

Descent 121

Chapter 121

Leonel looked at his hands, feeling a bit shocked.Â

He was certain that he had still not reached Grade One designation yet even after almost two months of diligent training. But now, he had suddenly leaped over that and reached the Advanced Grade One designation? There was only one explanation'! [Dimensional Cleanse].

Leonel was pleasantly surprised. Did this mean that when he formed his Third Star he would be able to reach the Superior Grade One designation without forming Force Nodes in his hands?

Leonel's eyes brightened, immediately taking back all the disparaging remarks he had made about the technique's creator. Even now, he had vastly underestimated [Dimensional Cleanse], he had never thought it would be this good.

'I have to find a way to get my hands on the latter parts. If the upper portions are as good as this first part, that would be amazing.'

Leonel laughed like a little kid, testing out his fingers as though he was playing the air like a piano. He felt almost like a newborn baby with the coordination and strength of an adult. His fingers felt so fresh that he couldn't even crack them.Â

'I can finally listen to the third book.'ÂPANDA-NOVEL.COM

Leonel didn't care about anything else and immediately immersed himself within the teachings his father left behind. Unknowingly, Force Crafting had become less about a competition between him and his father and more about his own curiosity. Even he himself didn't realize just how eager he had been to learn more until now.

The feeling of being blocked off for so long left him feeling a bit anxious. But all that weight was now gone and he smiled like a little kid.Â

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A week later, Leonel finally stood on the deck of the wooden yacht. He could feel curious gazes shooting off toward him from time to time, but since Lieutenant Damian didn't say much about him, those around didn't question it either. They immediately knew that Leonel must be some new recruit.

Leonel wasn't paying very much attention to the stares, though. Instead, he was looking toward the behemoth of a structure in the distance. He had no idea that the mobile checkpoint would really be so monstrous.

It was a massive steel structure that stood like a metal box in the ocean. Even towering waves didn't seem capable of shifting it one way or another. It was so impossibly immobile that Leonel had a hard time believing that this place was capable of moving at all.

But, this was where the descriptions ended. Aside from some landing pads for helicopters and runways for planes, there were no other landmarks on the massive steel behemoth. Leonel could only guess that all of its most important structures were hidden within.

'What a feat!' Leonel thought with a light gasp.

"Impressive, huh kid?" Damian grinned, slapping Leonel's back hard.

"Shouldn't you be focused on steering the ship?"

If Leonel took his eyes off of the floating checkpoint, he could see numerous ships approaching from all angles. A few were even nearby and sailing along in parallel. But, none of these ships were wooden like Damian's. It was either Damian's sector had poor funding, or Damian purposely chose this design to make use of his ability.

Damian rubbed his nose, laughing lightly.

“So you saw through that too, huh? I only take control of the ship when we’re forced into a corner. It’s a trump card, so I don’t use it casually.”

“I see’|” Leonel mumbled.Â

“Hey, Lieutenant? Are you really still not going to tell us who the kid is?”

A lady wearing a skin-tight black jumpsuit walked over, her eyes watery with grievances as though she might start crying at any moment. The first thought Leonel had about her was that if catwoman was real and jumped out from her comic, this was what she would be like.Â

“He’s a new recruit, you can call him Leo.”

The lady’s eyes brightened. “In the past, new recruits never got to go to the checkpoint. It was only after the Metamorphosis began that they changed the rule to make an exception for a certain group of people. Don’t tell me you’re a Variant like Lieutenant?”

Many curious gazes looked over.Â

“Come on, kid. Show me your power, quick, quick. I’m curious.”

Leonel scratched the back of his head awkwardly.Â

“I can’t, my ability is a sensory type.”

The lady pouted in dissatisfaction, but her curiosity had been piqued. She had heard of Variants with all sorts of wild and crazy abilities. Her Lieutenant alone could overturn the oceans, just how crazy was that? But, she had never heard of a sensory type Variant. She wondered what Leonel could do.Â

“Alright, alright. Stop hounding the rookie. We’re here.”

At first, Leonel thought that the wooden yacht would crash into the side of the massive floating metal cube. But, instead, a tunnel opened up on the side.Â

Leonel was mystified. He wondered what sort of clever engineering allowed such a thing to happen without the whole compound being flooded with salt water. But, his thoughts didn't have much of a chance to linger on this before he was astonished once more.Â

The dark tunnel ended and flooded them with light, opening them up to a huge hidden city.Â

Leonel was quite used to big cities. After all, he traveled through one everyday to get to school barely a year earlier. But this one left him fascinated.Â

Without the sun, the city had no choice but to rely on high-res panels that simulated the sky. As though realizing this wasn't enough, the light yellow glow of lanterns could be seen dotted all around the skyline, looking like fireflies buzzing in the night.Â

The city below wasn't nearly as congested either. It had a homey feeling, as though everyone knew everyone else.Â

The most magical thing, though, was its reminiscence of Venice, Italy, a city Leonel had read about in the past. The large wooden yacht could float through the city with ease, allowing Leonel to take everything in.Â

It was beautiful.Â

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The wooden yacht slowly went through the city, following loops and curls until it finally docked at a busy harbor.

Up ahead, a building that looked quite similar to a grand city hall stood. Instead of having doors, it had large archways that accepted ingoing and outgoing traffic. The entire first floor was open to the wind and elements while the above floors stood on the archways as though they were their legs.

Of the many docked ships at the harbor, groups of people walked out. They were all armed with various weapons. Some wore half or full armors, others wore robes like priests, and some others were dressed quite normally. If it wasn't for the Metamorphosis, Leonel would have thought this to be some sort of comic convention.

"Let's go." Damian spoke to his team before turning his attention to Leonel.

"This building is called the Southern Lookout. Those with Sectors located in the south have to come here to report every half year. In addition, it's also the place we come to introduce the new members of our elite teams."

Leonel nodded in understanding and followed along, sweeping his Internal Sight over as much as he could and committing them to memory.

Soon, the group had lined up in a long queue. The process somewhat baffled Leonel. Why was all of this so bureaucratic?PANDA-NOVEL.COM

"... the rankings had some movement."

"Really? What happened?"

"I heard that 'Chasing Wind' killed a target with an S-grade evaluation so they moved up from the fourth spot to the third, pushing down 'Thunderous Clap' by one."

Leonel, in all his boredom, caught a few conversations with his Internal Sight. He found that he could use this sixth sense of his not only as an eye in the sky, but also as an extension of his other senses. If he wanted to, he could even 'feel' like he was touching someone who was hundreds of meters away from him.

That said, he was very careful with this ability. For one, it drained his spirit much faster than when he just used it for sight. Secondly, when he used it as an extension of his touch, others seemed to notice. And, thirdly... let's just say he had regretted using it as an extension of his nose already. It was just once, but to him, that was enough for a lifetime.

“There are rankings?” Leonel asked Damian. PANDA NOVEL

“Rankings? Yes. How do you know about that?”

“I just overheard a conversation. Something about ‘Chasing Wind’ and ‘Thunderous Clap’?”

