

Descent 581

Chapter 581

Aina looked up into the skies, a picture of rage on her face.

It wasn't long before the flickering lights in the clouds coalesced into an image of Leonel. The image seemed to carry no life, as though it was a clone of Leonel rather than a depiction of him. But, there was no doubt that this was in fact Leonel.

By some magic, this singular image was viewable all across the spherical planet. A simple look upward was enough to gaze upon it.

Rather than a wanted poster, it felt as though Earth was being branded for Leonel's sins, almost like it was their burden to deal with such a traitor.

Leonel, too, looked into the skies.

For some reason, all his rage, all his anger, seemed to vanish in the blink of an eye. It was as though he was a completely different person, expressionlessly gazing at the skies as though the image above wasn't of himself.

He stood there in silence for a long while. For some reason, despite hearing the name and seeing the face, those of the Slayer Legion didn't move to immediately apprehend Leonel.

It would be fine if they weren't aware of the value of 10 000 kilograms of Urbe Ore, but they were most definitely aware.

There were no conversions for Fourth and Fifth Dimensional Urbe Ore. Simply put, even all the Fourth Dimensional Urbe Ore in existence couldn't be pooled together to buy even a single Fifth Dimensional Ore.

Of course, things weren't so exaggerated. There were certainly some powers that would find a certain amount worth it. But, all the most powerful worlds would never trade downward.

What did this mean? It essentially meant that Fourth Dimensional treasures could only be bought with Fourth Dimensional Urbe Ore while if one wanted Fifth Dimensional treasures, only Fifth Dimensional Urbe Ore could buy them.

What did 10 000 kilograms of Fifth Dimensional Urbe Ore represent? It represented multiple Fifth Dimensional treasures! Not just multiple, but multiple high grade Fifth Dimensional treasures!

PANDA-NÓVEL

Even with all of Earth's talent and the support they received, there was not a single Fifth Dimensional treasure on their world.

Yet, even with such temptation, for some reason, it felt like there was an invisible force field around him that even Aina couldn't break through.

He stood there silently, looking into the skies with a blank expression.

The rage in his blood cooled, the wild beating of his heart slowed, the fury that had a steel grip on his mind dissipated.

'Is this what power is?'

Leonel thought to himself.

To be able to say whatever you wanted, regardless of what the truth was. To trample on the efforts of those beneath you for the sake of your own benefit. To brazenly look down on the weak, sneering with a face of victory as though daring them to do something...?

Leonel had never felt smaller, and it was ironically while watching such a large projection of himself.

Leonel suddenly began to laugh.

In the silent atmosphere, it was truly jarring. A young man who was already the center of attention became even more so.

His laughter was one part sorrowful, one part self-deprecating, and a final part as though he truly found all of this to be funny.

That was right, seeing his face up there after putting his life on the line to eliminate a threat that may very well have ravage this galaxy in the future was outright hilarious.

Aina looked toward Leonel a bit worriedly. She wasn't sure how to console him. It felt like Leonel's world views were crumbling before her eyes, but she didn't know how to put the pieces back together.

If Leonel had reacted any other way, she'd feel much better. If he was uncaring, she'd be uncaring too. If he was furious, she would brandish her ax to redress his grievances. But how was she supposed to react to this laughter.

"Shield Cross Stars."

Leonel mumbled, his voice somewhat hollow.

At that moment, the skies suddenly split apart.

A platform of black appeared, slowly making its way out. On just a cursory glance, it looked no different from a military ship to be docked in the ocean, prepared to launch fighter jets. Except this ship took the skies as its waters and its fighter jets were instead replaced by row after row of soldiers.

What once was a uniform Leonel thought looked quite cool now looked no different from rags in his eyes. He felt his stomach churn laying his eyes on such a formation, not out of fear, but rather... disgust.

Leonel didn't move. He didn't really think there was a point.

His sensitivity to space was magnified several times over thanks to his part completed Divine Armor. He could tell that their Fold of Reality had been completely sealed by some inconceivable strength.

Beyond that, a world seemed to be vast with plenty of places to hide, but Leonel somehow felt that Earth had suddenly become extremely tiny.

As though a noose was tightening around his neck, he simply stood there, laughing.

By the time his laughter faded, the massive air ship had completely exited whatever void it had come out from.

At the helm, Commander Scithe stood, his face still the same pale, placid color. He looked like a man who always did everything by the book, and the warriors to his back seemed to believe this as well, having no idea what schemes their supposedly respected leader was pulling.

However, it was at that moment that the color of the world seemed to shift.

From the vibrant colors of dawn, only shades of black and white remained.

A dignified voice filled the skies. It sounded one part ancient and filled with wisdom, while simultaneously holding the momentum of an undefeatable War God. It was the kind of voice that ingrained itself onto the soul, never to be forgotten.

"To enter my Domain and demand the head of my grandson, how brazen indeed."

A hand appeared.

It must have been at least ten kilometers tall and five wide. It swirled with the only colors that remained of the world, appearing above the massive flying ship like a Deity descending from above.

BOOM!

The flying ship shattered into several pieces, what was left of it crashing to the ground below like a rain of meteors.

“Earth is not a world you can step into as you please.”

Chapter 582

The change was so abrupt that hardly anyone knew how they should react to the suddenness. In one moment devastating pressure was hanging over Earth, and in the next, it was as though it had been washed away by the warmth of a protector.

The life and death of the warriors who had just been valiantly riding the air ship were completely unknown. Many the only person who was aware of the answer to the question aside from the men themselves was Emperor Fawkes.

The hand slowly faded from the skies, but the voice of the Emperor didn't, hanging in the air for just a moment longer.

“! Leonel, you've avoided this old man for long enough, don't you think?”

These words lingered, reverberating through the minds of all those who heard it.

Leonel himself didn't move for a long while as though he couldn't hear the words of this grandfather of his at all. Instead, he had the same thought for the second time that day. In fact, this time, it reverberated in his mind with an even greater fervor.

'Is this what power is?'

Leonel suddenly felt a small hand slip into his. This time, it didn't wash away all the discomfort he was feeling, but at the very least, it gave him something to lean upon somewhat.

His gaze shifted from the skies to the petite young lady standing to his side. Something about her presence gave him the room he needed to breathe easier.

Leonel squeezed her hand lightly.

'Little Blackstar.'

