

Descent 481

Chapter 481

The situation only seemed to continuously spiral more and more out of control.

Without any direction, Aina continued traveling down the path of least resistance. What point was there in battling many Invalids if she was no longer on the right path anymore to begin with? All she could do was try to head in the general direction she had aimed for in the very beginning, but without a map, compass, or strong sensory abilities, Aina was practically flying blind.

Though she felt like she was headed in the right direction, for all she knew, by now, she was already headed in the complete opposite.

The headpiece Aina wore that almost took the shape of a loose crown on her head did have a strong boost to her abilities. But, it was multiplicative, not additive. Since Aina's senses were weak to begin with, the effect of the treasure wasn't as great as it would be to someone with true sensory abilities.

However, it was still very helpful in clearing Aina's mind. Despite the situation, she managed to remain calm, brandishing her sword toward her enemies and maintaining a steady control over her heart rate and stamina.

She didn't know how long she would have to run and hide. But, what she did know was that since the density of Invalids could so quickly increase, it could very likely decrease back to what it once had been.

She just had to keep running toward where the least of them appeared. As long as she ran for long enough, she felt she could finally break out of this encirclement.

From her interactions with the Invalids, their lack of intelligence was clear. She didn't believe that they would know to expand their encirclement to find her. PANDA-NOVEL.COM

Still, the situation just seemed off.

Why did that Invalid scream? Why were they acting so weirdly? In fact, to now, none of the Invalids had even used their abilities. One of the most dangerous things about Invalids should have been the unpredictable methods by which they made use of their powers. Yet, not a single one had taken advantage of this.

Also, now that Aina thought about it, another hallmark of Invalids, especially low level ones, were failed mutations. They often had extra body parts or an odd assortment of a normal number of limbs.

But, all of these Invalids looked 'normal'?

It was a silly thing to say considering their odd disjointedness. But, compared to 'normal' Invalids, these ones looked almost too human. They had no odd mutations to speak of in the slightest if one wasn't thinking about their double jointedness.

Aina had no choice but to continue running for her life. But, the situation only seemed to become more odd even as the density of Force continued to skyrocket.

Soon, Aina even felt as though the air quality was increasing and the quantity of oxygen was rising.
PANDA NOVEL

Immediately, she understood what this meant.

Aina had entered the network of tunnels from a mountain peak she had climbed to. Obviously, so high up, the oxygen density had plummeted. The only reason oxygen would be increasing was if she was headed down!

It was at that moment that Aina realized she truly was lost. She thought she had been heading in the general direction of her exit all this time, hoping that she would run back into a path where she could find her drawn arrows again. But, reality was cruel. She had ended up going in the complete opposite direction.

Aina steeled her jaw, her gaze becoming icy.

It no longer mattered. This wouldn't be the place she died.

With a swing of her blade, another two Invalids had their heads pierced through.

She had too many things she needed to do, she had no intention of earning herself a nameless grave.

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With a flip in her mindset, this endless maze of tunnels and Invalids became nothing more than another challenge Aina needed to cross. Every time her footsteps faltered or her arms grew tired, her resolve would be the light that burned brighter than everything else.

Aina severed the arm of another Invalid, her breathing ragged. She sidestepped its uncoordinated attempt to swipe at her, lopping off another head.

‘A light?’

Aina rounded another corner, only to find a faint red light ahead. It spilled out from several diverging paths, making it difficult to tell just where the source of it was or if there were multiple different sources to begin with.

Aina's chest heaved as she stepped over the corpse of the Invalid before her. Though she wasn't sure if this would lead to more danger or not, in these monotonous tunnels, such a change was welcome. Even if there was more danger, it wasn't necessarily a bad thing.

Aina felt that unlike the Invalids she had come across before, these ones in particular seemed to share a purpose outside of devouring humans. If that was the case, then something had to be controlling them. If Aina could find and kill this person or thing, she may very well have an easier time finding a path out of here.

With resolute steps, she made her way toward the brightest of the red lights, hoping this pathway carried the main source.

She rounded another corner, cautiously making her way forward.

‘A new Invalid hasn’t appeared in a while’!

Aina’s chest grew tighter. In the past, she hadn’t been able to travel even 50 meters without coming across another Invalid. But now she had travelled several hundred without even hearing a single one’!

Aina’s steps subconsciously slowed, her grip around her sword growing tighter as the red lights around her grew stronger. The crimson hue rebounded across the dark walled cave, making some of the moisture clinging to it look no different from dripping blood.

Aina stepped through another corridor, finding herself facing an opening to an open space. But, it was difficult to see clearly through the bright red light. After so long in perpetual darkness, the sudden increase in intensity blinded her for a moment.

However, before Aina could even care to about her blurred vision, her hair stood on end, her instincts screaming at her to run.

Without hesitation, she spun on her heel, looking to charge out. But, it was at that moment that a lazy voice speaking in a language she couldn’t understand drifted to her ear.

At least, that should have been the case. She wouldn’t have understood had it not been for the added functionality of her jeweled headpiece coming into effect.

“ ‘! You’ve come such a long way, why leave now?’”

A shiver crawled up Aina’s back. The voice was so soothing, it felt as though a devil was lingering over her shoulder, whispering sweet temptations to her.

As though something was compelling her, Aina’s body slowly turned back. Against her will, her feet moved, shuffling forward.

She grit her teeth so hard that blood began to leak from her gums. But, no matter how hard she tried, she couldn’t seem to make a difference.

Aina crossed through the opening, her eyes finally adjusting to the scene before her. However, what she saw left her feeling so disgusted she almost dry heaved.

It was a dinner table that extended dozens of meters. It was completely out of place in such a location. But, it was what was on this dinner table that turned Aina's stomach inside out.

Everywhere she looked, bits and pieces of human flesh could be found. Some were bones, some were beating hearts and trembling organs, there were even corpses that were only torso or others that were headless.

At the helm of this table, a man sat with an indifferent expression, a head on the plate before him and a fork and knife in hand. With a single motion of his wrist, his knife slid through the head's skull as though it was no tougher than butter.

“Did you have fun playing with my creations?”

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Aina's body continued to walk forward completely out of her control. Before she could even grasp what was happening, she was sitting to the right of the man, her body trembling uncontrollably. No matter how hard she fought back, she couldn't seem to break free.

Aina clenched her jaw, her head raising to look the man in the eye.

The situation was far outside of her expectations. She sat no more than a meter and a half from a man she was certain could take her life with a thought. But, what was even more astonishing was the fact this wasn't a man at all.

When Aina met the man's gaze, she finally noticed the familiar white irises, flickering with indifference.

There was no doubt, this was an Invalid, a true Invalid, a Variant Invalid.