“Hehe, you’ve heard of them too, kid?” Catwoman, as Leonel liked to refer to her, interjected, pushing her soft cheeks between the arms of Damian and Leonel.

“According to the higher ups, youths below the age of 30 adapt to the Metamorphosis far better than the older generation does. It’s an unfortunate reality, but the truth. Our abilities have far more room for evolution than those old fogies.

“The ranking is just a little competition between the shining stars of the Slayer Legion. We have a list called the ‘Empire’s Swine’ list. Threats are ranked on it. In order to move up the ‘Promising Future’ rankings, you gain contribution points from taking out threats on that list.”

When Leonel heard this, his interest dimmed down by several measures. He had no intention of getting so involved with the Slayer Legion, and even if he did, he didn’t very much like the idea of targeting people just because they were a little talented. If they had committed atrocities, that was one thing. But if they were just casually living their lives and making contributions to the Empire, Leonel didn’t believe that they deserved to die. p??(???????)

However, there was still one more thing he was curious about.

“ ‘Chasing Wind’ and ‘Thunderous Clap’, those are aliases?”

“Mhm, mhm.” Catwoman answered for Damian once again. “The real name of such talents are always hidden. We have our own confidential system to verify their contributions. But, the top priority is ensuring that they’re not in turn targeted by the Empire.”

Leonel nodded, finally understanding. If possible, he would also like to go by an alias.

An hour later, it was finally their turn. They made it to the front to find a long counter. Behind each station, there was an older gentleman or woman waiting. According to Damian, they were rebels who had already retired from service. Obviously, the Slayer Legion wouldn't treat them poorly after they had given their whole lives to the cause. So, many of the simpler, less physically intensive, tasks were given to them.

However, they might have been a bit too old because the man manning the counter Damian, Leonel and the others were assigned to was dozing off to the point of lightly snoring. Even after ringing the small bell on the counter, he wasn't stirred.

It was only after the impatient catwoman pressed the bell a few times in a row that the old man's head, which had been nodding away, snapped awake.

The old man groggily yawned, smacking his lips as though telling himself that the nap was good. The members of Damian's team seemed to realize that it wasn't the catwoman's actions who woke the old man up, but rather that he got up because he felt like it. Toward this, they could only bitterly smile.

Though this old man was just a receptionist, they couldn't afford to be rude. Sometimes, the retirees here were once bigwigs who surpassed even Damian's brother in rank. Even when they weren't such big shots, the Slayer Legion protected them to a fault. After all, if an organization didn't protect their veterans, they were finished. Who would wholeheartedly work for them?

So, they could only watch as the old man picked up a phone by the counter and dialed a number.

"... Yes... Mhm... The usual please... Extra cheese and meat... Don't forget to leave a kiss on the box like you usually do..." The old man giggled lewdly, almost like he was a teen secretly chatting with his girlfriend while trying not to wake his parents up.

The catwoman was irritated many times and was even muttering to herself, but the old man pretended not to hear anything.

After a while, he set down the phone. But, just when Damian was ready to step forward... he actually reached toward his pocket and pulled out a box of cigarettes.

“... Ah, break time.” He said with a light smile, about to walk away.

Black lines formed across Damian’s forehead. If the old man really left, they would need to join another queue, all to wait yet another hour. Others couldn’t help but look toward them with pitying gazes.

Just as the old man was about to leave, he swept a glance over the group as though to apologize. But who would believe he was sincere with the way he had acted until now?

It was then, though, that his gaze stopped on Leonel who also had a bitter smile on his face.

The old man’s eyes widened. “It’s you!”

Leonel blinked in confusion. ‘Could it be this man knows what I did at the Fort? That wouldn’t be good right...?’

He looked toward Damian with a bit of worry in his eyes, but he could have never expected what he heard next.

“Leonel Morales, right? Greatest quarterback prospect in the last century? Can I have your autograph?!”

At this point, let alone everyone else, even Leonel was speechless.

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Leonel scratched the back of his head, feeling a bit embarrassed.

The truth was, even he, himself, had almost forgotten just how famous he was. But, he had neglected that fact for good reason.

First, it had been too long. His life of training everyday for football seemed like a lifetime ago. After all, it had been a bit over a year now since the Metamorphosis began and he had experienced longer than that within Zones.

Second, even if he was still playing football, people coming up to him like this was rare. After all, he usually lived on a Paradise Island. Everyone who lived on one was like family. They had watched him grow up, so obviously they wouldn't fanboy over him. And, when he wasn't home, he was on campus. Who on their campus wasn't an elite of an elite, obviously they wouldn't fawn over him like this.

Thirdly, he had still been an academy student. His level of fame compared to a player in the NFL was still lacking. It could be said that he was only approaching them in name recognition because he was among the very best academy players of all time.

And, finally... football was a sport where everyone wore helmets. The average fan wouldn't be very familiar with his face to begin with. Only those who loved the sport and followed it diligently would know his face at first glance like this old man did. PANDA-NOVEL.COM

Still, the embarrassment Leonel was feeling wasn't because the old man had spoken too loudly or even because numerous gazes had fallen onto him. Rather, he was embarrassed that he had neglected something so important.

How was he supposed to keep hiding his identity like this? By now, at the very least, those in the immediate vicinity all knew his name. And, because he hadn't thought anyone would be able to link his face to the Fort incident, he hadn't come with his face covered either.

It seemed he had made another mistake.

"Sure." Leonel finally said, knowing he didn't have much of a way out of this.

The old man laughed like a little kid. His thoughts of going out for a smoke were thrown to the back of his mind. He hounded Leonel with questions, not minding the weird gazes he was getting. [PANDA-NOVEL](http://PANDA-NOVEL.COM)

It was only then that those who didn't follow football began asking around and finally learned a bit about who Leonel was. Of course, you couldn't expect everyone to be sports fans, but this day was the day Leonel learned that even those who couldn't be said to be his fans still recognized his name.

Leonel smiled bitterly. 'It seems that Royal Blue Academy made quite a bit of money marketing my name. Shouldn't I be a rich man, then? Why haven't I seen any of that money?'

"... Ah, look at me." The old man smacked his own forehead. "I completely forgot to introduce myself. You can call me Hutch or Old Man Hutch. I'm a big fan of yours, Morales. The game has gotten softer over the years, so I had lost interest in watching the NAFL. On a whim, I decided to watch the Academy League and haven't missed a single game of yours since. It's such a shame that the NAFL has been suspended until further notice, or else I would have loved to watch you teach those so-called professionals how to play."

The old man rambled on and on. He seemingly had an endless supply of air to give to his words.

'This man's breath control is outstanding.' p???

Others might gloss over this, but Leonel was shocked. Ever since he formed his Fourth and Fifth Nodes into his lungs, he had been experimenting with breath control. It was a wonder just how much of a difference a perfectly timed breath made to power output. There was a reason there was a recommended breathing rhythm whenever one lifted weights.

Damian, the catwoman, and the others, though, were frozen.

"Vixen..." Damian mumbled toward the catwoman in a low voice. "... What did he just say his name was? Did I hear correctly?"

