

Dimensional Descent - Chapter 20

[Bonus Chapter for reaching 50 powerstones. Next at 100. 7 more reviews till next bonus chapter]

Leonel breathed hard. The fog of his breath under the chilly night sky reflected like crystals within the moonlight.

Below him, yet another A-grade Invalid had fallen, and though Leonel remained uninjured, he could feel himself reaching his limits.

It wasn't the first time Leonel had felt like that. During those months in the Mayan temple, he experienced it all the time. It was just that he had underestimated the pressure A-grade Invalids could put on him.

Though his life was constantly on the line in the temple, it had to be remembered that the Spaniards were barely considered D-grade threats, and that was only when their weapons were factored in. Alone, they were normal mortals, not even of the F-grade. Their only real threat to Leonel were their numbers, especially after his battle experience deepened.

'Still not good enough. I'm wasting too much energy... One more left...'

Leonel pedaled hard to the next spot. This Invalid had originally been over 400 meters away, but by now, it was within 50 of their base. There was no doubt that it had already caught their scent.

By the time Leonel made it there, panting, he came face to face with an Invalid that seemed painted in silver. Its skin had become a flexible metal and judging by the heavy sounds its normal footsteps caused, maybe it wasn't just its skin that followed this pattern.

Across the board, its stats were completely normal. Nothing was above 0.70. But Leonel knew his senses would not lie to him. This was most definitely an A-grade threat.

Now more than ever Leonel realized just how flawed his self-created stat system was. He still didn't have the ability to account for everything. He couldn't even begin to posit how he would perfectly account for all of these abilities properly.

From just about 20 meters away, Leonel launched a dart, immediately catching the attention of the metal Invalid. Just as he hoped, it diverted its attention away from his sleeping friends. However, aside from that, the results were less than pleasing.

The dart's tip completely shattered against the Invalids body. Its reactions were far too slow to dodge, and its agility was even worse, but it didn't seem to matter. There wasn't even a single scratch on its body.

'... Dammit...'

Leonel quickly loaded another dart, this time aiming for its eye as he continued to pedal. But the dart was shattered once more with a simple blink.

'Did it blink just on reflex? Or are its eyes truly vulnerable?'

There wasn't much time left to think. Leonel hopped off his bike once more, charging with his shoulder and ramming into the Invalid's chest. PANDA-NOVEL.COM

A grunt escaped Leonel's lips as the Invalid was sent tumbling backward.

'Only 5'10, lean body type, yet weighs over 400 pounds...'

Realizing the ramifications of this Leonel retreated a few steps, nursing the numbness of his shoulder. He had thought that the defensive abilities of his flexible armor would protect him enough

to do some damage, but it was very clear that this metal ability of this Invalid was several levels more durable.

'I was wrong. I was using the specifications of a normal human to measure out his stats, but that's foolish. In order for a normal human to exert the kind of force it can while being at less than half the body weight...'

[Metal Invalid]

[Strength: 1.02; Speed: 1.05; Agility: 1.00; Coordination: 0.50; Stamina: 1.05; Reactions: 0.50; Spirit: 0.00]

Leonel sucked in a cold breath. The adjusted stats were mind numbing. These were the stats a normal human of about 5'10 160 pounds would need to move around with the ability of this Invalid.

If this Invalid had more time to adjust to its ability and reached an equilibrium point where it was no longer impeded by its heavy body... Just what kind of monster would it be? S-grade? SSS-grade?

Something beyond even that? He had simply never seen a stat above 0.99.

How many other Invalids were there with this level of potential danger attached to them?

The Invalid slowly picked itself off of the ground, its white pupils locking onto Leonel with a dull gaze.

Before Leonel registered what was happening a long sharp blade suddenly appeared between his brows.

PANDA-N0VEL Leonel's eyes widened. He pulled his head back as fast as he could, withstanding the whiplash with gritted teeth.

A fine cut slit across his forehead, the breath of death kissing his cheek. If it wasn't for his obscene reaction time, his skull would have already been split into two.

