

Descent 741

Chapter 741

After finding a path to cure her curse, Aina chose not to get rid of it completely. She had complete dominance over it with her ability and could continue to use it as she had in the past to help with her training.

Doing something like exploiting its effects for a moment to prove her identity was as easy as breathing, even though it put her in an uncomfortable position for a few moments.

Not long later, though, she returned to her true form, the form that left her feeling the most comfortable. Like this, she felt as though she could destroy a mountain range with a step and hold the world in the palm of her hands.

For a moment, that flawless countenance appeared again.

Her shapely nose, the gentle slope of her jaw, her willowy brows and slender neck. It was all perfect to an extreme. But, it only appeared for just a moment before she blocked it all with her mask.

Maybe some of the most stunned people by this change other than Magnaril were the likes of Balthorn, Radlis and the other freshmen.

Radlis still remembered making fun of Leonel for his poor choice in women while Balthorn very clearly remembered why it was that Leonel didn't like her very much in the first place. But now, it felt like this woman they had once poked fun of had become an untouchable goddess.

"Hm?" Apestus, who stood in the line of twelve youths, raised an eyebrow.

He had never thought that the girl he had picked up actually had a true appearance like this. If it hadn't been for Aina's less than optimal looks, the method they used to try to put Leonel in his place would have been very different.

At this point, let alone Apestus, even Raylion's heart, which was usually as calm as the unmoving surface of a lake, 'woke up' for just a moment.

Apestus grinned a toothy grin. If they thought that it was all sunshine and roses after entering the Zone, they would be sorely mistaken.

Leonel, sensing Apestus' gaze, looked over. Leonel's eyes were placid, his demeanor completely unmoved by the toothy grin he saw.

Instead, his gaze shifted down to the twin daggers by Apestus' waist, his lip curling with disdain.

Apestus froze.

The words Leonel spoke all those months ago about how pathetic his weapons were suddenly rang in his ears like a furiously ringing bell. Outside of his control, his face suddenly burned hot as though Leonel's gaze alone carried a fiery heat.

Apestus remembered exactly the kind of contempt he had treated Leonel's statement with back then, only to find out that Leonel had meant every word of it.

Leonel shook his head, a look of pity lighting his eyes as he looked away. But, this only infuriated Apestus even more.

'... Boy, I'll make sure you pay.'

Leonel ignored Apestus' heated gaze. As far as he was concerned, let alone dealing with him, his lovely girlfriend probably didn't need any help at all to all but solo them.

Leonel didn't know where Aina's limit lied at this moment, but he knew that it was most definitely not shallow.

At that moment, Magnaril and the other elders finally recovered.

“Little Aina... You... Your curse, it’s lifted?”

Aina nodded. “My boyfriend helped me find a way.” ρ??∫??????

Magnaril opened her mouth to respond, but the sound of Aina’s enchanting voice saying the word boyfriend seemed to shatter the budding fantasies of countless youths.

“That’s... That’s good.” Magnaril squeezed out a smile.

Though it seemed force due to her irrational hatred of Leonel, there was still a wave of genuineness found within her eyes. Clearly, she was very happy for Aina.

‘I guess this old bat isn’t so bad after all.’ Leonel thought with a smile.

Still, Magnaril was confused. The person that should be happiest about this lifted curse should be Aina. But, why did she sound like she was speaking of just another matter?

‘It seems that there is indeed something weighing heavily on this young girl...’ Magnaril sighed.

She had known that Aina was carrying a heavy weight long ago. She could only hope that Leonel could help her bear some of the burden.

Magnaril nodded.

“Since these matters have been settled, we can move on to important matters.”

Magnaril stood straight, regaining her dignified air.

“These matters have been a barely hidden secret for a long while, but the Elders have decided to speak of them in blunt terms.

“Our Valiant Heart is at a crossroads. We face internal enemies in the Oryx and external enemies in the Milky Way. We have sat at the top for a long while and the beasts chewing at our scraps have become restless, wanting a larger piece of the pie.”

Magnaril’s words were simple, but they seemed to make the blood of the crowd boil. Who would ever want things that were rightfully theirs snatched away by another?!

“This Valiant Heart Zone to my back represents the pride of my Valiant Heart Mountain. It is our most treasured possession and the light we use to guide the leaders of the next generation.

“When you enter, I hope you understand the important role you play, and I hope that you grasp every opportunity presented to you.

“I will not lie. The Valiant Heart Zone is not without danger. The longer a Zone is forcefully held open like this as opposed to clearing it, the more variables can appear.

“Our Valiant Heart Zone is especially susceptible to this because it is a Variant Zone that reflects the future. Variant Zones are meant to be the easiest and safest Zones to enter, however, our Valiant Heart Zone has long since stopped being such a thing.

“In my heart, I wish for you all to enter as children and exit as men and women – to enter as foot soldiers and exit as Generals.

“You are the pride of our Valiant Heart, our future!”

Magnaril’s voice resonated through the quiet mountain pass, a heavy atmosphere only growing heavier at that moment.

“Go forward and claim what is yours.”

The Valiant Pillars began to quake, an overwhelming surge of energy descending from above and crashing down toward the twelve youths.

This Force had every intention of forcing them to their knees.

## Chapter 742

In the face of such overwhelming pressure, Leonel and Aina were unmoved. If before it had been difficult for Aina to climb this mountain pass, at this current instant, she felt like she was walking through a field of fragrant breeze.

Hand in hand, the couple glided forward, a number of the other twelve following along with them.

Counting the number of individuals who took this pressure in stride, there was Apestus, Raylion, Sael, and two others that Leonel did not recognize. But, from what it seemed like, one of them was from Bear Rose and the other was from Severed Heart.

Among those struggling, there was the remaining member of the former Valiant Hall, a member of Bear Rose and Severed Heart, along with Radlis.

Of all these, there was just one person Leonel didn't account for, and he was the fourth individual to gain a spot of entry alongside, Leonel, Aina and Radlis.

And that person was King of Ores, Sarrieth.

Sarrieth seemed to be at the very center of the pack. He didn't seem to be mightily struggling, but he also didn't seem to be having an easy time either.

Even to Leonel, this in between state seemed genuine. If Sarrieth was faking it, he'd have to be on a completely different level entirely.

However, after this thought, Leonel didn't pay any more attention to Sarrieth. In his opinion, he didn't have any life or death struggles with Sarrieth.

The King of Ores Faction targeted him so that Sarrieth would have an easier path toward blue belt promotion, and they had succeeded in that regard.

In retaliation, though, they had to face Leonel's wrath. They lost their prestige and their hold on the Ore market in one sweep. It could be said that Leonel felt that he had dealt them a devastating enough blow.