The catwoman gulped, her alluring aura completely gone.

"H-Hutch... He definitely said Hu – Hutch..."

“He couldn’t mean the Hacker Hutch, right...?”

The catwoman’s lips trembled, but she didn’t dare to nod. Because if she did, the reality would be too scary.

Hutch was a legend. He was one of the best software engineers in history and unsurprisingly gained a Five Star evaluation during his Gene Analysis Exam.

However, this wasn’t a reason to fear him, one might say. Was there a need to be afraid of such a man? So what if he was good with computers?

And therein lied the problem.... The Hacker Hutch was a play on words. He was known for his wizardry in software engineering. But, he was even more known for hacking his opponents to death.

In a civilization of advanced technology like theirs, there should have been no reason for anyone to use weapons in such a fashion. It was barely alright now that the Metamorphosis had descended. However, obviously, Hutch was retired, so his era was long before the Metamorphosis.

Just what kind of sick, sadistic person did you need to be to gain such a nickname in this era? He had all sorts of fantastical weapons to choose from that would cause the military officials of the 21st century to drool. Even during his era, even mechsuits fitted with machine guns wasn’t an impossible ask.

Yet... The old man preferred a blade. Not just any blade either, but specifically a machete.

That was right, the amiable old man fanboying over Leonel without a care in the world, even tossing aside his own dignity without a care for the thoughts of others, was a man known for dissecting his enemies with a bloody, rusted machete. It was certain that even the upper echelons of the Empire feared his name.

As for his former title, it was above even Joseph’s Vice Commander title. In his prime, he was known as Supreme Hutch. That alone was four levels of rank beyond Joseph.

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Under Hutch's rain of questions, Leonel could only smile and take it. Compared to this old man, he wasn't nearly as passionate about football, but he didn't mind talking about the game he devoted so much of his life to. Even compared to the old man who seemed to have dedicated his whole retirement to the sport, he was several levels above.

"... Aiya, I has hoped to one day become a coach, but it seems that my knowledge is still too lacking. As expected, as expected."

Leonel's lip twitched. How would a rebel become a coach, exactly? He'd be lucky if the Empire didn't point all their weapons toward him the moment he even stepped foot into one of their provinces.

However, Hutch seemed completely unaware of his status. Or, maybe he was just so free and unrestrained that he dared to do anything. He was quite an adorable old man, Leonel couldn't help but take a liking to him.

Of course, Leonel had no idea about his past. If others knew he was calling Hacker Hutch adorable, the weird gazes he received would probably drown him in embarrassment.

"Ai, look at me, rambling on and on. You came here for the check-in, right? No problem, no problem. Just have your leader come forward." PANDA-NOVEL.COM

Leonel smiled and turned toward Damian. But, his expression turned a bit weird when he saw just how pale Damian's face was. Was there a need to react like this? It can't be that Damian was a fan as well, right?

After a while, Damian realized that he should probably pull himself together. If he made Hacker Hutch wait, who knew if this old man wouldn't hack him to pieces next.

He cleared his throat with maybe too much strength before stepping forward.

“Yes, your honorable. We’re here for our biannual check-in. I’ve already prepared the report, please take a look.”

How could he dare to call Hacker Hutch by his name? Let alone the fact he didn’t know if the old man was fond of his nickname or not. PANDA NOVEL

Damian respectfully handed a file over. If one opened it up, one wouldn’t find words at all. Rather, it was all written in a special kind of braille that was almost imperceptible to the eye. This ‘braille’ was a special language that only the computers of the Slayer Legion could understand. This allowed the process to be expedited and also kept confidential.

However, what shocked Damian was that instead of feeding the files into the computer like one was supposed to, Hutch actually began to... read it? What the hell was going on?

“Hm? Why don’t I see anything about Morales on here?”

Damian’s eyes widened. It can’t be that the old man actually read it, right? That’s impossible! Let alone the fact it was hard to even see the braille, each file was encoded. The possible combinations couldn’t even be counted in the trillions. How was this even possible?

“... He is a new recruit. Actually, we were planning on registering him today as well.” ρ??√??????

“Oh? So it’s like this? Alright. I’ll register him beneath my Fleet, then.”

Once more, Damian was struck speechless. But, before he could refute, the old man had agilely leapt over the counter and grabbed Leonel’s shoulder. Leonel couldn’t even react before he felt an undeniable strength take hold of his body.

“Your body is pretty good, Morales. Didn’t expect that. Let’s go.”

Like a little boat in a storm, Leonel could only helplessly disappear behind the counter, Hutch’s hand latching onto his shoulder like a clamp.

Damian, the catwoman, and the others watched on without knowing how to react.

“... Lieutenant, what just happened...?”

Damian cleared his throat. “I hope that kid doesn’t blame me. This really isn’t my fault at all.”

Damian knew that Leonel didn’t want to get tied up with the Slayer Legion, he only wanted to partner up with them for a moment. However, the attack of a Fort was too large of an operation. After all, there were only eight such structures on the Ascension Continent.

If Damian were to report such a campaign during the next check-in but be unable to provide a proper accounting for Leonel, it would lead to some problems.

Think for a moment if there was a lieutenant who suddenly succeeded in something grand, but the members of his team were very obviously unable to accomplish such a thing alone. Wouldn’t this raise suspicions? What if this was a scheme set up by the Empire to give one of their spies more merits?

In that case, Damian had no choice but to get Leonel properly vetted, or else instead of gaining from this expedition, he might lose out terribly instead and even be labeled as a potential traitor.

Leonel understood this as well, which was why he didn’t fight against coming here even though he knew it wasn’t the safest choice. But, he could have never expected that he would be abducted by a madman in such a way. Why was he so unlucky?

If Hutch was a normal man, everything would be fine. It wouldn’t be a big deal. But, a Supreme held a completely different connotation.

The ‘Fleet’ Hutch mentioned was the largest denomination within the Slayer Legion. Only a Supreme could head a Fleet and there were only four Fleets in the Legion. Being personally pulled into a Fleet like this was practically like dragging Leonel into quicksand.

Damian could imagine how bitter Leonel would be. He went from only partnering with the Slayer Legion to suddenly being hounded by one of their highest ranking members.

But, there was another problem here. If Hutch was in this place, it meant that he should have long since retired. He didn't head a Fleet anymore, so how would he pull someone in?

Who would have known that a day later, a certain bit of news would rock the Slayer Legion?

Supreme Mighelle, after only ten years in the position, abdicated.

This alone would have been shocking enough had others not gossiped about seeing him walking out from his headquarters with swollen lips and a forehead several sizes larger than it had been just that morning.

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Leonel sat blankly staring at a wall.

It had already been three days since he came to this checkpoint city, and he had stared at this wall for who knew how many hours, but his brain refused to wake up from this dream. How the hell had he gotten here?

'How is that old man so powerful? I feel like I can't do anything to him...'

Leonel felt quite helpless. He felt that that day the old man took him away, he had most definitely not used Force. Leonel's senses were too sharp to miss something like that. What was even more shocking, though, was the fact that the old man's stats were pushing 3.00. This is what truly left Leonel speechless.

