

Descent 111

Chapter 111

[I'm changing the bonus chapter requirement to every 500 powerstones. In return, I promise not to change it for another month. You can only blame yourselves for being too powerful <3]

Leonel was furious. He had never expected for such a thing to happen.

No matter how much stronger he was than Captain Sela, he wasn't at the point where he could break chains with nothing but his brawn. Even the alloys of the 25th century were beyond his means, let alone the fact that this chariot was a C-grade treasure she must have gained as a Zone reward.

'I was careless...' Leonel's gaze blazed with a cold light as he was forced to continue running.

He never thought that Captain Sela would be so brazen. She probably thought that he was trying to get her killed, which was why she had reacted like this, but at this point, Leonel didn't care. The incompetence of the Slayer Legion was turning him off from them more and more.

Aitken slammed his tower shield in the ground, trying to get a stronger foothold against the gorilla.

By now, there were only three that could remain standing in his squad, including himself. He could tell that support would be coming soon, so he was only doing his best to hold the creature back. Though he was a dick, it seemed that he wasn't a coward who left his squadmates behind.

Unfortunately, he wasn't very powerful. He seemed to have an ability that boosted the density of his muscles, but his strength was hardly over 0.80.

It was at that moment that Captain Sela came rushing in. PANDA-NOVEL.COM

"Damned beast!"

Another chain came rushing out of her chariot, trying to lock the beast down.

'Idiot!' Leonel roared in his mind. Unfortunately, the next scene was bound to play out exactly as he had expected.

The chain snaked forward, wrapping around the gorilla's thick forearm just before it could launch another attack toward the squad.

Aitken looked up, pleasantly surprised. In fact, when he saw the sorry state Leonel was in, having to rush after the chariot with his hands bound like that, there was even deep satisfaction in his eyes.

Though he had been a distance away, Leonel's roar of commands had covered the entire battlefield. How could he not be enraged after Captain Sela exposed his intentions. In fact, by now, many thought that Leonel had a voice compelling ability and had long since put up their guard against him.

pANDA-N0VEL Seeing that the gorilla was tied down, Captain Sela's eyes brightened.

She raised a sharp broad sword with a two meter long blade from her back, hacking down with all the might she could muster. pANDA N0VEL

But, she had forgotten one key detail. Tying someone down necessitated that you had a strong enough anchor. The best way to use this chariot's ability was to make use of its high maneuverability. The chain was meant to be a hidden card pulled out at an opportune time, not something to open a battle with.

Sela had managed to catch Leonel off guard and had the forward momentum of the chariot to help her keep control of him.

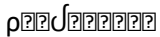
However, the chariot was going toward the gorilla, not away from it. And now she had shot out a chain and wrapped its forearm. She had even grown confident enough to send a direct attack. But...

Just when the Captains and soldiers were feeling excited, the gorilla slammed its free arm into the ground, roaring with all its might and swinging its bound arm upward.

'Goddammit...'

The chariot lost its footing, soaring into the air and taking Sela and Leonel along with it.

Leonel followed the arc of the chariot helplessly, both of his wrists bound together.

BANG! 

The chariot crashed and skid across the ground, its bronze light dimming somewhat.

The gorilla rose to its legs, its fists beating wildly against its chest. The sound was deafening. It felt as though a sound wave was tearing their eardrums apart.

Leonel grunted, landing on the ground heavily. He rolled further and further completely out of his control.

Though his chain necklace had taken the direct strikes for him, his inner organs still stirred upon impact. And, as though that wasn't enough, the chariot he was tied to was now rolling toward him.

Leonel rolled to his back, facing his two feet toward the coming chariot in hopes of stopping it with his legs. Unfortunately, reality was cruel to him.

A ledge of the chariot got caught in the ground, causing its skid along the ground to stop in favor of it popping into the air and crashing down toward him from above.

Leonel grimaced.

Without a choice, a green light lit on the sole of his treasure shoes. He slammed down hard, sending him skidding along the ground faster and just out of the range of the chariot.

Finally, the bronze chariot slowly came to a stop, but Leonel's expression was as dark as it could be. His fury was near reaching a tipping point.

Leonel pulled at the chains on his wrist, but they still wouldn't budge. It might not have been that bad if his hands were bound individually, but with them stuck together like this, he couldn't even use a spear. And, it was obvious bullets wouldn't work on this beast.

He cast a glance toward Captain Sela who had landed in the distance. The chariot had been going at 50 kilometers an hour at least and it was obvious she didn't have a defensive treasure as good as his own. She could only rely on that thick skin and that armor she wore.

As expected, she was covered in blood and gravel. Leonel guessed that if it wasn't due to her awakening as an Evolver, she would have already died.

At this moment, the other units were still charging, having lagged behind Captain Sela's chariot. They had seen everything happen and couldn't help but look toward the gorilla in horror. However, for some reason, the gorilla only seemed to have eyes for Leonel now.

Leonel's expression turned awful. 'Could it be this thing sensed me use Force just now?'

The situation was as bad as it could get. His hands were bound, there was a chariot weighing hundreds of pounds chained to him, and now this thing had locked onto him. And, as though that wasn't enough...

"Invalids! Invalids are coming!" Captain Zhang roared.

Just as Leonel had told them before. One group at 2 O'Clock and another at 11 O'Clock. Three B-grade Invalids between them. And now they were all here.

It was at that moment that the gorilla leapt across several meters, casting a vast shadow over Leonel as it raised its two fists into the air.

Leonel ground his teeth. He had already decided. This damned Slayer Legion would have nothing to do with him after today.

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In the distance, there was a large ship slowly swaying off the harbor. Leonel had seen it the first time he stepped onto the harbor, but he had never considered why it was that it was there and why it seemed that no one from within it had done anything despite the looming threats.

Within this massive 200 meters long wooden ship, two men stood on the deck, watching the scene unfold.

“Are we really not going to help?” One of them asked.

“This group is too incompetent. If they’re not forged in fire, if they don’t lose their lives today, they’ll lose it at a later date. There wasn’t much of a chance before the Metamorphosis for our lower level soldiers to get real fighting experience, but now we can slowly temper them...”

Chapter 112

[For those who missed the announcement, for the month of August, DD will be transitioning to a 2 chapter a day schedule. In addition, I’ll be uploading later in the day my time due to this (6pm EST) <3]

The Slayer Legion units were in shock. The gorilla directly ignoring them and jumping after the boy they saw as nothing other than a scout who overestimated himself and infuriated Captain Sela was completely out of their expectations.

“Rookie!”

Gerolt and Malt’s shrill cries reached Leonel, but they were simply too far away to do anything to help. Leonel was on his own.

At that very moment, Aitken and his injured squad members were taking advantage of the gorilla being distracted to retreat as quickly as they could. It became obvious that they had no intention of stepping

into those muddied waters again. Even Captain Sela's life and death was unknown at this point, why would they risk themselves for a boy who was just being so arrogant mere moments ago.

To the units of the six Captains, Leonel was essentially finished. Still, the only ones who felt even the slightest shred of remorse was Captain Zhang who brought Leonel into his unit and the four squad members he had spent the last two weeks with.

Still, none of them could do anything even if they wanted to.