Of course, Nigmir had died at Aina's hands, but he had also clearly tried to kill her.

That said... by now Leonel should know that things like logic and fairness didn't exactly work this way in the Dimensional Verse.

With a step forward, Leonel and Aina crossed into the swirling Gate first. Almost immediately, their vision blurred.

...

Leonel squinted, before his vision cleared. When he got a look around, his brows raised in surprise.

He and Aina stood in a hall of massive proportion. The walls were lined with bronze statues standing at 50 meters tall and there was a large dome of glass overhead that sparkled with rays of sunshine. The dome alone was at least 70 meters above the ground. To stand in this hall truly made one feel no different from an ant.

Compared to the width and even height of the hall, the length was several times more obscene. Leonel couldn't quite see to the end of it despite the fact there was nothing obstructing his view. Before him, there was nothing but a long road of marbled floors that extended to infinity.

Every 50 or so meters, there would be another pair of outrageously tall bronze statues facing each other with backs against the wall. Somehow, each of these warriors had a different air to them and a different strength.

They all wielded all sorts of different weapons, wore all sorts of different armors and gear, they even seemed to come from different races.

Leonel was shocked. 'An Oryx?'

Not far ahead, just two statues displaced from his current location, there was a large Oryx among the statues. ρ???(???????)

Leonel couldn't help but be off put. Wasn't this supposed to be Valiant Heart's Variant Zone? Why was there an Oryx statue here?

It had to be remembered that Variant Zones only appeared when a world was on the brink of destruction. This particular Zone had appeared thousands of years ago when Valiant Heart was about to collapse. It was only thanks to a treasure they gained from the Morales family that they were able to sustain this Zone for continuous use.

Technically, a Variant Zone allowed one to peer into the future and gain some benefits from it. Aina, for example, gained the Abyss Panther bloodline that had yet to appear on Terrain.

'... If this world was originally inhabited by the Oryx, maybe this Variant Zone was never Valiant Heart's to begin with?'

As soon as Leonel thought of this, he shook his head. Things weren't this simple, for sure.

This Variant Zone still carried the air of Valiant Heart Mountain. This was definitely their Variant Zone. But, these statues of different races...

The more Leonel observed them, the more shocked he became.

These weren't 'different' races at all. All the statues that depicted a species other than human was actually a variation on what the Oryx could become!

When Leonel made this connection in his mind, his heart skipped a beat.

Of the statues, about 70% of them were human. The other 30% were this other form and forms of Oryx.

Was this what Magnaril had meant by the longer a Zone was held open, the more variables that could be introduced?

If Leonel thought about it, a Variant Zone was meant to be a projection of the future, right? At the same time, the Oryx were in a state of Hyper Evolution they were trying to take advantage of. Could this Hall be reflecting not just the potential of Valiant Heart, but also a potential future where the world was ruled by the Hyper Evolving Oryx?

Leonel took a deep breath.

It was at that moment that the others entered the hall one after another, wearily watching one another.

When Radlis stumbled his way in, the portal to the outside world finally closed.

In that instant, all the lights of the Hall dimmed. If Leonel could see a few kilometers down before, now he could barely see a half kilometer ahead, and that was only if he squinted.

The only source of light remaining seemed to be the halo of bronze hanging around the statues.

It was then that the first two statues facing each other showed movement.

A dense light shot out from their bodies, crashing into the marbled floors before them.

They were both human, but they had eyes so cold that they still somehow felt alien.



And then... they spoke.

“Only ten can pass. Kill.”

The expressions of all the youths changed. In the history of all the Valiant Zone entries, this was the first time it had ever demanded they kill one another.

## Chapter 743

Leonel's eyes narrowed but he didn't even have the time to process what was really going on before a certain agile shadow flickered toward his back.

Since Leonel and Aina had entered first, despite the sheer size of the hall, the remaining ten members were all following to their backs. So, it wasn't surprising that they try to take such a chance.

Leonel's eyes sharpened, his palm flipping over to reveal a silver arrow as he quickly whipped backward.

Sparks flew as metal clanged.

Aphestus bore down on Leonel with a toothy grin, his twin daggers having pierced toward the latter's heart. Yet, Leonel was clashing with one with his reinforced arrow and had caught Aphestus' wrist with his other hand.

Feeling Aphestus' strength personally for the first time, Leonel's gaze couldn't help but narrow. Even with his Tier 4 Metal Body, he would have been blown away had he not immediately reinforced himself with Four Seasons Realm Universal Force.

Though this long armed, hyper muscular man was an annoyance, there was no doubt that he had real strength.

The arms of the two men trembled, sparks continuing to fly between the arrow's body and the blade's edge.

"Your knife is looking a little bit dull there. You sure it could even slice butter?" Leonel asked.

Aphestus' gaze flashed. It was indeed a humiliation for a dagger to be unable to cut through a mere arrow's shaft, especially since the latter wasn't designed for this kind of clash. But, at this point, there was already nothing he could do about it.

The clash of Aphestus and Leonel had suddenly taken center stage. The other youths were hesitant to do much of anything, scanning one another to avoid being attack from the back.

Aina, who had been right by Leonel, didn't raise a finger to help. Obviously, though, this wasn't because she was abandoning Leonel.

It was on the outside, on the mountain pass, that others were truly panicking. The elders had never thought that there would be such a sudden and drastic change to the rules.

Cold sweat matted their backs. If Leonel really died here, what would they do? It was one thing if Leonel died to the machinations of the Zone. But, if he died to one of their students, they were finished!

For the first time, the Upper Echelon began to regret not divulging Leonel's identity.

"Shut it down." Hutchin spoke.

His voice was even and allowed no path for refusal. Without a choice, the Elders could only do as they were told.

Projecting the images from within the Zone were functions the treasure from the Morales family allowed. In addition, this function was stupidly expensive, requiring the use of a Fifth Dimensional Crystal once an hour. However, it was an expense they were all willing to pay, hoping that the events of the Zone would reforge their organization with a sense of pride and belonging. p??J??????

But, watching their future generation kill each other for the sake of treasures would definitely not help them to reach their goal. In fact, it may very well have the direct opposite effect. This was something Hutchin most definitely couldn't allow.

Just like that, the image that had been projected to the whole of Valiant Heart flickered out, disappearing from the sights of the viewing public.

The elders could only hope that Leonel didn't die in there. And, if he did, they hoped to have some plausible deniability on their side.

...

Aphestus' arms pulled back as he retreated to prepare for another attack. But, what he hadn't expected was for Leonel to follow him like a shadow, a blinding golden light enveloping his every action.

