

Descent 271

Chapter 271

BANG! BANG! BANG!

Streaks of black and silver launched across the Lab Setting.

Leonel usually kept the Lab Setting exceptionally tidy. His father's blueprints were always neatly arranged, the ores he used were always placed within the snowglobes after he was finished, and any scraps he had remaining had their own place as well.

However, the Lab Setting was currently an absolute mess.

Leonel's Craft table was overturned. His father's blueprints were scattered and by some miracle managed to remain undamaged. At the same time, the snowglobes which were once neatly arranged by category and type were sprawled all along the ground.

The two clashing entities continued without a care in the world as though not noticing Leonel's presence at all.

Leonel's brow twitched several times.

"HEY!"

Finally unable to take it, he roared out in full force, fusing his Spirit Pressure into his voice.

As expected, it completely disrupted the rhythm of the two fighting streaks of light, causing them to fall over.

After rebounding along the ground, the streak of silver shot toward Leonel, landing on his shoulder and bouncing up and down as though venting its frustration.Â

By that point, the identities of the two became obvious to Leonel. The silver streak was Leonel's Metal Spirit Familiar, Little Tolliver. As for the black streak' | well' | PANDA-NOVEL.COM

The little mink landed on the ground, a dissatisfied expression on its little face as though it was unhappy with the sudden change of events.Â

It shook its little head, clearing its vision. When it saw Leonel, its eyes lit up with a hint of fondness.Â

Leonel frowned. "What's going on? Is it possible to overshoot the entry limit of a Zone?"

Leonel took out the dictionary. He was extremely confused at this moment.Â

First, there was the fact the little mink exited the snowglobe without his permission. This was already questionable. But, beyond that, this Zone should have a limit of 12 individuals.Â

According to what Leonel knew, the universe didn't treat the life of a beast or a human any differently. Both were instances of life. As such, a beast should count as an entry, no?

Now that Leonel thought about it, shouldn't Little Tolly also count as an entry? Before, Leonel had ignored it because he assumed that since Tolly was his familiar, the both of them together counted as one entry. But, the appearance of the little mink made him rethink it.Â

Originally, he thought that maybe the suspended animation state the little mink had entered had allowed it to skirt the requirements of the Zone. But now, it had obviously, somehow, made its way out.Â

Was it so easy to circumvent the rules of a Zone?

Unfortunately, Leonel was thinking too simply. Spatial treasures capable of housing life were exceptionally rare to begin with. Someone like Leonel who had the Segmented Cube was so rare that one in a million didn't do it justice.Â

'Easy' was only a relative term to Leonel himself. For others, accomplishing the same feat would be impossible. That said, that didn't mean there weren't consequences. PANDA NOVEL

[*Ping*]

[Replying to Seed, it is possible to overshoot the entry limit of a Zone]

Leonel blinked, his mind spinning. He froze a moment later, suddenly thinking of something and almost cursing the dictionary for being too blunt again.Â

"Is there a penalty for doing so?"

[*Ping*]Â

[Yes.]

"What penalty,?" Leonel's heart sank.Â

[*Ping*]Â

[The most frequent penalty is a time reduction.]

Leonel nearly cursed. This damn little mink, it was always causing him problems.Â

The original time limit of 10 years was already pushing it. Though, now that Leonel had given up on perfectly completing the Zone, it was still hard to say whether whatever reduction penalty he faced would allow him to clear the main quest.Â p??J??????

According to the dictionary, the main question was to 'save' King Arthur. With how complicated everything was becoming with Modred's actions, it was hard to tell exactly what that entailed. Leonel really couldn't afford a time reduction.Â

Leonel sucked in a cold breath and calmed himself. Worrying now wouldn't be helpful to him.Â

“How much time do I have left after the reduction?”

[*Ping]Â

[1 821 days remaining]

Leonel winced. That was a little under five years. The little mink's appearance really almost halved the time he had left, how infuriating.Â

“Could it be that Little Tolly doesn't influence the time?”

[*Ping*]

[Replying to Seed, Little Tolly's soul is fused with Seed's. As such, it does not count]

Leonel could only let his frustration dissipate. There was already nothing he could do.Â

Suddenly, arcs of lightning flashed within Leonel's Dreamscape causing his gaze to brighten.Â

“Two questions. How was the time reduction calculated? Secondly, if I meld my soul with the little mink, will the time penalty lessen?”

[*Ping*]

[Replying to Seed, only five of the initial entries still remain alive. Due to this, the penalty for an additional entry was reduced greatly to just a half reduction]

Leonel's eyes widened. There was such a thing? Seven of the twelve that entered died already? How?!

Leonel felt a cold sweat mat his back. The dictionary's meaning was that the penalty would have been even worse if not for these deaths?

He had been so lost in his own grievances and improvements that he had forgotten that this was an SS-grade Zone. It should be at humanity's limits to clear a Zone like this. It couldn't be done casually.

Yet, because of Leonel's actions, the well-planned teams designated by the Slayer Legion became imbalanced. He likely ruined much of their plans.

In truth, it wasn't Leonel's fault. It was the fault of the Adurna family. Leonel was originally slotted as an entry from the very beginning thanks to his performance. But something told Leonel that this sound logic wouldn't be accepted by the members of the rebels.

Now that Leonel thought about it, he had also almost died. Had to not been for a stroke of fate, he too would be among the dead.

Thinking to this point, Leonel grew several levels more serious. In this place, his life was truly on the line. He couldn't take things lightly.

[Yes, becoming one with the little mink would remove the penalty, though only by a margin]

Leonel took a deep breath.

His plan was simple. The messenger mages of the frontlines had given Leonel no small amount of inspiration.

Usually, those beast taming mages could only control weak willed animals with low intelligence such as the falcons and hawks they used to pass on messages.Â

However, Leonel had several advantages over them. Firstly, his Spirit Pressure was several times more powerful. Secondly, he had several methods of lulling the little mink's mind into lowering its guard. He had to at least take the chance if possible.Â

All this said' ¦ Leonel couldn't have possibly guessed what would happened next.Â

The little mink blinked out and into existence. When it reappeared, it had already sat on Leonel's opposite shoulder, standing in opposition to Little Tolly.Â

At first, Leonel had his guard up. But this, his strong Internal Sight suddenly felt something stretch out from the little mink to him, tying them together.Â

Leonel's expression changed. He felt a subtle link between himself and the little mink. But, it wasn't through their souls but rather' ¦ ?

Leonel took a step, his face twitching.Â

'Our shadows are connected' ¦ ?'

Leonel subconsciously felt that this connection was no weaker than a soul connection. In some ways, it might have been even deeper.Â

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"What' ¦ What just happened?"

[*Ping*]

[The little mink has used its Shadow World ability to tie Seed's shadow to its own]

"What the hell does that mean?"

Leonel didn't understand. A shadow was just a body blocking light from reaching the ground. It shouldn't have been any more or less. How do you tie two shadows together? And worst yet, he didn't even have the means to resist. What if this was detrimental to him?