At that moment, a shadow suddenly blazed a trail by Leonel's side. Before Pisces could react, she found a hole where her heart should have been.

The little mink flashed, appearing to stand on Leonel's shoulder with a beating heart in his hands. pANDA NOVEL

It looked toward the shocked Pisces, its little paws digging into the dripping heart.

Pisces watched on in horror, her body visibly trembling.

"Why' ¦ Why me' ¦"

She never thought that a small bout of jealousy would really lead to her death in this way. She had just wanted to grow stronger. Wasn't she allowed to want such a thing' ¦?

Ironically, Leonel ended up adding his own strokes to the cruelty of this world.

Leonel and Aina rose into the skies, leaving over the horizon. But, from start to finish, Elorin didn't make a single move. p??U?????

The other Slayer Legion members who hated Leonel's guts could only watch on in fury. But, after seeing the Emperor's prowess, and even hearing that he had specifically stepped out to protect Leonel' ¦ Which of them would truly dare to move at this point?

However, hidden within his pockets, Elorin's index finger continued to twitch, illusions of slicing the little mink in two replaying in his thoughts.

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The Palace was just as grand as Leonel remembered. Though he had only appeared before it for a moment previously, it was most definitely enough for him to never forget the impression it had left on him. And, despite the fact he was enraged at the time; it most definitely left a grand impression.

If it wasn't the overwhelming presence the Palace, Leonel would have found it far more difficult to ignore the fact a battle was still raging on below.

Of course, this battle wasn't as explosive as it had been when Leonel first stepped foot onto it, with what remaining just being petty skirmishes, but it was a battle nonetheless. Leonel almost felt bad for flying over it without lifting a finger to help.

But, something told him that he couldn't delay going to see his grandfather this time. Though it seemed that everything had already been handled, Leonel was far from naïve enough to believe this.

The moment Leonel stepped foot into the highest layer, he felt as though he had entered an all new world. Despite the fact a war for a world was occurring below, the main core of The Capital seemed completely unaffected. It was hard to tell how someone of Terrain would react to seeing such a thing.

But, then again, they probably had their hands full wrapping their minds around the strength Emperor Fawkes just displayed.

When Leonel landed before the Palace, he found that the roads paved of wealth that led to its doors were lined with warriors, each exuding a dangerous aura. It felt that if even just ten of these men and women stepped toward to the outside world, the war would be as good as over.

Yet, they all stood here, valiantly guarding the entrance of the Emperor's home.

At the side of the grand doors, a spectacled man stood, his hands clasped behind his back. The only word Leonel could think of when he looked upon him was 'Disciplined.

The man was so cleanly shaven that Leonel could almost feel the suppleness of his skin with his eyes alone. His white-gold hair was done up in an elaborate royal style and his emerald eyes hid behind a pair of glasses that seemed carved of diamond.

His dress was immaculate. Even with his senses, Leonel couldn't find a single wrinkle on his person.

This man frowned slightly when he saw Aina by Leonel's side. But, as though receiving some sort of order, he decided to ignore it.

Without a word, he turned into the Palace, leading Leonel and Aina through the grand halls. From start to finish, his steps were even and measured without even a centimeter of deviation. For a man like Leonel who was used to seeing the world as an accumulation of numbers, this was baffling.

Soon, Leonel and Aina were led into the depths of the Palace, only to make their way through another opening and find themselves in what seemed to be yet another world.

Chirping birds, rushing waters that glittered of rainbow colors, and lush greenery. The entire garden seemed to breathe with vitality, inhaling and exhaling to the rhythm of the world.

At the center of this garden sat an old man Leonel couldn't take his eyes off. No, he almost felt that it was inappropriate to call him old. This supposed old timer was brimming with more vitality than even Leonel himself.

"Imperial Father, I have brought them."

The spectacled man bowed reverentially even as Leonel raised an eyebrow.

It was only now that he understood that this almost too well-groomed individual was his uncle.

Chapter 583

Leonel quietly observed his grandfather. This was the first time he was meeting the man, yet he somehow felt a sense of familiarity with him.

At first, Leonel thought that this was his Dream Force dragging up memories for him once again. But, after a while, he understood that this wasn't actually the case.

Dream Force helped his memory to be near infallible. Yet, even with it, his recollections of the man before him were blurry at best.

Something like that seemed impossible to Leonel. With the presence of this man, how could he possibly ever be forgotten? He had an air that seemed to outshine the sun itself. It felt as though even if he was in the depths of space, without even the slightest hint of light, he would still radiate with his own brilliance.

The longer Leonel observed him, the brighter Emperor Fawkes' amiable smile seemed to become. He felt more and more satisfied with every passing second.

Leonel's uncle, however, frowned at the current situation.

Standing before the Emperor without a word or even an attempt to bow. This was no small amount of disrespect.

If it was anyone else, the Prince would have long since lashed out. But, this time, he refrained for no other reason than the fact Leonel was his nephew. That said, that didn't stop his impression of Leonel from taking a large dip downward.

Bowing in this situation was more than about showing respect to an Emperor, it was also a means of showing respect for your predecessors. But, clearly Leonel didn't have this modicum of respect.

Leonel, however, wasn't thinking so far. It was just that after his experience with King Arthur, he had gained a dislike of kneeling and bowing. In addition, he hadn't grown up in the same culture as this uncle

of his. Leonel had never bowed to even his own father a single day in his life, but this was also part of the reason he hadn't taking kneeling or not kneeling very seriously in the past.

In fact, even now, Leonel didn't think kneeling was a big deal. It was just that he had gained a subtle dislike for it, the same way someone might not like a flavor of ice cream. There was no need to do it if he didn't care for it, the same way there was no reason someone wouldn't go out of their way to eat a flavor of ice cream they weren't fond of.

Soon, the odd atmosphere was suddenly broken by Emperor Fawkes' laughter.

"It seems you've grown up well. You're still quite weak minded, but you shouldn't be very far from a breakthrough in that respect. You're only in need of a little push'!"

Leonel's brows rose. What was any of that supposed to mean? He wasn't quite sure, if he was being honest.

Was he weak minded? PANDA NOVEL

Well, he couldn't exactly be objective in answering this question. But, from an outsider's perspective, the answer was most definitely yes. Leonel had yet to truly mature yet and his reaction toward Shield Cross Stars coming after him in such a fashion only painted this truth clearer.

However, despite the fact he was practically blatantly insulted to his face, Leonel didn't have an adverse reaction.