Leonel's legs blurred, his stance shifting and his arrow vanishing. His fists left explosions in the air as they shot forward, raining toward Aphestus.

Aphestus reacted quickly, a sneer coating his lips. An unprotected fist versus his daggers? He didn't care how poor his equipment was, Leonel was asking to be skinned alive.

Unfortunately, Aphestus soon realized that Leonel's fists were nothing but feints. No, could this even be called a feint at all?

The sound of fabric being sharply pulled back sounded as Leonel's fists came to a grinding halt. There was just a slight pause before an explosion of flames rocked the air, catching Aphestus completely off guard.

The explosions completely blinded Aphestus. He didn't even notice when Leonel had pulled out his spear, slashing downward with an undeniable momentum.

Aphestus' bestial instincts tingled with wild abandon. But, deep within his heart, he felt that it was already too late. He had underestimated Leonel, he hadn't even entered his true battle form but he already no longer had time to do that.

The violent explosion of flames completely blocked his vision and even charred his skin to a painful degree. He felt as though he had suddenly met the sun. He only just managed to coat himself in a skin of Force to fight back.

But it was exactly then that a massive blade appeared above his head, descending with a weight of several thousand jin.

Just when Leonel was about to smash Aphestus' head into meat paste, his own primitive instincts screamed through every cell of his body. But, unlike Aphestus, Leonel had a calculative mind that saw through many situations before they even occurred. Something like Raylion interfering was well within his plans.

What he didn't account for, though, was just how much strength Raylion's attack carried. Any plans Leonel had of both killing Aphestus and leaving unscathed were thrown out the window.

The heavy spear in Leonel's hands vanished and his feet smashed against the ground, sending himself shooting backward like a golden star.

**BANG!**

As though an invisible and indomitable pillar descended from the skies, just as Leonel dodged backward, the space he had just been gained a perfectly uniform hole. The whole was so flawless that it seemed to have been purposely sculpted by a master artist.

Even though the hole was more of an indent, and even though it was only about an inch deep... Those who understood the sturdiness of the marble they stood upon all felt a cold shiver travel up their spines.

In the distance, not having moved an inch, Raylion stood with his hands in his pockets, his visage expressionless.

## Chapter 744

Leonel's mind calculated many things in a split instant.

To be able to create a hold in this sort of marble was a feat in and of itself. It took strength beyond Tier 8 alone. However, this was just the beginning.

Creating a hole was one thing, but doing it so perfectly that no cracks were formed in its creation was a completely different matter. It showed a level of ease that made one's spine tingle.

There were two last factors that would truly make one shocked. The first was the speed. Between Leonel sensing Raylion's intention and the actual execution, there was no more than a split moment.

The second was the distance. Raylion had been able to complete that near instantaneous attack from over ten meters away and seemingly without a hint of fatigue. Everything about his actions was nonchalant and casual.

Leonel took a deep breath, using the momentum of his explosive step backward to glide along the marble back to Aina's side. It was only then that he looked up and gazed toward Raylion.

Without a word, he flipped his palm over.

Many eyes narrowed when they saw the appearance of the small disk, thinking that Leonel was going to do something with it. After all, which of them here dared to underestimate such a high level Force Crafter? Who knew what sort of gadgets he had?

However, they only got more nervous when they saw Leonel's lips move but no sound travel to them.

"What's his ability?"

[ \*Ping\* ]

[ Subject: Raylion ]

[ Telekinesis ]

[ Evolution Stage: Tier 7 Bronze ]

When Leonel heard this, his brows furrowed.

“What is his Ability Index?”

[ \*Ping\* ]

[ Replying to Seed, Two Star Amplification Stage ]

Leonel took in a breath. Now he understood.

He had already gone through the Ability Index once and memorized it all. The Telekinesis Ability Index was separated, from lowest to highest, Control, Strength, Amplification and finally, Sublimation.

For Raylion to be at the Two Star Amplification Stage, it meant that he was one sub level away from the very Peak of the Amplification Stage. It could be said that in terms of progression in his ability, he wasn't too far away from Leonel. And, the fact he reached this level while still in the Bronze Grade spoke to the potential for growth he still had.

This was extraordinarily rare, exceedingly so, for a person born within a Fifth Dimensional world.

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From what Leonel understood, Control was the weakest. This was the level Aina's good friend Yuri was at with her ability, at least when it was initially awakened. This level allowed one to enforce control over things outside of one's body.

The next step, Strength, took this a level beyond. Strength represented the ability to enforce more power with your Telekinesis than your body could alone. As one might expect, the power of this level varied greatly from person to person. But, usually, this strength was not small.

Even a petite young girl who could hardly move a 20 kilogram weight on her own might be able to shatter boulders ten times her size after reaching this level.

Then there was the third level, this was Raylion's level. At this stage, the Amplification Stage, one would gain a subtle and fine control over their Telekinesis that allowed them to apply it directly to their body without risking harm.

It was this subtle and precise control that allowed Raylion to imprint such a hole into the ground without causing even a crack to spread. It was also this control that allowed him to give form to his mental strength, making Leonel feel as though a steel pillar was falling upon him from above.

Leonel lips curled into a smile. This ability was indeed worth all the hopes the Elders had pinned onto him, Leonel was even a bit jealous. It was just a shame that this Raylion had chosen to be his enemy for reasons that still made little sense to Leonel himself.

This Raylion seemed to think that Leonel cared about what little authority controlling this organization would give him when the reality was...

Leonel didn't care about Valiant Heart at all.

At that moment, Apestus slowly pulled himself up from the ground, his pupils having mutated into slits. It was clear that now he was truly serious, his gaze practically boring holes into Leonel.

However, Leonel wasn't looking at him at all. Rather, from start to finish, Leonel's eyes were trained onto Raylion who also had his eyes locked onto him.

Putting his dictionary away, Leonel looked away from Raylion and back toward the bronze soldiers that were blocking their path forward. Then he looked toward the group of ten before him and Aina again.

Did they really have to kill two? But what if in the end there was only him and Aina left, would this damnable place ask him to kill her? How far did it want to go, exactly?

The best decision for Leonel would be to 'kill' these opponents and place them within his snowglobe. If he was lucky, then the Zone wouldn't register them being alive and allow them to pass.

However, how would he convince these people to do such a thing? The simple answer was that he couldn't. One way or another, he'd have to defeat them first.

Dealing with Raylion with how flexible his ability was right now was impossible in such a chaotic battle. That likewise meant that Apehestus was also off the board. This meant that there were eight people he could possibly eliminate right now.