If it was just this strength, it would be insane enough. But, what truly shocked Leonel about the old man was the sturdiness of his body. He was almost like the Metal Invalid Leonel met all those months ago. But, unlike that Invalid, his stats hadn't been tempered down by his own weight.

After some thought, Leonel's mind drifted toward something in particular. When his father retired as a general, he had gone to work as a researcher. It was while in that position that he produced the vomit brew Leonel was forced to consume daily. PANDA-NOVEL.COM

To this day, Leonel didn't know what the name of that department was. All he knew was that his father was involved in the evolution of human food and the consumption of it. The Ascension Empire had brought technology basically to its upper limits, so they wanted to test the limits of the human body.

If the Empire could run such tests, why couldn't the rebel army do so as well? If Hutch was part of these experiments and could be considered a success, then maybe the waters of Earth were far deeper than he thought.

But, if such was the case, then why was Hutch the first person he had seen with such ridiculous stats? If such a good thing existed, Leonel believed that the old man definitely wouldn't be the only one to benefit.

For example, the Governor Duke's son had stats that could barely be considered average among non-athletic humans even before the Metamorphosis. If the son of a Governor Duke wasn't allowed to partake in such benefits, how could others?

Of course, there was the possibility that only the Slayer Legion had access to such technology. But, if that was the case... wouldn't the Empire have been taken down long ago? What could they do against a legion of super humans? PANDA NOVEL

'Maybe I'm just over thinking all of this. What if the rebels have someone amongst them like that monocle wearing prick? If someone awoke the abilities to alter their genetics, that could explain it too... But if that was the case, why would they choose an old man first?'

"Agghh."

Leonel ruffled his hair with both had as though trying to hurry his brain to the answer. But, not unexpectedly, he failed.

PENG!

At that moment, someone threw a kick at Leonel's door, sending it flying off the hinges... again.

ρ??∫??????

“Time to train!”

Leonel's expression darkened. “Old Hutch, I've already told you a million times, I have no intention of joining the Slayer Legion. If you keep treating me like this, the day you train me to be your better is the day I'll directly betray the Slayer Legion.”

If other rebels knew that Leonel was speaking to Hacker Hutch like this, they would plop to the ground in fear for him. Who of the rebels dared to speak to this madman in this way? Wasn't that just asking for death?

“HAHAHA!” Hutch laughed uproariously. “Speak of that the day you defeat me. Otherwise, obediently listen to me, boy!”

Leonel felt helpless. Did this old man really think he couldn't defeat him? If Leonel activated his Force, his stats would also be pushing 3.00. If he used his Spear Domain Lineage Factor on top of that, defeating Hutch wouldn't be impossible.

Unfortunately, this entire city hidden without a block of metal was covered in Force disrupting towers. And, secondly, even if it wasn't, Leonel would still feel hesitant. The spear was a killing weapon, after all. And, his Lineage Factor didn't seem to activate when he used blunt weapons. Though he was annoyed by the old man, he definitely didn't want to kill him.

When Hutch first took him away, Leonel thought that he just wanted to talk more about football. But who knew that when this old man sensed how strong his body was when he resisted being pulled away that he would actually react so crazily?

First, he stormed into Supreme Mighelle's Fleet headquarters and claimed that he would be taking over. When Supreme Mighelle obviously resisted, he beat him to the point he was black and blue.

Then, he claimed a 'Promising Future' quota for Leonel, directly booting one of the youths who had previously held the position away in favor of him. It was suffice to say that this enraged a great many people, but Old Hutch was a madman that seemed to do whatever he wanted.

Even after Leonel explained that he wanted nothing to do with that ranking, Old Hutch actually brought out a stick and started whacking him with it in the name of 'training'. No matter what logic Leonel used, the old man didn't seem to care in the slightest.

Leonel's shoulder was clamped down once again and he once more let out a helpless sigh.

"Old Hutch, I'm definitely not participating in that Promise Tournament."

"You have no choice, Morales. Who asked you to now represent my face? Not only must you participate, you must get first place."

Leonel almost couldn't refrain from rolling his eyes. Why did he say it like he asked for this? He most definitely didn't ask for this.

"I don't need your training to get first place even if I did participate." Leonel said, a bit annoyed. Who wouldn't be annoyed in his current condition? He was currently flying like a kite in the air because this damned old man was running too fast.

"Hohoho, you look like a good little prep boy, but I see right through you. You're actually so arrogant. If those other youngins heard you, you wouldn't even need me to enrage them. You'd do it by yourself.

"Hehe, good thing I recorded you."

Leonel was left speechless once again before almost fainting in rage. But, the old man didn't seem to notice as he was once more dragged to the training grounds.

Old Hutch threw Leonel out when they reached the training ground. A normal person might have fallen and rolled a couple times, but Leonel was able to regain his bearing and land on his feet, a helpless expression in his eyes.

The old man walked to the side toward a rack of weapons. Well, one might call it a rack of weapons, but it was more accurate to call it a rack of machetes. This old man apparently didn't allow any other weapons to enter his sight.

The training ground was old and dilapidated. It was located in the basement of a place Leonel could only assume was Old Hutch's home. The ground was built of broken concrete, the ceilings were covered in half shattered light bulbs that probably hadn't appeared in a home since the 20th century, and there was a faint musty smell of sweat that hung in the air.

"Old Hutch, I've told you again and again that I have no interest in using a machete as my weapon. I use spears."

"Hmph, the machete is a man's weapon. I'll be damned if you're going to waste your talent." The old man snorted but then smiled. "That said, if you show me a bit of your skill, I might change my mind."

Leonel was exasperated. This back and forth conversation sounded like it was the first time they were having it, but the truth was that this had happened two times before already. However, Leonel was really reaching the end of his rope this time.

The more time he spent with this old man, the less adorable he thought he was and the more pissed off he got. The first few times, it might have been a funny story to tell in the future, but now it was becoming an annoyance that was ruining his future plans.

Aina was in who knows how much danger right now. Miles and Simeon were still sucking air and Leonel had no idea what plot the latter was potentially laying down. After all, he didn't believe that that gorilla-man had popped up out of thin air. And, Leonel still had no idea where his father was. PANDA-NOVEL.COM

"Fine."

Leonel's furious gaze calmed to the point of lacking ripples. His abrupt change caused Old Hutch to raise his brows. He had expected Leonel to react just the same as he had the previous two days, disdainingly to fall for his taunts.

Over the past two days, Leonel had completely ignored the old man, only casually brandishing a machete to get him off his back. But now, Leonel had reached the limit of his patience.

With a flip of his palm, a silver rod appeared in his hand. He stood tall, his tranquil gaze bearing down on the old man.

Old Hutch looked toward the rod in curiosity. "That's what you call a spear?"

"I'd prefer not to kill an old man just seeking companionship." Leonel said indifferently.

Old Hutch blinked before bursting into an uproarious laughter. PANDA NOVEL

"Kill me? I knew it, I knew it. You really are an overconfident little brat —."

