silently appeared before her.

He stood indifferently, his hands in his pockets and his white track suit still being just as spotless.

Leonel's senses flickered, his surfboard coming to a grinding halt.

"Get the hell out of my way."

Leonel's voice dripped with cold, causing Elorin's brow to furrow. This definitely wasn't how many normally reacted to his presence.

As though finding a pillar to lean on, Pisces snapped.

"Show some respect!" Pisces spoke in a shrill voice. "Young Supreme Elorin is one of the four heroes of Earth, he was the second fastest in clearing the first Zones!"

Pisces' knees went weak when Leonel's gaze swept over her, but she managed to glare back, her lip curling into a sneer.

"... If that's the basis of your confidence, just take your own life now.

"Second place...?"

Leonel's growl traveled across the battlefield.

"Who the hell do you think was first?"

Chapter 579

A stunned silence gripped at Pisces' throat.

It wasn't just her. The mystery of who first was had pervaded the people of Earth and their enemies for a long time. But, no one had managed to find the truth.

At this point, one might wonder how it was everyone was so certain about the positions of Elorin, Noah and the mysterious fourth individual.

The truth was that the so-called heroes of Earth were only chosen among the youths. One had to remember that Leonel's first entry to a Zone was vastly different from all the other instances. He was

first transported to another world before falling into a coma for several days. Only after this was he able to enter a Zone of his own accord.

If one thought about it, this was completely different from any other experience Leonel had had, and there was a reason for this.

This mysterious world they had been taken to was the core of Earth. The only ones allowed to enter this space had been youths mature enough to make their own decisions but immature enough to not have reached their full potential yet.

As for what criteria a world used to come to this conclusion, it was impossible to tell. But, the more talented a world, the more accurate its judgment would be in this regard.

Ultimately, only youths chosen by the world would gain this chance...PANDA-NOVEL.COM

This was where the mysterious fog of that time came into play. Back then, among the youths who had fallen into a coma with him, Leonel received by far the smallest portion of this fog-like energy while Aina received the vast majority.

This mysterious energy was a very special type of Universal Force known as World Force. Its role in that instant of time was to aid in the Awakening of one's ability to their greatest potential.

So then, one might ask why it was Leonel received such a small portion? The answer was obvious, Leonel's ability had awakened long before the Metamorphosis. He simply didn't need this energy. If it wasn't for his father locking his ability away in his youth, it would have grown far beyond the measure it was at currently.

However, such a powerful existence on Earth too early wasn't a good thing either. Leonel's presence alone would have sped up Earth's evolution by too large of a margin. Beyond this, there were various reasons why evolving a powerful ability on a weak world would be a detriment to Leonel as well.

Ultimately, Leonel awoke far earlier than everyone else as a result of this and as such cleared his Zone long before...

How did others know the order? That was by judging who exited first.

However, when receiving his rewards, Elorin learned that he was actually second. PANDA NOVEL

This was the hidden truth. The overseers of that treasured world of white weren't as tight lipped as one would expect... but, Uncle Montez never spoke of Leonel. So, while others found various channels to learn of who second through fourth were, no one ever learned who first was... until this very moment.

"You're lying!" Pisces screeched.

Laymen might not understand the value of the four heroes, but those of the Slayer Legion were painfully aware.

On any other world, these four would be the pillars that upheld the World Spirit. However, on Earth, even though there was no World Spirit to split, these four represented the four most talented youths of their World.

But, what was truly the most shocking to Pisces was that she had no idea Leonel didn't have a fourth of the World Spirit. If it was such wide spread knowledge, there was no way Terrain wouldn't have stumbled upon this information.

So, in the face of such words, it felt as though she was facing a man capable of grasping the fate of their world.

Leonel didn't bother to respond to Pisces, his gaze locking onto Elorin. For this man to force him to stop his forward momentum despite his rage, there was no doubt that he was radiating a large amount of danger. But, Leonel had no intention of letting these matters rest so simply. p??J??????

If he did nothing, he felt as though his heart would burst from his chest. His blood ran even hotter now than when he used his Scarlet Star Force.

"I won't say it again." Leonel said coldly, looking into Elorin's blue eyes.

Elorin silently scanned Leonel. This man was first?

Elorin had always trusted his intuition, and his intuition told him that Leonel wasn't lying. In fact, if Leonel wasn't in such a rage induced state, he might have not even bothered to speak such words.

“The members of the Slayer Legion can't be casually dealt with by outsiders.”

“Outsiders?” Leonel's sneer deepened to the point of being overcast by darkness. “According to my simulations, there's a 97% chance the Slayer Legion is a hidden card that reports directly to the royal family.”

Elorin's pupils constricted into pinholes, staring toward Leonel with a tinge of extra alertness.

“If you were an independent organization, not only wouldn't you be at a head with the hidden families, but you would also have allied with Terrain instead of battling them to your near deaths.

“So try me again. Tell me how this Prince of The Empire is an outsider.”

Pisces and others who had been in the dark felt as though bells were resonating in their minds. Leonel had no idea he had just revealed a secret kept for centuries, nor did he care. Today, Pisces would die.

Elorin regained his calm after a moment, his gaze becoming indifferent.

“Unfortunately for you, Prince, even if such a thing were true, it would have been a secret maintained for hundreds of years and we would be an organization that only reported directly to The Emperor himself. You, even as a Prince, for the crime of revealing such a matter, would be executed.

“That's how the story would go, no?”

Leonel's expression only became colder.

However, just as he was about to attack, the world suddenly trembled, the sound of a shattering barrier radiating down from the skies.

The energies whined, reality bending and twisting beneath an inconceivable might. And then... a voice that traveled to all corners of their Fold of Reality spoke to them all.