[*Ping*]

[Seed can consider this a magic system unique to the little mink's ability]

Leonel's eyes widened before he came to a certain understanding. It turned out that the universe could introduce new magic systems not only through Mythological Zones, but also through abilities!

"Then what does the melding of our shadows mean?" PANDA-NOVEL.COM

[*Ping*]

[To the little mink, shadows function similarly to souls. Connecting your shadows is similar to the little mink taking you as a Familiar]

Leonel's lip twitched. Wasn't it supposed to be the other way around? He was the one getting treated like a pet now?

He really didn't know how he was supposed to react to such a thing.Â

Leonel sighed and shook his head.Â

"[Soul Reader]."

The little mink rubbed its head against Leonel's fingers.Â

"Alright, I'll call you Blackstar. How about it?"

"Yip! Yip! Yip!"

The little mink seemed to like its new name.Â

Blop *Boop*

On Leonel's opposite shoulder, Little Tolly seemed a bit disgruntled. Clearly, it didn't like Little Blackstar too much.Â

"Alright, alright."Â

Leonel let Little Tolly rush around his fingers and wrist. After the little guy began to evolve, it learned to control its corrosive property a bit more. As long as it wasn't activated, there was nothing to worry about.Â

With Leonel help, it had already reached the Tier 7 Black Grade of evolution. Who knows, maybe if its control increased, Leonel could use it to take this damned wrist watch off without taking his hand with it.Â

Watching his two Familiars glaring at one another, Leonel felt his mood lighten. It had been a long time since he could genuinely smile. It felt like ever since he sent Aina away and fell out with James, everything had only been getting worse and worse for him.Â

'I don't know enough about this little guy's ability to make proper use of him'!

After smiling for a moment, Leonel thought of a problem. The little mink's greatest weakness was its poor battle sense. Leonel could technically make up for that, but the prerequisite was understanding the little guy. If he couldn't! then he would be limiting the little guy too much.Â

Leonel tried to ask the dictionary, but unfortunately, it could only give him vague hints. Even the dictionary didn't have the ability to give him too many details. There were simply too many variables when it came to abilities.Â

'Shadow World' ¦ Shadow World' ¦ Forget it, I'll just slowly figure everything out' ¦'

Leonel planned to use [Soul Reader] consistently in the future. As long as he paid more attention to Little Blackstar while he used his abilities, it would be easier to gain a grasp on how Shadow World worked.Â

Just when Leonel had made this decision, the ground began to shake. Due to the fact he was underground, it felt as though the rumbling was within his chest, even to the point his teeth began to clatter.Â

Leonel's gaze narrowed, turning his attention to the video capturing array he left on the surface.Â

The scene he saw was about what he expected.Â

On one side, a beaten and haggard group of human knights and mages stood. It was clear that fatigue was written all over their faces. However, their gazes remained sharp almost like half unsheathed blades.Â

In the midst of of these humans, there was a man clad in white armor. The spaulders were shaped into roaring white tigers, giving him a valiant and partly barbaric appearance. Leonel immediately recognized this man as King Arthur.Â

On the other side, there was a hoard of demons. They weren't nearly as organized, but their eyes reddened with fighting intent. Some of them with part bestial bodies let their tongues hang from their mouths, not caring as thick, grotesque globs of saliva dripped down.Â

In the midst of these demons, Leonel's eyes locked onto a woman.Â

In truth, this woman should have taken his breath away. She had a valiant air that reminded him of Aina, but she had a maturity Aina was still lacking. Her body seemed carved by the hands of a god, perfectly proportioned and without an inch out of place. The way her black armor flowed into a skirt that revealed two long, pale legs could grip the gaze of all those who saw her.Â

However, Leonel hardly spared this woman a glance, because his eyes landed on something else directly afterward’!

It was yet another woman. She too was beautiful, though somewhat lacking in comparison to the woman donning black armor. She wore fiery red armor and had a cap of red feathers attached to her shoulders.Â

Still, it wasn’t her looks that caught Leonel’s attention. Gazing upon her, his eyes couldn’t help but narrow’!

‘Supreme Monet’!

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Leonel sucked in a cold breath.Â

If Monet had managed to get close to Modred, this was either a good thing or a bad thing. Something like betraying Leonel and siding with the demons was impossible. After all, doing so would put Monet’s life on the line as well. Unless’! unless her Zone detection treasure made a mistake.Â

Leonel had already learned the hard way that such treasures tended to be unreliable. Had it not been for his luck until now, he probably would have fallen in a Zone already simply due to lack of information.Â

If Modred’s detection treasure informed her that the main quest was to save King Arthur, this could be a good thing. However, if for whatever reason it was off in its assessment, then Monet might become an enemy Leonel had to fight against.Â

”| This might be a problem’|’

Leonel looked through the rest of the opposing armies.. He immediately found the remaining three who had entered with him.Â

‘Big Buddha’| Little Nana’| Violet Rain’|?’

Leonel was stunned. Could it be that adorable little girl was all alone now? What happened to the rest of the Adurna family? Did they all really die?Â

Leonel knew that there was an escape ticket to leave Zones. However, he couldn’t imagine that a family would leave their little sister behind like this. There had to be another explanation.ÂPANDA-NOVEL.COM

On the other side, the fact that only Monet, Big Buddha and Violet Rain stood on the side of the demons likely meant the others were dead, including Badger’s partner, Mayfly.

Leonel didn’t know how to feel about this. Though he had no love lost to the Slayer Legion, Mayfly had been among the two who came to save him. Though he didn’t really need such help at that time, sometimes the thought was as important as the action.Â

The two armies faced each other, the tension towering into the air.Â

King Arthur sat upon his horse with a stoic expression. A strong dignity scrunched his brows.Â

The version of him now was completely unlike the enraged monarch he had been before. Rather, he had once more regained his bearing, facing off the enemies of humanity with a valiant momentum.Â

On the opposite side, Modred stood. Unlike King Arthur, her demeanor didn’t hold any dignity. This wasn’t to say that her momentum lost out, but rather than her method of showing her majesty was much different.Â

While King Arthur was incomparably serious, surrounded by six of his originally twelve Knights, she was completely indifferent. It was as though she didn't put Camelot in her eyes at all.

"DRAW!" PANDA NOVEL

King Arthur's mighty roar was met by the sounds of unsheathing blades. Their movements were as one, causing the sharp, metallic resonance to fuse into one, piercing toward the rumbling, black clouds above.

At that moment, the pillar of light to Modred's back suddenly shuddered, splitting in two and slowly opening.

Modred's indifferent expression curled into a smile. It carried a hint of seduction and teasing. It was the kind of expression that a daughter should never give a father. But, those who were aware of the relationship between Modred and King Arthur were few and far between.

"There's no need to fight, now is there? We can simply enter together and leave the rest up to fate."

Modred's delicate voice should have made them sigh a breath of relief, but it instead made their rage bubble up.

No need to fight? They had known nothing but battle for nearly the whole of this last month. Now, they finally met the enemy that was the cause of all their frustrations but she actually said that there was no need to fight?!