The atmosphere grew heavier and heavier. The weakest among them felt cold sweat trickling down their brows, their fingers twitching. Many of them seemed to be about to make the first move out of sheer nervousness, unable to take the mental pressure that was bearing down on them.

It was in that exact instant that Raylion and Leonel suddenly moved in unison. However, their targets were far outside of everyone's expectations.

**BANG! BANG!**

Leonel's eyes narrowed, slowly lowering a bow that had appeared so quickly people hardly registered that it had been there.

With a crash, the two bronze projections shattered into motes of light that surged toward the two.

Leonel and Raylion both reached out a hand, snatching their rewards out of the air.

Chapter 745



The bronze lights slowly coalesced, forming in a transparent orb. It looked no different from a polished crystal ball except for the faint light it gave off.

Leonel rolled the ball between his fingers, a curious light in his eyes.

As though sensing something, his hand suddenly squeezed into a fist, shattering the orbs of light and causing a mysterious energy to surge into his body.

The moment Leonel felt this energy, his eyes narrowed.

Now that Leonel had learned his lesson, he no longer used Soul Force, at least in its normal form. Whenever he deployed his Internal Sight or used his magic, it was now all controlled by his Dream Force. Over time, he came to realize that this did more than just give him a basal boost to his abilities, there were some more interesting and insightful tidbits as well.

For example, when Leonel used his Internal Sight now, he felt that he was more sensitive. It wasn't just that his range had grown explosively, but he felt like his attention to detail was far greater. If he used his Internal Sight to smell, Leonel felt that he was even better than most beasts at this point, and that was just one instance.

So, when Leonel observed the changes to his body now, his attention to detail was far greater. He could see his blood moving through his veins and arteries, he could see nerve signals firing within his nervous system, he could even see the perforations in his bone leading to his marrow.

As a result, the moment the energy entered his body, Leonel almost instantly understood what it did.

It was identical to the energy he received from the Puppet Master. Though in far lesser quantity and quality, this energy was able to open up the path of bottlenecks that lay before him. Albeit to an very small extent, he felt the bottleneck to his Tier 5 Metal Body loosen just a small nudge, a nudge he might not have even noticed before.

Leonel nodded to himself. 'So it's like this...'

There were many eyes trained onto Leonel. But this made sense. If they had to choose a person to display any sort of greed over, it would definitely be him. After all, the legend of Raylion had been firmly implanted into their minds for years already. But, Leonel didn't pay them any mind as he turned to Aina.

"It's good stuff, though it won't be very helpful for now. It's like the Puppet Master energy."

Aina nodded, understanding without Leonel needing to explain further.

Force that loosened one's future path as opposed to directly upgrading one's strength was the most sought after. Though Leonel hadn't bothered to ask the dictionary about it, this sort of Force was extraordinarily rare and could only usually be found after killing Variant Invalids.

This fact alone should prove the level of rarity assigned to this Force... A Force named Life's Breath.

It was the rawest and truest form of Life Elemental Force. And, the fact that it was appearing in the Variant Zone of a Fifth Dimensional Bronze Organization just went to show that this place had evolved far beyond what even Valiant Heart knew it to be.

Ignoring everyone else, Aina and Leonel walked forward together. ρ??C??????

Realizing that this hall would likely be an endless road of battle, Aina brought out her battle ax, her light steps making it seem that this Brazinger family Heirloom had the weight of a feather when it reality... It was likely far heavier than even Leonel's Heavy Domain Spear.

Before the group could react to the movement of the couple, they had already taken down the next two guardians and had already moved on.

"It feels good." Aina said softly after crushing the orb and allowing the Force to enter her.

"You can't just casually say that kind of stuff now." Leonel said 'seriously'. "Someone might take it the wrong way."

Aina turned and gave Leonel a glare, but all she found was a man trying his best to stop his lips from twitching.

Aina's current voice was really too seductive. Anything she said could easily be taken out of context. Yet, simultaneously, she had a presence no one dared to blaspheme. It was an eerie combination that could drive a man wild.

Luckily for Leonel, he didn't mind lewding his own girlfriend, even if she did have the presence of an Empress.

The one thing Leonel would never feel is inferior, he had always pursued Aina with his head held high. If she was an Empress, he would be an Emperor. Plus, someone had to put a baby in the Empress right? Of course it should be him!

At that moment, the others seemed to have recovered, presenting a new problem to the group.

With only two guardians appearing each time, but there being 12 of them, how exactly would they decide who battled?

The logical choice would be that since practically everyone aside from Radlis and Sarrieth had come in pairs of two, they should allow a rotation of six with each pair getting a shot.

But, this sort of logical and fair route... Would it really be accepted? Leonel had thought of it long ago, but he already knew it would be rejected by Raylion and Apestus, so why would he waste his breath?

As for majority rule? That only worked on the weak and those who thought of themselves as weak. And, obviously... Raylion and Apestus wouldn't think of themselves in this way.

As expected, when Leonel and Aina made it to the line of the third pair of guardians, a sharp wind pierced toward their backs.

The couple simultaneously each took a step to the side, separating from each other by a measure as an arrow soared between their shoulders and splintered the forehead of a guardian in two.

Leonel sent a casual look back to find a young man with features he seemed to recognize grabbing an orb out of the air. However, though Leonel recognized his features, he didn't recognize the man himself.

'Family member? Cousin? Most likely sibling... Balthorn.'

Leonel's mind completed the circuit in a split moment and realized that this person must be an elder brother of Balthorn's. And, from the looks of it, he was a member of Bear Rose.

For some reason, though he was clearly the Vice Leader, the Leader, a petite young woman only tall enough to reach his shoulder, seemed to differ to him. In fact, this Bear Rose 'Leader' was among those struggling against the mountain pass' pressure.

Leonel couldn't help but be intrigued by this dynamic.

## Chapter 746

The arrow that had soared by Leonel and Aina suddenly rose back up and shot back, landing in Balthorn's elder brother's palm as though it had always been there.

'Telekinesis? No... This is a bit different from that. The control was specifically on the arrow tip. There's no reason for that unless what he can control is limited to metal and metal alone.'

Thinking back to Balthorn and her control over those massive and heavy steel balls, Leonel came to a realization.

It was either that these siblings just so happened to awaken similar abilities. Or, this was related to the Lineage Factor of their family.

It had to be remembered that the awakening of abilities was completely random, it was a gift given by the Universe and technically gave those with weak backgrounds a chance to rise up.

As such, there was no shortage of individuals from powerful families who awoke abilities that were completely useless. In fact, Leonel had fought his fair share of battles where the losing party didn't use their ability even when a loss was imminent.