However, Leonel, the person in question, watched on with a cold expression. PANDA-NOVEL.COM

Timing his escape perfectly, he darted forward, leaping just out of the range of the gorilla's descending hammer fists. He pulled on his chains hard, taking advantage of the heavy chariot and his own strength to sweep the chain across the gorilla's ankles and knocking it off its feet.

Leonel jumped toward the gorilla's back as it fell, wrapping the chain that bound his wrists across its neck. He pressed his knees down on either side of the beast's spine, pulling his arms back hard.

The veins of his arms bulged and the pain of the chains pressing against his wrists was excruciating. But Leonel continued to pull, wanting to break the gorilla's neck in one move.

"ROOOOAAARRRRR!!!!"

The gorilla bellowed, trying to lash out toward Leonel's hands.

But, Leonel shifted once more. His legs moved, sliding his knees from the gorilla's back and placing the soles of his feet flush against the beast's triceps.

He stamped down hard, pulling up with his arms as though he was trying to stand up, but the chains across the gorilla's neck were stopping him from doing so. PANDA NOVEL

It seemed that the gorilla was finished. The control Leonel had over its neck was commanding. If it wasn't for its sturdy body, it would have already lost its head. But, the beast hadn't given up.

With another roar that made Leonel's ears ring, a familiar silver light coated the beast's body. In that moment, the soft flesh of the gorilla's neck became harder than steel. Leonel knew immediately that it had become impossible to break its neck anymore.

'There must be a short duration for this ability, or else it wouldn't be turning it on and off like this. We'll see how long you can last!'

Unfortunately, the gorilla didn't give Leonel the time. The moment it got the slightest bit of reprieve, it rolled to its back, trying to crush Leonel with his heavy weight.

Without a choice, Leonel could only leap away. A normal gorilla wasn't even 400 pounds, so Leonel was confident in outlasting the beast. However... He knew quite well that this wasn't a normal gorilla.

After being freed, the gorilla felt a deep sense of humiliation that fueled its rage. In those moments, it had felt the call of death. It had really almost died at the hands of a puny human boy.

It rose up, lashing out with its fists toward Leonel, but the cold glint it found on the latter's face left it shivering. p??(?????)

Leonel yanked the chain around his wrists again. In all its rage, the gorilla failed to realize that when it had rolled to get Leonel off its back like that, it had inadvertently wrapped the chain around itself loosely. This time when Leonel pulled, it was no longer as simple as tripping it. This time, its legs were tightly bound together, causing it to fall over once more.

Leonel took hold of the opportunity, dashing to the side and picking up the two meter long broadsword Captain Sela had lost control of when the chariot went flying. It was impossible for him to use a spear properly, but it was easier to use a two-handed weapon with his hands bound like this.

By the time he brandished it, the gorilla had stood once more. Its eyes focused on Leonel with a crimson red, its snarls throwing hot air and flying spittle from its sharp canines. Its teeth glistened beneath the high sun almost like the tusks of a wild boar.

Their gazes clashed in the air before they dashed forward in unison.

Leonel didn't know how to use a sword. But, he hadn't known how to use an ax back then either. However, what he did know were two things.

PANDA-NOVEL First, the gorilla's attack pattern was too simple. And, secondly, its shield ability couldn't be abused. Better yet, this shield ability had just been used.

Leonel's figure was nimble. The faint shadow of the succubus spearwoman could be seen in his movements.

He flitted around like a ghost, ducking out of the range of the gorilla's fist.

Appearing to its side, his broad sword flashed forward, leaving afterimages in the air as it aimed for the gorilla's arm.

CLANG!

It chipped and rebounded off of the silver light, but Leonel's movements didn't pause. He madly circled the gorilla, dodging and striking whenever he got the chance.

The haggard breaths and enraged roars of the gorilla rang over the battlefield.

Suddenly, the silver energy shield flickered and Leonel's cold, calculating gaze blazed to life as he stepped forward like lightning.

The broad sword pierced forward completely unlike a sword. Despite the weapon in his hands being as clear as day, for just a moment, to those observing, it felt that it wasn't a sword in his hands at all... but rather, a spear.

PCHUUU

The sword shot through the gorilla's neck. It had such a wide blade that the gorilla's collarbone and forehead were pierced in unison.

Thud.

With a dull sound, the gorilla fell, leaving Leonel standing over it expressionlessly.

His unkempt dirty blond hair was kicked up by the wind caused due to the beast's fall, waving about like a flowing river. His breathing was steady and unhurried. It was almost impossible to tell he had just been through a battle if not for the dead gorilla lying before him.

The battlefield was so silent the drop of a pin could be heard. They had all watched it from start to finish, but even having witnessed it themselves, they couldn't believe it. Even Aitken felt his knees trembling. Just what had he provoked?

However, it was then that something unexpected occurred.

The gorilla began to shrink. Soon, there was nothing left but a naked man who died with his eyes wide open.

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'A man...?' Leonel's pupils constricted.

He finally understood. The Invalids had been drawn here by this man's silver shield ability. Back then, Leonel had been confused, wondering why it was that they had been when the dictionary had told him earlier that Invalids wouldn't antagonize creatures from another race.

'Is it that man from the Brazinger family again?'

PANDA-N0VEL Leonel frowned, spreading his Internal Sight to the max. If Simeon was here, it would be a good opportunity to deal with him.

According to the dictionary, Simeon had some sort of gene manipulation ability that fell into the SS-grade. There was a chance that this man was another one of his experiments...

Of course, it was also possible that this gorilla form was just this man's ability. After all, Leonel used his own ability all the time but never attracted Invalids unless he used Force. If he thought about it, it also made sense if this man's transformation was his ability while the silver light was some sort of Force technique.

'Am I overthinking it...? Is he not involved?' PANDA-N0VEL.COM

Leonel raised his head and swept a glance over the Slayer Legion units. Just the simple act made them feel as though their chests would burst from the thumping of their hearts.

At that moment, the Invalids led by B-grade threats had entered the range of the battlefield. Leonel had finished off the gorilla so quickly that there wasn't even an opportunity for them to influence the battle. However, Leonel didn't even cast them a glance. Was it even his problem anymore?

If they couldn't handle three B-grade Invalids on their own, could they even count themselves as a rebel army? Plus, Leonel wasn't a pushover even if he had a kind heart. After seeing Captain Sela's ridiculous actions, none of them stepped forward to say something, let alone help him.

'I guess I was expecting too much from them. What could an organization that's done nothing but lose to the Empire for decades possibly have to offer. It's better if I just hone my Force Crafting and clear Zones as well. It won't take me more than a year to have enough trump cards to deal with the Junior Governor Duke and that man from the Brazinger Clan. Then I can go and find Aina...'

Having already made up his mind, Leonel ignored the cries of the rebel units and walked to the chariot that had bound him. Soon, he looked through the mechanisms and found what he needed to release the chains from his hands.

Leonel sighed, rubbing his bruised wrists. 'I was too reckless this time. If I had been prepared for anything, I wouldn't have gotten caught like that.' PANDA NOVEL

In the end, he was too inexperienced and had grown too confident. It was fine to be confident, but it had to come from a place of knowledge and strength. Leonel had the strength, but he was still lacking in knowledge.

In this world, there were too many unique abilities and treasures he had to account for, getting caught off guard would happen frequently. The only way to perfectly combat this would be to be cautious. If he had been, there was no way a mere Captain Sela could put him in such a situation.

