

Dimensional Descent - Chapter 18

“Milan.”

Hearing Leonel’s voice, Milan reacted quickly. He took his tall F-grade tower shield and slammed it forward, ramming the C-grade Invalid backward.

Joel followed up, his F-grade pike piercing over Milan’s shoulder as though the two were one. Just like that, another C-grade Invalid fell.

It had already been three days since they began following Leonel, but even Yuri who had been the only one who wanted to reject his leadership had her lips tightly sealed. Not to mention the fact a third of this group was made up of men who shared their lives with him on the football field for four years already, even if this wasn’t the case, the results spoke for themselves.

They had fought tens of battles in just these three days, but not a single person had been injured. On top of this, they never met a group of Invalids they couldn’t handle. The most dangerous situation they had come across was a group of ten D-grade Invalids, but even that seemed to roll off their shoulders like it was nothing.

Over time, the group gained more confidence and relaxed, their tense nerves loosening. Yet, they somehow didn’t become complacent either. No, it wasn’t a mistake. Joel, Milan and James always followed Leonel’s orders to the finest detail. It was they who set the example for the rest of them.

Maybe it was only Yuri and the silent Aina who knew things shouldn’t have been this easy. It wasn’t a coincidence most of them only had F-grade treasures. The Zones they had entered were only of that level, so they hadn’t earned any rewards that were better.

Despite only entering F-grade Sub-Dimensional Zones, just look at how many of them had died. Over half of them would never see their families again. But, somehow they were navigating seas of F to C-grade Invalids as though they were nothing? Since when had the Metamorphosis become such a joke?

For moment, Yuri had even believed that Leonel would thrust her into the front-line as revenge. But he actually hadn't done that either.

Looking toward Leonel, Yuri frowned. Leonel hadn't attacked a single time in these several days. But she was certain that the treasures on him were above the F-grade. And, she had learned through deductions of her own that he had actually woken up before Aina even though her Lady had never said a word about it.

Just what was going on?

Yuri had known Leonel for a long time. She knew he was intelligent. She was also quite fond of his personality. He was kind and respectful, the kind of man she wouldn't mind being with her Miss. The problem was that he was too weak.

But was he really weak? She didn't know anymore. •PANDA-NÓVEL.COM

Her gaze landed on Leonel's crossed arms. She could see his fingers digging firmly into his own tricep every time another Invalid fell.

Leonel looked up into the sky. Seeing the sun setting, he made a decision.

"Let's stop for today."

The group was currently in the middle of what they had no choice but to call city ruins. This was the very advanced city that had once surrounded their third ranked Academy. But now, it was practically rubble.

After the Paradise Islands fell from the skies, many of them lay the tall skyscrapers to waste. Even those buildings that weren't directly impacted collapsed after the fierce earthquakes.

In order to find shelter for the night, the group had to dig through what was left of the buildings to see if they could find any basements that survived the collapse. Before, they were apprehensive. What would happen if they became trapped or worse, crushed to death?

But, Leonel seemed to be able to tell which were safe and which weren't. Though Leonel never fully explained exactly what his abilities were, everyone gained an almost infallible belief in them in just three days.

"Aina, if you don't mind." Leonel called out.

Without a word, Aina walked to the slab of metal and stone Leonel pointed out and lifted it. It would never stop being weird seeing such a small girl lift such a massive load, but it was at the very least easier now than it had been in the past.

Still, what felt the most uncomfortable for the group was the odd turn in the relationship between Aina and Leonel. They felt that in the past, Leonel would never ask Aina to do such menial work, nor would he speak to her so neutrally. He gave her commands and assignments no differently than he did to anyone else.

The group collectively sighed and thanked Aina as they passed by. In the end, Aina slowly lowered the slab, sealing them off from the outside.

PANDA-NÓVEL The underground space they found this time had a decent ten by ten meter size. It gave them all more than enough space to themselves. PANDA NÓVEL

As usual, Yuri brought out an F-grade tent that took up a bit more than half of the space, inviting the women of the group in. It was quite a convenient thing. Leonel had almost chosen a Tier 4 Black treasure of similar abilities — well, it would be known as a C-grade treasure by those of Earth — but he chose the bracelet still in his pocket instead.

Also as per usual, Savahn hesitated, her steps pausing outside the tent. She glanced back toward Leonel with a complicated gaze before she eventually entered as well.

‘How ironic...’ Leonel smiled bitterly to himself.

In the past, it was Savahn who always ‘protected’ Aina. Despite Leonel’s overall ‘good guy’ persona, she was even protective against him, shielding Aina from all the bad in the world. As a result, she had always been the most abrasive with him in comparison to Yuri.

But now, their roles had inexplicably flipped. And... She was maybe the person who most understood how Leonel was feeling right now.

Leonel sat down cross legged, the metal container on his back clinking slightly against the stone. He closed his eyes, emptying his mind completely.

Seeing his present state, James and the rest of the boys decided not to bother him, rolling out the sleeping bags Yuri had given them. They had no need for a scout to stay awake, they knew that Leonel alone would be enough.

Yuri had given Leonel a sleeping bag as well, but he had never used it. She usually snorted when she saw him sitting on the cold stone floors every night, believing that his pride was overblown. But

she had no idea the truth was that Leonel had simply gotten used to sleeping this way after months in the Mayan temple. Of course, he couldn't be bothered to explain this to her.

Leonel sank into his own world. It was a weird state of mind being empty, yet completely alert at the same time. Everything within a fifty meter radius of his body was entirely in his grasp.

'Just what is this ability of mine... I don't quite understand it even now...'

Leonel felt that he learned new facets of his ability everyday. After he started practicing [Dimensional Cleanse], new doors opened up constantly.