It's clear that in that situation, it wouldn't be a matter of hiding one's trump card, but rather a case where this 'trump card' was useless.

The most common abilities were low level boosts to one's physical attributes like strength or speed or eyesight or maybe hearing. Not all abilities had all the fancy bells and whistles Sael's ability did, and most weren't as useful as Leonel's despite not having a tangible form.

From Leonel's deduction, Balthorn was likely born with a useless ability, which was why she didn't use it even when her life was on the line against the Titan Hyena. As for her brother... Well, his control over their Lineage Factor was clearly much greater and had a much greater range. But, only time would tell if his ability was useless.

Or, rather it would if Leonel hadn't already used the dictionary to check everyone's ability and knew for a fact that his ability was indeed 'useless'. But, his sharpened eyesight most definitely helped with his archery.

At that moment, the second guardian fell. But, this one was taken by Raylion who had still not shattered his first orb.

The tension in the group seemed to reach another level. No one seemed eager to allow Leonel and Aina to continue leading the group, but no one wanted to stand too close to each other either.

Unfortunately, in such a tense atmosphere, one couldn't possibly expect peace to last for long... and that it didn't.

It didn't even take much time at all. When the group reached the fourth pair of guardians, hell erupted.

The moment they appeared, the Leader of Severed Heart, a man with an expression that seemed carved out of the purest ice cold, took action swiftly, a spear of lightning appearing before him and tearing a path toward the guardian.

However, at that same instant, Sael seemed to want to make a move as well. Her wrist manifested several swirling petals. But, instead of becoming her melee weapons like last time, she seemed to have evolved them to become capable projectiles.

The path of the lightning spear and seemingly dainty petals crashed, resulting in an explosion that ended up not injuring even a hair on the guardians.

At that same instant, Balthorn's elder brother moved again, but his action was impeded by Apehestus who also seemed to want in.

But, Apehestus didn't have any long ranged attacks, so he directly deflected the Bear Rose Vice Leader's arrows before grabbing it out of the air.  $\rho\text{??}\int\text{??????}$

Clearly not willing to let such a thing slide, Balthorn's brother let loose a rain of arrows, not giving Apehestus a chance in the slightest.

In an instant, though only four were fighting, it essentially placed eight in a deadlock. Though the petite girl by Balthorn's brother hadn't moved yet, one would think that she wasn't as simple as she looked, especially since Raylion had yet to take action.

At the same time, Severed Heart's Vice Leader was glaring daggers at Sael's companion, seemingly only waiting for an opportunity to tear him to shreds.

Leonel watched all of this with a helpless expression while Sarrieth and Radlis didn't seem amped to take action.

Seeing Leonel's gaze from across the sparking lights of the battlefield, Radlis put two thumbs up, raising them to the sides of his pale face as he looked from Aina to Leonel and back again.

Even though Aina was masked, he still couldn't help but click his tongue. This woman was truly too pristine.

Leonel was left speechless by this Radlis once again. If it was anyone else ogling Aina like this, he'd probably send a few arrows their way. But, this Radlis always seemed to be covered in a thin layer of fog. Leonel couldn't tell if he was serious or not.

Up to this point, none of Radlis' actions seemed to add up.

Leonel shook his head and chose to calmly observe the battle. Considering how long this corridor was, he was under no illusions that this would end any time soon. They might spend weeks, even months in this place.

If they had to fight it out like this every time, it would take even longer. So, Leonel was under no illusions that he had to save everyone.

These people were aware of the dangers and they were still fighting, he wasn't their babysitter. If some got eliminated early here, it would be better for the atmosphere of the group.

The best he could do for them was if one was close to dying, he would just throw them into a snowglobe to give them a chance. That was the best his kindness could give them right now.

Leonel's eyes began to wander. Even though his senses remained trained on the battlefield in case anything untoward could happen, he found that this hall was far more fascinating than he gave it credit for.

Leonel's pupils suddenly constricted.

The glass dome above them had originally been flooded with sunlight. But, the moment the hall went dark, only illuminating a small light around the bronze statues, the sunlight had also disappeared.

But now, with the sun gone, Leonel was suddenly able to see subtle patterns that the bright lights had obscured before.

'Those patterns...?'

Leonel flipped over a palm, bringing out a familiar ring.

But, what he hadn't expected was that the moment he did, he vanished, leaving just eleven youths behind.

Chapter 747

Aina's eyes widened. Her hand subconsciously reached out to grab at Leonel. But, by the time she had reacted and moved, her palm could only touch at empty air.

Her brows creased beneath her mask, confusion coloring her face.

There was nothing that Leonel kept from Aina. On the days they spent together, they meandered through conversation that usually lasted hours at a time. It could be said that the only thing Leonel had never told Aina were the words his Coach had spoken on that day.

This was all to say that Aina had long since been aware of the existence of the ring and had just seen Leonel pull it out while no one was paying attention.

Knowing this, though still worried about Leonel's safety, it wasn't to the point that Aina was plunged into a well of despair.

After she took a deep breath, practically hypnotizing herself into believing that Leonel would be fine, she looked up, her eyes several shades colder than they were just a moment ago.

If she had to face the ten who remained alone and without a partner, that was fine too.

In her heart, though, she couldn't shed a last stubborn and sinking feeling. However, this just filled her with the will to vent... and she definitely wouldn't be as merciful as Leonel.

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As Aina was panicking, one could only imagine what Leonel was feeling.

“FUCK! SEND ME BACK!”

Leonel’s roar bellowed into a wide expanse of sky.

Worry for himself? He never felt it. But, the idea of leaving Aina behind in that cesspool of human angst and ambition made his heart feel as though it was being lit on fire.

“General?”

Leonel’s head snapped in the direction of the voice only to realize that he was seated on a steed in the middle of a thousand strong army. His roar that shook the skies seemed to have awakened them all, however, the words Leonel spoke make the dreary atmosphere even worse.

Even the General knew that this was a losing battle, why should they even bother to fight? Shouldn’t they just lay down their arms and give up now?

Leonel’s rage had yet to dissipate. At first, he really didn’t have the mind to care who was calling out to him or if he was even being called out to at all.

He had never thought the simple act of taking out the ring would result in this. To make matters worse, it was now stuck on his finger and he couldn’t even take it off if he wanted.

However, Leonel soon realized that he had to calm down. No amount of roaring or rage was going to make this ring magically pop off, nor did this world seem prepared to listen to him.

It was only after Leonel reached this infuriating conclusion that he finally decided to look around.