It was as though they had met the enemy of a lifetime, but could do nothing but watch as they basked in their own success. The worst part was that they knew they had no choice but to play along with this enemy's wishes.

King Arthur's jaw set, but he didn't flare up. His cold, blue eyes flashed with a hint of killing intent.

Their army had been worn down during this travel. Entering the Gates in this condition would no doubt put them at a great disadvantage. Modred definitely knew this. There was no need for her to put her own people at risk. It was more important to enter.Â

Without another word, she turned, leading the Demons into the wide expanse. She didn't even protect her back. This not only showed her disregard for Camelot, but also how little she cared about the lives of the demons who served her.Â

While they had to worry about the emotions of humans and protecting their lives, Modred didn't have to care for any of this.Â

King Arthur calmed the rage in his heart. They had already sacrificed so much to get here. They couldn't afford to sacrifice any more.Â

He swept a glance over the would-be battlefield, but he didn't find a hint of Leonel's shadow. This realization caused him to frown.Â

He waved a hand. "Gawain, stay back and guard the Gate. Only enter at the last moment and make sure you're the last to do so."

One of the knights by Leonel's side nodded. He was King Arthur's nephew, a Knight of the Round Table, Sir Gawain.Â

The relations between the knights were quite complex. Gawain was Lancelot's best friend, however Lancelot wasn't present. Due to the complexities of Arthur and Lancelot's relationship, Arthur had no choice but to walk a fine line. As such, his compromise was forcing Lancelot to remain back and defend while Gawain was allowed to come.Â

Unfortunately for Arthur, Leonel had no intention of being left out at the last moment. The moment Modred turned toward the Gate, he had already begun moving through the ground. In this situation, he couldn't afford to continue being cautious.Â

Maybe it was a bit expected, then, that Modred's steps would pause just when she was about to enter the Gates.Â

“Hm?”

Her delicate brows arched, seemingly sensing something.Â

Her gaze swept forward, landing on the precise piece of land Leonel was running beneath.Â

Leonel’s eyes narrowed when he sensed he had been locked onto, but he didn’t change his direction nor slow his pace. In fact, he kept running beneath the ground. He was too far beneath the ground to be easily dealt with. Only an Earth Magus could disrupt him greatly.

Modred’s eyes twinkled as though she had found an interesting toy to play with. She could tell that Leonel had sensed her, yet he actually continued undaunted.Â

By now, Modred wasn’t the only one who noticed the oddity.Â

Those of Camelot immediately knew who it was. They all knew Leonel was an Earth Mage, who else could it be but him?

Modred chuckled and didn’t mind it anymore, stepping into the gate.Â

The moment she vanished, Leonel had already cut deep into the demon army, shuttling through beneath their feet with the greatest speed he could muster.Â

King Arthur’s jaw clenched. He could have never imagined that Leonel would be so brazen. But if he thought about it, what had Leonel done to now that wasn’t a slap to his face?

“Forward!”

He already knew it was too late to stop Leonel, but there would be plenty of chances to get rid of this potential trouble during the trials as long as they were anything like the last time he entered.Â

Toward such an attitude, Leonel could only shake his head. He really didn't want to save such a man, but he had no choice if he wanted to keep his own life.

Shaking his head, Leonel launched himself out of the ground, not minding that he appeared in the midst of several Demons. His speed was too fast. Now that he wasn't a member of Camelot anymore, what could restrict him from using his Light Elemental Force?

In the blink of an eye, a streak of blinding gold appeared beneath Leonel's feet and he entered the gate.

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Leonel didn't find what he expected to find on the other side.

From the reactions of the demon and human armies, it seemed that they would have another chance to deal with him within the Trial. So, he had been fully prepared for an all out battle the moment he stepped in.

However, this wasn't what he found at all.

At the moment, he stood on a dull grey platform. It was a meter by meter in length and width. There was nothing particularly special about it at all except for the fact that it hung mid-air amidst an endless darkness.

Leonel stretched out his senses, but he couldn't sense a ceiling nor a bottom, it was as though he was floating in the depths of space.

It almost felt like a dream. But, if it really was so, Little Tolly wouldn't still be happily squirming around his fingers, nor would Little Blackstar be lazily lying around his neck. Since both of them were by his side, it was clear that Leonel's true body had entered whatever space this was at least upon his initial assessment.

Just when Leonel was feeling confused, an aged voice suddenly rang around him. Due to the surroundings, it was difficult for Leonel to tell whether it was sounding directly in his head, or if it was being transmitted to him some other way. But, Leonel didn't linger on this question for too long as the words the voice said caught his full attention.Â

<Analysis Complete>

<Please choose: >PANDA-N0VEL.COM

Leonel saw several orbs of light manifest before him. Each of them housed a different object.Â

There was a sword, a bow, a spear, and a wand. Outside of these four, there were other more unconventional weapons. Leonel could see maces, staffs, and battle axes. But, none were as large as the first four Leonel noticed.Â

'I'm supposed to choose one of these' !?'

Leonel didn't really need to think much.Â

He had never touched a sword before and there was no real point in learning now.Â

The spear was even easier to ignore. Though this might sound odd, after a moment of thought, it became obvious why. Everything in this Trial was tied to the Third Dimension, it might very well become obsolete at higher realms unless Leonel put in the effort to evolve it.Â

This Zone represented an opportunity. All of the Magic Systems here had ample potential for growth if taken to the extreme. However, why would Leonel need to do such a thing for the spear since he already had the Spear Domain ring on his finger?

The last two were a bit more difficult to choose between.Â PANDA N0VEL

Leonel was very interested in his world's Mage Art system. It had been very helpful to him to this point and he could see it being useful at least into the immediate future.Â

At the same time, Leonel had long since realized that his talent in the bow was overwhelming. Even though he had awakened his Spear Domain Lineage Factor, he still felt that his talent for marksmanship overshadowed it by a large margin.

In the end, Leonel decided on the bow. It came down to a simple risk assessment. He had a legacy related to the Bowman King Inheritance in his hands. From Leonel's understanding, this was related to a Minor Opening.Â

Elys had said that benefiting from a Minor Opening could give some advantages during a Major Opening. In that case, there really was only one option. Leonel had enough to worry about. It was in his best interest that he made everything that he could control as easy as possible.Â

Leonel subconsciously took the deep black bow from his spatial bracelet. It alone stood as tall as anyone of his spears.

The moment Leonel acted, the sphere of light housing a bow reacted immediately, shooting toward him like a falling star and fusing into him and the black bow.

Leonel raised an eyebrow.Â

There was now a small, barely perceptible, golden brand on the back of his hand. It looked especially faded as though it had been drawn on then washed away. Leonel subconsciously felt that this tattoo of sorts would become very important very soon. p??ú??????

Leonel didn't get much of a chance to observe the tattoo for long because the situation around him changed completely in the next instant.Â

His grey platform shot forward as though trying to fling him off. Luckily, some unknown force kept his feet planted, or else he really would have been in a sorry state.Â

Leonel's vision blurred and his mind spun. Not knowing whether he was moving up, down, left or right left him completely disoriented. If it wasn't for a vague forward trajectory, he wouldn't have any idea where he was headed.Â

Suddenly, the platform came to a grinding halt.Â

Leonel's eyes squinted and he shook his head.Â

At that moment, he felt several auras lock onto him, many of which were filled with killing intent.Â

'Hm?'