Aina's heart lost control of any sense of rhythm, accelerating to the point it seemed it might fly from her chest at any moment.

The man's wrists never stopped, slowly cutting the head before it in half. Grotesque white and red liquids spilled outward, pooling around the severed neck and almost overflowing the plate. PANDA-NOVEL.COM

Aina's stomach rolled as the Invalid brought the fork to its mouth. Somehow, the immaculate table manners it displayed made the scene several times more difficult to watch. The dichotomy of stateliness and stomach churning sights made one's head spin.

"No comment?" The Invalid finished chewing and spoke these words.

It wiped its lips with a pristine white cloth despite the fact there wasn't a speck of impurity on its face. It seemed completely at ease.

"When I sensed that there was someone who had actually chosen to come to me after all these years, I assumed that you would be powerful. But, I didn't think that you would be such a fledgling. I guess as the saying goes, the ignorant fear nothing, hm?"

The Invalid smiled lightly.

To anyone who didn't know better, it was quite the dazzling smile. All the practice Leonel put in couldn't match to even half the charm the male Invalid was currently projecting. Yet, Aina only felt more disgust. Unfortunately, as much as she wanted to look away, she couldn't. PANDA NOVEL

As for the words the Invalid was speaking, Aina didn't spare them much of a thought. She wasn't aware of how dangerous this region was before she entered. Had she, she would likely understand more of the male Invalid's surprise.

It had quite literally been centuries since the last time anyone had come to this mountain range willingly, let alone to the point of entering its home and travelling so deeply into its lion's den.

The Invalid's word suddenly paused, its strong bridged nose tilting up in the air. It took a deep sniff, its gaze stirring with the first hint of emotion Aina had seen from it.

"This smell'!"

The male Invalid leaned forward.

Aina fidgeted in her seat, trying to maintain distance, but her movements were completely out of her control. Her body trembled violently even to the point where the chair she sat on almost collapsed. However, it was all meaningless. ρ??∪???????

The nose of the male Invalid brushed by Aina's hair and almost touched her neck.

It took a pause as though it was appreciating the scent of roses, completely unbothered by Aina's near breakdown.

Having an Invalid so close, Aina, too, could smell it. One would have thought that the sensation was akin to being near a rotting corpse, but in Aina's opinion, it was far worse than that.

It felt as though she was standing next to a pile of shit. But, upon that pile of shit, one had poured the strongest and most invasive perfumes all over the top of it. It was far worse than just a rotting corpse, far worse than someone trying to replace a shower with deodorant, far worse than any olfactory assault Aina had ever faced before.

" '! What a nice scent'!"

The male Invalid didn't move from Aina's hair for a long time. It was as though it couldn't sense her squirming in the slightest.

" '! It's the scent of a delicacy, the kind of scent that shouldn't appear on this forsaken world. I understand now, you aren't from Terrain, no wonder, no wonder."

The male Invalid pulled back, but at that moment, Aina's hands began to move against her will. From her sides, they were pulled up until they were pressed palm side down on either side of the plate before her.

It was only at that moment that Aina saw what sat in front of her.

The brain sat there, its numerous folds slowly collapsing on its own weight. After being exposed to the air for so long, it started to experience some discoloration, turning into a deeper purple-black. A pungent smell of blood and gore hung in the air as though trying to suffocate Aina.

All the effort she was putting in toward trying to escape made her head swim. The foggier her mind grew, the more the scents seemed to hook into her body, dragging her down toward a bloody abyss.

But, it was at that moment that Aina's body froze. All her trembling ceased and even her heart seemed to stop beating completely.

All of her senses focused on the subtle, soft feeling gliding across her fingers.

Aina looked down her hands, her breathing hitching as she watched the male Invalid slowly run the flat of its knife against her long, slender fingers.

Fear gripped Aina's heart, her teeth rattling out of her control.

“ ‘I’ve never tasted an other worlder before’ I’m sure you understand. My kind isn’t very well accepted, it’s a bit sad, if you ask me.

“It’s quite amusing, though. In every instance of human history, it was the majority that dictated the rules and wielded the power. So, have you ever asked yourself why it was that despite the fact the majority became like us’ I that we would still have to run and hide like this?

“It’s interesting, don’t you think?”

The male Invalid continued to run its knife across Aina's fingers, seemingly enjoying the elasticity her youthful skin showed. Something about the way her skin bent beneath the weight of its knife and rebounded back once the blade moved away was quite mesmerizing to the Variant Invalid' ;

But, it was even more eager to know just what Aina might taste like.

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The male Invalid smiled lightly, pressing its knife just a bit more firmly into Aina's skin. Despite the fact it was still the flat of the blade, Aina's skin was left with a much deeper impression, taking several more seconds to rebound to its previous unblemished appearance.

Aina's jaw clenched tightly, her gaze completely focused on the knife gliding across her hand. It was as though she would rather see everything through to the end than look away.

As for the Invalids words, she hardly cared about them.

Invalids represented failure. Even if they were the so-called majority, nothing would change that.

Plus, unlike humans, Invalids couldn't reproduce. They had no way of multiplying their numbers. As such, even if for a short moment they were indeed the majority, just how long would that last exactly?

That said, it wasn't like there were no worlds where humans failed to weed out the Invalid threat. In those cases, Invalids would become the majority and take hold of the planet for themselves. But' ;

The irony of it all was that while humans could evolve without Invalids, the vice versa was not possible. In the cases where Invalids 'won', the reality was that they in fact lost.

Now trapped on a world without humans and without ability to travel to other worlds, they essentially reached their limit until the day the world was devoured by its Zones due to lack of human presence. PANDA-NOVEL.COM

No matter how you looked at it, Invalids were inferior in every way. Whether it was by the fact they failed to awaken their abilities or even up to the fact they were reliant on humans even now.

“Hm? You don’t believe me?”

The male Invalid blinked, a part dangerous, part amused light in its eyes. It seemed impossible to read its intentions, leaving Aina in a perpetually tense state. Her nerves stood on end, even the tiniest hairs on her arm standing erect.

This reality quickly chipped away at Aina’s mental fortitude. It made one worry if this was the true goal of the Invalid all along.

“You humans have indeed always been like this. But then again, my people have their own issues. I try to tell them that they should control their impulses better, but they don’t like to listen.”

The male Invalid sighed, continuing to run its knife across Aina’s fingers.

“They can’t blame me for their own foolishness, right? I just turned them all into puppets so they could calm down a bit and bide their time properly. How are we ever going to show the humans who the true superior beings are if we can’t do even that?” PANDA NOVEL

The male Invalid chuckled a bit.

It looked up from Aina’s hand only to find Aina looking toward it, her gaze carrying a fiery blaze. Maybe if looks could kill, the male Invalid would have been diced into countless pieces by now.