Emperor Fawkes' gaze shifted to Aina, a light smile on his face. Despite the fact she had put her mask back on, she still felt as though she was being seen through completely. She couldn't help but shiver slightly, her grip on Leonel's hand tightening.

The action startled Leonel a bit. This wasn't because Aina used too much strength but rather because'! he had almost completely forgotten she was by his side as though his grandfather had become his whole world.

The Emperor chuckled.

“There’s no need to be nervous, little girl. Though I know about your family, I’m also aware that you want to see them destroyed just as much as I do. In such a case, why would I do something to a young lady my grandson has taken a fancy to?”

For some reason, despite the words of comfort, Aina’s grip on Leonel’s hand only tightened as though trying to remind him not to forget her again. ρ??∪???????

Emperor Fawkes turned his attention back toward Leonel.

“So, you’ve angered Shield Cross Stars?”

Leonel remained silent for a while, but in the end, he could only nod. That was the only explanation for what had just happened, right?

Emperor Fawkes chuckled.

“Shield Cross Stars does indeed have the capital to ignore the wishes of the Morales Clan to a certain extent. But, I’m afraid that they didn’t enter this situation knowing they were facing a potential Heir. They are still treating you as a normal talent of Earth. However, they seem to believe that you’ve gained favor of a much larger entity. Unfortunately for them, this belief leaves many loopholes in their approach.”

Leonel’s gaze brightened slightly.

“It seems you understand already.” Emperor Fawkes said with a light smile.

“Your strength isn’t small.” Leonel finally spoke.

“A grandfather hearing such words from his grandson should be grinning ear to ear, but why is it that I don’t feel as happy as I should?”

Emperor Fawkes' teasing words were clearly aimed for Leonel. Though Leonel's words seemed to be praising him, they carried a hint of melancholy and a blaming tone.

But, how could they not?

The Emperor's words had an obvious hidden meaning to Leonel. He was saying that Shield Cross Stars was making use of their subordinates as scapegoats to deal with him. When it came down to it, they would just hand over the 'culprit' and wipe their hands clean.

But, by taking this approach, they had to veil their movements.

What did this meant? It could mean anything from only releasing information about Leonel to a small segment of the universe to strong arming a weak world like Earth into handing him over.

Clearly, the second option had failed, so they would very likely progress to the former, all to maintain the illusion that these were the actions of a rogue subordinate and nothing else.

However, the reason they had failed in their first attempt couldn't have been clearer.

The Fawkes Family was far more powerful than they had initially thought.

But, that truth left another elephant in the room.

Once again, Emperor Fawkes had so much strength at the tips of his fingers, but he was more than content with allowing those he could have protected to die one after another.

And this time, people Leonel once called friend were among them.

Chapter 584

Another silence fell over the gardens as Leonel didn't respond immediately. But, it was clear that this was less about Leonel not wanting to respond and more about him being uncertain of how to.

His grandfather had just saved his life. There was no way around this, this was the truth of the matter. Was it truly so easy to spit in the face of someone who had done such a thing for you, especially when your personality was like Leonel's?

But at that same time, Leonel had been growing such animosity for this very same grandfather of his for so long. Yet, just when he had the opportunity to give the man a piece of his mind, this happened. It was as though the world was playing a joke on him.

That said, Leonel also didn't feel right just welcoming this grandfather with open arms. All of his actions ran diametrically opposed to everything Leonel stood for.

"If you have such strength, why do you never do anything with it?"

Leonel finally spoke, his gaze matching his grandfather's. He didn't particularly have any anger to speak of, in fact it was currently just as emotionless as it was when he was in the midst of battle. But maybe, in some ways, this was exactly that. Just another battle.

What Leonel didn't expect after he said these words, though, was for a stifling aura to suddenly envelop him.

However, it became very clear, very quickly that this aura wasn't from his grandfather. But, rather, from this silent uncle of his.

Still, this aura that felt like a wall of water became a drizzle just as quickly as it took for Leonel's grandfather to raise his hand.

Emperor Fawkes' smile never faded even as he lowered his hand. He continued to observe Leonel the same way he always had. Yet, for some reason, despite the fact there wasn't even a hint of change in his smile, Leonel still felt as though the situation had completely shifted.

When Emperor Fawkes finally spoke again, a slight cold breeze seemed to sweep the spring gardens.

“To ask someone else why they didn’t use their own strength as they please... Don’t you find this to be very weak?”

Leonel matched his grandfather’s gaze but didn’t say a thing. However, that didn’t mean that a certain Aina wasn’t enraged by such an answer. If it wasn’t for the fact Leonel hadn’t released her hand and she knew that they weren’t safe to lash out in such an environment, she would have long since done so.

“I expected more from you.” Emperor Fawkes said lightly. “This isn’t a world where you can say such things. Not only is it the pinnacle of foolishness, these thoughts will one day get you killed.”

Leonel once again didn’t lash out at these words. He replied simply and just as emotionlessly.

“It’s foolish to ask you, as an Emperor, to protect your citizens?”

Emperor Fawkes put up another hand pre-emptively. This time, he sent a look toward his son, warning him that this should be the last time he should waste his time doing such a thing.

The Imperial Prince swallowed his rage and stood in place, his back ramrod straight and his gaze locked onto Leonel.

If others who knew of his personality were here, there was no doubt that they would be shocked beyond belief. This was a man who was known for his stoicism no matter what the situation. For him to have lost his temper not just once, but twice, and even in such quick succession... It could only be said that this man was truly protective of his father, even if the one he was protecting The Emperor from was his very own nephew.

“The weak do not have a voice. They do not have the right to demand, nor do they have any right to direct the actions of the strong.”

Leonel indifferently listened to these words. Didn't he already know this? Existences like The Empire and The Slayer Legion made it as clear as possible. Those with strength could survive, while those who were weak could only scramble for scraps.

Hard work? Perseverance? It didn't seem to be worth a damn in this world.

If you weren't born with backing, talent, or both, you were finished. In fact, Leonel would have long since died dozens of times over if not for having such things in his corner.

However... He felt that this was wrong. Why was his life more valuable than others? Why was it that he could stand here while his friends had to be buried?

Emperor Fawkes replied simply. However, before Leonel could even think of responding, he continued.

"Such words won't get through to you. And, quite frankly, I hate explaining myself the most."