Leonel's vision slowly cleared, allowing him to look around for the first time. What he saw left him smiling a bit bitterly.Â

All around him, platforms just like his own hung in the vast expanse of darkness. There were about 200 of them in total, half of which were taken by humans and another half of which were taken up by demons.Â

Many of the strings of killing intent came from the demons that floated around him, but that was simply due to their hatred of humans. The more pointed streams of killing intent actually came from the humans.Â

Leonel could feel King Arthur's gaze sweep over him. But, there wasn't just him. Supreme Monet was seemingly stunned and enraged to see him here.Â

So many of her men had died in this place, yet Leonel had actually managed to survive. Whether it made sense or not, she subconsciously placed blame on Leonel for such a thing. Of course, she also hated the Adurna family for sticking their nose in a place it wasn't meant to be. However, some of this hatred was unwittingly directed toward Leonel as well.Â

After ignoring the glances and regaining an air of calm, Leonel realized that everyone also held a weapon. But, their weapons were strikingly different from his own. Compared to the powerful bow in

his hand, theirs were mostly the most simple and crude weapons imaginable. They even reminded Leonel of the primitive man's spear.

As Leonel was noticing their weapons, they too noticed his.

'Minor Opening' !'

They all understood immediately and the light of greed lit in many of their eyes.

Among those who were here, there were a striking minority who had such a luxury.

The first was King Arthur. He wielded his sword with a valiant air. There was no doubt that this sword was the legendary Excalibur.

The next was Modred. She held a wand as black as ink. It held an air of majesty that made Leonel's heart tremble. For some reason, he could see the faint image of an ink black qilin looming behind her.

Surprisingly, the third was actually Peirce! This was likely a surprise even to King Arthur and his men. Peirce's long twin swords gently touched the ground, being held lightly in his palms.

The fourth was Pope Margrave! He held a radiant cross to his chest as though sinking deep into a perpetual prayer. The light around him seemed to illuminate even the endless darkness.

Before Leonel could observe the others, the situation changed once again.

<First Trial Begin!>

The world warped. A single massive grey platform over 20 meters in width and length appeared.

At that moment, a demon's own grey platform shot forward, connecting to the massive platform outside of his control.

Before Leonel could understand what was happening, a creature began to manifest' |

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Soon, an odd metallic beast came into being.Â

At first it seemed that its metal coverings were just bits of oddly placed armor. However, when it began to stretch, it became obvious from its movement that these metallic shields were a part of its body.Â

It stood on four limbs, looking somewhat like a large silver tiger. However, its tail was exceptionally long, being formed of shield-like scales that reminded one of a scorpion without the final pincer. This tail was almost like a whip, being double the length of the creature's body.

It had two sharp tusks that left its mouth partially open. At the same time, it only had a single vertical eye that split its forehead in two.Â

At this time, the beast was surrounded by a shield. Though the voice had said that the first trial had begun, a step had to be completed first.Â

The demon chosen to be first stood on its platform, facing the creature. However, he had yet to step onto the main platform just yet. This wasn't because he was cowering in fear, but rather because odd patterns had begun to form before him.Â

He wasn't the only one who could see these patterns. It was another choice. Except this time, everyone would bear witness to it together.

Soon, the patterns coalesced, forming a clear image. What was left were numerous spheres connected by branching lasers.Â

Most of these spheres were dim. However, at the very bottom, there was one that was slightly brighter.ÂPANDA-NOVEL.COM

Leonel's mind immediately realized what this was.Â

'Skill tree?'

At first, Leonel thought his idea was silly. But, the more he thought about it, the more he realized that this was the only explanation.

The demon's choice of weapon was a mace. The only bright sphere of the skill tree also projected the image of a mace except this mace was in movement, displaying what Leonel assumed was a technique.Â

Unlike Leonel who was in the dark, it seemed the demon wasn't surprised by the appearance of this skill tree. His eyes looked toward the top of the skill tree with a fiery light, but he was well aware he wasn't in position to touch those legendary abilities just yet.Â

With a hint of reluctance, he reached for the only slightly bright sphere.Â

<Basic Skill 'Single-handed Bash' Chosen>

<Skill Points Remaining: 0> PANDA NOVEL

<Trial Commencing>

The demon brandished his mace and licked his lips.Â

The shield vanished the moment he stepped onto the main platform. In that instant, the lazily stretching beast suddenly stopped, a faint growl trembling its tusks.Â

The battle lasted longer than Leonel thought it would. He had originally assumed that it would be a matter of a few moves, but the longer he observed, the more shocked and apprehensive he became.Â

The reason for his shock wasn't because the beast was too powerful or that the demon was too weak, or even the vice versa of either. The reason he was so shocked was because aside from 'Single-handed Bash', the demon didn't use any other moves.

No, that wasn't exactly right. It wasn't that he didn't use any other moves but rather that' He couldn't!

When Leonel reached this point in his thoughts, he sucked in a cold breath and suddenly understood how this trial would work. There were likely formless laws in this place that made it impossible to use skills that weren't unlocked through the skill tree.

Leonel was stunned. For the first time, he somewhat regretted choosing the bow. If things were really like this, he was in a bad position.

It wasn't a simple matter of attack patterns being restricted. The demon could only move with simple steps. In addition, his skill seemed to have a cool down as though this was really a game. This sort of situation caused him to only be able to attack once every three seconds.

This meant that every aspect of battle was controlled, whether it was movement, attack or defense! As a bowman, Leonel was particularly restricted. It would make the future several levels more troublesome.

This wasn't the only problem either. Leonel had hoped to use his Mage Arts to make up for his lack of arrows. But, if he could only use skills on his skill tree' where would he get arrows from?!

Leonel was certain that if this place could restrict even attack patterns, there was no way it would allow him to produce his own arrows.

'Shit' Leonel clenched his jaw.

Finally, after a long drawn out battle, the sound of shattering glass resounded. An invisible shield around the metallic beast broke, causing it to shut down.

Beaten and haggard, the demon's eyes flashed brilliantly. Though fatigued, he had done it, he had passed the first trial.Â

<First Trial Complete>

<Time Taken: 2:39:02>

<Trial Grade: C>

<Skill Points Rewarded: 2>

<Special Reward: None>

The skill tree appeared before the demon man once again. This time, a new row had lit up. But, with his skill points, he could at most choose two. In addition, there were some skills that needed more than just a single point to awaken.Â

For now, though, all the skills the demon man could awaken were Basic and as such only needed one.Â

The trouble was deciding a path to go down. Should he try to diversify or try to specialize in one branch until he could awaken ranked skills?