“Interesting, interesting.” The male Invalid chuckled more deeply. “Your mind is still clear after so long. Its rare for someone to last so long in my presence. Most minds would have collapsed by now. Let me guess, does it have something to do with that crown on your head?”

The male Invalid reached a finger forward, trailing it across Aina’s inflamed scars until he stopped at the gem that hung from her forehead.

The feeling of having her scars poked and prodded at left Aina's body shaking even more fiercely than before, but her gaze remained defiant.

At that moment, the sound of a knife meeting hard wood sounded.

Blood flowed slowly, pooling across the table and dripping to the floor. ρ??∫???????

“Ah, oops.”

The male Invalid clicked his tongue, shaking his head.

He raised his knife back up, carefully cleaning the blood off its blade. After he was finished, he raised the bloodied cloth to his nose, inhaling a deep breath.

Aina's fingers rolled from her hand freely, only to be stopped by the male Invalid's plate.

Veins bulged out from Aina's neck, but her gaze gained a new level of intensity. If only she could move, if only she could just move.

“ ‘| This blood’ |”

The male Invalid closed his eyes. When they opened once more, his gaze had earned a tinge of red. From his previously calm expression, it seemed as though he had lost all reason for a moment.

“ ‘| You’ | You're a Broodmother’ |”

The male Invalid's face flushed with excitement. He displayed a level of emotion Aina had yet to see to this point.

Its laughter rang through the underground space. It was so loud that the walls began to shake.

“How unexpected! How truly unexpected! Never would I have thought that I would have such a day! For me to meet such a treasure, the Heavens are truly smiling down upon me! HAHAHA!”

The male Invalid stood, knocking over its chair and almost shattering the table before it.

A towering erection pressed outward against the male Invalids robes and pants. It seemed with each billowing laughter it released, it grew more, becoming almost like a second pulsing monster of its own.

When the male Invalids laughter died down, it looked toward Aina with a fervent gaze, the tent in its pants pulsing with a grotesque air. In those moments, the scent the Invalid gave off only became more nauseating.

“Just looking at you, you have no idea the kind of value you have. But, I expect humans to wallow in ignorance, so I don’t mind explaining it to you’!”

Though the Invalid began to speak, Aina’s mind was roaring. She wanted to move, she needed to move. She wouldn’t be caught here, she wouldn’t allow this disgusting creature to do the things it wanted to do to her.

She already well knew what a Broodmother was.

It went by too many names. Birther, Eternal Mother, some even called them Vampires. However, there were two things all these titles had in common.

The first was that they all guaranteed an impossibly high Blood Force affinity, affinity so high that most talents couldn’t even match up to it. Maybe only monsters like Leonel who had Grade Nine Dream Force affinity while still in the Third Dimension could hope to be on the same level.

And the second was that’!

They were among the very few existences that could allow Invalids to reproduce.

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Aina struggled with all her might.

By now, she had a grasp of what the ability of this Invalid was. It was clearly a puppeteering ability and this ability was unfortunately especially effective against those with weak Soul Forces like her own.

However, that didn't mean that she didn't have a chance. She had been struggling from the very beginning, there was simply no way that the stamina of this Variant Invalid was endless. There had to be a limit to how long it could hold control over her.

Due to her experience in the Joan Zone, Aina had learned a lot of Joan's death. Even if there was just a single thing the experience taught her, it was that it took far more energy to control a person than it took to wrest control away.

Aina knew that all she had to do was to keep struggling, to keep playing the part of helpless damsel, only then might the Invalid foolishly continue to chip away at its own stamina.

“‘! Do you understand now? Do you understand your worth? HAHAHA!

“Don't worry, I will treat you well. How couldn't I? You will be the key to my Empire, the centerpiece to me truly ruling the universe and showing these humans who the true superior beings are!

“These fools of Terrain seem to believe that they have won the battle against me when the reality is that I am just using them. I have patience that my fellow man do not have.PANDA-NOVEL.COM

“If I didn't have these humans as a cover, how would I continue to enjoy such delicacies everyday? Who knows if those Invalid hunters would have come to put my head on a pike by now?”

The male Invalid's manic laughter continued to cause the Earth to tremble. It was clear at a glance that this Invalid was just a step away from the Fifth Dimension. As for why it hadn't crossed that threshold yet, it simply couldn't.

In a world with its potential capped like Terrain, it would simply take too long to reach the Fifth Dimension. Without the ability to travel to other worlds, the Invalid could only wait patiently and bide its time.

But, so what if Terrain reached the Fifth Dimension eventually? How could the male Invalid's ambition end there?

Unfortunately, there was nothing it could do. Unless it could find a method to secretly travel to another world without being detected, its path would end here.

So, the male Invalid had kept its head lowered, displaying patience those of its kind simply didn't have. Of all the things it had spoken, this was by far the closest to the truth. It had indeed displayed exceptional foresight and forbearance.

"HAHA! The name of the Puppet Master will ring throughout the Dimensional Verse. PANDA NOVEL

"At my mere mention, I will ensure that the women shed tears and the men shed blood. I will sunder the clouds with a single word and destroy the earth with a single step. All shall know of my legend!"

By the end of its speech, the Puppet Master was practically roaring. Its voice seemed one part ambitious and another part rage fueled. It was as though all the pent up frustration of the last several centuries had come bubbling forth.

After a long while, the Puppet Master slowly calmed its raging emotions, its gaze becoming a placid lake of steadiness.

With a clap of its hands, the sound of shuffling feet could be heard from the distance.

“This timing couldn’t be more perfect. With all my other chess pieces aligning, this must be a providence of the Heavens. I will make my debut into the world soon.

“But you are still too weak at the moment. If you were to bear my children now, they will be of no help to me. I will first raise your strength, only then will my children be birthed with the most optimal power.”

At that moment, the puppets brought in an oddly curved package. It was large in stature, so large, and likely so heavy, that six ‘Invalids’ had to carry it in at once. ρ??∪???

“I personally handcrafted this piece, you could call it my magnum opus.” The male Invalid continued to speak as though it couldn’t sense Aina’s struggle.

“I’ve been nurturing the resources of this mountain range for a long time. You could even say that the most precious herbs and ores of Terrain can be found here. But, since no one dares to come, it’s all mind.”

The male Invalid chuckled as though he felt Aina should be impressed. His demeanor seemed to scream: ‘What do you think, isn’t your future husband wealthy? Be happy.’

“But, even compared to those things, this is especially valuable.”

With another motion, the six Invalid puppets set the heavy curved package down and opened it up, revealing a cavity filled with pulsing red rubies.

If Leonel had been here, his eyes would have immediately widened in shock. These red rubies, each an every one was as valuable as a Quasi Bronze Ore!