An air of suffocating majesty filled the garden. Even Leonel couldn't help but feel his knees buckle somewhat. This sort of presence... It was far beyond his own.

If it wasn't for a worthless pride that had bubbled forth from within him, unwilling to give in to his grandfather's ideals, he may very well have fallen in that very moment.

"However, you are my grandson, yet I have never been a part of your life. Consider my next words as payment for this missed time. After this, you can consider our relationship as neutrally as you please."

The pressure bore down on Leonel. Sweat poured from his back, his spine trembling.

"You must blame me for the Paradise Island incidents. Yet, why is it that you don't assign the same blame to your father? Was he not knowledgeable about the situation? In fact, he's quite a bit more powerful than I am. If he wanted to, he likely could have waited until the Metamorphosis began and slaughtered every Invalid on the planet before going on his way.

“But I guess that much is just a small matter. What about the things he left behind for you? I’m sure they would help someone much weaker than yourself protect their lives, why is it that you’ve kept it for yourself? If the Slayer Legion had those treasures, I’m sure less people would have died and your friends would have been saved.

“I guess that much can be passed off as a small matter as well. But, in addition to not doing your best to help the Slayer Legion stave off casualties, you just murdered a young lady who was only trying her best to survive.

“Wasn’t she among the weak you think the strong should protect? Or is it that the weak you refer to only encompass the people you think are deserving? After all, you are one of the strong.. Supposedly.”

Chapter 585

Leonel felt as though his grandfather’s every word was grating on his soul.

But he still stood there, his mind wrapped in a steel cage, clearly unwilling to accept the things he was hearing. A part of him would have rather ignored it all.

As quick as Leonel’s mind was, if he wanted to come with excuses to ignore valid points, he could run circles even around this grandfather of his. His mind was simply too nimble and quick. And, as expected, that was exactly what he did. In no more than a breath of silence, he had already come up with several rebuttals.

His father? Wasn’t he just restricted by the same things the hidden families were? How could he have interfered if he had rules he wasn’t allowed to break?

His treasures? If he had handed them in, would they really have helped his friends? Trusting Supreme Monet with his things, would that have really been an intelligent thing to do?

Pisces? That backstabbing bitch? Was she really the same as the weak? Why should she be categorized as such?

The worst of it all was the fallacy of Emperor Fawkes' argument. He and Leonel weren't even remotely in the same position. One of them hadn't even known of their noble status until a few weeks ago while the latter was an Emperor of a world. There was a very clear dividing line in their responsibilities. There was no way Leonel should care more about the citizens of Earth than their Emperor.

Even if Leonel was the most selfish individual there was... So what? His burden wasn't the same as this supposed Emperor. Why were they even being compared?

However, in the breath it had taken Leonel to think of these things, Emperor Fawkes had continued speaking as though he had never taken a pause to begin with.

"Those were the last words I'll say on the topic. If you feel that you would be a better Emperor, I am right here. If you can defeat me, the throne is yours."

"Imperial Father!"

Leonel's expression finally cracked, replaced by something other than indifference for the first time.

This man before him felt like rolling hills that extended to infinity, like an endlessly rising land that shot into the skies, like a lurking beast slumbering as though there was nothing that could gain his interest.

PANDA NOVEL

Emperor Fawkes ignored his son.

"But the weight of this crown isn't something you can carry. You're weak. And worst of all, you don't seem to know that you are."

The Emperor looked toward Leonel as though he could see through him completely, even down to all the rebuttals he had at the tip of his tongue. But, true to his word, he didn't speak a single word about the topic again.

It seemed he wasn't lying. He really did disdain to explain himself. If Leonel felt like he could still squirm his way around his words as though this was a debate rather than real life, that only meant that Leonel was even weaker than even he realized.

He had already explained things once. He wouldn't do it again. He had no need for the useless and foolish.

"The matter of Shield Cross Stars," Emperor Fawkes continued, "You will be safe as long as you are on Earth. My dignity isn't something that can be encroached upon, Shield Cross Stars, or any other."

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The indifferent declaration seemed to caused the winds to shift. It felt as though the world itself acknowledged The Emperor's words as infallible.

Leonel couldn't help but think that it was precisely this old man who had earned the World Spirit before he was born. But, he had no way of confirming such a thing.

Then again, the thought that he could display such power without the World Spirit was even more shocking. So, shouldn't he just accept this?

"When you leave Earth, though, you will be on your own. I doubt that Shield Cross Stars will be as blatant as they have been to this point, but with the death of that Commander Scithe, their approach will be more subtle this time."

Leonel didn't even know who this Commander Scithe was. But, for some reason, hearing his name made him feel as though he was falling further and further into this quagmire that was his grandfather.

Those who understood the backstory of this matter would most definitely be shocked beyond belief. Commander Scithe had been biding his time to strike at Leonel, yet he had died... Just like that.

As though that wasn't shocking enough, Commander Scithe was a Fifth Dimensional existence!

“The bounty on your head won’t be changing, nor will your fugitive status. That said, that only matters to those who know of it. When it comes down to it, you will have to protect yourself.”

Leonel felt as though his head was spinning.

He had a bounty on his head? But only some people knew about it? He had a fugitive status? But it only mattered to those who knew of it?

What did any of that mean?

Was he a criminal, or wasn’t he? Would he be hunted down, or wouldn’t he? What was the truth?

The crux of the matter was that as Heira had alluded to, the universe was a vast place. Even with Shield Cross Stars acting as the police force of the Dimensional Verse, even they didn’t move as one unit. They were split into countless quadrants which were even further separated into several overarching factions.

Commander Scithe’s quadrant was on full alert, the very same quadrant Terrain and Earth were located in. Logically, as a person who was now a Tier 3 Criminal, Leonel was only just shy of the true scum of the universe. Yet, due to Scithe’s actions in deploying the Decree, Leonel’s status had become more like a ticking time bomb than a falling meteor.

If anything, maybe Leonel’s most immediate threat was Heira...

Unfortunately, Leonel didn’t have enough information about the universe to complete such thorough analysis. Even to this point, he had no idea how powerful Shield Cross Stars was. He could only find time to interrogate the dictionary.

But, he was so lost in his own thoughts, that he didn’t even react as he was being escorted out the Palace. Even to the end, Emperor Fawkes really couldn’t bother to explain himself in full. The fact he said anything at all was only a testament to the fact Leonel was his grandson. Nothing less, and definitely nothing more.