Leonel looked around again to find the rebel units fighting for their lives against the B-grade Invalids. Sometimes, pleading gazes would meet his own, making him feel guilty. In the end, he was still a bit soft and couldn't completely harden his heart. Ultimately, these people had been misled by Captain Sela. He didn't want to leave them hanging.

'Fine, fine. Whatever.'

Leonel took out his atlatl and three darts from his spatial bracelet. Killing B-grade threats was as easy as breathing for him. Three Invalids, three darts, three throws and three deaths. It was that simple.

As for the C-grade and lower Invalids, this time, he really did leave it to them. PANDA NOVEL

At that moment, the weakened Captain Sela struggled to stand. Her left arm was bent at an unhealthy angle and a side of her face seemed to have skidded along the ground and was thus ruined by severe cuts, burns and blood, but she stood nonetheless.

She had no idea what had just happened and couldn't even see the gorilla any longer. All she saw was Leonel standing on her chariot.

In truth, Leonel was planning on leaving now. He just could have never imagined that instead of treating her injuries properly, this Captain Sela would actually come to find trouble with him in her half-dead state.

“Get away from my chariot!” She snarled.

Leonel cast a glance at her and shrugged, leaping off the chariot and turning to leave. However, completely out of Captain Sela’ expectations, his destination wasn’t the harbor where it was far safer, but rather back into the ruined city. It was obvious that he was intending to leave.

“You... Where do you think you’re going?”

Leonel didn’t have any intention of answering, so he just kept walking. Why would he even bother to stay here? This Slayer Legion was nothing but a joke. Their Captains were fools, their fighting strength was weak, and as if this wasn’t enough, they apparently didn’t have issues targeting their own men.

An organization rotting from the inside-out like this didn’t deserve his effort. It seemed that Earth really had nothing left for him.

It was a thought he never thought he would have, but now it was as firm as a lighthouse in a dark, foggy night.

‘They might still have some use.’ Leonel thought. ‘In the small likelihood that that man was one of his experiments and he finds out it was taken out in this harbor... he might send more to investigate. In that case, I can find out a bit more about this Brazinger family.’

Leonel’s gaze grew frosty. If it wasn’t for them, he would have never been separated from Aina.

“... Do you think that the Slayer Legion is a joke?! You think it’s possible to join one day and leave the next?! Why aren’t you all doing anything?!”

Hearing this question, many looked at Captain Sela with weird gazes. He just took down an A-grade threat with his hands bound. Then he took down three B-grade Invalids with three flicks of his wrist. Do something about it? Wasn’t that the real joke?

Leonel’s footsteps paused.

Of course, it had absolutely nothing to do with Captain Sela. She could scream ten times harder and he still wouldn't listen to her ramblings. The reason he stopped was because a man had suddenly appeared before him. And, though he didn't know it, this was the very same man who had been observing the battle from the large ship in the distance.

Though Leonel didn't know this, he had seen how this man got here with his Internal Sight. He rode the waves of the water with his bare feet then launched himself here... Yet, the process was so quiet that no one but Leonel seemed to notice his actions at all.

“It seems I will have to reward you with a promotion, Captain Sela. When you sent a report that a recruit came in with a stolen invitation card, I hadn't thought much of it. But it seems that your intuition was right. If I hadn't seen it with my own eyes, I would have never thought that this kid was a spy.

“I should have known... A critical margin of error wouldn't appear without reason.”

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Leonel cocked an eyebrow. There was something weird about this situation. It was missing the edge it should have, or maybe it was something else he couldn't quite put his finger on.

However, Leonel had already suffered once today from not being cautious enough. He had no intention of making the same mistake twice. Instead, he silently observed, his senses primed to their peak. He seemed to be relaxed, but there wasn't a single detail within 200 meters of him that he missed.

Captain Sela's eyes flashed with happiness when she heard the man's words. As a Captain, of course she knew who this man was.

“Make things a bit easier on yourself, young man. Don't resist and come with me.”

“... It's no wonder you all have never stood a chance against the Empire.”

Even in the 25th century, there were certain offensive things one should never say. Racial slurs, culturally insensitive phrases, ignorant and uninformed statements... However, even among all of these things, maybe saying such a thing amongst a field of rebels was amongst the worst. PANDA-NOVEL.COM

At that point, even the carefree man who had just rode a wave to block Leonel's path had a stiff expression. If Leonel could read the man's mind, he might have felt a little bad.

The truth was that this man hadn't come here to make trouble for Leonel. He had said those things, but that was only to keep up a certain facade. He had good reasons for treating Leonel the way he did and if the boy just cooperated a little bit, he would know the reasons why in just a few moments.

But this boy just had to go and say these things. Why was he so brazen? Doesn't he know that he's surrounded by 200 people? Even if he took down the gorilla, he would die meeting such a large group as long as there was one person near his battle strength. As far as the man was concerned, Leonel could at best match him. In that case, getting into a fight with their group would only lead to his death.

'... Ah, dammit, kid. How am I supposed to continue now? If I don't respond with anger, those with eyes here will get suspicious. But, if I do fight you, how can we end this peacefully? Dammit, dammit.'

At this point, the man realized he had acted a bit too rashly. He should have approached with a better plan, but this was the best he could do in such a short time. PANDA NOVEL

If he waited any longer, Leonel would have left. After Leonel left, there was no guarantee that he wouldn't be secretly watched by others. In this case, it would be even more suspicious if he tried to meet him in secret.

Even if by some miracle he managed to successfully meet Leonel after he left without alerting anyone else, there was no guarantee that he would be able to sneak Leonel back like he wanted to.

This should have been the perfect opportunity. He should have been able to 'arrest' Leonel while showing favoritism he shouldn't have. Then, he would have been able to 'imprison' him and thus gain a perfect excuse for why Leonel was with them.

PANDA-NOVEL In this way, those keeping an eye on the rebels would underestimate them more, thinking that their leaders were trash for getting rid of a talent like Leonel for short term benefits. And, at the same time, they would be able to secretly bring Leonel to their side and gain yet another hidden trump card.

Everything was so perfect, but this boy was displaying too much confidence which left the man uneasy. Suddenly, something that should have been a simple task became incredibly difficult and there was no longer a path for him to take it easy on Leonel. ρ??∪???????

‘Damned hot blooded kids and their damned pride, fuck.’

With no other choice, the man’s face twisted into a feigned rage.

“Kid, you sure have a big mouth.” He growled. “Remember this well, I am Lieutenant Damian Warner. Today, I’ll teach you a lesson on behalf of your parents!”

Leonel’s expression darkened.

He couldn’t read the man’s mind. Even if he found this situation weird, he tossed all thoughts of finding out what was wrong after hearing such words. His dad had disappeared to who knows where, but that didn’t give this man the right to comment on it.

Leonel’s aura grew heavy, the silver pole of his bike appearing in his hands.

Damian realized that there was something wrong with the atmosphere almost immediately, but by the time he realized he might have said something wrong, the blunt tip of Leonel’s rod was already before him.

‘Shit, shit, shit!’

This speed, this technique, this strength. Each and every one was far beyond Damian’s expectations. He felt as though a whole world was bearing down on him and that no matter what he did, he wouldn’t be able to dodge.