It was known as Force Nurturing Ore. It was an Evolution type Ore, though less potent than the true Evolution Ore.

Its ability wasn’t as exaggerated as raising the grade of an Ore by a single step. Not only were its effects lesser, it took a long period of time “” months to years “” for its true worth to come into effect.

Usually, Force Nurturing Ore was only useful on already completed products while Evolution Ore could be used on raw materials. This was maybe the most important fundamental difference.

There was, of course, another benefit to Force Nurturing Ore as well. Not only could it increase the quality of treasures, but it was useful on living beings as well! It had similar recovery benefits to Leonel's Cleansing Waters albeit lesser healing effects. At the same time, it could quicken the cultivation of humans and even help herbs to grow faster!

Maybe the most shocking part was that the red glow of these tunnels'! It was entirely reliant on the source of Force Nurturing Ore! Just how much of it did this Variant Invalid have?!

"I will allow you to sleep in here for a few decades." The Puppet Master said with a hint of excitement in his voice. "By the time you come out, the foundations of my empire will be set and my new strength will have stabilized. By then, the world will be ours!"

The Puppet Master stepped forward, caressing Aina's scars. Somewhat ironically, just like Leonel, Aina's appearance meant little to him. But, their reasons vastly differed.

A surge of helplessness took hold of Aina's soul. She struggled so hard, yet she couldn't even interrupt this Puppet Master's psychotic personal soliloquy. Was she really going to die here?

Her severed fingers continued to drip blood, coating her hands with a warmth.

'I can't die here'! I can't die here!'

A deep unwillingness surged through Aina's body.

Her will suddenly pressed against the barrier to the Third Tier of the Fourth Dimension. If she could just breakthrough, it would be that much more difficult for this Puppet Master to control her.

A light of hope gripped at Aina's heart. She pushed with all her might, even to the point blood vessels popped in her eyes, causing blood to trickle down her cheeks.

A low shout escaped her lips as she rammed against the barrier.

The male Invalid's eyes widened slightly. Under its control, Aina shouldn't have been able to make a single sound.

But at that moment, just when Aina was about to succeed, the burning marks on her face suddenly lit afire.

All the momentum she had vanished, completely destroyed.

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Aina felt as though all the wind had been knocked out of her. The faint light of hope she thought she could grasp on to suddenly went up in smoke, disappearing like a fleeting fragrance in the wind.

After a moment, the male Invalid finally recovered from his shock.

That last struggle of Aina's, especially the shout, had actually put a dent in its stamina. Though it wasn't as exaggerated as him being on his last legs, at least a third of his reserves had been sapped up.

In truth, Aina's breakthrough wouldn't have made a difference. It was the final act of defiance that truly impacted him.

But, it seemed that this final push had truly taken whatever she had left out.

When the Puppet Master recovered, its gaze narrowed, a slight hint of ferocity hidden within their depths.

"It seems that you don't understand how to be grateful, what a shame."

The male Invalid reached up from Aina's cheek, ripping the crown from her head.

"Oh?"

At that moment, the control the male Invalid had on Aina increased by more than tenfold. Whereas Aina could at least struggle and resist before, right now, she couldn't even breathe without the Invalid's permission.PANDA-NOVEL.COM

"So that's how it is. Clever, clever. You diverted some of your mental strength into hiding the grade of this treasure from me so that you could struggle in secret. I thought that your mental strength was nothing compared to me to begin with, but to think it was even worse than I originally believed."

The Invalid examined the headpiece closer. After a moment, it began to laugh again.

"A Quasi Bronze Treasure? An one that boosts mental strength as well? You are truly my guardian angel!"

The Invalid's laughter seemed even more uproarious than before. But, it only made sense. Such a treasure to a mental strength expert like him would be like giving wings to a tiger.

It already allowed someone with such poor Soul Force like Aina to struggle against a near Fifth Dimensional entity like it. What kind of amplification effects would it have on him?

Without hesitation, the Invalid slipped the headpiece onto its head. Though it was somewhat feminine, it was already clear that appearances were something it could care less about.

Whereas the benefits of using Aina like a sow would take decades, even centuries to begin to bear fruit, the benefit of a Quasi Bronze treasure would give its coming plans an almost 100% chance of succeeding.

If the Invalid was certain that the Heavens were smiling down on it before, it was convinced without a shadow of a doubt now.

“AH! YES! YES! YES!” pANDA nOVEL

The Invalid felt as though the whole world had opened up to it. The restrictions on Aina became even sturdier. It was to the point it could even manipulate Aina’s senses to make her see what it wanted her to see.

The male Invalid looked down at Aina. By now, its erection had calmed. It looked toward the girl before it like a prime steak on a cutting board.

“It’s a shame that you aren’t obedient. But this is fine, I will teach you obedience.”

The Invalid picked up the knife on the table and spun it in the air, allowing to fall as it pleased.

The sound of a blade embedding itself into wood sounded again. But this time, it had severed the fingers from Aina’s other hand.

Aina couldn’t even flinch. Pain wracked her body, threatening to throw her into the pits of hell. It felt as though everything revolved around the torture she was experiencing.

The Invalid forced Aina’s head to turn toward it as it picked up one of her fingers, sniffing at the dripping blood as an intoxicated look surfaced across its face.

Its tongue swept across the crimson liquid falling from its hand.

“Oh my!” p????????

The rested erection of the Invalid came back, soaring to towering heights even past where it had been before.

“Magnificent! Wonderful! Unbelievable!”

The Invalid could no longer hold itself back. Its teeth shone beneath the crimson lights as it bit down.

The sound of crunching bones shook Aina to her soul. She sat there and watched as her finger was eaten before her.

The fear, the helplessness, the despair'! It swarmed around her like inner devils looking to devour all sense of pride and hope she had left.

'I can't die here! I can't die!'

Aina continued to roar these words in her mind, the tears of blood continuously streaming down her face. But, it simply didn't seem to matter what she thought at all.

"How could there be such a delicacy in this world! Magnifique!"

Aina sat immobile, the haunting thoughts eating at her mind.

Would she really die here? But what about her mother? What about her revenge? What about the Brazinger family?

A bitterness took root in her chest.

The flash of a young man's smile suddenly occupied her mind. Though it was less charming than that of the Invalid's, to Aina, it was several times better. She didn't know how much effort the young man put into that smile, but just by gazing upon it, it felt as though she could see through all its sincerity, all its meaning.

Other than the smile, though, she couldn't quite see the rest of the young man's face. Her mind was tired, her heart was tired'!

'I can't die here'!'

“Hm?”

At that moment, the male Invalid suddenly frowned. Before he realized what was happening, he had already swallowed four of Aina’s fingers, each tasting better than the last.