However, as Leonel stood in a daze at the palace gates, his uncle seemingly couldn't continue to bite his tongue.

“Try not to die.” He said coldly. “And, while you're out there, try and think of why in a war of such concentrated Force, not a single Invalid horde appeared from start to finish.”

The words were like a bomb going off in Leonel's mind.

His head snapped backward, but all he saw was his uncle's backview and two large doors slamming shut.

BANG!

Chapter 586

Leonel sat within the Lab Setting of the Segmented Cube, his mind absent. His only company was Little Tolly, but seemingly having seen through its master's mood, the little guy was a lot less joyful.

It was quite an odd situation to be in. The war for Earth was likely coming to a close even as he sat here, the nightmare that had haunted Aina had been killed by his own hands, and a bounty that should have been hanging over his head was effectively neutered for the time being.

Yet, Leonel couldn't find it within himself to be happy in the slightest. In fact, he felt a nagging insecurity eating away at his heart, refusing to let go and filling his chest with a heavy darkness.

Uncertainty.

It was dangerous enough for a normal human to allow such an emotion to rule them. To fear the unknown and one's future path more than the idea of not taking a step at all was as good as allowing one's life to come to a grinding halt.

In a normal world, the worst that could happen would be living out a life of mediocrity. One would become a normal man, wallowing through life with a woe is me attitude that wouldn't fade even with age.

Such a person would be a perpetual victim for the rest of their lives, blaming their failures on the actions of others and never undergoing any sort of introspection about what personal decisions might have led to their current situation.

However, in a world like this, in a new world order where killing and death was just the product of another normal day, such apathy was the root of more than just failure.

Left alone with his own thoughts, Leonel spun his own counter arguments in his minds over and over again. At one point, his numerous thoughts split into two streams, attacking one another from opposite sides as though determined to completely destroy the other side.

The more Leonel thought, the more he realized just how flawed his previous thoughts were.

His father was restricted the same way the hidden families were restricted? Was that really true?

The hidden families were in a completely separate space while his own father could appear on Earth itself. Were they really restricted by the same rules? Was that possible?

How convenient was it for him to rely on a set of rules he wasn't even aware of to absolve his father of any guilt? It was laughable at best. At worst, he was a terrible kind of hypocrite, the kind of bastard that would shame one for killing then turn a blind eye when a 'friend' committed the same atrocity.

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And what about his treasure?

Even if he didn't give it to Monet, what was stopping him from giving it to someone else? If he had handed it over to Hutch, an old man he somewhat trusted, what kind of result would there have been?

If Hutch had the dictionary, how much easier would his battle against the three Heads have been? Would he have been struck down to the point he was in a coma? And if his battle against them was easier, wouldn't that mean that he would be able to end it earlier and save more lives?

According to what he saw from Raynred's memories, it was precisely because Hutch had been occupied that he became bold enough to travel into the depths of the army and eventually kill Roaring Black Lion and the others.

If he had been less selfish, would they have died?

The most complicated of Leonel's thoughts revolved around Pisces, this girl he hated with all his heart.
p??J???????

But, if he broke it down to the foundation of why it was he disliked her so much, wasn't it purely because he couldn't stand the fact she survived while those he called friend could only be buried?

What was Pisces' worst crime?

If Leonel was being objective about it, the worst thing she had done was point Raynred toward Royal Blue Province. This action could have led to a catastrophic outcome had Leonel not dealt with the Puppet Master.

Yet, even then, Raynred hadn't been targeting Royal Blue Province at all when he ran away from Elorin, the Province just happened to be the closest piece of land. Regardless of whether he found out this information from Pisces, he would have found out eventually anyway. Just like he had asked for Leonel from those of the Slayer Legion, asking the same question to those of Royal Blue Fort would have had the same impact.

However, if Leonel was the most honest with himself, what infuriated him the most about what she did was the most benign action: she had tried to get his treasures taken away.

If he broke down that action, sure, it was rooted in a certain selfishness on her part. But, wasn't his rejection of Monet's request also rooted in selfishness?

He had no obligation to hand over his things, this much was true. But... If he accepted this premise, what right did he have to dislike his grandfather's actions?

Of course, to Leonel, this was about more than just the fact the treasures had value. Tied to these treasures was also the fact his father had entrusted him with them, they could be considered to be the last bit of his parents that he had with him.

If he took it one step further, these treasures represented his chance at reuniting with his family, it represented a path toward the strength he would need to save Aina.

These all sounded like noble matters. But...

What was more demanding? For him to hand over a treasure that would allow him to accomplish his own selfish goal? Or for 'the strong' to risk their lives to protect 'the weak'?

If he felt that it was wrong for the Slayer Legion to take away the last piece of his father that he had and cut off his path toward saving Aina, then how could he also not feel it to be wrong for him to expect others to lay their lives on the line for strangers?

These thoughts ultimately led to the final nail in Leonel's coffin.

The reasoning he had clung to was that his obligations weren't the same as his grandfather's. One of them was a newly minted Prince while the other was The Emperor of a world. How could they be equated?

Leonel had no obligation to be selfless, but wasn't this the role of a ruler?

However, the words of his Uncle rang in his mind again and again.

No Invalid hordes... Not even a single sighting...

If an Invalid horde interfered in the war, Earth would have been finished. When comparing the talented versus the untalented, which would the Invalids prefer to target? The people of Earth would end up being attacked from two fronts, completely unable to counter. Even Leonel wouldn't be able to do anything to change this.

What right did he have to question Emperor Fawkes?

Chapter 587

Leonel didn't have any answers. He lost himself in endless tinkering, working his way toward the completion of his Divine Armor.

The space rending abilities of the Terrain cities had given him exactly the enlightenment he needed to comprehend the core intricacies he needed to complete his first Armor. But, whereas this matter would have given him great satisfaction in the past, knowing that he had come a step closer to bettering his father in Force Crafting, currently, he completed every step with an almost eerie monotony.

Surprisingly, though, this very monotony, the disconnection of his emotions, made his every action even more perfect than they would be usually. He completed everything with a level of precision that existed beyond the realm of humans.

...

Aina entered the Lab Setting with a hint of worry on her face. Leonel never restricted her movements, so she could enter any location of the Segmented Cube just as easily as him.