The shadow of a spear was projected into his mind. He couldn't help but think... 'If this was a spear, wouldn't I be dead now?'

Damian quickly crossed his arms, taking the brunt of Leonel's strike with his forearms.

BANG!

Without suspense, he was sent flying. It wasn't until he had moved back almost ten meters that the ground beneath him suddenly 'awakened', stretching up into the skies like a wave and catching him like a soft pillow.

Leonel's eyes narrowed. 'It seems his ability isn't as simple as water control. This is an S-grade power at worst, and I still feel like I'm underestimating it.'

Leonel was using his rod instead of his spear because he wanted to separate himself from the influence of his Spear Domain Lineage. He felt that his comprehension of his Lineage Factor was too weak and that the only way to find out exactly what made it tick was by comparing his abilities with it and without it. In addition, he felt that he didn't need his Lineage Factor to defeat this man.

However, this ability put quite a bit of pressure on him. He had only seen a small glimpse of it, but he saw endless possibilities. If this man was even somewhat competent, he too should be able to handle A-grade threats just as easily as Leonel did.

What Leonel didn't know was that the man's expression was growing gloomier and gloomier. Having sensed Leonel's strength, he realized that taking him in like this would be even more difficult. As if things weren't bad enough... His arms were broken.

'This little devil. No wonder he embarrassed Royal Blue Fort and the Leum family like that. Who created this little monster?'

Damian's arms hung limply to his side, wanting to shed real tears when he saw Leonel charging toward him again.

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Leonel's speed was beyond the limits of a mortal. However, with his experience in martial arts, Damian realized that it wasn't as simple as pure pace. There was something odd about the rhythm of Leonel's steps that made him seem even faster than he was, as though he was approaching from all sorts of impossible angles at once.

'How is this possible? I've immersed myself in martial arts for decades, why can't I match up against a little boy?!

Damian roared in his mind, but he realized that he couldn't allow this to continue in this fashion and for so long at that. However, what he didn't know was that Leonel was disappointed by his performance.

'I'm still missing something, she was far better than this.'

However, as soon as this calculative thought appeared in Leonel's mind, it was thrown out. This wasn't because it was wrong, but rather because he was pissed.

First this Slayer Legion was incompetent to the point they rated his ability within the D-grade. Then he was targeted by one of their Captains without reason. To make matters worse, that captain had actually tried to kill him.

All of this was already enough to push someone to the edge. But, as though they wanted to make sure he was aware of just how worthless this organization was, this prick had appeared and actually mentioned something about teaching him a lesson in place of his father?

In what felt like the blink of an eye Leonel had appeared before Damian, his body sinking into a low crouch that concentrated all the torque of his hips toward the ground and rebounded it back up toward his piercing rod.PANDA-NOVEL.COM

It was a beautiful synchronization of the primitive man's body control and the primitive woman's speed.

Damian fell back, a fluid pillar of earth appearing before him and Leonel.

As though expecting this, Leonel's steps shifted. His body flitted across the air, leaving shadows in the wake as he slid to Damian's side, only to find another wall of earth waiting for him.

'These walls aren't solid. In order to move them, he's sacrificing the sturdiness of the earth. But since he can't manipulate material without negatively influencing its rigidity, how is it that he could ride a wave like that?'

Leonel didn't dare to come in contact with Damian's wall of Earth, he could only continuously avoid it. Who knew if this was Damian's ploy? If he entered the seemingly fluid earth and Damian solidified it, it would be too late to regret it.

PANDA-NOVEL Even as Leonel felt that he was getting a headache trying to deal with Damian's ability, Damian himself was in an even sorrier state.

His arms weren't broken to the point of suffering a clean snap, but there were most definitely several fractures. Regardless, his arms were as good as useless. PANDA NOVEL

Now, with his arms in this state, he couldn't use weapons. And, even if he could, he didn't want to draw a gun on Leonel lest he accidentally kill the kid. How could he know that Leonel didn't have to worry about bullets due to his Quasi Bronze chain necklace?

Leonel frowned, retreating explosively only to find a wall of fluid earth blocking his path backward.

'Not good.'

Completely out of expectations, instead of continuing to retreat, Leonel firmly planted and shot forward with everything he had. At this point, even Damian was caught off guard. He had thought that Leonel would continue to run, trying to escape the range of his abilities.

However, while Damian was trying to end this peacefully, Leonel still believed this was a battle he might lose his life in. In such a case, he wouldn't take a chance on guessing where Damian's range ended.

If the range was within ten meters, Leonel might be able to escape. But, if it was ten times that, Leonel would be trapped and then his life would be in the hands of another.

However, if he was as close to Damian as possible, he wouldn't trap himself, right? There was no guarantee the Damian didn't have another way to escape, but between the two options, Leonel's calculative mind quickly deduced that this had the least risk. ρ??∫??????

Damian's eyes flashed. At that moment, the land Leonel was running on suddenly began to sink.

But, as though having already thought of this possibility, Leonel's expression didn't even change.

With a thought, his soles glowed green once more as he stamped down hard, sending him flashing to the side once more.

Damian's eyes widened in surprise, not catching why it was that Leonel seemed unaffected by the swamp-like ground. Leonel hadn't jumped high into the air before using his treasure shoes this time, so their effect was extremely low profile this time around.

Still, Damian was experienced in combat and reacted quickly, erecting another wall of fluid earth after judging Leonel's landing location. But, he suddenly felt uncomfortable when he saw Leonel's lip curl.

Leonel, who had just been in the air, shouldn't have been able to change his direction at all. By all rights, it should have been impossible. But, in that moment, another green light flashed from Leonel's other shoe and he suddenly took a sharp turn that seemingly defied the laws of physics.

Damian hardly registered what had happened when Leonel had shot through a gap in his walls of earth.

He panicked, trying to quickly close them down into a cage. But, it was too late.

Leonel's foot slammed into his chest, pushing him to the ground. Damian's vision spun and by the time he could see again, he felt a cold rod pressing against his throat.

From the outside, all the rebels saw was a half-sphere of fluid earth. Leonel and Damian were completely blocked from their view, but they still were left stunned.

This sort of battle, had it really been between two humans? Even if it wasn't as exaggerated as the earth splitting and sky shattering, it was still enough to leave them in awe. Captain Sela especially felt as though a lump had been firmly lodged in her throat.

This sort of battle prowess... D-grade? Which bullshit engineer built the machine that said his ability was D-grade?!

“Wait! Wait! Wait!”

What the rebels could have never expected was that the Lieutenant Damian they all respected so much had put his hands up in surrender. Leonel had his silver rod on his throat and a foot on his chest, was it really possible for him to do anything else but this?

Leonel frowned. The smartest thing to do would be to apply pressure and break through Damian's throat now, but he hesitated hearing his words.

Damian sighed in relief seeing that Leonel didn't act to kill him immediately.

“I know you're angry with me, but I had to do things this way so that you could join without attracting the eyes of others.”

The lieutenant obviously didn't want to play with his life anymore so he immediately got to the point.

Leonel frowned. Could it be that the Slayer Legion wasn't as useless as he thought? However, he had no intention of releasing Damian so easily. His ability was too powerful. If he was a bit more experienced with it, Leonel would have been finished. This encounter truly taught Leonel the terror of abilities.