“There’s Fifth Dimensional blood within your veins?” The male Invalid shook his head. “How impressive. It will be a bit troublesome to get rid of it, but with my strength, it won’t be a problem. In fact, it will only strengthen my body in the end’ !”

Compared to Aina, the Puppet Master was much closer to the Fifth Dimension. It of course wouldn’t be a problem for him to deal with such a faint trace of the Abyssal Panther blood. After all, Aina had already absorbed most of it.

But, in that instant, the male Invalid suddenly grabbed his stomach and coughed.

“Hm?”

A cough? He had no reason to be coughing.

A heat suddenly spread throughout the Invalids body. The more seconds ticked by, the hotter its body seemed to become.

The Invalid’s eyes suddenly widened, its vision blurring.

“A curse?!”

Shackles lashed out at the Invalid, spreading through its body like a virus. At that moment, Aina finally felt the restrictions on her loosen’ !

~A year later~

Aina slowly rose up from her position, her hand reaching out toward the curved package by her side.

It trembled and opened, revealing the form of a massive golden-red ax, pulsing with a blinding red light.

“ ‘! Blood.”

Her soft voice traveled to the ears of everyone on the battlefield once again’!

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A maleficent aura enveloped the battlefield. It felt as though a crimson tide was washing over them all, but instead of carrying the characteristic warmth and thickness of blood, it was instead cold and lifeless, seeping into their pores and causing their hearts to quake.

Aina slowly walked from the military tent, its flaps making way for her. Somehow, despite her petite body, she became the center of the entire battlefield. Even City Lord White who was in the midst of sending a final death blow toward Lancelot paused, an eerie look in her eye locking onto Aina as well.

Aina’s footsteps halted. The scars that danced across her face seemed to come to life, raging about like living, breathing flood dragons. The grew a size, radiating out with a heat that made the temperature of the battlefield skyrocket.

The momentum she had walked out with seemed to dim somewhat. Though the hold she held over the battlefield didn’t vanish, it snapped City Lord White out of her stupor. And, very quickly, what once was her absentmindedness became her shock.

How could such a thing happen to her? How did she lose control of her thoughts for a moment? Why’!
Why did she feel fear just now?

Aina’s delicate brows furrowed, her gaze still somewhat vacant.PANDA-NOVEL.COM

“Go’ | away’ |”

The scars on Aina’s face grew more fervent, as though insulted by Aina’s words. They bulged out another fold in size. By now, it was almost impossible to see what should have been a young girl’s face. The swelling became so bad that healthy skin became impossible to spot.

“I said’ | Go away!”

Aina’s delicate voice boomed across the battlefield, carrying such compulsion that many of the warriors on it turned tailed and ran.

No’ | They weren’t running’ | They were’ | Following Aina’s orders! PANDA NOVEL

At that very instant, a mental strength that superseded worlds covered the battlefield. It was simply impossible to grasp that someone with such weak talent in this area could possibly display such might.

However, any thoughts one would have spared to this instantly vanished with the next sight.

The scars on Aina’s face struggled and rose, finally showing their true appearance. They squirmed like grotesque leeches, wielding their circular mouths and several rows of teeth as though trying to devour Aina right then and there.

But, it was in that moment that Aina’s overwhelming mental strength shook them to their core. As though feeling a fear they never had before, they retreated, disappearing into Aina’s face like they had never been there.

However, it was the sight that was left behind that silenced the battlefield. p??J??????

Beautiful. Too beautiful. Beautiful to the point it seemed impossible to have such a being in the possession of a human. It must have been a Faerie, a Fey, a Goddess’ |

The moment the vile leeches vanished, a restriction placed on Aina’s body seemed to disappear as well.

She grew half a foot in height, quickly soaring past six feet and rivaling even Mordred. Her legs became long and slender as her figure filled out completely. The curves that had once been so well hidden by her black military uniform couldn't seem to hide any longer as her clothing grew.

Aina's hair lengthened. From the small of her back, it almost fell to the ground, shimmering with a healthy luster. Her amber eyes became warmer, exuding a soft golden color that compelled one to stare indefinitely yet somehow make them want to look away just as much.

Even with all of these changes, the largest of them couldn't be denied.

Without her scars, Aina's visage had become more precious than the most delicate of carvings. Her supple skin, the gentle slopes of her jaw and nose, the elegant arches of her brow. Her every action, no matter how mundane, no matter how indifferent, exuded a charm that only creatures of myths and legend could match.

Aina's delicate brow furrowed. At that moment, her frustration seemed to become everyone's frustration. All those who laid eyes on her wanted to know what was bothering her, she just had to say the word and they would fight to the ends of the earth to get rid of it.

Aina's chest moved and seemed to flex slightly. The sound of tearing fabric sounded, making the hearts of all those watching lose track of their breaths for a moment. But, oddly enough, there was no change to Aina's military uniform in the slightest. Well' ¦ No change except for her figure seemingly becoming a size fuller.

She reached her slender fingers into her collar and pulled out a long white cloth that had once bound her chest, throwing it onto the ground.

Aina, seemingly finally feeling comfortable, swung out casually with her ax.

An invisible, piercing wind shot across the ground, elevating a piece of earth and blasting it apart.

Aina looked up, her gaze locking onto City Lord White. This was the she devil that had brought her out here, she had the blood she wanted so badly.

Aina finally began to walk forward. Her every step seemed soft, but webs of cracked land followed her gait. Each time she raised a foot, she crossed tens of meters in a blink.

Yet, her every action was so enticing, so hypnotic, that City Lord White didn't even sense danger until Aina was already just ten meters away. To experts on their level, this might as well have been a single arm's length.

Aina raised her ax.

At that moment, it felt as though the whole world had raised it along with her. The winds followed her will, the clouds split just so that the stars could watch her, the energies of the universe stilled and calmed'!

City Lord White only seemed to awaken again when that dense killing intent locked onto her. The instincts she had trained for decades shocked her still heart into action.

Her face flushed, shock and fear written all over it. This sort of suppression was something she had never faced before in her life. She couldn't comprehend just what was happening.

But, she already had no more time to think about it as Aina's blade began to descend.

Chapter 487

Farialice watched as her warriors fell one after another, a hint of shock coloring her gaze.

The warriors of White City had long since been indifferent to high casualties. The truth was that one of the strategies Terrain had prepared before launching this attack was precisely this.

It had to be remembered that Earth had lost more than 99% of its population. As a result, even if Earth had a higher concentration of talents, what could they do if Terrain sent wave after wave of warriors after them?

This was precisely why City Lord White didn't care about using the death of her men to stall. Compared to Earth's remaining population of barely a few million, Terrain's City Lord's had access to population in the billions and fighters numbering in the tens of millions.