The old man might have wanted to say more, but Leonel had already moved. His body was lithe and flexible. Somehow, despite moving in a straight line, it felt as though he had cut off all paths of retreat.

"Oh?" The curiosity of Old Hutch was suddenly piqued.

With a crooked grin, the old man stepped forward, swinging his machete down. It seemed like a casual movement, but Leonel could feel the weight of a mountain behind it. This old man... was strong.

However, Leonel wasn't the same as he was just a few days ago. He had always felt that he was missing something when it came to imitating the primitive woman, but now, he knew what it was. It was flexibility.

Though men had certain advantages when it came to martial arts, so too did women. The primitive woman especially seemed to move as though her bones were made of water and her flesh was carved of dew. That sort of flexibility was exactly what Leonel had been missing this hold time.

However, flexibility wasn't something one could casually improve upon. It took years of consistency to reach such a point. And, even those who could boast great flexibility would show decline in their abilities if they slacked off. $\rho \int \dots$

Luckily for Leonel, after forming his Two Star Constitution, his body had been remolded. In everything beside his size and strength, he was practically like a newborn baby, allowing him to lay an even better foundation of flexibility for himself.

Not only did this allow him to break through to the Advanced Grade One designation, but it allowed him to imitate the movements of the primitive woman to a much greater degree.

BANG!

The tip of Leonel's rod perfectly met the old man's blade edge. However, instead of rebounding off of each other, they seemed to become stuck, causing Leonel's eyes to widen.

He pulled his rod back, deftly dodging Old Hutch's follow up strike, but the result was the same.

Leonel's brow furrowed, his gaze becoming more serious. This time, he no longer held back.

A ran of piercing strikes came at the old man from all sides. Leonel's speed was inconceivable, fluttering around the old man as though his stamina was endless.

His rod fell like droplets of rain, blurring shadows of silver streaking across the room as he attacked the man from all angles.

Yet, no matter what he did, his rod always seemed to become stuck to Old Hutch's machete as though they were two parts destined to be fitted together.

Leonel's gaze narrowed. He was shocked by the ability of this old man. Even relying on the skills of the primitive man and woman, he seemed completely unable to find an opportunity to break through his defenses.

With a flicker of his eyes, the rod in Leonel's hands vanished, only to be replaced by a true spear. His aura completely changed and the pressure bearing down on Old Hutch multiplied severalfold.

The old man couldn't help but blink in surprise. In a moment, his casual appearance became serious as his feet finally began to shift.

As Leonel's blood boiled, his power seemed to multiply. He was completely immersed in the feeling, he could almost smell the old man's defeat.

His heart yearned for it. He wanted nothing more than victory.

It was maybe only at this moment that it became clear that it wasn't that Leonel didn't have any ambition, but rather that he only had this simple wish. To always win. Nothing else mattered.

Seeing the look in Leonel's eye, despite the pressure on him, the old man grinned.

“What a good kid... Unfortunately, you're still several decades too young to think of defeating me.”

Suddenly, the man's aura changed as well. Though it was just the faintest of light, Leonel's senses were too sharp to miss the slight glow that coated the old man's blade.

SSSHUUUUUU

The machete's edge perfectly met the tip of Leonel's spear. The spear's prism-like tip stopped in the air for but a moment before it was split. In fact, the machete continued down and would have chopped Leonel's hand off had Old Hutch not shown mercy.

Leonel's steps paused, looking at his ruined spear with a shocked gaze. His breath hung heavily in the air as his chest heaved. It was only now that he realized he had been battling the old man for a few hours and was exhausted. But, he didn't have a mind to think of that.

“Force... That was definitely Force... But it was different at the same time... Blade Force...?”

Chapter 127

Leonel was astonished. This Force could be used beneath the disruption of the towers?

He didn't know much about Force Strengthening Deviations, nor had he ever seen one. But, he was quite certain that what he had just seen was Blade Force.

Leonel's father had said that there were certain things about the Spear Domain heirloom that he wasn't allowed to know until he grasped Spear Force, but even to this day, he had still not yet grasped it. Who would have known that this damned old man would have long since comprehended it?

At this point, Leonel came to another understanding. The old man's strength wasn't because of an ability or because of some special food. The reason his body was so strong was precisely due to his Blade Force.

From Leonel's minor understanding, Force Strengthening Deviations weren't as simple as just making one's weapon more powerful.

First of all, not all of them were related to weapons. And, secondly, even those that were could grow and nurture the body, strengthening it over time.

The old man must have comprehended Blade Force a very long time ago, likely even before the Metamorphosis, allowing his body to be much stronger than others. In this case, his strength made much more sense.PANDA-NOVEL.COM

When a Force Strengthening Deviation was comprehended, it would take form in the Ethereal Glabella, exactly like Leonel's Stars. In fact, the Stars in Leonel's Ethereal Glabella could be classified as Force

Strengthening Deviations as well. It was just that whereas Spear Force would make a spear's attack more potent, the Stars in Leonel's mind nurtured his spirit and quickened his recovery of it!

Hearing Leonel's words, Old Hutch was stunned before he broke out into laughter.

"So you know about Blade Force, little brat? Not bad, not bad. I have indeed comprehended Blade Force. I was 42 years old back then, now I'm almost 150."

Leonel felt a bit numb when he heard this. Though technology had extended life expectancy, from the 21st century to the 25th, a normal lifespan only went from 80 years to about 120. However, he had never heard of a 150 year old man capable of jumping around like a spry monkey.

At the same time, Leonel finally felt a heartfelt respect for the old man. Comprehending Force related abilities back when Earth was still a Third Dimensional world was difficult beyond imagining. This old man's talent in blade arts was most definitely outstanding.

"Old Hutch, teach me how to comprehend Spear Force and I'll participate in the tournament for you."
PANDA NOVEL

Leonel's pale green eyes shone brightly. For a moment, they were like lanterns in the dull light of the basement, boring holes into the old man's body.

However, instead of receiving the answer he thought he would, Leonel saw Hutch frown for the first time in the three days he had known him.

"Morales, do you think comprehending Blade Force is a joke? I thought before, when you were insisting on using the spear, that you had some lingering attachments to it. This is why I was willing to let you show me your talent. But, from what I see, you have no real attachments to the spear at all, you didn't even react when I destroyed your weapon. How could you possibly comprehend Spear Force with your current mindset? How could you gain the acknowledgment of a weapon if you don't love it?"

"Love it?" Leonel's expression changed.

Did he love the spear? The simple answer was no. It was a weapon he randomly picked up only because it was convenient. He had snatched it from a small gang who dared to speak inappropriately of his Aina. After that, he just so happened to learn that he had a spear related Lineage Factor, so he stuck with the spear. It wasn't more complicated than this for him.

But even setting this aside, Leonel couldn't understand why it was that the old man said he had to love his spear to comprehend Spear Force. None of this made any sense. He couldn't find a logical reason for why love would be necessary to the equation. ρ??C??????

If it was about this, then didn't that mean Leonel would never comprehend Spear Force? It wasn't like he could fake his love for a weapon right? If he learned that he had a sword, or machete, or bow and arrow Lineage Factor right now, he wouldn't hesitate to leave the Spear behind.