“Keep speaking. I won't release you until I hear something worthwhile. You better be quick as well. If we stay here for too long, your plan will fail even if you convince me.”

Chapter 116

Damian bitterly smiled. Of course he understood what Leonel meant. If they remained in here for too long, no matter how convincing their previous act was, it would become suspicious. In that case, it wouldn't matter if he convinced Leonel to play along.

"There's not much I can tell you." Damian said through gritted teeth. "But I think you're smart enough to know why this is the approach we must take. The more competent we seem, the more attention the Empire will pay to us and the less chance we'll have in the long run."

Leonel had already thought as much, but this wasn't enough to convince him of anything.

"Do you think that the Empire is stupid? I doubt they're unaware that this is a facade."

"It doesn't matter if they know, they'll still underestimate us. A vague threat will always be taken less seriously than a tangible one. As long as they don't know the true extent of our depths, it'll be easier for them to neglect us."

Damian was trying to speak quicker and quicker, not wanting to give up this chance. If they could take in Leonel secretly, this would be great.

"I assume by your words that you know who I am? Unless you were really crazy enough to try this stunt after seeing the small bit I showed?" PANDA-NOVEL.COM

Damian's lip twitched. 'Small bit'? How much more was there? He was already in this state!

"Yes, I know that you're Leonel Morales and know that you're a Variant. In addition, I also know of what happened at the Fort."

"Good, that makes things easier. I'll agree to join and help your Slayer Legion as long as you support me to take down Royal Blue Fort within half a year and you help me take this damned wrist watch off. If you say yes, I'll let you take me out of here as your 'prisoner'."

Damian's expression changed.

This matter was simply too big. It wasn't that they didn't want to take down the Fort. In fact, if they were willing to pay a small price, it wasn't impossible to take the Fort down even without Leonel's help. The issue was that it wasn't worth it.

The Slayer Legion still wasn't ready to appear boldly in the real world just yet, so what good was the Fort to them? It would do nothing but make them an immobile and vulnerable target. PANDA NOVEL

In addition, the Governor Duke, the true powerhouse of the Royal Blue Province, wasn't here. So, at best you'd be taking down his son who hadn't even really grown into a man yet. This was another reason why it wasn't worth it.

"I know what you're thinking." Leonel said expressionlessly. "But, is it really as you're thinking? You're on this expedition right now to scavenge the broken pieces of fallen buildings... Wouldn't it be much better to directly snatch the technology of the Royal Blue Fort?"

Damian's eyes suddenly shone bright at these words. If it was looked at from this angle... it was indeed possible.

The truth was that he had quite a bit of freedom when it came to what exactly to do with this group. Their value wasn't very high to the Slayer Legion and they were essentially here just to train and hopefully become useful in the future. If he wanted to attack the Fort, he could make the decision alone...

Taking a deep breath, Damian's eyes sharpened with resolution.

"I can't make the decision to remove your Shackle, but I can agree to attack the Fort with you after some more preparation. But, since you're such a high profile recruit, it will be necessary for you to gain a more... thorough clearance." PANDA NOVEL

Leonel paused for a while, looking at Damian quite intently. It was to the point the latter couldn't help but squirm.

“Alright. I hope you keep your word.”

Damian sighed a breath of relief when Leonel finally removed his rod and foot from his body.

On the outside, the rebels were quite anxious. They had no idea that such a conversation was happening. Everyone one of them believed that an intense battle was taking place within that cage of earth.

When the fluid earth finally began to crumble, they all held their breaths before bursting into a chorus of cheers.

Damian stood at the front, proudly walking with Leonel’s rod in one hand and a rope formed of fluid earth in his other. Attached to the end of this rope were Leonel’s bound hands. He stalked forward slowly like the prisoner he was.

No, actually, upon closer inspection, his feet were bound as well. He was only moving because their lieutenant was sliding him across the ground with his ability. How magical.

That was their lieutenant! He was so powerful!

Captain Sela felt as though a weight had been lifted from her chest and she couldn’t help but smirk. Though, since half her face was covered in bloody, burnt and peeling skin, she looked even more unattractive than she usually did.

Damian smiled brightly. “Captain Sela, for your role in this you’ll definitely be rewarded well. It might not be impossible for you to become a Colonel.”

Captain Sela felt giddy with excitement. She put on an expression that might have been adorable on a 5 year old girl but looked simply ridiculous on her before she sent a sneer Leonel’s way.

PANDA-NOVEL Leonel, however, had his head down, his eyes aimed toward the ground. Beneath his drooping hair, his calm, calculating gaze was hidden.

In the distance, Gerolt, Malt, Lisa and Davy clenched their fists tightly. They didn't know what all this spy talk was about, but they did know that Leonel had saved them all not just once, but twice. First with the A-grade threat and then by taking out the three B-grade Invalids.

Even beyond this, his ability had saved them who knows how many times during their rounds. It was just that he was so good they never ran into trouble so even they didn't have an exact number...

However, they were too weak. There was nothing they could do to help him.

In the end, they had known Leonel for too little time. They were unable to bring themselves to risk everything for his sake. And, even if they did try to... What exactly could they accomplish?

Of course, the person in question, Leonel himself, wasn't bothered by such things. He was an understanding person for the most part, so he wouldn't hold grudges for something like this. It was only as simple as that their friendship would likely never deepen beyond this surface level.

That said, Leonel wasn't even actively thinking about such things. He wasn't even aware of their complicated feelings.

At this moment, his Internal Sight was completely focused on the corpse of the man, turned gorilla, turned back to man. He wanted to check on as many clues as he could at the 'crime scene' before things were moved around.

Something still felt fishy about the whole thing.

Chapter 117

A long while later, Leonel had been escorted by Damian to the large ship in the distance. There, there was surprisingly another man waiting. What was surprising wasn't the fact that there was such a man, but rather that he was quite literally the only other member on board.

That was right, a ship of 200 meters in length, rivaling any luxury yacht, was accommodating just two men... How did this work, exactly?

'It can't be that Lieutenant Damian can use his ability to move such a large ship... right?'

Leonel felt his heart skip a beat. If this was true, it likely meant that it was easier for Damian to control water as opposed to earth. In that case, if the latter had any evil thoughts, even Leonel wouldn't be able to do much about it.

However, even after thinking to this point, Leonel remained calm. The reason was precisely his previous run-in with the octopus. He couldn't imagine what kind of powerful creatures were lying in wait in the depths of the ocean right now. Even in the 25th century, Earth still didn't know everything about its waters.

With the threat of him releasing his Force, Damian wouldn't likely dare to act rashly. Plus, Leonel believed that the lieutenant was being sincere. Leonel believed himself to be quite good at reading people, even his own best friend of over a decade couldn't fool him at a critical juncture, let alone Damian who he was especially cautious of.

"... I can't take it anymore!" PANDA-NOVEL.COM

Damian's voice snapped Leonel out of his thoughts even as the fluid earth wrapped around the latter's wrist and ankles fell with a 'plop'.

The lieutenant's face paled, his arms falling and trembling to his side. It was only now that Leonel remembered that this guy probably had numerous fractures in his forearms. It was a wonder he had been able to keep up the act for long.

"What are you standing around for?! Hurry up and heal me! This kid is a little devil."