Though only a fraction of these were elites, it hardly mattered if Terrain could just throw such numbers out continuously to wear Earth down.

However, the group Farialice was heading was far different. These men with her were the true elites of White City. Not only did they have ten White Knights with them, but a large number of the soldiers beneath them were just a step away from this title. In fact, there were many candidates to replace White Knight Diore among them.

Unfortunately, no matter how elite they were'! How could they make do without their Force?PANDA-NOVEL.COM

Farialice was completely caught off guard. According to her information, Force Disruption Towers should have lost their effect after Earth entered the Fourth Dimension. So, what was going on?

'No, that's not right. Even the most elite of Force Disruption Towers should only have an effective range of a few hundred meters. But, I don't sense any Towers in the vicinity.'

At that moment, Crakos raised his saber and attacked Farialice once more.

The White Knight could only grit her teeth and parry, her feet sliding several meters before coming to a grinding halt.

'This'! It really is the weapon.'

Farialice was at a loss. When had Earth gained such technology? It can't be that Earth already researched the Fourth Dimension? PANDA NOVEL

But that didn't make any sense. Crossing the Dimensional barrier should have been the equivalent of Earth getting sent back to the stone ages. It took thousands of years for Earth to reach the technological advancements they had within the Third Dimension despite their talent. It should take the same amount of effort to reach such a height in the Fourth Dimension!

This was why most worlds, even when they had comprehended the sciences to a high degree, would choose to abandon it entirely after undergoing their first Metamorphosis.

If a world took several thousand years to stabilize themselves every time they evolved to a new Dimension, how could it possibly protect itself?

As a result, these worlds had no choice but to rely on the well established disciplines of the Dimensional Verse. Only these well tested and well known professions that had withstood the test of time could be trusted.

'Unless'!

Farialice trembled. Could it be that Earth had a Force Crafter?!

The possibility shook Farialice to her core. In fact, she found it even harder to believe than Earth managing to adapt their technology to the Fourth Dimension.

It had to be known that Terrain' had not a single Force Crafter.

Of course, things weren't so exaggerated. There were plenty of petty 'Force Crafter' apprentices who thought to flaunt themselves on weak worlds like theirs. However, even the best of these could only Craft Tier 3 Black treasures at best.

This shouldn't be looked down upon, though. Unfortunately, due to such constraints, most of their warriors were outfitted with such weapons.

But, to put things into perspective, wielding a Tier 3 Black treasure at their current strength was like a soldier of Earth's 21st century choosing a butter knife as his preferred weapon.

Force Crafters, as in ones that could actually sway a war of this level, were existences even City Lord White would have to be respectful to. Such existences wouldn't be caught dead on a world like Terrain and wouldn't have a reason to come to Earth just yet because such a fledgling world, despite its talent, simply couldn't afford to compensate them!

Someone like Leonel who didn't quite understand the full scope of the Dimensional Verse would still be in the dark about these matters, but Farialice who had seen much of the world most definitely wouldn't have been.

Those who had talents to become Force Crafters were one in a billion, and that was only if one took the aggregate of all worlds, both talented and untalented. If one were to look at a world like Terrain, despite their population of tens of billions, it would be impossible to find even one such talent.

The threshold one needed to reach in Internal Sight was too high. One only needed a smidgen of Internal Sight talent to cultivate Force. But, in order to become a Crafter, one would need to, at the very least, be capable of forming One Star of Leonel's Three Star Constitution!

As though this wasn't enough to prove the rarity, just having the talent wasn't even the minimum threshold one needed to meet.

Why would a Force Crafter easily divulge the secrets of his or her Crafts? Why would they disseminate their techniques and the product of their years of research without a price?

One with talent might have the capability to become a Crafter, but whether one would truly be able to succeed would be dependent on whether you had the connections to learn what it is one would need to!

The more Farialice thought about it, the stronger her clashes with Crakos became, the more blood leaked from her lips, the more confused she seemed to become.

It was impossible. It shouldn't be possible. How could Earth have such a thing?

They must have traded for these weapons with their Zone rewards. Yes, that must be it. That had to be it.

Though Farialice thought this far, she knew her attempts at calming her heart were just foolish.

How could Camelot, who just became a part of Earth, have had time to clear enough Zones to gather so many weapons'?

A sharp pain shot through Farialice's chest. She looked down, stunned before looking up toward Crakos with a defiant glare.

Unfortunately, unlike the rest of her counterparts, the facade of White City cracked just a margin with her.. Behind that gaze, the roots of despair had already sunk their claws in.

Chapter 488

Leonel watched all of this coldly from the distance. Even until their deaths, those White Knights would have no idea that they had dug their own graves.

The weapons Leonel had outfitted the demons with were very special. Each of them had a Beast Crystal at the core of the center of their design.

When Leonel came across the Predator Ravens, he knew that he had gained a massive chance to turn the tide of this war.

The Force Disruption abilities of the Predator Ravens was actually quite weak. As a result, they could only interrupt Force based techniques that relied heavily on order and organization. And, even then, if they ran into someone like Leonel whose Internal Sight was exceptionally strong, it would be an issue to interrupt him at all unless they had a large number's advantage.

This only made sense. Terrain was a world of weak talent, so how could the beasts that called it home be too powerful? They were very limited in the impact they could have and this was only right.

However, this was where Leonel could step in.

Using the Force Disruption of the Predator Ravens as the base, he amplified it to the greatest degree he could.

The ability of the Predator Ravens was ultimately a Soul Type ability. Using this knowledge, Leonel combined it with a familiar Ore, the Tier 8 Black Grade Ore, Howling Tiger.

Leonel had come across this Ore during his time in the hive. In fact, he had even thought of making it a part of his Divine Armor at one point. At least, that was until he ran into a stronger Domain Type Ore.
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Howling Tiger was a Domain Soul Type Ore. It could assault one's mind with wild fluctuations of Soul Force that manifested like a roaring tiger.

This was an exceptionally valuable Ore, as made obvious by its Tier 8 status. But, Leonel didn't need the effects to be so powerful. In addition, even if Leonel wanted the maximum effect, he would need enough Ore to infuse the full Essence into every weapon.

If one did the calculations for just how much such a thing would cost, even the greatest tycoons of Fourth Dimensional worlds would begin to feel the squeeze.

Instead of doing this, Leonel just needed to incorporate a small sliver of Howling Tiger Ore into each weapon, thus using its howling effect to amplify the Force Disruption ability of the weapons the demons wielded.

When these weapons were used, a warrior would essentially have a small domain of about two meters around themselves where Force within the standard of the Fourth Dimension became absolutely useless!

That said, there was one glaring weakness of these treasures....