“Under the Decree of Shield Cross Stars, Leonel Morales is to be classified as a Tier 4 Fugitive, found guilty for the crime of colluding with a Variant Invalid.

“The fugitive has two hours to hand himself in, or his charges will be increased to Tier 3.

“The bounty is set to 10 000 kilograms of Fifth Dimensional Urbe.”

Chapter 580

~Half a day ago~

Heira stumbled out of a teleportation gate, her knees feeling weak.

A mixture of emotions seemed to ram against her skull, causing her to keel over, the contents of her stomach emptying out before her.

She heaved and coughed, her elegant demeanor twisting to nothing every time she remembered Anared wouldn't be coming back.

After a long while, when her heaves reaped nothing but dry coughs, she stood, wiping her mouth with her forearm.

If those who wrote tales of this goddess like woman were to see her now, it was hard to tell how they'd react.

Heira took a look around the world she was on currently. But, after a moment, it became clear that it would be hard to call this place a world at all. Rather, it was an asteroid floating aimlessly in space. If it wasn't for the Force Arts protecting her from the cold and especially the fearsome Astral Wind Force, she would have died a hundred different ways by now.

Her appearance hadn't gone unnoticed.PANDA-NOVEL.COM

This was a small relay hub, the location of which was usually only known to bounty hunters and the like. So, it could be said that their alertness was as high as it came. Plus, considering the small size of the asteroid, they would be far too incompetent to miss the sight of a grieving and vomiting beauty.

The hub was made of nothing more than what looked like a gas station. As for what kind of vehicles it fueled, it was hard to tell. But, from the outside, it didn't seem to be as important as it truly was.

Heira stumbled forward, the change of gravity not helping her case in the slightest. But, she still managed to make it to a dwarf like man who seemed to be napping.

The short man reclined on a chair, his face covered by a newspaper. Even after Heira got close, he still didn't react.

"Give me a communication channel." Heira said coldly.

The dwarf like man shifted slightly, a single groggy eye peeking out from behind the folds of his slipping newspaper.

But before he could speak, Heira slipped a ring off her finger and threw it at him. PANDA-NOVEL

The man seemed to finally awaken, snatching the ring out of the air with movements that were far too nimble.

Without a word, he hooked his finger toward a narrow wooden outhouse that exuded a foul stench.

Heira stumbled toward it without a word. She didn't seem to give a damn about the smell as she barged in, not even glancing toward the filth filling the toilet bowl.

She reached for a rusted phone hanging above that seemed to have appeared from thin air. With nimble fingers, she dialed numbers in quick succession, her demeanor becoming calmer and calmer by the second. It was as though every number she clicked sealed away another portion of her soul, chaining away emotions that she had just worn out in the open.

"Hello."

It seemed to be a greeting, but the voice on the other side seemed as distant as possible.

"Commander Scithe." ρ???(???????)

"Ah, Miss Heira. It's surprising that you've called me directly this time. Finally had enough of manipulating my subordinates?"

Heira didn't seem to react much to this accusation.

"It seems you have quite a lot of time on your hands despite being a Quadrant Overseer. Paying attention to a little world like Terrain is beneath you, don't you think?"

"Normally that would be so, but who asked them to be so lucky as to be so close to Earth?"

"Are you sure that's the only reason?" Heira sneered. "Or is it more related to a certain Leonel Morales?"

Scithe's voice took a long pause, not responding immediately. But, when he did, his voice carried a bone chilling cold.

“Sometimes knowing too much isn’t good, Miss Heira. There’s a reason men don’t like women who are too smart for their own good.”

“Then I’ll be a good little girl for you and speak on things that may or may not be true. I’m just a woman, after all. How could I know any of these things for certain?” Heira replied just as coldly.

“First, it may be true that Leonel is the First Hero everyone has been looking for all this time. And, it may be true that no one has been able to confirm this due to the fact his assigned overseer has kept their mouth closed.

“This may mean that he is extraordinarily favored and this just might mean that for this overseer to resist temptation despite the price for such information that they are at the very least from a Higher Sixth Dimensional World, most likely a Seventh Dimensional World.”

Scithe grew quiet. But, the slight creaking of the phone beneath his palm didn’t escape Heira’s notice in the slightest.

It was quite obvious that this was the first time Scithe had made such a connection. This was about as good as Leonel having the favor of a Seventh Dimensional world. For him to step into such a matter, he was no different from the pawns he had been using from Terrain’s headquarters all this time.

Anyone who understood politics knew that the purpose of keeping Leonel’s title secret wasn’t to hide the title itself... rather, it was a silent warning, a hidden blade in the darkness. The purpose from the very beginning wasn’t to hide the title, it was a beacon to not touch a hair on his head.

“Then what *might* you suggest?” Scithe

Heira’s lip curled, a cold light flashing within her gaze.

“There are some crimes that no amount of status can protect you from.”

“That’s bullshit and you know it.” Scithe said coldly. “Try and manipulate me again and I’ll leave this call immediately.”

Heira's smile didn't fade.

"Fine." She said lightly. "How about this then... the universe is a vast place. How possible do you think it is to pay attention to every corner?"

"I have a certain Variant Invalid that thought too highly of himself. And you have control of a certain Quadrant in a small corner of the Milky Way.

"Why don't we form a partnership? You don't have much of a choice, right?"

Scithe fell silent.

How ironic, just minutes before this call, he was thinking of how to use his subordinates as scapegoats, now he was in their shoes.

That was true... the higher ups of Shield Cross Stars might not care to offend a Seventh Dimensional World, but what about him?

This must be what they call Karma.. And now, if he wanted a way out, he would have to make a deal with this Shedevil.