Damian had completely lost his noble air. He looked no different from a little boy complaining to his big brother, a sight that left Leonel rather speechless. He had always wanted a little sibling since he was an only child, but he felt like changing his mind after seeing this.

Leonel had only barely had this thought when he realized that the man Damian was speaking to actually resembled him quite a bit. Could they actually be brothers?

They were about the same height, had the same sandy tanned skin, and both had deep brown eyes.
PANDA NOVEL

After appeasing Damian, the second man walked forward and smiled amiably.

“I’m Vice Commander Joseph Warner, it’s nice to meet you.”

‘Same last name? So they are indeed brothers...’

Leonel smiled in return. “Leonel Morales. What exactly is it that you two want me to do? I’d like to make something clear first. Though I’m alright with collaborating with Slayer Legion to take down Royal Blue Fort, I have yet to decide to join you all longterm.”

Joseph raised an eyebrow and looked toward his younger brother. They had just gotten here, so he obviously hadn’t had the opportunity to learn what Leonel’s requests were.

Soon, he learned of everything and fell into pensive thought. ρ??C???

“... Taking down the Fort would indeed be a good opportunity. In addition, we might be able to recruit some fresh blood as well. I’m certain that there are many common folk who are unsatisfied with the Junior Governor Duke’s actions.”

“I was surprised.” Leonel suddenly interjected. “I thought it would be harder to convince you two to attack the Fort. Why is it easier for you to agree to this in comparison to helping me remove this wrist watch?”

Joseph and Damian looked at each other and smiled.

“You’re new to the Slayer Legion, but you’ve probably already seen that things aren’t what they appear on the surface. Most of our public appearances are just facades. For now, we haven’t truly formed up.

“Lieutenants and above have quite a bit of freedom at our current stage. You can almost consider us like ancient time generals who can take action without consulting with our king first. This gives us greater flexibility and better adaptability. Since this region is the territory we oversee, whether to attack the Fort or not is entirely up to us two brothers.

“However... the wrist watch is a special case. The secrets behind how to remove it are tightly guarded by the highest echelons of our Slayer Legion.”

Leonel’s lips curled. “Shouldn’t you be giving me a speech about how noble your cause is and that you would stop at nothing to end the Empire’s tyranny? Why are you so blatantly exposing that you’re hoarding such important secrets to yourselves?”

Joseph laughed. “No one is so noble. While it’s true that we don’t agree with the paths the Empire has taken and do believe that we have the higher moral authority, we aren’t angels either.

“Like all organizations, we need a hierarchy, we need incentives, we need our people to have goals to strive for. This is the only way.”

Leonel quite appreciated Joseph’s attitude. He had expected to find some cliché, die-hard rebels with tragic backstories that were worth the tears of all the women in the world, but what he actually found was much more real. Though these two brothers might still have faced some sort of tragedy in their past, at least for now, it wasn’t important.

After thinking this far, Leonel nodded internally. The trouble with taking this watch off wasn’t just how sturdy it was. Though the material was hard, there were many things that could still destroy it. The trouble was finding something that could destroy it without taking his hand and most likely his arm along with it. That was much more difficult.

“Alright, that’s enough of that. My brother made the right decision, taking on the Fort is a good opportunity and will provide us with far more rewards than what scavenging these broken buildings can. But, we’ll need to wait for the rest of our team to get back before we can start planning something like this.”

“Rest of your team?” Leonel’s brows raised with interest.

“Yes. They’re the main force of my brother and I, they can be considered to be the true elites of our Division. But, right now they’re training themselves in several Zones. Of course, we’ve already had a few clashes with the Fort over Zone entries as well.”

Leonel couldn’t help but be quite confused at these words. Did Sub-Dimensional Zones only appear on land? What about the vast ocean? Was there a need for them to fight over Zones on land if there was so much vast space on the ocean?

“It’s about time we report in anyway. They should be back in a half a month to a month at most. After that, we’ll have to go back to base and report our progress like we do every half year. You can take that opportunity to learn a bit more about us. We really are the best option for a fugitive like yourself.”

Leonel inwardly chuckled. This was somehow both the best and worst pitch meeting imaginable. Ultimately, Joseph was right. He was nothing but a fugitive. Where else could he go if not to them?

“That said... In the meantime, you’ll have to help us put on a little show.”

Leonel had a bad feeling when he heard Damian’s words and saw his evil smile. He looked like a man excited to finally get his revenge.

PANDA-NOVEL Damian took out a collar from who-knows-where. Leonel couldn’t help but shiver when he saw arcs of electricity coursing through two small silver plates hidden on its inner lining.

“It can’t be...” Leonel’s jaw clenched.

“Don’t run away little brat, you really made me suffer before.” Damian’s grin grew wider. “You just need to obediently act like a little slave for a small while.”

“You’ve seen him too, right?”

“Hmph, serves him right. Wasn’t it very stupid of him to come here alone? He must have thought himself to be invincible, but didn’t Lieutenant Warner take him down just the same?”

“Lower your voice a bit.” The one who spoke sent a playful smack to the back of his friend’s head. “That’s still a person who took down an A-grade Invalid on his own. He could kill you with a glare.”

The recipient of the smack laughed.

“Kill me? With that thing around his neck? Even if he had a wrong thought he’d be fried into barbecue chicken.”

Conversations like this seemed to happen all the time these days. Whenever a group passed by the pillar at the gate of their harbor, their thoughts would inevitably drift to the young man forced to stand guard there. PANDA-NOVEL.COM

He stood atop the pillar, legs crossed. His hair and immature beard were just as unkempt while his clothing was just as casual. But, now, he had a collar wrapped tightly around his neck that flickered with arcs of electricity from time to time.

“What are you two doing around here?! Scram!”

A sudden roar shocked the two gossiping men, sending them scurrying into a distance. Comparing Gerolt’s large physique to themselves, they knew they didn’t stand much of a chance.

Gerolt looked up at the young man who sat on the pillar and sighed. The young man didn’t seem to notice his presence, but could Gerolt blame him? Scaring away those who ran their mouths too much was about the best he could do.

'It's not right. None of them seem to remember that that damned lieutenant wasn't the one to step out and save their lives, it was Leonel who did. Since he could defeat Leonel, why didn't he step out earlier to kill that A-grade threat?' PANDA NOVEL

Gerolt was fuming, but he couldn't even raise up his courage to contradict Sela who was nothing more than a captain. How could he do anything against a lieutenant?

After casting another glance toward Leonel, Gerolt turned and left.

Leonel, who was on top of the pillar, didn't seem to have much of a reaction to this. For one, none of them knew that he wasn't actually a prisoner, this was just a facade. Even the electric collar on his neck was just a little trick, it did little more than leave his skin a bit numb. And second, if he interacted with Gerolt on friendly terms, that would probably make this whole act a waste. So, he ignored him.

His life was pretty leisurely right now, in fact. He had become the 'guard dog' of the rebels, standing guard here for 12 hours everyday. For others, this might have been a complete waste of time. But, with his Dream World, Leonel could still progress.

Leonel found that when he did nothing but clear his mind and meditate like this, he had thoughts and ideas he never even considered before. In an age of technology, people rarely took time to themselves. And, even when he entered Zones which had no such distractions, he was constantly on guard, worrying about his life. ρ??∪???????

But now, he could breathe and relax. This whole pretending to be a prisoner gig wasn't half bad.