Eventually, the demon made his choice.Â

<Basic Skill 'Two-handed Bash' Chosen>

<Basic Skill 'Charged Bash' Chosen>

<Skill Points Remaining: 0>

<C-grade Recovery Rewarded>

The demon's platform shot back. Once it was within the group of waiting trial takers, a soothing light descended upon him, slowly washing away his fatigue.

At that moment, everyone grew tense once more. For a Demon Lord with such a formidable body to struggle so much, everyone was hoping they'd have more time to observe, even Leonel.

Unfortunately, reality was cruel.

Leonel felt his platform tremble and then shoot forward. It seemed he had won a lottery he had wanted no parts of.

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Leonel settled his breathing. Since he had to go, he would go.

Numerous gazes flooded toward Leonel. Compared to the interest the previous candidate had, the curiosity toward Leonel was several levels greater. This could only be expected, after all, Leonel was the beneficiary of a Minor Opening. He was definitely among those who would last to the very end of these Trials.

At the same time, he was a target. As for the reasons why, only those who entered the Merlin Trials before would be aware.

The skill tree appeared before Leonel the moment his platform connected to the large stage. Seeing it upfront and personal like this, Leonel realized there was a lot he had missed before.

The skill tree actually had three 'roots'. These roots were the starter Basic Skills that didn't have any prerequisites to unlock. Among these roots, there was the weaponry root, the physical root and finally the special skill root.

From what Leonel could tell, the weaponry root were all related to his bow. The physical root was related to movement techniques, use of Force, defensive techniques, and another broad range of matters. It seemed to have the greatest variety. Finally, the special skill root seemed to be universal in its use, meaning that Leonel's special skill tree was likely the same as everyone else's.

The special skill root was indeed unique. The more Leonel looked at it, the less it seemed to conform to the previous rules he had come to know.

For one, it took more than just skill points to unlock them. You seemed to need to pair them with rewards for trials that had been cleared. In addition, there were sometimes less stringent prerequisites and sometimes more.

For example, the Silver Skill 'Force Burst' could explosively increase the strength of Force attacks for a time. However, it required the unlocking the Bronze Skill 'Force Burst' three separate times.

However, there were also some Gold Skills that had no prerequisites whatsoever. It didn't seem to have much rhyme or logic to it.

That said, Leonel took a mental note of this. He didn't believe it was without reason.

Leonel turned his attention back to the weaponry root.

Leonel's weaponry root was a Basic Skill named 'Single Shot'. Much like the demon's 'Single-handed Bash' it allowed him to fire one arrow every three seconds.

<Skill Point Remaining: 3>

The voice suddenly snapped Leonel out of his thoughts. He was pleasantly surprised for a moment before understanding. This must be his advantage as a beneficiary of a Minor Opening.

The jealous gazes he was receiving pretty much confirmed this. Some even seemed to be urging him to hurry up. After all, Leonel had been standing for a while.

But, Leonel turned a blind eye to these people. Since there wasn't a time limit, he would imprint this skill tree in its entirety into his Dreamscape.Â

'Wait' !'

Leonel's eyes suddenly flashed as his mind nearly exploded with blinding arcs of lightning.Â

He couldn't believe he hadn't thought of this before. If he imprinted his skills into his Dreamscape, in the midst of battle, would his ability be able to deduce the perfect response every time?Â

Originally, he had only wanted to imprint this skill tree into his mind so he could deduce the optimal path for skill unlocks, but he realized there was much more benefits to this than he thought.Â

'Outside these trial grounds, I don't have 'skills' that I put into use. It's too freeform, so it's difficult to use my Dreamscape' !' p???(???????)

This was the real reason Leonel never thought of using his Dreamscape like this. Real life wasn't a game, you couldn't just breakdown a person's abilities into 'skills' they could use at any given time' ! or' ! could you?

If Leonel broke down all of his techniques and abilities into their simplest forms, then arranged them into his Dreamscape, what would happen then?

'Let's use these Trial grounds as a test' !'

This environment was perfect for Leonel to test whether or not his idea was viable. In here, he really could only use skills provided by Merlin. What better place would there be to test whether or not this new application of Dreamscape would work?

If this worked, this would fix another big problem Leonel was having as well. To now, he had yet to be capable of fluidly linking all the spear legacies he was gaining. But' ! what if he could arrange all his spear skills into his Dreamscape as well?!

Leonel's breathing hitched slightly. If this worked, his ability which had always been lacking in direct combat might allow him to become a true monster'!

However, Leonel knew he couldn't get ahead of himself. In order to use his Dreamscape in this way, he had to raise his battle sense to obscene levels. Only by being able to read his opponent would he be able to perfect the suggestions of his Dreamscape.

'Experience'! It all comes down to experience'!

Leonel's gaze turned bright. These Merlin Trials would be perfect for him.

The moment he made this decision, he blocked out the entire world. He didn't care about the impatience of those waiting for him, his heart had slowed to a crawl.

<Basic Skill 'Single Shot' Chosen>

<Basic Skill 'Quick Reload' Chosen>

<Basic Skill 'Stacked Shot' Chosen>

<Skill Points Remaining: 0>

<Trial Commencing>

The moment the voice descended, a quiver of arrows descended before Leonel.

<Basic Quiver>

<Capacity: 10 arrows>

<Reload Time: 60 sec>

<Reload Capacity: 1 arrow>

Leonel understood immediately. This basic quiver gave him 10 arrows and a single arrow would be replenished every minute. It seemed that his advantage in weapons didn't extend to his arrows, but this was fine too. He had enough advantages already.

His gaze turned serious as the shield around the metallic beast disappeared. It was the very same beast the demon faced and it was likely the invisible barrier the demon cracked was now revitalized.

Leonel felt that Little Blackstar and Tolly's movements were restricted the moment the trial began, but he wasn't surprised. On the special skill tree, he had already seen numerous skills related to familiars. It seemed he wouldn't be able to make use of them until he unlocked them.

But, this was fine. For now, Leonel didn't think he needed them just yet.

He brandished his bow, nocking his first arrow.

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Leonel took a step forward.

He realized that no matter what he did, his steps were measured. Exactly 0.50 meters apart without the slightest hint of deviation. He couldn't speed up, nor could he slow down. Even taking a sidestep was difficult. If he wanted variations in his steps and speed, the only way was to begin unlocking the physical root.

However, he wasn't worried. He had already seen one person pass this test so all the stats of the beast had long since been reflected in his mind.

[Metallic Beast]

[Power: 1 Stars (Black)]

[Strength: 1 Star (Black); Speed: 1 Star (Black); Agility: 2 Stars (Black); Coordination: 4 Stars (Black); Stamina: ?? Stars (Black); Reactions: 4 Stars (Black); Defense: 3 Star (Black); Spirit: ?? Stars (Black); Force: ?? Stars (Black)]

[Power Accuracy: 100%]

Leonel knew that this assessment was 100% accurate. This metallic beast was purposely nerfed by Merlin. As such, all of its abilities were perfectly measured without the variation one would expect in real life. PANDA-NOVEL.COM

In addition, during this first trial, it seemed that the beast's long, whip-like tail couldn't be used to attack.