To him, the spear was just a tool. Why was there a need to love it?

Seeing Leonel's changing expression, the old man shook his head. If it was so easy to pass on comprehensions like this, nothing in the world would be difficult.

After a moment, Leonel took a deep breath.

"Old Hutch, show me your Blade Force just one more time."

Leonel's mind was difficult for others to understand. He was a kind soul, but he was equally as cold and calculating. He had a soft heart, but he couldn't stand losing. He was capable of feeling pity that his spear was now destroyed... but he couldn't feel that heartbroken emotion Old Hutch expected from him.

Old Hutch's initial instinct was to reject, but after seeing Leonel's staunch gaze, he sighed.

"Fine, fine. I will show you once more. Consider it repayment for kidnapping you."

'Oh, so you're aware that you kidnapped me too, huh?'

Though he said this, Leonel still felt a sense of loss. He could see that Old Hutch had lost interest in him after seeing him exert his spearmanship. It wasn't because he wasn't talented enough or because he wasn't skilled enough, it was rather because he didn't care about the weapon in his hand.

At such thoughts, Leonel could only shrug. He couldn't force himself to have emotions he didn't have. But, that lit a fire in his heart nonetheless.

He had to love his weapon to comprehend Spear Force? Bullshit. He would show this damned old man who had been annoying him all this time that he needed no such thing.

A vast, boundless aura shrouded the basement room as Leonel focused his entire being on the machete in Old Hutch's hands. He didn't even notice that Hutch's eyes flickered with killing intent he quickly suppressed.

'This damned brat, if I didn't stop myself in time, his aura would have made me lash out to kill him. I thought I was on the battlefield meeting a formidable opponent for a second...' Old Hutch shook his head. '... Still, you have so much talent yet you're wasting it. You place so many things below your vision, so you hardly care about anything at all. I want to teach you a lesson, but I'm afraid that our Slayer Legion really doesn't have many at your age who can defeat you.'

'But, I won't bring those brats out. If I did, they would at most be able to match you. By then, you would think that maybe the road you're on is fine, when the reality is that you should be far better than them. You're hampering your own progress...

'In that case, I'll allow you to despair for a bit. Without humbling yourself, reaching the pinnacle is impossible.'

A violent surge of wind whipped around the training grounds, leaving Leonel in a trance.

On that day, the Southern Lookout was in an uproar. It might have even been more accurate to say that a tempest of rage had swept over it, stifling them to the point that they couldn't wait to vent their anger on somebody.

One might think that this rage was due to some actions the Empire took against them. After all, this was the mighty Slayer Legion. They were an organization created for the sake of taking down the behemoth that ruled Earth. Who else could enrage them so much if not their sworn enemy?

But, reality was cruel and usually very far from expectations. This time around, the entity that had enraged them wasn't the mighty Empire at all, but rather a little boy of barely 18 years old. In fact, this boy had only joined them for all of three days, yet managed to claim all of their ire.

First, it was said that he was taken under the wing of Hacker Hutch, the very man who smacked the face of Supreme Mighelle in public.

If it was only this, maybe the young man could dodge the guilt by association label, however, what came next was even worse. A recording of the young man saying that he could rank first among the Promising Youths even with Hacker Hutch's training was released, leaving the young men and women of the Slayer Legion fuming.

As though that wasn't enough, just today, the young man's alias was finally released.PANDA-NOVEL.COM

Everyone knew that all those who could list on the 'Promising Future' rankings were all youths with great potential that had caught the eye of various higher ups.

The truth was that not everyone could appear on the list just because they wanted to. If one wanted to have their progress tracked and their feats seen by all, it was necessary to gain the acknowledgment of an official of at least the Commander rank, a step above Joseph.

Only upon receiving this recommendation would others start paying attention to you. In addition, your name would appear at the bottom of the Promising Future rankings.

In order to protect these youths, aliases were chosen. In addition, whenever appearing in public, each of these youths would wear specialized masks created by the Research and Technology units of the Slayer Legion.

The name one chose was incredibly important. After all, it would follow them for a lifetime. Choosing a name was akin to branding yourself. PANDA NOVEL

However... Who could have imagined that that arrogant prick would choose the name: 'Indomitable'.

Compared to the other names on the rankings that were usually formed of word couplets or poetic sayings, the singular word at the very bottom stood out to everyone. When this was coupled with the news they had been receiving over the last few days, it was easy to guess what the public opinion toward the young man 'Indomitable' was.

As for the man in question, Leonel himself, he would likely want to cry tears if he was aware. But, the truth of the matter was that he wasn't. As for the name? Of course he wasn't the one who chose it. In fact, he wasn't even aware of what was happening. He was completely engrossed in his spear.

One would think that if he was practicing, he would be testing out his movements, maybe redoing the same attack again and again. But, Leonel was actually frozen in place.

Ever since Old Hutch performed the last move, Leonel hadn't moved a single inch. He stood there, staring into space. p??(???????)

His actions caused the old man to sigh and shake his head. Sometimes, the old wanted to pass on their wisdom to the young, but would the young always listen? Unfortunately, there were some things in life that could only be learned through trial, error and continuous failure.

He believed that Leonel's attempts were foolish and had even told the little brat as much, but Leonel obviously wasn't listening.

What he wasn't aware of, though, was that in his mind, Leonel was replaying his long battle with the old man over and over again. Then, he would replay his final demonstration of Blade Force before cycling it all back to the beginning again.

Leonel didn't believe it. Everything he had learned about Force was so logical up until now. Even the energy itself was rooted in concepts of quantum physics. He didn't believe that something like Blade or Spear Force suddenly became so arbitrary.

Unlike what the old man was thinking, Leonel didn't actually disregard his words. In fact, Leonel believed that the old man wasn't lying to him. Or, at the very least, he believed he wasn't lying. And, this thought alone was enough for Leonel.

What was it? What was it that a veteran like Old Hutch could confuse for such an arbitrary feeling? What could trick him to such an extent?

'Love... That wasn't what he was talking about... He meant unconditional love... That's the kind of feeling he has for his machete.'

It was a small difference in wording, but the moment Leonel had the thought, his eyes shone like two stars.

'Unconditional love... unconditional love... The root of unconditional love is unconditional trust, it's based in instinct. A mother or father loves their child simply because the baby is theirs. On the surface, it seems no more complicated than this. However, this 'instinct' is still rooted in logic. It's the will to see their offspring grow, to continue their bloodline, to not have their families come to an end by their hands... to continue to leave their mark on history...'

The light in Leonel's eyes grew brighter and brighter. At one point, they became like burning torches, the paleness of his eyes disappearing to give way to two flashing emerald gems that could light the night sky.

Leonel felt like he understood something.

What Old Hutch thought of as 'unconditional love' was just an unconscious reliance on his own talent for blade arts. He trusted his own talent to the point it could be described as instinctual, as a part of himself. This trust, this love, this unconditional love, and further, this unconditional trust, is what allowed him to comprehend Blade Force in such a poor environment.