The army he stood within was indeed a thousand strong. However, there wasn’t a single unifying identity to them in the slightest. In fact, they looked like nothing more than a group of ruffians. If they

were holding hoes and plows, Leonel could easily mistake them for farmers rather than the warriors they were supposed to be.

Beyond that, the horses they rode, if they could be called that at all, looked as though they had been starved for several weeks. They had discolored patches of skin, their ribs were visible through their dull coats, and their legs seemed several measures too thin.

Was this supposed to be a cavalry? Weren't they better off on foot?

Leonel had hardly finished this thought when his Internal Sight swept over the men once more. It was only then that he realized that beneath their cobbled together armor was sunken skin, malnutrition, and a vulnerability so keen they could hardly withstand the heft of their own weapons.

'What the hell is this?'

"General...?"

Leonel looked over to the source of the voice, only to find out that this person was indeed talking to him. He seemed to be a young man, no older than Leonel himself. He had a nervous look hidden within his blue eyes, but his hands gripped at his sword so hard his veins threatened to burst.

Leonel could see an almost pleading look in the eyes of this young man. Whereas the others only had fear, this young man had a small bit of hope.

Gazing around once more, Leonel realized that of the army, only this young man stood almost level to him. Though he was a half step back as a sign of respect, he was nearly shoulder to shoulder with Leonel.

'Right hand man? Lieutenant maybe?'

Leonel's brows furrowed.

Before he could truly understand, a rumbling began to sound in the distance. Though they were several kilometers away, they still seemed capable of making the ground quake. Their presence alone plunged Leonel's army into a deeper bout of despair.

Though they were so far away, with the improvement of his Internal Sight, Leonel could easily see them. What he saw, though, made him sigh.

Compared to their army, this one was leagues above. Though they didn't have high class and shimmering armor, their weapons were well kept, their steeds were well fed, and their bodies bolstered a strong health that rippled through their muscles.

As though that wasn't enough... their numbers were double their own.

'I need to get out of this place as quickly as possible.'

At that moment, Leonel's spear appeared with a flip of his palm as he jumped down from his horse. This sort of steed would only hinder him, not to mention the fact he hated riding horses. p??J?????

"DID YOU HEAR ME?!"

Leonel's sudden roar shook the warriors to his back again.

"If this is the kind of heart you want to show... that kind of spineless, cowering, effeminate garbage... Just send me back, I want no part of it!"

"But, if you want to be men, if you want to defend your lands and protect your women and children, then raise your weapons!"

Leonel's roar echoed through the valley.

On either side of them, tall walls of rock stood. There wasn't a single place to go but forwards or backwards.

However, backward is where their homes lay, it was where those they loved and cherished rested. Going backwards was not an option.

The gaze of the blue eyed youth shimmered.

“FORWARD!” Leonel roared, charging ahead, his body wrapped in golden light.

If one looked upon the valley from above, it would feel as though one was watching a blazing laser of gold tear a path forward. It felt as though Leonel could cross hundreds of meters in the blink of an eye. His speed was undeniable, but his momentum was even higher.

“What are you all waiting for?! CHARGE!”

The blue eyed youth rose his weapon into the air, pointing it forward and kicking the side of his horse.

The army surged forward like a tide. They had poor coordination and their formation was faulty, but, at the very least, a fire burned in their eyes.

Leonel’s back was a like a fuel that lit their bellies.

As for Leonel himself, though, he was inwardly shaking his head, wondering how he had gotten himself into this mess.

As amped up as the soldiers following behind Leonel were, he himself just wanted to end this battle as quickly as possible, hoping that this would send him out.

Unfortunately, no matter how powerful Leonel felt that he was now... He really wasn’t confident in taking down 2000 warriors at the same time, especially since they were all in the Fourth Dimension.

The only reason Leonel shot ahead on his own like this wasn't because he could do it alone, it was because he was the only one strong enough to disrupt this army's formation before they reached his men. If he didn't, this well-trained army would run through him like a knife through butter.

Leonel shook his head. 'Is this another Zone? Why would it teleport me here? What the hell does it have to do with the ring?'

Leonel really couldn't fathom just what was happening. However, he had also never been in a Zone that could be continuously reopened for the sake of training future generations.

That said, the Zone should still fundamentally follow its original purpose, right? A Variant Zone was supposed to be a Zone that allowed those who entered to benefit from things in the future. It appeared when a world was on the brink of collapse in order to give it a chance.

Plus, this time, rather than coming in as himself, Leonel seemed to have been loaded in as some sort of pre-designed character? This wasn't how it had been before at all.

However, what did this have to do with that ring? And, what was maybe even more mind boggling was how Senior Lu got his hands on this ring to begin with.

Leonel had to be very cautious with investigating Senior Lu's background. After all, why would he be making such inquiries if there wasn't anything suspicious going on?

But, he hadn't been able to catch anyone snooping around after his disappearance.

That made Leonel conclude just one thing... Maybe Senior Lu really had only stumbled into some luck, only to end up benefitting Leonel in the end?

But was this even a benefit?! Leonel didn't even want to be here!

'Dammit.'

“Scan this place. How the hell do I get out of here?!”

By now, Leonel was just a kilometer from the charging army, his annoyance becoming more and more palpable.

[ \*Ping\* ]

[Sub-Dimensional Zone detected: Valiant Heart]

[Sub-Dimensional Zone grade: Quasi Silver]

[Clear requirements: Valiant Heart]

[Side Quest: Valiant Heart]

[Side Quest: Valiant Heart]

[Hidden Quest: Valiant Heart]

[ \*Ping\* ]

[ Seed is warned to be wary of Valiant Heart ]

Leonel almost tripped over and fell. What the fuck was this?

Chapter 748

Leonel didn't have time to make sense of what he was hearing. He subconsciously felt that even if he had all the time in the world, it still wouldn't matter.

Somewhere deep inside, he subconsciously felt that his father was playing another practical joke on him. But, how could his dad possibly know that he would stumble into such a ring and be teleported to this place? Senior Lu was too insignificant of a character to be predicted by anyone and maybe this was simply what some called Fate.

Practical joke or not, though, all Leonel knew was that the dictionary had lost its usefulness in this situation. He could only hope that he could finish things quickly or that the time dilation here bordered on excessive. He couldn't afford to be here for as long as he had been in the Camelot Zone.

Leonel's figure flickered, his four meter long Wind Spear following in a stream behind his strike.

The opposing army seemed stunned that a single man had led the charge all on his own. And, in fact, Leonel supposed right hand man was also beginning to panic. Though he had wanted Leonel to be fired up and lead the army well, this was a bit too much, no?

However, it was already too late to call him back.