While it impacted one's opponents, it was unfortunately subject to friendly fire. Not only would this treasure stop comrades from using Force, even the wielder of the weapon itself would be unable to use Force in the slightest.

Other than pouring in Force directly from one's body and into the weapon to sustain the domain, it was impossible to do anything else Force related. PANDA NOVEL

Due to such a striking weakness, this weapon would never be used by most people. The trade off simply wouldn't be worth it for many warriors. Force was the foundation of too many abilities, without it, it would be like tying one's hands behind one's back.

But the demons were different. They were especially known for their physiques. Compared to humans, they were several times more powerful in this aspect. In addition, while the warriors of Terrain had become used to battling with their abilities and Force, the demons of Camelot had long since been used to battling without such advantages.

On top of this, demons were larger and heavier. Without Force, it was difficult to even begin to take them down.

In the end, such weapons were absolutely perfect for a demon army! Leonel's actions were practically like giving wings to a tiger.

At that moment, Leonel turned his attention to the platform flying over the mountain range. They were likely still unaware that their people were being massacred. But, Leonel had no intention of sparing them in the slightest.

Leonel waved a hand, causing a line of crossbows to appear.

'Chain Domain.'

One might wonder how a world without Force Crafters like Terrain could build siege weapons as powerful as these crossbows. But, the answer was simple: PANDA NOVEL

Over engineering.

Over engineering was a concept in the field of engineers to point out excess. Sometimes it was done on purpose in order to ensure a structure would never fail. But, at other times, this excess often became the representation of a waste of resources.

In the second case, over engineering was usually the folly of those without experience or understanding... it would be like building a bridge of diamond just because diamond was a very strong stone rather than the much less expensive steel. Only a fool would do such a thing.

In order to make up for their lack of skill, Terrain overcompensated with the materials they used.

The pulley structure of the crossbows were built with unrefined Tier 7 Ores and pulled with the tendons of Tier 7 and 8 beasts. In the end, the crossbows were incredibly inconvenient to use. Not only was it almost impossible to aim, but just loading it took the strength of a warrior that would be much better served on the battlefield.

And, as much of a waste as the crossbows themselves were... the bolts they used were an even sadder case. Leonel didn't even want to think about it.

However, now that these crossbows were in Leonel's possession... How could they possibly still have the same weaknesses?

The eyes of the scout on the back of the floating platform widened, partly in shock and partly in confusion. He recognized the crossbows well, it was simply impossible for anyone without the strength of a Tier 5 warrior to load them. And, even such an existence would have to use all their strength and several minutes.

Just what could this young man do with 500 crossbows lined up like that?

Still, the scout didn't take any chances.

“Raise the defenses!”

Strong fluctuations of Force surged. Soon, the floating platform, carried by numerous flying beasts, was covered in a thick, illusory shield.

Leonel watched this scene emotionlessly, his Chain Domain slowly winding the pulleys of the crossbows and slightly shifting their aims one after another.

With one Predator Raven Beast Crystal, Leonel was able to make ten weapons. However, there were only 2000 or so demons fighting below. So, what did he do with the rest?

Leonel's cold gaze remained locked onto the platform. His black robes whipped about in the harsh winds. So high up, the air was not only cold, but it was violent and sharp.

The atmosphere seemed quite appropriate.

With a thought, Leonel fired all 500 crossbows at once. In those moments, it felt as though the sky might collapse at any moment.

**

“... Blood.... Sovereign...”

City Lord White struggled to breathe. But, with Aina's slender hands clasping her throat, her brain hardly got any flow of blood, let alone her lungs being satiated by oxygen.

Aina's indifferent gaze looked into City Lord White's demonic eyes. And then, the sound of breaking bones resounded.

City Lord White's defiant gaze remained locked onto Aina, but any light it once held had long since faded.

Aina inhaled.

Under the astonished gazes of the silent battlefield, a torrent of blood manifested from the dead City Lord White, entering her mouth.

—

Chapter 489

Aina stood amid a pile of corpses, her slender neck tilted. The slight hints of crimson that dripped from her smooth lips shook the soul, her every action mesmerizing to the extreme.

It was hard for those who witnessed everything from start to finish to reconcile with what had just happened. In one moment, they had been deep within a pit of their own despair. But in the next, the enemies that had had control over their lives were suddenly all dead.

When Aina began to battle City Lord White, it became very obvious very quickly that the latter was completely unable to display her true power. Without a choice, the five White Knights of course forced their way toward their battle, only for them to become lambs to the slaughter.

Whatever hopes White City had to win this war were dashed. As the life drained from their City Lord, they all became aware that there was no longer a path for them to survive.

Aina's body pulsed with an unimaginable amount of power. Her skin flushed with a healthy red hue, a light sigh of satisfaction escaping her lips.

Just the sound alone made those who heard it feel their bones go soft. The way it delicately vibrated their ears made them feel as though all their inhibitions were being knocked down one after another. If she told them to jump to their death at this very moment, not a single one of them would hesitate.

In the skies, Mordred watched this with a slight frown, doing her best to keep control of her mind. Even she had to admit that she had never been so attracted by a woman before. It was taking all of her will not to bow down and kiss at Aina's feet.
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'Is this the monster? Why is it so different from last time...?'

Mordred, unlike the others, knew that there would be times where Aina lost her rational mind. It wasn't that she became a different person, it was the very same Aina. It was just that in this state, she no longer filtered her actions. She did as she pleased, when she pleased.

Leonel had met this version of Aina just once before during their entry into the Joan Zone. Back then, Aina dove into a sea of Englishmen without regard for anything. It seemed that her stamina had become endless and her power had increased explosively.

However, Leonel could see the truth. He saw that she was bordering on fatigue and that her body might collapse at any time.

Though Leonel had been curious about what had happened back then, he assumed it had been related to Aina's Lineage Factor. After all, back then, he had sensed that there was something special about Aina's blood as well.

As a person who knew little of the Dimensional Verse, Leonel just assumed that whatever oddities Aina hid in her blood had to be related to her Lineage Factor. And, since a Lineage Factor originated from one's family and considering the fact Leonel knew how much Aina hated her own, he never pressed her for more information. PANDA NOVEL

However, maybe.... Those things hadn't been so simple as they seemed.

Mordred wasn't sure why this time was so different from the last. It could be because of City Lord White's appearance or it could be because Aina had evolved.

But, regardless of what the reason was, Mordred was certain of two things.

The first was that Aina in such a state was absurdly powerful. Though City Lord White seemed to have been suppressed by her presence, she was still a Tier 7 existence. Not only that, but due to her ability being related to blood, her refinement level was far beyond a normal existence at this level.

Yet, Aina had treated her like a toy.

Unfortunately, that still left the second thing Mordred was certain of... ρ??J???????