There were only three attack patterns: 'Lunge', 'Sweep', and 'Bite'.

'The beast can lunge at most 1.5 meters. A sweep of its claws extended its range by half a meter at most. Bite will only activate if I enter a two meter range of its and also has a range of half a meter. It can attack only once every two seconds and will be stunned for 0.20 seconds after suffering a hit, however, if I hit it in that spot...'

These kind of perfectly measured battles... They were simply too easy for Leonel.

SHUUU!

An arrow appeared right between the brows of the metallic beast just as it was stalking its way toward Leonel.

'Stacked Shot.' Leonel thought to himself. PANDA NOVEL

He reloaded his bow, shooting again.

Normally, having unlocked 'Quick Reload', Leonel could fire a normal 'Single Shot' once every 2.5 seconds instead of once every 3. However, when 'Stacked Shot' was activated, Leonel could fire two shots consecutively with a reload time of just 1 second.

Leonel used his steps, circling around the beast. A normal hit would stun it for 0.20 seconds. However, whenever its single eye was attacked, it would be enough to stun it for a full second, allowing one to get more hits in.

However, Leonel didn't use it in this way. He had a limited amount of arrows and wasn't like the others. It was inadvisable for him to just unload. In addition, a single second wasn't even enough time for him to do so.

Rather than doing so, Leonel took this time to constantly adjust his footsteps, taking care to control not only himself, but the angles of attack the metallic beast could use.

Leonel realized that while this space could hinder almost all of his abilities — whether it be his abilities as an Earth Mage or a Light Mage — the one thing it could not hinder in the slightest was his ability!

He realized this was the same for Little Blackstar as well. There were only two reasons he didn't use Little Blackstar. First, he needed to properly vet his new path and potential use for his Dreamscape himself. If he used Blackstar, it would defeat the purpose. And secondly, while this space couldn't block Blackstar's ability, what it could do was stop his ability to move at all. p??J?????

Leonel believed that the moment he unlocked the Familiar special skill, Little Blackstar would be able to use his full range of abilities.

As Leonel was lost in thought, falling into the steady rhythm of battle, the demon who had gone before him felt his whole world plummeting. Why did Leonel make it look so... easy?

BANG!

The invisible protective barrier shattered once more, sprinkling down like a rain of broken glass.

<First Trial Complete>

<Time Taken: 27:22>

<Trial Grade: A>

<Skill Points Rewarded: 4>

<Special Reward: 1 Special Store Ticket>

‘Special Store Ticket...?’

Leonel didn’t use this ticket immediately. He assumed this special store was a place he could go to to upgrade his equipment. His bow was fine, but his quiver was lacking, as an example. However, Leonel also noticed that there was no currency. This made him realize that he likely had to pay skill points to buy items, And, in the case it wasn’t skill points that were necessary, that just meant he didn’t have the funds necessary to buy anything to begin with.

in that case... it wasn’t worth it just yet. It was better that he spend his skill points on himself for now.

Leonel turned his attention back to his skill tree.

‘I need 5 skill points and something called a ‘star point’ to give Little Blackstar the ability to move... In that case, I’ll just focus on myself for now.’

<Basic Skill ‘Side Step’ Chosen>

<Basic Skill ‘Advanced Quick Reload’ Chosen>

<Basic Skill 'Reinforced Arrow' Chosen>

<Basic Skill 'Critical Arrow' Chosen>

Leonel had already made his decision before his battle even began.

'Side Step' would allow him some more freedom in movement. It was essentially a lunge to the side that he could use in critical moments to move himself to the left or right by a meter.

'Advanced Quick Reload' would quicken his reload from 2.5 seconds to 2 seconds.

'Reinforced Arrow' was his first Force ability. It undid the shackles on his Force by a small amount and allowed him to reinforce his arrows. With this, he would finally be able to use the Tier 9 Black Grade gloves he had designed for this bow, albeit it by a small margin.

'Critical Arrow' worked just like a video game's critical strike did. It gave him a boosted chance of dealing more damage to his foes. Though it was a passive ability, due to the percentages, it would become very useful in the future especially when he began to fire more arrows. And, most importantly, 'Critical Arrow' was a prerequisite for many of the higher level skills he was eyeing...

Leonel took a deep breath and stepped back onto his platform. He could sense numerous gazes on him, many of which were both hostile and cautious. It was clear that after his performance, many had begun to take him as a serious competitor.

<A-grade Recovery Rewarded>

Chapter 278

A pillar of golden light fell onto Leonel's body.

At first, he thought it was a pity. Aside from soreness in his muscles from pulling his bow again and again, there wasn't much else wrong with him.

However, the moment the pillar fell onto him, Leonel realized that he had thought too simply.

Leonel felt his meditation technique begin to circulate on its own. He immediately realized that this meditation technique wasn't one he had learned from Camelot, but rather a meditation technique he had grasped from [Merlin's Bestrowal: Bowman King].

Meditation techniques all relied on breathing. This wasn't only the expansion and contraction of the lungs, but of the Force Nodes as well.

Where they differed in complexity was in the purity of Force they used to temper one's already existing Internal Strength and the methods by which breathing could be done.

Many meditation techniques could only intake energy through the mouth and nose. Some higher level techniques could use the hands in thanks to special seals formed by the fingers. PANDA-NOVEL.COM

However, Merlin's technique was on a completely different level. It could absorb Force directly through the Ethereal Glabella. Not only was Force capable of doing this exceptionally pure, but it was also incredibly dense, making it easier to Crystallize one's Force.

The special Force capable of doing this was known as Star Force.

Star Force was among the highest level Forces in all of existence, existing on a level no inferior to Light Elemental or Dark Elemental Force. In fact, this was only when considering the lowest grade Star Force there was. When the highest order Star Forces were taken into consideration, even such Elemental Forces could not compare.

Of course, this was just a matter of differing quality. There were always exceptions to the rule. There were stronger and weaker inheritances of Light and Darkness as well. But, this wasn't important at the moment.

What was important was that Star Force was well known for two abilities: its purity and its density.

Compared to other Forces, Star Force was the most well known for its purity. Not only was it exceptionally pure, but it could influence its surroundings to be purified. In fact, this latter abilities where much of its preciousness came from. PANDA NOVEL

In addition, Star Force was naturally dense. Even without undergoing Crystallization, a given portion of Star Force could execute more actions than the same amount of another Force.

What Leonel realized at that moment was that this recovery opportunity wasn't just for healing his body, but it also circulated his meditation technique for him, purifying his Force.

Leonel immediately realized that this refinement was several times faster than it had been in the past.

Suddenly, Leonel's expression changed.

The two stars within his Ethereal Glabella began to greedily absorb the Star Force flooding into him. Soon, they began to spin faster, pulsing out with radiant Star Force that was a level purer and denser than what was provided by Merlin's Trial grounds.

Leonel felt like he had been hit by a bolt of lightning. PANDA NOVEL

[Dimensional Cleanse]... Could it rely on Star Force as well?

Now that he thought about it, every time he formed a Star, his body would be cleansed and impurities would be washed from his body. Didn't that conform with the abilities of Star Force?