PANDA-NOVEL '... I'm such an idiot, why didn't I think of that? Since Metal Spirits are known for their corrosive ability and in the art of refining metals, can't I just have the little guy melt this wrist watch for me? I wouldn't even need the Slayer Legion at that point.'

This was just one of Leonel's many fleeting thoughts. In fact, he felt that he could just barely split his thoughts into two streams, allowing them to draw conjectures along two completely different avenues. It was almost like combining the computing power of two computers to gain results faster.

Leonel had barely grasped this ability when he was escaping back to the Fort. He had been trying to absorb the primitive man's combat experience as quickly as possible and formed three simulations in his Dream World. However, the third had been so bare bones that it could hardly be considered one. So, two was Leonel's real limit, and even then, it drained his spirit very quickly without the support of [Dimensional Cleanse].

Still, this was only a fleeting thought of Leonel's. Right now, he still didn't dare to touch the little guy with his bare hands and he only had protective gear for his palms and fingers. His wrist would still be exposed. So, without some experience or assurances, he wouldn't dare to act rashly just yet.

In reality, this was a thought Leonel had had days ago. What he was focused on now was completely different.

'Just where is the perfect location for my Ninth Node?'

If before Leonel wasn't very worried about this, believing he had time to figure it out, he was now getting a bit anxious.

In the past month or so, he had already formed his Fourth and Fifth Nodes within the lab. He could form his Sixth any time as well, but hadn't because he needed to allow the lab to accumulate more Force, or else he would run out when it came time to form his Second Star.

It could be said that Leonel faced practically none of the bottlenecks Aina had mentioned. In fact, his speed was blinding to the point of being incredulous. If there were knowledgeable individuals monitoring his progress, they'd be numbed with shock.

It should be mentioned that Earth only had a few million people left of their population. The rest had either died during the Paradise Island tragedy or become Invalids. Of those people, those like Aina who had families pass down Force cultivation techniques to them numbered in the few hundred at most. All others had to earn their own in Zones just like Leonel...

Now, considering this, how many could get a good technique? Even if you put aside the fact that Leonel's technique was among the best in the Fourth Dimension and didn't mind the fact not just anyone would be able to get a Tier 9 Black reward... what then?

This was all to say that Leonel's strength was frightening. Those who had as many Force Nodes as him had all begun long before the Metamorphosis truly descended.

But now, his own speed was knipping at his heels. At this pace, it wouldn't be long before he formed his Eighth Node... But he still had no idea where his Ninth should go!

Chapter 119

Leonel's brow furrowed as his mind spun. At the same time, his fingers stretched in odd positions, moving them like individual striking snakes.

His First Node was with his brain stem. His Second and Third Nodes were along his spine. His Fourth and Fifth Nodes were fused into the walls of his lungs. According to his current plan, his Sixth Node would be fused into his stomach. The Seventh and Eighth Nodes would be split between the chambers controlling the outgoing flow of his blood and the ingoing flow.

Up to this point, this arrangement had a near 100% compatibility with him and he felt that it was near flawless. Yet, no matter how hard he tried, he couldn't find a Ninth Node with as much compatibility with him.

If others knew about Leonel's arrangement of Force Nodes, they just might call him insane. Most sought after boosts to strength in their arms and legs — essentially, things that could directly upgrade their battle prowess as quickly as possible. Yet, all of Leonel's choices were supplemental, yet absolutely perfect for laying a foundation.

With Nodes in his spine and brain, when his Force was activated, and even passively, his thinking speed and reaction time was exponentially better than his peers. The Nodes in his lungs increased his air intake and oxygen siphoning ability. The Nodes within his heart would perfectly supplement the increased capacity of his lungs, not to mention the Node in his stomach as well.

Ultimately, the blood was the centerpiece of the body, it was interwoven and interconnected with every corner, right along with the nervous system. So, in Leonel's mind, forming his nodes with these two systems as the core was only right.

But now, he was at a loss. He even began to doubt himself somewhat. What if he was wrong from the very beginning? He had indeed started to choose the locations of his Nodes without consulting anyone...PANDA-NOVEL.COM

Leonel had always been confident in himself. Maybe a bit too confident considering all the mistakes he had made since the Metamorphosis descended. However, he still felt certain that he wasn't taking an incorrect path...

Leonel's head snapped up to look into the distance. He stood.

'Another one, huh...'

With a sigh, Leonel hopped down from the pillar, causing those who had come back after Gerolt left to scurry off and hide once more. Who knew why these people were so bored to hang around him like this just so that they could make sure that he heard their words.

It had been quite a long while since Leonel had dealt with such a thing. If he recalled correctly, during his first few weeks in the Royal Blue Education System, he was quite looked down upon since he lived on a Paradise island. But, by now, that seemed like a lifetime ago.

After making his rounds and wiping out the approaching Invalids once again, Leonel once again pretended to 'run away', only to be zapped back into submission by the collar around his neck. PANDA NOVEL

He was quite used to this routine after half a month. He walked back to the harbor with head lowered and his hair hiding his eyes once again.

"Another escape attempt? Seems I'll have to speak with Lieutenant Warner about this. I'm not sure why you can't just be an obedient guard dog."

PANDA-NOVEL The first time Leonel heard this voice, he thought it came from a respectable female captain. Now when he heard it, he only managed to feel annoyed. Why this Captain Sela insisted on being so annoying was beyond him.

That said, he wasn't very surprised by her appearance. After all, in order to keep up appearances and not raise suspicion, Captain Sela was tasked with overseeing what she called his duties as a 'guard dog'.

Like always, Leonel simply ignored her. Once the matters with the Fort were concluded, there would no longer be a need for him to stay here. He could pretend that Damian brought himself elsewhere or that he escaped. Either one would be fine.

Captain Sela watched with a pleased smile as Leonel obediently walked back into the harbor. The side of her face was still bandaged from her previous injuries, making her look even worse than she usually did.

ρ??∫???????

Once he had disappeared, gone now that his 12 hour shift was concluded, her smile disappeared and became indifferent. First she ensured that the next guards took up their duty. Leonel alone was enough to guard half the day, but several dozen men and women were needed when he was off duty. After accomplishing this, she headed back to her quarters.

She seemed to relax after getting back into her room, her burly figure suddenly changing its gait to that of an elegant woman with swaying hips. But the issue was... her silhouette made those who saw it want to vomit instead of appreciate the sight.

Still, without a care, she walked to the bathroom, humming a little tune as her clothes fell to the ground one by one. It wasn't long until a blubbery, top heavy figure appeared. Still, it was more toned than one might expect. What happened next, though, was astonishing.

Captain Sela's burly body began to shrink as she sauntered toward the bathroom. By the time she stepped off the hardwood and onto the tiles, her figure had become slender and the backview was enticing to the point of inducing a nose bleed.

Her bottom became pert with just the right amount of jiggle. Her slender legs moved along with her hips, following a hypnotizing rhythm. The sight one could behold when she finally reclined in a pre-made wooden bath could make the blood boil. The clear water could hardly hide the shapeliness of her soft breasts.

As if all of this wasn't enough, she shed the bandages on her face, revealing delicate features that brought her looks together with a bow. She was most definitely a prime beauty, the likes of which few could match.

At that moment, a slight vibration came from her wrist.