The blue eyed youth hesitated. Trying to call Leonel back now would dampen the momentum of the army by a considerable bit. But, at the same time... wouldn't Leonel's death be even worse.

Gritting his teeth, the eye lieutenant made a decision. However, just as he opened his mouth to speak, the situation abruptly changed once again.

Illusory wings spread to Leonel's back. As though the golden image of a heavenly Roc, his speed increased explosively.

In one instant, he was still a hundred kilometers from the opposing army. In the next, he had appeared above their general, his spear jetting out like a meteor.

The opposing General couldn't even react before a spear had split through his brows.

The battlefield fell into silence for just a moment. But, that was quickly ended by an explosion of fire that lit the air aflame.

The opposing General's head combusted until all that was left was ash.

Leonel landed on the General's still running steed, his steps unexpectedly light. His motion to kick the opposing General off before landing was so seamless that the horse didn't even seem to realize that its owner had already been slaughtered.

Leonel raised his head up to the sky and roared, billowing flames jetting out from his mouth as though to signal his victory.

His army was stunned for a moment before they erupted. Their blood boiling to the absolute limit, they saw nothing but red. Their own roars echoed through the valley, their charge suddenly gaining organization and purpose.

It was then that a slaughter was released.

...

The battle ended not even an hour later. With Leonel leading the charge and taking on much of the pressure, they managed to survive. However, there was only so far motivation could get an army.  
p??J??????

Despite the victory, Leonel lost at least 50% of his men, leaving barely 500 remaining. And, though he expected the result to be like this, he was still very much in this world with no sign of getting out.

Sighing deeply, Leonel shook his head.

“Gather the scattered horses, don't let them run far. Those that are able bodied will become our new war horses. Those that are too injured to be of use will be slaughtered and used for food.



“Other than this, take spoils as you please.”

This army was clearly lacking in food and equipment. Though this was a hard fought battle and they had lost many, it ironically guaranteed that everyone would gain a large upgrade in this regard.

Using the carriages the opposing army had brought along, they began to organize their loot. However, this was undertaken only after they dealt with their dead, giving each man a proper burial.

Even though Leonel wanted to leave this place as quickly as possible, he couldn't help but feel the weight of these deaths.

Ever since he had entered the Mayan Zone, Leonel had never been able to separate the lives from a Zone to those in real life. To him, whether the past, future or present, these were all people.

He couldn't help but feel that maybe he had been too rash. Maybe he should have thought of a different plan, a different approach that would have ended in more surviving.

Logic told him that with the army already in the valley and the enemies charging forth, there was no other course of action to be taken. But, emotions seemed to rage through his heart.

He was supposedly intelligent, right? Why hadn't he even tried to think of anything else?

And the truth was that he knew the answer to this. He knew exactly why he threw the lives of these men away without caring to look for another way...

It was Aina.

He was so worried about his own loved one that he neglected to care about the fact that these men had their own girlfriends, their own wives, their own children and mothers and fathers... friends and grandparents, dreams and aspirations...

Leonel clenched his fists, his jaw steeling.

When they all finally returned to the small town they all called 'home', it hit Leonel like a ton of bricks.

Walls of women and children stood anxiously at the gates. They flooded the outer town limits, many of them camping and even more staying completely awake, unable to sleep until they laid eyes on their lovers, their husbands... their fathers.

When they saw the army return in victory, a cheer that shook the town resounded. The walls quaked and the ground trembled.

However, when the number they expected to return was reduced by half, the wails and cries were just as resounding.

This sweeping sorrow, flooding the town like a monsoon, crashed through Leonel's heart in waves.

#### Chapter 749

The men and women of this town had all been prepared to die. The threat they faced was too great and they were simply too weak.

They knew that they should be happy simply for the sake of surviving, they should be grateful, thanking their lucky stars that they could see another day. However, how could pain be washed away by logic?

"General?"

The blue eyed youth always stood silently by Leonel's side. Seeing him blankly staring at the pain and grief before him, he couldn't help but check up on him.

"Hm?" Leonel absentmindedly responded, his gaze never shifting.

There was a little girl over there, no more than seven years old, clutching the blood stained scabbard her father had left home with.

Not far from her, there was a woman. She had a young and youthful face. Though she wasn't extraordinarily beautiful, she was very pretty, maybe even the prettiest within this small, malnourished town.

Yet, tears streamed down her face endlessly, her sobs echoing as she grasped onto a necklace that hung from her neck with both hands.

With every quiver her body made in her fit of sorrow, her dress shifted in the wind, making the baby bump she sported all the more obvious.

On another side, there was an elderly couple. The old woman with deep grey hair trembled in her husband's arms, her tears getting lost in the folds of her wrinkles.

The eyes of the two were already murky with age, but they clutched their son's leather armor between the two of them, their fragile bodies seemingly ready to be blown over by the wind.

Leonel's senses were too sharp. He didn't miss a single story of grief, a single cry of pain, not a single tear not a single quiver. It was all seared into his mind and stored in a place he would never forget, leaving a mark he could never ignore.

The blue eyed youth sighed again.

"The pain they experienced would have been far worse if not for you, General."

Leonel didn't respond.

Was that the metric he should be using? Especially when just hours ago, he didn't even spare the lives and deaths of these people a single thought?

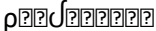
Once again, logic seemed to tell him one matter, while his heart pulled him toward another.

Leonel wanted to roar into the skies, but he knew that even if he did, he wouldn't be able to vent his rage in the slightest.

Suddenly, Leonel suddenly felt a tight grip on his wrist. He looked down to find that his blue eyed, right hand man had grabbed onto him.

"Come on, General. I can't let you wallow away in another bar all night after saving our asses. I'll take you to meet my girl, you haven't met her yet, right?"

The blue eyed youth beamed.

Leonel forced a smile and allowed himself to be pulled along. He didn't know what he should be doing in this world, but he knew that wallowing in self pity wasn't it. 

"Plus," The youth continued, "Our esteemed General can't be the only one without a proper home to be greeted by, right? How embarrassing would that be?"

The blue eyed youth's laughter seemed to want to fill Leonel's soul with light and hope.

The two entered the town, traveling through its streets.

Leonel noticed the shabby roads, the half broken homes, the filth and the poverty. It seemed that whether they camped out at the town's entrance or not, the living conditions of these people truly wasn't that much better. In fact, they might have been better off living in nature.

However, what Leonel did notice was a large building at the center of the town. Compared to everywhere else, it was almost like a heaven, unblemished by the trash of this world. He couldn't help but wonder just what it was.

Soon, though, the blue eyed youth led Leonel to a modest little home of stone and wood.