Leonel, too, could rely on this unconditional love. If he fell back and stopped trying to find logical reasonings at every corner, he could have relied on his Lineage Factor to comprehend Spear Force no differently than Hutch relied on his talent. In fact, by now, Leonel's Spear Force could have long since surpassed Hutch's Blade Force by leaps and bounds. All he had to do was have that same unconditional trust in his own talent, to blindly follow it and allow it to lead the way...

But this wasn't the kind of person Leonel was. He didn't like the feeling of being led by the nose, even if it was his own bloodline. He liked to understand the root of things, to comprehend them to the point of making them his own.

By now, Leonel understood. The reason his Lineage Factor had had such a small effect on him to this point was because he wasn't trusting it as much as he should. He didn't have the blind faith in it someone else would have... At the same time, it made sense why his father had left so little about Spear Force in the dictionary. There was no need to explain Spear Force because Leonel's Lineage Factor should have told him about everything he needed to know!

This 'love' Hutch spoke about wasn't his path. He could rely on his Lineage Factor, but he didn't want to. He wanted to comprehend his Lineage Factor, to unveil all of its secrets and allow it to lay bare before him. Rather than relying on instinct, he wanted to rely on logic, on reasoning...

It might have sounded very fancy, but it boiled down to one point.

He wanted to win. He wanted to be Indomitable.

Chapter 129

On this day, the Southern Lookout was bustling. Actually, it could be said that the past week was easily the liveliest time of the year. Not only was it the time for the agreed upon biannual check-in, but it was also the time for the gathering of Promising Youths.

Many saw the check-in at the Lookouts to be a small vacation from the days of putting their lives on the line. It could be said that this gathering acted as the main attraction, placing a nice bow on the events of the last week.

At this time, many had come together toward the center of the Venice-like city, ready to enjoy all the excitement.

The arena at the center of the Southern Lookout was quite beautiful indeed. It seated about 10 000 people normally, but this only counted the seats available directly on the property.

To the sides of the arenas, there were many artificial rivers of water that allowed boats to float around. If the seating capacity of these various steel behemoths was taken into account, the number of spectators could easily reach 50 000.

Though this number of individuals might not necessarily come out to watch usually, the events of the past week were too shocking. How could any of them bear to miss this event? As a result, let alone 50 000 people, there were even more trying to push their way in.

Those with special water based abilities were making quite a sum of money today, just taking in these people to have a look.

As for who these people had come for? Who else if not that young man known as Indomitable?PANDA-NOVEL.COM

On the arena stage, there were already several masked young men and women who stood silently. Their posture could be considered perfect and each of them had the bearing of a military man or woman. Their discipline was immaculate.

Each of their masks held a different symbol that represented their title. One might have pictured a roaring lion, another might have a slithering snake, some had images more abstract painted on theirs, while yet some others were completely straight forward and opted for words.

There were about 40 youths present. The actual number of Promising Youths assigned to the Southern Lookout was easily double this. However, not every youth on the ranking would come forward. After all, this was an organization created for the sake of taking down the Empire, not all of them had the time to spare out of their dangerous daily lives to take part.

Usually, barely 20 would appear to put on a good show for the masses. But this time, double that number had come, and for obvious reasons at that.

“These kids are quite anxious it seems. To think that they didn’t come out when we provided such good rewards, but are eager to now just because a little boy said a few words.”

A group of three stood in an overseer’s box, looking toward the arena. Amongst them, there were two men and a single woman. Though they seemed smiling and reserved, it was obvious by the fact they had been chosen to oversee this battle that they were at the Commander rank at a bare minimum.

“It can’t be helped.” The woman replied. “They all have seniors that give them treasures like the ones we reward all the time. Plus, even though they’re young, they understand the concept of protecting themselves. The less famous they are, the better it is for them. Stepping forward for short term benefits is unwise.” PANDA NOVEL

“You say this like we’re the bad guys for trying to give them a little incentive.”

“I do find the whole rankings to be a bit silly. Why did we create them at all? You know that I was among the few who directly rejected the idea. We should be protecting these youths, not thrusting them into the spotlight like this.”

The woman clearly didn’t like the proceedings. This was only the third gathering to ever take place. After all, the Promising rankings were only created after the Metamorphosis. It was widely known that youths had greater potential during this evolutionary stage, so emphasis was placed on them.

Regardless, this woman felt that this was only more reason to stop this practice, but it was too difficult to go against the tide.

One of them men sighed. “Violet Rain, the higher ups have their own concerns as well. Earth’s situation is quite precarious right now, not everything is as it seems on the surface.”

Hearing these words, the woman fell silent. She too knew that the behind-the-scenes matters weren’t so simple. But, even if there were logical reasons, she still found it to be a difficult pill to swallow.

An event like today was exactly what she had been worried about. No matter how sensible they were, the young was still the young, after all. They were only provoked just this little bit and look at how many of them had come out this time. In fact, if it wasn't for the fact the rise of 'Indomitable' was too sudden, she was certain that even more would have come. Maybe all over 100 Promising Youths would have come this time had Leonel appeared just a little earlier. ρ??(???????)

Though she didn't share this with anyone, the vigilance in her heart was raised by several levels. Who knew if this was a ploy by the Empire to learn more about the future pillars of the Slayer Legion?

The reason she didn't dare to voice such concerns was precisely because of Hacker Hutch. Since Indomitable was tied to Hacker Hutch, it could be said that he was endorsed by the latter as well. Not many would believe that such a legend had betrayed them.

But, wasn't it exactly because of this that the plan would be so perfect? After all, it wasn't like retired officials of their Legion hadn't become disillusioned to the point of defecting in the past... The path they as rebels walked was too perilous.

"Yes, yes, yes. I know I how you feel. Well, today you might just get to see that kid you hate so much get his just desserts. Look up there, two in the top five actually remained behind."

The man pointed toward two young people, one of which was a young man and the other of which was a young woman.

The young woman wore a tight fitting green tracksuit. The leggings clung close to her toned legs and her jacket was half unzipped, revealing a sports bra that held back her breasts. Though her chest couldn't be said to be large, it was still eye catching, causing a few youths to look over and gulp down every so often.

However, after seeing the green, spiraling swirls painted onto the young woman's mask, none of them dared to harass her. They knew immediately that this was the new third ranked on the Promising Future list, 'Chasing Wind'.

The young man stood a few columns away from her, his back as straight as a javelin. His full, sturdy chest jutted out like two blocks of stone, pushing against his simple white shirt as he clasped his hands behind his back.

His mask was covered in the image of a dark cloud. Everyone knew who he was by this symbol. He was the youth who had just been pushed down a spot by 'Chasing Wind', 'Thunderous Clap'!

However, though these two were here and had even looked around on several occasions, they only saw masks with symbols they recognized. The man named Indomitable was nowhere to be seen.

'Could it be that he would provoke them into coming like this then dodge responsibility himself? If so, this plot is too sinister...' An ugly expression twisted the image of the beautiful woman in the overseer box.