Leonel couldn't believe he hadn't made this connection before.

At that moment, he realized another weakness of his Dreamscape. Things he didn't place within his Dreamscape obviously couldn't be used to draw conclusions.

Leonel had never placed his own techniques within his Dreamscape. Everything that could be found within it now were things he had read within the Mage and Knight Academy libraries!

Leonel took a deep breath, quickly circulating the meditation technique. This time, he didn't restrict his Stars, instead allowing them to act as they pleased.

In the past, he hadn't been able to absorb enough Star Force at once to elicit this response. But now that he had, he realized his body was perfectly suited to Merlin's meditation technique.

Others continued to take their trials, but Leonel didn't have time to spare for them.

By the time the feeling faded away, Leonel realized that just one of these rewards was the equivalent of an entire month of meditation for him. If he continued at this pace, in another dozen or so trials, he would have enough assurance to form his Ninth and Tenth Nodes!

Leonel felt that once he formed these final two Nodes, he wouldn't have anything to fear within this Zone any longer. He felt a keen anticipation.

But soon, he buried these thoughts deep within his heart.

Even after the pillar of light stopped, Leonel didn't open his eyes. Rather, he had focused his attention on the skill tree once more. Namely, the skill at the very top.

In truth, there were five.

One pictured an endless snowy plane. The whistling of harsh winds and sharp, fluttering snow made Leonel feel a bite of cold just by looking at it.

The second was a forest painted in red, yellow and brown. It was a lush landscape of Fall that made one gasp in astonishment. However, it carried with it a withering feeling that ate at the heart as though reminding you that death was a step away.

The third was filled with greenery. A sun hung high in the sky, beaming down with endless heat. Leonel felt as though his eyes were being scorched just by glancing at it.

The fourth could only be described like a cool breeze. It was fleeting and calm while carrying an air of rebirth and revitalization.

These four skills were linked and came together as one to form the highest level skill.

This highest level skill could only be described as having a myriad of changes.

Leonel knew exactly what these skills represented. When he first laid eyes on them, he couldn't help but be shocked. To think that these Trials could give him such an opportunity.

However, grasping it would be troublesome. The only method of doing so would be to unlock every skill of the weaponry root.

Still, the moment he laid eyes on it... Leonel knew he had to no matter what.

Chapter 279

[Author's Note: I keep getting caught up in the story and always forget to properly explain this part of DD's magic system, so we'll finally get to it now, lmao]

In the universe, the current state of Leonel's Force Strengthening Deviations can be called by many names. However, the one that resonated the most with Leonel was the Embryonic Stage. These so-called Embryos were represented by the small translucent spear and the 12-sided Star in Leonel's Ethereal Glabella — each representing Leonel's Spear Embryo and Light Embryo respectively.

Unlike the various fictions Leonel had indulged in back when his life was more normal, the comprehension of Force Strengthening Deviations was incredibly complex. Each path had a myriad of variations making it so that two people at the same level could be of vastly differing strengths.

Ultimately, the path of improving one's Force Strengthening Deviations — or, rather, comprehending and refining them — was known by some wise men as the Comprehension of the Cycles of the Universe.

Force Strengthening Deviations represented the mysteries of the universe. In order to use them to the highest standard, it was thus necessary to comprehend these so-called Universe Cycles. And, how thoroughly one comprehended them dictated just how powerful one's Force Strengthening Deviations would be.

This matter was difficult to comprehend at first, but the highest level skills of Merlin's Trial painted it perfectly.

The simplest Universe Cycle in all of existence were the Four Seasons: Winter, Spring, Summer and Fall. This level of comprehension was known as the Four Seasons Realm. The current Leonel could be considered to be at the Embryonic Stage of the weakest Four Seasons Realm!PANDA-NOVEL.COM

That said, calling the Four Seasons Realm weak simply did not do it justice. Even those strong enough to progress through this Universe Cycle and comprehend the next may not do so perfectly. Refining one's Force Embryo to the point of comprehending the profundities of the Four Seasons wasn't a simple task by any stretch of the imagination.

What made mastering this Realm exceptionally difficult was the fact that not all Force Embryos were compatible with this compression.

If you comprehended a Fire Embryo and wanted to master the Winter Variation of the Four Seasons Realm, just how difficult would that be? Just the idea alone didn't seem to make any sense.

As a result, many failed to comprehend the Four Seasons Realm in its entirety and could only be assumed to have gained small insights into it. Only the most exceptional of geniuses could comprehend all four aspects of the Four Seasons Realm and use it as a foundation to proceed to the next Universal Cycle profundity.

Compared to Elemental Force Strengthening Deviation, Weapon Force Embryos had a comparatively easier time. However, the difficulty was still as troublesome as ascending to the skies. One could spend a lifetime comprehending just a portion of the mysteries in this so-called 'weakest' Universal Cycle.

By now, it should be obvious why Leonel was so shocked by these Merlin Trials. If he was to believe what was before him now, it would be possible to comprehend all four aspects and even fuse them into one if he completed this Trial to its entirety. PANDA NOVEL

One had to know that the fusion phase of the Four Seasons Realm was the most difficult. It was already hair raising to attempt just to comprehend each of the Four Seasons individually. But, combining them into one was even more so. However, it was only by completing a perfect fusion that one lay the most perfect foundation for the next stage.

This was the world of Force Strengthening Deviations. Only by comprehending these profound Universal Cycles could one truly become powerful.

This was exactly why Leonel couldn't just break into the next realm with his Spear Embryo. The more spear comprehensions he observed, the more all-encompassing his eventual fusion would be. The better he could capture the myriad of changes the Four Seasons represented... the more potent and powerful his spear would be!

'The next Realm after the Four Seasons Realm is known as the Heavenly Body Realm. It requires comprehending The Meteor, The Moon, The Planet and The Star. But, I can forget about comprehending them perfectly or even fusing them into one if I can't clear the Four Seasons Realm first.'

The Four Seasons Realm was the equivalent of the Third Dimension. However, when mastered, it was the equivalent of peak existences within the Fourth Dimension. Likewise, the Heavenly Body Realm was the equivalent of the Fourth Dimension, when fully mastered it was the equivalent of peak existences within the Fifth Dimension.

Though... these things are easier said than done. And the reason for this is due to the fact there are different kinds of comprehensions within each Realm. PANDA NOVEL

The first kind of comprehension is one who doesn't attempt to grasp the Universe Cycle at all. For example, Leonel could try to forcefully evolve his current Third Dimensional Spear Embryo into one of the Fourth Dimension as long as he gains access to Fourth Dimensional Force.

This sort of comprehension is the weakest and is known by various existences as 'Shell Comprehension' or 'Empty Comprehension'.

The second kind of comprehension is the one displayed here. This is relying on the comprehension of another to grasp the truths of the Four Seasons Realm.

Leonel wasn't certain if he would be allowed to keep Merlin's comprehensions when he left these trial grounds, but if he could, then he would fall into this second kind of comprehension.