Looking at Leonel's back, she wasn't really sure of how to comfort him. The only thing that Aina was sure of was that she didn't want Leonel to change, she didn't want him to become as cold blooded as the rest of this world. She had said as much when the two were in the Joan Zone together. In fact, that moment between them back then was maybe the most honest she had been with him up to that point.

However, now, Leonel was stuck in a dilemma he didn't know how to bring himself out of. And, it was exactly this sort of matter that Coach Owen had been so worried about.

A person without purpose was easily swayed by others. If Leonel had a one-minded pursuit, a dream that was rooted in himself and no one else, how could the words of others so easily sway him? In fact, knowing Leonel, having such an aspiration would make him an untamable monster, an existence the likes of which existed above all others.

But at this moment, Leonel still didn't know exactly what that was. And, as though this wasn't bad enough, he wasn't even looking for it.

As the saying went, one didn't know what they didn't know. It was impossible for Leonel to see through his shortcomings if he wasn't even sure of what they were. But, ironically, if he was told of what he needed to look for, it just might have the opposite effect.

Something like searching for the purpose of one's life was a monumental task. There were many people in existence that would never find this purpose for themselves. PANDA NOVEL

And, at this moment, it was unknown whether or not Leonel would be among these individuals.

The little mink hopped into Aina's arms, making small, worried purring noises. But, even with the slight commotion, Leonel didn't turn back. He was so engrossed that he probably didn't even notice that Aina had entered to begin with.

Aina sighed, not sure of what to do.

Her gaze drifted from Leonel's back to the numerous snowglobes on the wall. Even now, there were still hundreds. Some were filled with beast carcasses while the others were filled with various herbs.

Though Aina didn't recognize much of the herbs, after her ability had evolved with Earth's Metamorphosis, she found that she could somewhat read the life signatures of living beings she came across. p??u[??????]

Aina wondered if this had to do with the Life affinity those trial overseers of Valiant Heart Mountain mentioned. But, she wasn't sure. Though she had heard of a Blood affinity before, she had never heard of a Life Elemental affinity. Yet, she had both.

Regardless, this ability to read life signatures allowed her to extend her ability. Now, not only did she know the perfect way to train her body to break its limits, she also knew what to consume to help break these limits as well.

The extension of this ability also gave her an instinct on how to combine and mix certain materials to benefit herself. Such a breakthrough made Aina realize that if she wanted to maximize this new ability of hers, she would have to spend some time reading many beast and herb compendiums.

In the past, the only reading Aina had done was for school. Outside of that, she didn't waste even a moment of time on anything other than training. In fact, although she had wanted to go and watch Leonel's games, she never had because she felt time was simply too precious.

But now, this studying would benefit her future, so she no longer had a choice.

'Leonel said that he never had much of an appetite when he was younger...'

Aina bit her lip out of habit as she scanned through the snowglobes.

Leonel never really put two and two together, but the nutrients packed into his father's vomit brew were so numerous that it would have been impossible for him to have any appetite. If anything, he had been overeating his whole life.

'... I wonder how many delicacies he's missed out on?'

Aina was the opposite. She had always loved food and often ate a lot of it.

Leonel had kicked himself for not realizing she needed more food. But, the truth was that wasn't his fault. Aina had purposely suppressed her own appetite in the Joan Zone subconsciously, maybe because she was worried about how Leonel would react.

However now, if she didn't have enough to eat, Leonel would practically stare her down until she did. With his senses, it was difficult for her to fake being full anymore.

The memories, albeit from a short time they had been together, brought a smile to Aina's face.

She looked back toward Leonel's back, but he had still not reacted to her entrance. After a hint of hesitation, she looked to the snowglobes once again, seemingly having come to a decision.

'I've never cooked before, but...'

Aina's meals had been handled by Yuri for as long as she could remember. She had zero experience cooking which was also why she always let Leonel handle it.

Though Leonel's cooking lacked flare and could only be described as mediocre, it wasn't terrible so the effort always brought a smile to her face.

Aina reached out and began picking out ingredients from the shelf of snowglobes, her mind spinning as it came up with several ideas.

Though her mind was filled with such thoughts, her heart was focused on something else entirely. All she wanted was to share her love of food with the man she liked.

Chapter 588

Leonel's hands were as steady as a rock, his gaze measured and sharp. He seemed to be able to see through everything with a glance, the faint image of a Snowy Owl hovering to his back.

Even after more than a day, Leonel didn't seem to realize the special state he had entered. It was as though he had completely forgotten about the world, as though everything else had been destroyed and all that was left was a man, his Metal Spirit and his Craft.

Auspicious Air hung around Leonel, its density increasing with every moment.

Shockingly enough, Leonel had yet to bother to waste any time on healing himself. His body was just as injured as it had been before his meeting with his grandfather. But, at the same time, it made the process all the more awe inspiring.

Forgetting the world was one matter, but this had reached the level of even forgetting oneself. To be able to move and act as though anyone else in his situation wouldn't be at the brink of death was baffling indeed.

However, the truth of the matter was presented for all to see. It had reached a point where even Aina herself simply assumed that Leonel had been healed. After all, there was nothing about his actions that seemed to point toward injury in the slightest.

The Auspicious Air became heavier and heavier, growing to a point a dense, dirty gold hung in the air. It had much of the color of a mustard yellow with a tinge of a noble gold that betrayed its distinctiveness.

At an unknown time, the air grew so heavy that cracks began appearing along the Lab Setting floors. But, what was maybe most shocking was a certain unmoving snowglobe began to show signs of being awakened.

Unfortunately, Leonel had yet to realize that the acceleration of Earth's evolution toward the Fourth Dimension wasn't the only reward for perfectly completing Camelot's trials...

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With a blank expression, Leonel picked up an intricately carved forearm brace. Little Tolly peeled away from the structure, revealing it in all its glory.

It shimmered with a beautiful black-silver color. It was formed in several layers, giving it a sharp appearance. Its presence alone seemed to make space warp and quake.

However, despite its beauty, Leonel didn't react much to its appearance at all. PANDA NOVEL

He absentmindedly pressed it into his right forearm. As though by magic, Leonel's body flashed with bronze runes and the bracer sunk into his skin, vanishing as though it was never there.

Leonel reached toward his work table again. But, before he could grab anything, he found that there was nothing left to do.

His blank expression slowly recovered, a hint of fatigue hiding behind his pupils.

At that moment, a wall of thoughts Leonel had done his best to ignore these last few days began to resurface once again.