< "Report." >

A commanding tone demanded from the other end, but the sound waves were so unique that no one but Captain Sela herself could hear them.

"... Things are going well. I should be receiving a promotion soon."

After giving her usual report, Captain Sela ended it with these words.

There was a long pause on the other end.

< "You don't see anything fishy about all of this?" >

Captain Sela shrugged. "It doesn't matter. Even if it's all a ploy, they'll give me appropriate rewards so that I can continue shielding Leonel Morales. By then, I will start displaying some of my true abilities and they will recognize me for other reasons. It took me decades to become a captain, but now I can become a colonel. Who cares if it's just a ploy?"

The voice was silent for a long time once again but didn't respond. After a while, it became obvious that the person hung up.

Captain Sela reclined with a smile, a devilishly beautiful curl coating her lips.

"You're using me? Well, I'm using you too..." She said with a light giggle.

If Leonel were here, he would finally remember just why it was he had smelt a familiar fragrance from Captain Sela. It was because the slender woman in the tub was precisely the very same Secretary Marquisette Maia he met at Royal Blue Fort.

Chapter 120

Another half month passed by in a flash. Finally, the teammates Damian and his brother Joseph had spoken of before had made their way back, making the empty 200 meter wooden yacht far more lively.

Leonel didn't have much interaction with these people. Though Damian and Joseph claimed to trust them with their lives, the less people who knew a secret, the better. As a result, Leonel stayed in a room on the lowest level of the boat and didn't leave. Obviously, his guard duties had been passed on to someone else.

Joseph had said that a high-level recruit like himself had to go through a deeper acceptance process. However, Leonel had seen through a while ago that this 'vetting' process was not much different from the Empire marking down all his secrets and treasures. The Slayer Legion and the Ascension Empire really didn't seem to have much of a difference between them from what Leonel had seen. One just happened to be weaker than the other, or so it seemed.

Despite knowing this, Leonel played along. He was truly curious to know more about the Slayer Legion. Aina had said that success in the future could influence the past, so who knows? If the Slayer Legion gained a modicum of success with their endeavors, they might be able to provide him with certain benefits now.

Either way, Leonel felt like he needed to see more of the world. The problem of his Ninth Node was weighing on his mind. Though he knew that completing the evolution and gaining a Fourth Dimensional Body could be done with just one Force Node, he obviously wanted to succeed with all nine.

Like this, Damian and Joseph separated. Joseph remained behind to oversee their lesser recruits while Damian led them toward what he called their checkpoint. According to the latter, the checkpoint changed every half year and was a floating military base. All those in their sector would converge toward it.

Since Royal Blue Province was ranked third amongst the Provinces, there were quite a few big shots assigned to this Sector. In addition, the Slayer Legion was several factors more lawless for obvious reasons. So, Damian warned him to be careful. PANDA-NOVEL.COM

Still, it would take several more days to reach the checkpoint, so Leonel wasn't thinking about such things currently. Instead, he had entered the Segmented Cube once more and was finally forming his Sixth Node.

Violent swirls of Force surged into Leonel's body. He was like a bottomless hole, devouring Force that had been accumulating for a whole month without any reserve.

Just like before, his Sixth Node formed in just half an hour before sweeping changes took hold of his Ethereal Glabella, forming a second star that pulsed just as brightly as the first.

Leonel's body began to squirm and tremble. If one looked closely, it was possible to see muscle fibers wiggling beneath his skin, bulging and compressing again and again in an endless cycle.

According to the creator of [Dimensional Cleanse], forming a One Star Constitution was enough to make you the cream of the crop. After forming it, the impurities in Leonel's body were expelled in droves. This process expelled much of the lingering shackles of a Third Dimensional Body. As long as this step was reached, forming a Fourth Dimensional Body wouldn't pose any issue at all.

However, in the end, this was just the first step. In fact, its impact could be considered to be the smallest of the three Stars, and for good reason. PANDA NOVEL

PANDA-NOVEL The Second Star was a true remolding. Though the pain surpassed even when Leonel formed his First Node, the benefits were countless times more potent. It wasn't just Leonel's muscle fibers that were breaking down, reforming, and compacting in on themselves, but even his bones and inner organs.

As Leonel clenched his jaw, the crackling of his bones could be heard. The longer the process went on, the brighter the glow of his skin seemed to become. He looked like a deity who had stepped down from a loftier world, come to spread his blessings.

Leonel's hair fell once more as layers of his skin began to shed, but this time, it grew back much faster. He felt as though his whole body was somehow both being broken down by a sledgehammer and floating on a cloud. The two contrasting feelings left him in a complete daze, as though his mind could slip away at any moment.

But, he pushed through. Much like a Lineage Factor would give more benefits the longer one retained their consciousness, so too would the formation of the Second Star. Leonel had no intention of letting this opportunity go.

For some reason, he had still failed to awaken his Spear Force. And, he had yet to awaken his Metal Synergy Lineage either. In the end, the only option he had for increasing his power quickly were his Force Nodes and his constitution. And... They most definitely didn't let him down.

Leonel felt that not just his body, but his Internal Sight and his ability were strengthening many times over. Before, the region of sharpness for his Internal Sight was just 200 meters, but he felt it rapidly doubling. At the same time, he felt his Dream World growing sharper and could tell, even without testing it, that his simulations would be a few degrees more accurate. ρ??C(???????)

Leonel could once more sense the endless potential of his ability. It might not be as flashy as Damian's, but if he used it appropriately... The sky was the limit.

Over half a day later, Leonel finally opened his eyes, his body covered from head to toe in sweat. The situation was so bad that there was even a shallow puddle beneath him. Though his breathing was heavy, his eyes shone like two lanterns, a deep rooted confidence growing within him.

[Leonel Morales]

[Strength: 1.99; Speed: 1.78; Agility: 1.83; Coordination: 2.01; Stamina: 2.13 (+0.05 – nullified); Reactions: 2.03; Spirit: 2.32; Force: 0.60]

Leonel's new stats left him speechless. Just what kind of strength was this?

“Scan my ability.”

[*Ping*]

[Evolution Stage: Tier 3 Bronze]

[Evolution Type: Sensory]

[Evolution: Dream World, Dream Sculpt]

[Dream World: A virtual world formed in the mind capable of running simulations of the real world with a certain degree of accuracy.]

[Dream Sculpt: Ability to create a perfect, immutable, and unforgettable memory fragment with 100% accuracy.]

Leonel's eyes widened. 'My ability was Quasi Bronze before, but now it's Tier 3 Bronze?!'

Though Leonel didn't know much about this new world order, he was absolutely certain that having an ability that surpassed their Dimensional Grade was ridiculous. One had to remember that the 'Black Grade' was assigned to the Fourth Dimension. This was why high level abilities could swing battles so fiercely, especially since Earth was still a Pseudo Fourth Dimensional World.

Leonel had the equivalent of a Fifth Dimensional ability! Of course, this was still ranked very low amongst the Fifth Dimension, but its influence on the Pseudo Fourth Dimension could be imagined. After breaking through this barrier, Leonel was certain that his simulations would all be above 90% now.

'Hm?'

Leonel's eyes widened once more. He hadn't even finished being astonished by his improvement when he noticed something about his hands.

He had reached the Advanced Grade One designation...