This sort of comprehension was in the middle of the first and the third kind. It wouldn't be as powerful as the peak existences of the Fourth Dimension, but it should be able to make Leonel undefeatable within his own realm of strength with a fair amount of ease.

The third kind of comprehension was the most powerful. This kind was the result of one relying on themselves to comprehend the truths of the Four Seasons and fusing them into one. Only in this instant would the true strength of the Four Seasons be perfectly displayed and only then would it truly be possible to leap an entire realm to battle.

After knowing all of this, the reason why Leonel would be so eager to gain these skills was obvious. Even though it wasn't as good as comprehending the third way, it would still be very helpful to him. It would allow him to lay a foundation for his own personal comprehension in the future!

In addition, this was just for the bow. Currently, Leonel's main weapon was the spear. He wasn't so arrogant to believe that he could grasp everything in his hands. He was only one man and he was already struggling with juggling everything he had to learn and master already.

In such a case, wasn't mastering the second kind of comprehension better than not comprehending it at all? In that way, he wouldn't have to worry about his bow skills lagging behind for a long while. In addition, by using his bow as a framework, he would be able to light his path of the spear. It would definitely become many more times easier to bring his Spear Embryo to completion in these circumstances.

But, once again, Leonel forced himself to calm down. The number of skill points he would need numbered in the tens of thousands. In addition, he hadn't even formed a Bow Embryo yet. He was getting too ahead of himself. He had to take this step by step.

Just as Leonel was reaffirming his own resolve, a familiar voice sounded once again.

<First Trial Complete>

<Time Taken: 12:52>

<Trial Grade: Perfect>

<Skill Points Rewarded: 6>

<Special Rewards: 1 Special Store Ticket, 2 Star Points>

Leonel's brows shot up.

His head immediately snapped toward the platform to see who had gotten such an exaggerated result, only to find King Arthur standing over the metallic beast, his back straight and his aura towering.

Chapter 280

Leonel was shocked by the result.

If he was honest with himself, he believed that he had already done about as well as anyone could. However, reality was cruel.

It wasn't just King Arthur that performed better than he did. Following him, whether it was Pope Margrave, Modred, or Peirce, each of them gained a perfect evaluation. What truly embarrassed Leonel was that there were even two demons who hadn't benefited from Minor Openings that managed to gain Perfect evaluations as well.

Before those two demons stepped forward, Leonel had thought it was due to the fact he was at a disadvantage. After all, while other beneficiaries of Minor Openings didn't have to worry about anything other than their weapon, Leonel had to balance his powerful bow with his weak arrows.

However, after observing for a while longer, Leonel realized that things weren't so simple. If two demons with normal weapons could succeed then there had to be a problem with him.

Had he been too conservative? But Leonel really couldn't think of a way for him to have been more aggressive.

As Leonel was realizing that matters wouldn't be as simple as he thought, the shock only continued to grow. PANDA-NOVEL.COM

After the two demons passed with Perfect evaluations, Supreme Monet stepped forward and received yet another.

This time, Leonel wasn't the only one who was shocked either.

Monet used a whip. But, it was clear by its quality that she too was just another regular participant of these trials.

However, where she distinguished herself was in the fact that while Leonel had to unlock his Force wielding abilities, Monet didn't!

Raging flames surged out from her body and coated her whip, making her every strike easily worth tens of times that of another. In the end, she shattered the protective shield around the metallic beast in less than ten minutes, setting a new record.

Toward such a display, Leonel couldn't help but frown. It seemed he had begun to take some things for granted. He couldn't afford to lose his focus chasing after dreams when there was very real danger right before him. He still wasn't aware if Monet would be on his side or not. [PANDA NOVEL](http://PANDA-NOVEL)

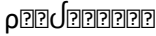
His first priority was to survive. Only if that was possible would he give his everything to master the Four Seasons Realm with his bow.

'As expected, these trial grounds can't restrict abilities. Just like I can use mine freely, so can Monet. I had originally assumed that no one in Camelot or in Modred's Demon Army had abilities, but what if it's not that they don't, but that it's rare?'

Leonel began to silently inspect the two demons. It wasn't long before he understood just where their specialties lied.

'They have inborn natural strength. It seems that the abilities those of this Mythological Zones have aren't as broad and varied as ones from back on Earth, but it's possible for rare variations like this to occur.'

Leonel didn't dare to casually inspect King Arthur with his Internal Sight, but he believed that if he did, King Arthur might very well have such special inborn strength as well. Coupling that with the fact he had Excalibur and everything would make sense.

The only questionable one was Modred. She should have been in a similar position to Leonel, only being able to rely on long ranged attacks from weak spells. Her situation was not much different from his own. Yet, she still managed to gain a Perfect evaluation. 

Ultimately, though their situations were similar, they still differed by one major point. While Modred's wand could amplify the strength of her 'weak' spells, it was difficult for Leonel's bow to do the same for his arrows, at least not by the same measure.

Leonel grew more serious the more he thought. It seemed he had fallen a step behind. There were already seven people with better evaluations than him.

It was fine for Monet and the two demons for now since they didn't get the initial boost of skill points Leonel did. At most, they were on par with him with all of them having received seven total skill points. But, if things continued like this, Leonel would only fall further behind.

In addition, if Leonel couldn't perform better, he doubted that he would ever earn enough skill points to trade for the Fall, Winter, Summer and Spring Embryos, let alone the fusion of them all. To make matters worse' ; not everyone had gone yet, who knew if there were other monsters waiting in the wings.

Now that Leonel thought about it, the others that had entered this Zone with him also had abilities that wouldn't be restricted.

As though to confirm Leonel's worries, Big Buddha and Violet Rain went up one after another. Big Buddha seemed to have gained large gloves for his hands from the weapon selection round while Violet Rain had chosen a sword. Both of their battles were without suspense.

AS though even this wasn't enough, after many had gone, Little Nana was the last to go up.

Leonel frowned when he saw her. Compared to the shy little girl she had been when he last saw her, she seemed somewhat even more reserved and '¡ scared?

Leonel's initial thought was that she had been scared by the trial. After all, she was only a teenage girl and younger than even the young Leonel by several years, didn't it make sense if she was scared?

However, when she used her bind ability and then easily dispatched the metallic beast to the point of breaking Monet's record, Leonel realized that her fear wasn't toward the beast, but rather toward turning back to approach' ¡ Pope Margrave?

Leonel's frown deepened. Could the death of the other Adurna family members be related to the Pope?

But this didn't make any sense. Why would the Pope kill them all but Little Nana? And, if he did do so, why would he allow Little Nana to enter these trial grounds? Shouldn't he be like King Arthur, doing everything in his power to stop her from entering?

The more Leonel thought about it, the more confused he seemed to become.

Just when he wanted to see if it was possible to communicate with the little girl directly, a familiar voice sounded.

<Trial 1 has been completed>

<Milestone Reached: 10 participants have earned Star Points>

<Trial 2 has been postponed, Elimination Round commencing>

<Elimination Goal: 10>

The small grey platforms began to rumble.

<First Elimination Round "" Begin!>