There was only one problem with circulating [Dimensional Cleanse], though. Whenever he did, Invalids would sense their position far easier. During the first night, Leonel was forced to stop and sneak out silently in order to clear them away, something that left him completely sick to his stomach. ρσδφσσσσσσ

From that day on, he only circulated [Dimensional Cleanse] at less than 1% of his ability. This slowed his progress, but it also allowed him to cultivate peacefully without interruption.

With that, Leonel locked down a new stat: Spirit.

[Leonel Morales]

[Strength: 0.72; Speed: 0.67 (+0.1); Agility: 0.75 (+0.1); Coordination: 0.99; Stamina: 0.78 (+0.05); Reactions: 0.99; Spirit: 0.10]

Spirit was what Leonel classified as the ability to use that weird energy. Unlike his other stats that were measured by the limit of the human body, Leonel set 1.00 as the energy density of a Tier 9 Black threat.

After he categorized it this way, he immediately slotted himself in for 0.10. However, in three days, it hadn't budged a single inch. Or, more accurately, it had, but Leonel couldn't register it sharply enough to put a number to it.

Still, there were other outstanding effects. Leonel's Reactions and Coordination had improved to 0.99. It was only now he felt that the barrier to 1.00 was exceptionally thick.

Luckily, though his coordination and reactions had slowed to a grinding halt, his other 'stats' had also increased decently. Setting aside the boosts from his treasures, his speed had improved to 0.57 and his agility to 0.65. Of course there was also the leap of 0.05 in his strength and the increase in his stamina to 0.73.

From what Leonel could tell, these changes most definitely didn't come from [Dimensional Cleanse].

He had picked that technique primarily because it increased his spirit. His spirit, by extension, increased his coordination and reactions. In addition, his coordination had a positive impact on his agility. But, spirit should have had next to no impact on his strength or speed.

Simply put, Leonel had no idea where these 'stat' increases were coming from. But his body seemed to be slowly improving over time at a pace that was out of his control. And, whatever improvement it seemed to not appear in the Zones.

'It might be related to what Uncle Montez was saying about Pseudo Fourth Dimensional constitutions? Maybe as a world evolves, its people do too. The closer Earth comes to the Fourth Dimension, the closer we all come to dropping that 'Pseudo' from our title.

'But if that's the case... Why isn't anyone else experiencing this increase —.'

Leonel's eyes flashed open. 'Something big is coming...'

Without a sound Leonel jumped up. Everyone around him seemed to be soundly asleep already.

Looking at the time, he should have been practicing [Dimensional Cleanse] for several hours.

Making his way to a smaller second exit, Leonel exerted some strength and quietly left, appearing beneath the night sky and high raised moonlight.

'B-grade...' Leonel sighed.

The group he had taken out two nights ago were just a bunch of F-grade Invalids. Their boost to his 'stats' were so minuscule that Leonel knew they couldn't have had an impact on his 'stat' increases.

Though this quickly approaching Invalid was of the B-grade, Leonel wasn't afraid despite the fact he knew the Priest he had struggled with so much was still a sliver away from the B-grade himself.

There was something Leonel had realized over these few days. First, Invalids weren't as intelligent as humans, making them less dangerous than the 'Bosses' of Zones. Second, not all Invalids had the same abilities. They personified the abilities they would have had had they survived the awakening process.

Simply put, the Priest was a C-grade Spirit type entity. This made him especially dangerous to a naive youth like Leonel who knew little of this world of powers and abilities. The Priest's Spirit had actually been much higher than Leonel's current 'stat'.

This was all to say that a B-grade speed type Invalid like the one rushing toward Leonel now was much easier to deal with.

'Why'd you have to come here.'

Leonel stood atop the rubble, his left hand calmly reaching toward his back and his right pulling his white boned atlatl from his waist.

'40 meters... 30... you've long since gotten too close.'

A beautiful silver dart with feathers of white to one end appeared in Leonel's hand. It was just about a meter and a half in length, looking more like a work of art as it sat atop Leonel's atlatl instead of the deadly weapon it was.

Cocking his arm back and releasing with barely 20% of his ability, Leonel allowed a line of silver to cut across the skies, reflecting the dull moonlight.

The Invalid who dashed forward like a vampire in the night was suddenly struck in the forehead, a hole as thin as a bullet wound bloodying its skull.

With a heavy heart, Leonel crossed the 20 meter distance between them. His use of [Call of the Wind] was already too refined for an enemy to survive at such a close distance.

Bending down the side of the Invalid who was beginning to turn to motes of light, he caught a glimpse of its face. On the last day he rode his bike to school, the day of the Championship Game, this 'Invalid' had been among those to greet him and wish him luck. He even said he bet on Leonel to succeed with Aina that time around.

By this point, it felt like a lifetime ago.

Leonel picked up his dart. It was slightly damaged, but if his treasure could build darts from raw materials, why wouldn't it have the ability to repair ones with nicks and scratches? To now, Leonel still had all 200 it came with.

'I guess that's it for tonight. I'll head back and rest.'

Leonel suddenly looked over his shoulder, frowning. He thought he had sensed something, but there was nothing.

Just as Leonel was about to investigate further, his mind trembled.

An inconspicuous black wrist band on his arm that seamlessly blended into his flexible armor silently tugged him in a certain direction.

A Zone had appeared! But not just that... It was within 500 meters of this place.

But, what truly shook Leonel was the fact he sensed not just one but seven A-grade Invalids!

It was only then Leonel realized the appearance of his B-grade underclassman wasn't a coincidence. Could it be that Zone openings attracted Invalids too?