“It’s nothing much, but I managed to secure it with our military salary. That sum you lent me? This is what it went into!”

The two entered the small home, only to hear a sudden cry.

“Rollan!”

A blur of blue leapt into the blue eyed youth’s arms. When this ‘blur’ cleared, it became obvious that it was a petite youth lady who was about the same age as the two leaders of the town’s army.

Seeing, her, Leonel realized that there was a hidden flower of this town. It seemed that Rollan was quite a lucky man.

At the same time, Leonel felt relieved to finally know this young man’s name. With how familiar they apparently were with one another, it would have been too embarrassing if Leonel had to ask.

“Elise, come, come.” Rollan beamed. “This is our General and my very best friend.”

Leonel smiled in greeting.

“Ah! My manners.” Elise politely curtsied, her dress spreading outward that a blooming flower. “I was just getting preparations for dinner finished. In just about half an hour, everything should be finished. There’s more than enough for a plus one!”

With those words done, as though a little bundle of energy, Elise skipped off to the kitchen under Rollan’s delighted laughter.

Leonel suddenly felt a great peace observing this small home. Though he still felt like a third party observer to this world, he couldn’t help but think of how nice it would be if he and Aina could have such a life.

If she never had to go through such trauma as a child, if she never lost her mother, if her father never disappeared... Would they be able to be together like this? In a home they called their own, cooking side by side, laughing and joking with one another without a care in the world?

He truly wanted this. But, he also knew how important revenge for her mother was to Aina. He knew that it gripped her and consumed her every waking moment.

Maybe such a peaceful life... They were never destined for.

An hour later, as the trio was exchanging banter over a warm dinner, a heavy almost obnoxious knocking came from the door. What was more shocking though, was that this person didn't wait for the door to be answered. Rather, it was very soon broken from its hinges.

## Chapter 750

The house was very small to begin with. It only had a single room, a single bathroom, and the dining room, living space, and kitchen could all be considered to be one cobbled together homogenous zone.

This was all to say that the trio had a very clear line of sight to the door. And, it was even more to say that it wouldn't have taken any of them more than five seconds to reach and open it.

Could there really be anything so important that it couldn't wait five seconds?

Leonel frowned.

The moment the door crashed down, a large figure stomped in. No, maybe it was more accurate to say that this person looked quite large because of the heavy and somewhat flowery armor they wore. Though, their massive belly wasn't helping.

Leonel had seen his fair share of warriors to this point and there were some who could have large bellies and still be explosive athletes and powerful soldiers. Leonel's own teammates were among them. His offensive linemen were essentially his body guards and in terms of strength, at least before the Metamorphosis, Leonel couldn't match up to a half of them.

However, Leonel could immediately tell that this person was most definitely not a warrior of any kind. The armor they wore seemed to be lined with Force Arts that gave his frail body the capability to move around and even exhibit the strength he just had to breakdown the door. This alone made it impressive. But this alone didn't make this person worthy of fear.

And yet... The instant this individual appeared, Rollan and Elise shot up from their seats, saluting seriously. Even after several moments, they didn't dare to raise their heads.

The fat, armored man scanned the small home with a clear disdain painting across the narrowed slits of his eyes.

From the beginning, he didn't even care to check that everyone was showing him his due respect. After all, he already expected it. Was there even a need to question?

"His Lordship Helyes has demanded the presence of The General. He questions why it is that an hour has passed since your return, yet there has still been no formal report sent to His Lordship's manor?"

It was only after speaking out words that seemed squeezed from the mouth of a weasel that the fat, armored man turned to the dining room table.

At first, he nodded in satisfaction when he saw that Rollan and Elise still had their heads lowered in a deep bow. But, his face froze when he realized the Leonel was still sitting at his seat, his gaze scanning him up and down as though observing something inconsequential.

At that moment, Leonel stood.

"It seems that I will have to come back a later time. Thank you for your hospitality."

The fat, armored man trembled with rage. But, when Leonel took a step toward him, he suddenly felt like a towering giant.

Rollan's expression changed. Though his head was still lowered, he had known 'Leonel' all his life. That tone of his voice made it obvious that he was angry. He wouldn't go and do something foolish.... Right?

Rollan's expression changed. He wanted to call out, but if he did so, he might turn whatever wrath would be aimed toward Leonel, toward him and his wife as well.

Rollan hesitated. However, in the end, he gritted his teeth.

Raising his head before he received an okay from the fat, armored man, he stepped forward and grabbed Leonel's arm seriously.

Leonel was stunned. When he looked back and into Rollan's eyes, he couldn't help but shiver.

That look. He hadn't seen it in a long time... It was different from the reliance and trust Leonel had experienced that day after he saved the freshmen. No, it was a look of willingness to walk through the fires of hell together, a look Leonel had only seen from the few brothers he trusted the most in this life.

"Don't." Rollan said firmly.

Leonel stayed silent for a long while.

It was at the moment Rollan thought that he had gotten through to him that Leonel's suddenly lashed out, punching Rollan squarely in the jaw and sending him sprawling to the floor.

Elise's small shriek sounded as she watched her husband tumble to the ground.

Leonel fixed his sleeve as though washing Rollan's dirty hands away and walked up to the fat, armored brute.

"Hurry up." Leonel barked.



“You...!”

Before the fat man could say anything more, Leonel was already standing less than a step from him. It felt at that moment that though Leonel was only a head taller, he might as well have been ten. It was like a mountain was weighing down on him from above.

Fearing for his life, the fat man could only turn back, a sinister light flashing in his eyes. It was almost as though he could already see the image of Leonel’s demise.

It wasn’t long before the small home fell into an eerie quiet.

Elise scrambled to her husband’s side, tears falling uncontrollably down her delicate cheeks.

“Why did he do this?!”

Elise entered a state of half hysteria. The mixture of fear and seeing her love hurt like this left her not knowing how to react or feel.

Elise was quite a naïve and pure young woman. She didn’t seem to understand the danger of war, or she at least chose to be relentlessly optimistic about it. Why else would she be waiting with dinner prepared for Rollan while practically everyone else felt that the town was finished?

Yet, because Rollan told her his best friend, The General, would most definitely succeed, she believed his word and even began to almost deify Leonel as well. But now...

Rollan sighed deeply, wiping the blood from his lip.

“Don’t blame him... He did this for our sake.”

A flash of determination lit Rollan’s gaze.

He reached out and grabbed his wife's hand.

“Elise... Are you willing to be with me in life and in death?”

Elise froze when she heard these words, but soon her tears came spilling forward even faster than before.

She buried herself in her husband's arms, but her words were surprisingly clear and firm.

“Yes.”