Leonel grasped at his forehead, a light headache taking hold. A deep sigh left his lips.

As much as he wanted to lose himself in a world of Crafting again, he had used up all his materials. Unless he raided Camelot's vaults again, there wouldn't be anything left to do. And, even if he was that shameless... ρ???(???)

Well, let's just say that King Arthur would probably rip his own hair out if he saw the state of his precious treasure vaults.

Leonel didn't quite know how he ended up using so many materials. His original plan didn't require so much. He had wanted to use the others for future Crafts he had in mind.

When he dug into his memories of what had happened, he couldn't help but raise an eyebrow.

His previous best Craft was only formed of less than a dozen parts. But, this armor was formed of 97. He had thought that he would have to muddle through it for a few weeks, but he had never thought of finishing it all in less than two days.

Still, rather than feeling proud, he really just wanted something else to throw himself into.

Leonel was in a classic state of running away from his problems. Was this what normal teens called procrastinating? It felt worse than just that, though.

Leonel had never been one to procrastinate, mostly because he was always good at setting his mind to something and doing it. If not for this, he likely wouldn't have forgotten himself in Crafting so easily.

‘... My current spear wouldn't pair well with my Divine Armor... It might be time to change it...’

If others heard Leonel's thoughts, they would think that he was an ungrateful second generation nouveau riche.

One had to understand the value of a Quasi Bronze treasure. Leonel seemed to go through them as though he was drinking water, but such a treasure was the pinnacle of the Fourth Dimension. Even in the highest Fifth Dimensional worlds, a youth like Leonel would scratch and claw for the right to wield such a weapon.

Yet, Leonel thought of casually changing his because it simply didn't suit him.

Leonel still didn't have a full grasp of the Dimensional Verse, though, so his face portrayed a very punchable shade of innocence even as he spoke such shameless words.

Even if Leonel had known, though, it wouldn't stop him. He immediately sent his mind into Spear Domain.

Not even a quarter hour later, Leonel came out with a new spear.

He only tried to stand with it, yet it nearly sent him crashing down to the ground.

‘Oof... I thought 50 pounds was heavy, but this one is over 5000...’

This spear was clearly crafted to be heavy. Its body was over two and a half meters long and its spear head was a three dimensional monstrosity of over three feet long alone. Though there was some taper to the spear head to give it the semblance of a blade, it still had a width of over half Leonel's palm.

No matter how Leonel looked at it, though it seemed to be a spear, it would be better used as a blunt weapon. With some work, it would definitely be a good hammer.

Leonel shook his head. 'This one is no good too...'

Leonel entered Spear Domain again, ignorant to the fact he was becoming a menace to society.

Chapter 589

The practically blunt spear had a Domain similar to Leonel's Chain Domain. But, rather than using chains, it caused fluctuations in weight. Depending on how it was used, it could actually be quite useful. But, ultimately, it was just another movement restraining Domain that focused on the physical.

However, as Leonel began to travel through the Spear Peaks, he came to realize that this focus on physical restrictions was a running theme amongst the Quasi Bronze Spears.

The next spear Leonel picked up had two heads. He stood immersed in the feeling of its Domain, grasping it much quicker than he had with his Chain Domain. In fact, it almost came with too much ease. Leonel had a feeling that this was because of the completion of his Spear Embryo into true Spear Force thanks to his comprehension of the complete Four Seasons Realm. But, he didn't spend much time thinking about it.

This Domain, as expected, was another restraining Domain. But, this one focused on the Wind Element. The style of this Spear Peak and many of the spears that formed its base was swiftness.

Controlling the flow of wind in battle could allow one to do a countless number of things. But, what Leonel saw as the most potent use would be in controlling momentum. Snatching the tail wind of an opponent and adding it to your own... Under a protracted battle, someone with this Domain would be near invincible.

The lethality of such a weapon on a battlefield would be undeniable.

Still, Leonel felt that this spear wouldn't meld well with his Divine Armor either. Not to mention the fact he didn't have a Wind Elemental Affinity, this sort of restraining type of battle style wasn't resonating with him at the moment.

Somewhere deep inside, he wanted something more destructive, something he could truly release with.

However, every spear Leonel came across seemed to tell the same story.

'A Gravity Domain... A Water Domain... A Vine Domain...'

Leonel walked through the Spear Domain as though it was his own backyard. He had completely forgotten that even taking a single step in this world used to deplete him down to his very core. Now, he travelled from peak to peak, not finding anything he could use. PANDA NOVEL

By now, Leonel had conquered over a dozen Quasi Bronze Peaks, but he hadn't found anything he wanted.

The truth was that the number of such treasures in Spear Domain was practically endless. Even after hours of walking, even to the point of ignoring all the foundational spears, Leonel still hadn't come anywhere near the end of them.

Leonel believed that there were easily tens of thousand of Quasi Bronze Peaks. Let alone Quasi Bronze Peaks, there were probably just as many Quasi Silver Peak and beyond as well. This treasure seemed to treat such spears as though they were a dime a dozen. And in fact, they were... at least here, anyway.

It was no wonder Leonel took them for granted.

'Quasi Silver...' p??c??????

Leonel looked up toward the distance.

He had grasped a Quasi Bronze spear before his Soul Force was even in the Third Dimension. Now that he was at the peak of the Fourth Dimension with his Soul Force, why not try for a Fifth Dimensional weapon?

Leonel stepped forward, crossing through the rolling hills with slow steps. The graveyard of spears around him seemed to get particularly silent at this moment.

Maybe even the creator of Spear Domain couldn't have imagined a day where someone within the Third Dimension would have the gall to stroll through their world in such a way. However, compared to the past, it couldn't be said that Leonel was still unqualified.

One had to remember that strength of mind was only one aspect of traveling through Spear Domain. The most important factor was most definitely one's comprehension of the spear. The first time Leonel had come here, he had barely formed Spear Force. The fact he could take a single step at all was a testament to how strong his mind was.

But now, Leonel had fully grasped the Four Season Realm. Though this wasn't perfectly tailored to the spear, it could be said that the spear, and every other weapon, was perfectly tailored to it.

The combination of this comprehension and Leonel's strong mind made the journey forward surprisingly easy. Even when it began to grow difficult, a sharp Spear Force appeared around Leonel, slicing through the presence of the spears around him.

The clashing of blades sung in the air, but Leonel's steps didn't pause.