The sound of a heartbeat resounded through the battlefield.

Aina, who had been standing in an alluring posture in one moment, suddenly regained clarity. Her eyes, which had been an emotionless, abyssal pit, flashed with hints of pain. A heavy air of darkness swirl around her.

Before anyone could react, Aina's face burst into a river of foul black blood. The cursed leaches which had not long ago disappeared into her came back in full force and even several times more powerful than before.

Aina began to suffer a suppression worse than even what City Lord White had faced.

The veins all across her body blackened one after another, her face swelling to the point it became unrecognizable.

Her body shrank back to its original size. But, this time, whereas the scars had only been across her face before, they descended to her neck, crawling toward her heart.

Aina convulsed, her eyes rolling back as she collapsed to the ground.

She coughed, more foul black blood leaking from her lips.

“Aina!”

Mordred's eyes widened. She dove down from the skies, flashes of worry crossing her visage.

Even she couldn't put into words why she was so protective of this little girl. But, what she did know was that she couldn't stand seeing anything happen to her.

However, in that instant, Mordred wasn't the only one who moved.

Noah and Jessica had been on the frontlines since the very beginning. Though they didn't manage to have as large of an impact as they would have liked, no one could accuse them of not trying. But, this wasn't a matter that took any sort of precedence at this moment.

Before, Noah was willing to let Aina go for the moment because her strength wasn't something he had to worry about. Unfortunately, it was clear that the situation had changed now.

Aina was so powerful that he knew well that if she entered such a state again, he wouldn't stand a chance. In fact, he felt that beneath her presence, he couldn't even bear to lift a finger in an attempt to harm her. Such a feeling left him stifled as a Prince.

If she was really a member of the Brazinger family, she had to be detained. As for what his grandfather would decide to do after this, it would no longer have anything to do with him.

Without hesitation, Noah shot forward.. As though by tacit agreement, Jessica didn't lag behind a single step.

Chapter 490

"You' '!!"

Mordred's brows shot up. Though she couldn't say that she was surprised by such a change, she was still somewhat caught off guard. Her entire mind had been focused on Aina's condition, so she wasn't particularly worried about what others were thinking at this moment.

King Arthur frowned.

“Hang in there.” He spoke to Lancelot quickly. He had been by the Knight’s side, but it seemed that he wouldn’t be able to remain there.

Unlike Leonel, it took King Arthur several moments to cast a Three Star Mage Art. Not only could he not spare the time, but with the condition of his body at the moment, he couldn’t spare the stamina to heal Lancelot either.

Just the action of moving forward made Arthur feel as though his bones might collapse at any time. In order to protect his men and his wife, he had become the main frontline fighter against City Lord White, and it seemed that it was coming back to bite him now.

Noah’s expression remained indifferent, his planted leg suddenly growing explosively in size. PANDA-NOVEL.COM

BANG!

His body was like a bolt, crossing the remaining distance in a flash. By the time he landed, his leg had already returned to its original length and he was beside Aina.

He reached out a hand, allowing it to grow to the point it could capture Aina completely.

At that moment, being so close, he could smell the foul air coming from her. It was as though he had stepped into sewage. The change was simply too different from what she had been just moments ago.

Aina couldn’t even react to what was happening around her. Violent coughing fits shook her body, a mixture of blood and foul liquids shooting out with every heave. It was difficult to tell if it was just a terrible cough or if she was vomiting.

Just as Noah’s enlarged hand was about to wrap around Aina, he smelled the scent of danger. But, Jessica was to his side. PANDA NOVEL

With a simple command, the demonic beasts under Jessica’s control shot forward, intercepting Mordred’s rain of dark arrows from above.

Without suspense, each one was pierced through and died in mere moments. But, Jessica didn't even flinch. She had taken control of all of these demonic beasts in the first place so that she could use them as canon fodder when she needed to.

However, that didn't mean that all she had was canon fodder.

Jessica gripped at a set of polished marbles hanging from her hip. At the instant Mordred was slowed, she flicked one of these marbles forward.

In one moment, it seemed like nothing more than a child's toy. But, in the next, it grew explosively in size, becoming a massive four-armed white ape.

The ape's roar shook the skies as it soared toward Mordred, intercepting her descent with four hammer fists.

Jessica didn't want to use her personal beasts until now because she had invested too much into them. Not a single one had an ability worse than the S-grade at birth and not a single one hadn't been nurtured with all the finest nutrition and environments.

However, they were ultimately still infants. It wasn't that they were too weak to participate. In fact, they were the strongest trump cards Jessica had. It was just not worth it in the grand scheme.

But now, facing an opponent she was sure wouldn't be a threat to the life of her precious babies, she no longer hesitated.

Mordred's eyes widened. This was something she had simply never seen before.

But, as a veteran of battle, her reaction speed was still frighteningly quick. Dozens of dark shields appeared before her with a single wave of her palm.

This ape had no ability to maneuver in the air. Simply delaying it for a moment already gave her ample time to press off another shadowy platform and change direction, shooting past the ape.

But, by the time she had, Noah's enlarged hand had already begun to wrap around Aina's body.

King Arthur entered the battlefield, his gaze flashing with determination.

Aina was the reason Camelot could continue to stand now. He had no intention of allowing her to be taken away just like this.

At that moment, streaks of sharp blue tore through the skies. A familiar barrage of ice javelins aimed for Noah's wrists, causing him to frown.

His hand quickly shrunk back to its original size, dodging out of the way of the Javelin's.

By this point, Nile and the others had reacted as well. Knowing that their Prince and Jessica would be hounded from all sides, they shot forward as well, blocking off the remaining Knights of the Round Table.

Nile brandished a spear of almost two and a half meters long, leading the vanguard against Queen Guinevere. He knew well that he didn't have the strength to match up against her alone, but this was precisely why he had brought support.

Noah reacted quickly to the change, reaching for Aina once again. But, by this point, King Arthur had already closed the remaining distance, brandishing Excalibur against the Prince.

Noah swung out his massive saber, looking to block Arthur while continuing to reach for Aina's convulsing body.

Mordred swung out her wand. A rain of arrows fell once again, pinching Noah from his opposite side.

Noah's gaze narrowed. He planned to allow Jessica to protect his back, but at that moment, Arthur's sword met his saber.

A deep, reverberating clash of blades shook the battlefield as Noah was forced to retreat several steps.

Noah stumbled out of range of Aina, only to be assaulted by a rain of arrows to his back.

Jessica reacted quickly, her whip lashing out several times in quick succession.

In the blink of an eye, the battlefield split into three. The Knights and Guinevere against a team led by Nile. Noah against Arthur. And finally, Jessica faced Mordred.

They stood in a triangle around Aina's convulsing body, the pressure growing palpably.