But, at that moment, a hysterical laughter cut through the chatting voices of the crowd waiting for a show.

"Old Hutch, let me go dammit! I was so close!"

"Shut up, brat. You said that you would participate if I showed you my Blade Force one more time. Do you think I would let you miss this gathering? Dream on!"

A young man was sent tumbling into the arena, entering in as sorry of a state as one could imagine.

He huffed a sigh and stood after his body stopped rolling, sending a glare toward the old man who had crossed water to bring him here.

'Force can be used to walk on water? So cool.'

Despite his glare, the young man was actually quite intrigued.

Finally, seemingly noticing that this situation wasn't quite right, the young man looked up to find over 40 burning gazes looking toward him.

The young man raised an eyebrow. 'Why do they all look like they want to eat me alive?'

Who else could this young man be if not Leonel?

Chapter 130

The gazes of over 40 youths fell onto Leonel. When they saw that his mask had no markings on it at all, they immediately guessed that this man should be the so-called Indomitable.

As for Leonel, he was as confused as ever. What had he done to attract such hatred?

'Is it because I was late...?'

Leonel felt a wave of fatigue hit him all of a sudden. It was only now that he remembered he hadn't slept in almost five days. He had been diligently comprehending something when the old man suddenly appeared, grabbed his shoulder, then tossed him here.

If it wasn't for his high spirit, staying awake for so long would be impossible even if his body was many times more powerful. Unfortunately, his spirit had taken quite a bit of a hit now.

"Sorry, I was late."

These were the first words Leonel said, but they only made the gazes of the over 40 youths that looked toward Leonel burn brighter. This wasn't only because of what he said, but also because they recognized his voice. It was the very same voice that said it could defeat them all even without Hacker Hutch's training.

As for Leonel's words themselves, how could they take it seriously? In fact, they found it to be quite insulting. If his words didn't imply disregard, then what else could they imply?PANDA-NOVEL.COM

They had all gotten here early, all to teach Indomitable a lesson. Yet, not only did he not appear on time, making them wait for him, but they had all just heard his voice clearly. Even to this point, he still hadn't

wanted to come. Had it not been for Old Hutch, he might have not come at all. How could they not feel unsatisfied?

Seeing the atmosphere wasn't quite right, Leonel smiled bitterly and scratched the back of his head. But, at that moment, a yawn inadvertently came from his mouth, causing him to subconsciously cover his lips despite having a mask on. It couldn't be helped, he was too tired.

However, what he had forgotten was that since he was wearing a mask, no one could see his sheepish grin. But, they all very clearly heard his yawn. This made their already furious gazes spit fire.

At this point, even if Leonel wanted to explain, no one would listen.

The sound of a throat clearing rang over the arena.

"Indomitable, I presume? Please take your place on the arena and we can begin."

Leonel turned his head back toward the overseer box, seeing that the voice came from there, then complied. It seemed he really wouldn't be able to get out of this. He was usually well-liked wherever he went. This could be said to be the first time in his life where he was truly public enemy number one for reasons that were completely out of his control. PANDA NOVEL

Though Leonel complied with the voice, his every action was under the scrutiny of too many people. His appearance in comparison to the perfect military form of the other youths on the stage with him stuck out like a sore thumb. It was clear that whether it was his posture or demeanor, he was lacking completely. He threw their perfect formation into disarray.

His steps weren't even, his back was slouched, and his eyes were perpetually half closed.

As if that wasn't bad enough, he kept yawning.

The flickers of deep disdain and disgust continuously came his way, but by this point, Leonel didn't have the mind to care for them. He had fallen into a trance once more, seemingly trying to grasp something that had just been within his reach.

Over the last several days, he had been trying to comprehend his Lineage Factor and by extension Spear Force, but he had ended up stumbling upon something completely different. It left him quite shocked, actually. In truth, he had almost completely forgotten about his infatuation with Spear Force.

Unfortunately, his absentminded gaze and his continuous yawning not only made him the public enemy of the youths, but also the crowd watching on. They hardly even paid attention to the Commanders who were in charge of reading out the rules of the gathering.

The more they paid attention to Leonel, the more he didn't seem to notice them, and the more enraged they became. Then, when they reached a tipping point, Leonel would yawn again, making veins bulge like slithering snakes on their foreheads. ρ??∪???????

“... The first will be Indomitable, I assume you don't mind?”

At first, Leonel didn't register the words. After all, he didn't know his name was Indomitable now. He wasn't the one who chose the name.

But, after a moment, he seemed to recall that the woman who spoke from the overseer's box earlier had also said Indomitable when referring to him. He hadn't thought much about it because his mind was too sluggish to care for other things. But now, he suddenly made the connection.

“Who, me?” Leonel looked up, only to find several more glares aimed toward him. “Sure, sure. Yes, yes.”

He hurriedly spoke. He had no idea what was going on, but he thought his best option was to agree, or else these people might really pounce on him.

The woman in the overseer's box frowned. She had already had a poor impression of Leonel from the beginning, but his actions since coming here infuriated even her.

Under Leonel's confused gaze, the other youths who had shared the stage with him cleared out and left, not forgetting to send a few more threatening gazes toward him. Toward this, he could only be helpless.

‘Am I supposed to leave too, or?’

Leonel hesitated. He was apparently supposed to go first, but he didn’t know what he was supposed to do. Luckily, he got an answer quite quickly.

The ground separated to reveal a hidden underground passageway. Others couldn’t see what was going on with just their eyes, but even with his weakened spirit, Leonel could tell that there was a small group of Invalids coming toward him now, all of which were at the A-grade. He could see that there were a total of five of them.

‘Am I supposed to defeat them?’

Leonel came to an understanding, then. Since that was the case, everything was pretty straight forward then. In truth, Leonel’s mind was groggy, all he really wanted to do was sleep, but whenever he had such thoughts, his curiosity got the best of him and he continued to study that weird feeling he grasped just a few days ago.

Now that his mind had cleared once more due to this tournament and he didn’t have that curiosity to distract him from his fatigue anymore, all he wanted to do was take a nap.

The five A-grade Invalids stalked their way up from the hidden underground passage. The crowd had been quite interested in seeing all of their weird mutations and quirks. After all, there was a high chance that Invalids at the A-grade would have such oddities attached to them. But, they didn’t get much of a chance.

With a flip of his hand, an atlatl appeared in Leonel’s palm. With his increase in strength after forming a Two Star Constitution, defeating A-grade Invalids was as easy as a flick of wrist.

Five streaks of silver pierced through the air, leaving howling winds in their wake. A moment later, they shot through five foreheads, blasting the A-grade Invalids apart only for them to turn into several motes of light.

Seeing that the task was done, Leonel couldn’t refrain from yawning again. He went off to the side to find a place to rest. He didn’t seem to notice the silence of the arena when he sat back down. In fact, he

had just been feeling tired a moment ago, but instead of closing his eyes, he actually sank back into that absentminded head space.

A light of fury flickered in the female Commander's eyes.

“Indomitable is disqualified for breaking the rules.”

Unfortunately for her sanity, Leonel didn't seem to hear this either.