By now, the spears around him had completely morphed. From wooden and half broken, they began to sing with their own sort of majesty. In fact, they quickly rose from the lower Black levels, jumping to Tier 5, through Tier 6 and past Tier 7.

By the time Leonel got to the range of the Quasi Silver Peaks, there were nothing but Bronze Grade spears around, each radiating a palpable aura even beyond that of his Chain Spear.

'This is the true Fifth Dimension...'

Leonel thought about where he had sensed this before, only for his mind to flash to thoughts of a massive flying ship ripping through the barrier of Earth's Fold of Reality.

'So that's where... He was in the Fifth Dimension, but suppressed...'

Leonel shook his head, still not wanting to think of such things.

He basked in the aura of these spears, still not realizing the kind of treasure trove that was before him.

As far as Leonel was concerned, after completing his Divine Armor, he now had the skills to begin crafting Bronze treasures, all he needed was the material to do so.

However, even for him, a Quasi Silver treasure was leagues away. He neither had the strength necessary to claim one from a Zone, nor the skill necessary to Craft one.

In Leonel's eye, all he could see was a single silver light, standing tall atop a Spear Peak. But, unlike the rolling hills of the Quasi Bronze Peaks, this one looked like a small mountain, stretching over a hundred meters tall.

Leonel's gaze glowed. He had finally found something else he could throw himself into.

Chapter 590

Leonel appeared in the Lab Setting, his chest heaving. He sent a gaze toward the silver spear in his hand, shaking his head at how crazy he was. He felt like he could have really died climbing that mountain.

The presence of this spear made him feel suffocated, let alone the fact its polearm alone was over three meters long. It could only be described as a monstrous weapon. Even now, it was shining too brightly for Leonel to get a good look at it.

Leonel squinted, but all he could barely make out was the fact this spear was also double sided, similar to the Wind Domain Quasi Bronze spear he had run into previously. In addition, this spear seemed to be able to split into three portions connected by chains.

Of course, Leonel couldn't see any of this very clearly. He had only gotten a faint vision of the spear when he first touched it. Outside of that, he had nothing else to pull from.

Leonel could feel that the spear was struggling against his grasp as though it had a mind of its own. Clearly, it felt like Leonel wasn't worthy of it.

In truth, Leonel couldn't blame it.

The normal way to use Spear Domain would be to slowly master the spears that surrounded the base of the Spear Peak. The comprehension of these spears would give one the insight necessary to comprehend the Domain of the spear at the Peak. Only then would one then gain the acknowledgement of the spear in question.

But, Leonel had bulldozed his way to the top, relying on a combination of his mental strength and his Four Seasons Realm. He really had no business wielding such a spear.

Beyond this, there seemed to be a qualitative change in weapons after the Bronze Grade as well.

While Leonel's Fourth Dimensional weapons were only good for their quality and sharpness, effectively, this spear seemed to be able to affect change in the surroundings. Some of the Force Arts that formed its foundation seemed to flash into existence from time to time, making their displeasure known.

"Shut up."

Leonel said faintly, cursing the spear as he fell into a deep sleep.

** PANDA NOVEL

“... You idiot.... Sleeping on the floor.... What were you thinking...”

Leonel could vaguely sense his body being hauled out of the Lab Setting. Before he knew it, he was being thrown into a pool of water.

He shot up in confusion, his fatigue vanishing into a feeling of surprise. However, by the time he had shot to the top of the pool, the culprit had already vanished.

Leonel wiped his face, sliding his hair back from his eyes.

In the end, he chuckled and shook his head.

How long had he slept? A few days probably? It was no wonder Aina just tossed him into the water like this. ρ??∫??????

‘Spear?’

Leonel blinked, looking around him to find that his spear was nowhere to be seen.

He sent his sight into Spear Domain, only to find the spear back on the Spear Peak.

Leonel shook his head, but he didn’t mind too much. Whenever he entered Spear Domain, he would reappear where he had been last. So, at the very least, he didn’t need to climb that mountain again. He could just snatch the spear whenever he wanted.

‘If it’s double sided, could it still be called a spear?’

Leonel shook his head, it didn’t matter much. During his time in Spear Domain, he had seen many weapons that he’d have a hard time classifying as a spear. But, he found no real point in thinking about it too much.

...

After he cleaned himself, Leonel walked out of the bathhouse to suddenly catch a whiff of something.

His tongue involuntarily watered, his steps quickening.

He had hardly been to the place he was headed in. Though he knew the Abode Setting had everything a normal house would, the kitchen simply wasn't a place he frequented. But, this was the first time Leonel could remember smelling food that made him feel as though he was floating on air.

Of course, Leonel had smelt good food before. It was just that he never had the appetite to match, so it never really hit him like it did now. And, even after his appetite had returned in full force... well, 90% of Earth was nothing but collapsed buildings and vast ocean now. So, where would he have a chance to smell such delicacies?

Leonel rounded a corner and appeared within a luxurious kitchen.

If a chef could see this place, they would definitely curse Leonel for wasting such treasures. But, it truly wasn't his fault.

Much of the things in this place, Leonel had no idea how to use. It was all a mixture of extremely high-tech and ancient cooking devices that left his head spinning. On one corner of the room, there was an oven that looked more like a planetary destruction weapon, but on the other side, there was a stone oven that looked like a place one might have cooked pizza with 500 years ago.

Of course, what Leonel didn't know was that with every upgrade of the Segmented Cube, not only did the Cleansing Waters improve, but so did the gardens and the kitchen as well. The devices in this place could burn even a beast on the verge of entering the Fifth Dimension to a crisp. In fact, with some creativity and patience, it could even cook true Fifth Dimensional beings as well.

This might not sound like a big deal, but if one thought of the Dimensions properly, it was like giving mortals the power to cook Gods. It was insane that Leonel hadn't seen this place's value before.

Of course, in the middle of this large kitchen, there was a petite young lady wearing her hair up in a bun. Beads of sweat fell down her face as she bit her lip, her expression the picture of absolute focus.

Leonel seemed to get lost in her efforts. As hard as he had worked to forget things these past few days, just this seemed enough to make him ignore the rest of the world even if it was collapsing around him.

Seemingly sensing something, Aina turned toward Leonel with a bright smile on her face as she wiped her brow, the high temperatures of the stove she was working over causing wisps of water vapor to rise from her skin.

Leonel's heart skipped a beat.