Leonel rolled across the ground, realizing that he had once more miscalculated. Not only was this Invalid covered in metal, but it could shape this metal as it pleased. In that moment, even with Leonel completely focused on it, its arm suddenly became a three meter long blade, nearly impaling him.

'So fast... At least 0.90. I have to adjust his base agility because of that. Dammit!' PANDA NOVEL

In Leonel's calculations, attack speed was factored into agility. If he corrected the Invalid's stats like this, then its adjusted agility for a normal human would be even more ridiculous.

Leonel grunted, using his silver rod to block a second blade. But though the metals his rod was formed of managed to withstand the sharp edge, the weight was too much for him to stay on his feet.

Leonel coughed violently as his back slammed into a half collapsed building.

He didn't have the luxury of slowly recovering. Without pause, yet another blade tore through the air toward him.

There was no time for Leonel to land back on the ground before it reached him. Thinking quickly, he hooked his rod into a broken window. He turned it hard, launching himself toward his left.

The blade tore through the building's wall as though it was a piece of paper. It continued to follow through, chasing after Leonel while slicing through tough sheets of metal and stone with absolute ease.

Leonel fell through the air quickly, morphing his silver rod back into a bike and pedalling away.

'His blade gets thinner the further from his body it is. He isn't producing more metal, he's just diluting what he has to extend his range. So...'

Leonel's gaze flashed, his thoughts spinning.

His bike sped up.

'There it is! Ten meters is his limit!'

Leonel bike cut a hard turn, driving up the side of a tilted building and back toward the the Invalid with everything his thighs could muster and flipped back.

Leonel soared through the air. There was no longer any room to maneuver. He fell in an arc aimed right for the Invalid.

The Invalid's gaze showed no emotion. It simply brandished its second arm, sending out a blade that was impossible for Leonel to dodge.

Leonel twisted his body, a sharp spike of pain ripping through his left shoulder as the blade went through him and his flexible armor with ease. However, his gaze remained pure and focused. □□□□□□□□

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His bike turned back into a rod he gripped tightly. Using it like a spear, with his only good remaining arm, he stabbed it toward the Invalid's eye.

The pain was absolutely excruciating. As his body fell under gravity's influence, the blade tore further and further into his shoulder. There were several times in those split seconds that Leonel thought he would pass out.

A sharp clink sounded as the Invalid closed its eyes. However, Leonel had already expected this. He wouldn't lay his life on the line for such a poor attempt at victory.

Both of his feet landed on the free shoulder of the Invalid, the very one he had stretched the arm of to a ten meter length. In his hurry to attack Leonel who was streaking through the air, he had yet to

retract it, just as expected. The Invalid's coordination was too low to complete too many fine motor tasks at once.

Leonel roared, both of his legs slamming downward with all of his might.

The Invalid fell over. Then with a sharp SNAP, its arm broke right at its shoulder joint.

Leonel finally hit the ground, his own shoulder becoming a bloody mess as he rolled away, just managing to pull the Invalid's blade out.

Slowly pushing himself up, Leonel's eyes remained focused. He had used advantage of the Invalid stretching itself too thin to break off one of its arms. But in the process, he did functionally lost an arm as well.

The break in Leonel's flexible armor began to mend itself, sowing his wound shut at the same time. This was why he dared to take on such a terrible injury. Even if his left arm was now all but useless, blood loss wouldn't be a problem. In fact, due to the amount of pressure his armor was placing on his wound to keep it suppressed, in a pinch, it wouldn't be impossible to withstand some pain and use it.

'He's bleeding.' Leonel's pupils constricted.

He could see it. From the split in the Invalid's shoulder, a coarse, metal infused liquid was dripping.

Leonel could even faintly see some pink muscle fibers.

'So his inner organs aren't metal! If that's the case there are some other methods I can use. His coordination stat is too poor to extend blades from anywhere other than his arms. Now that I only have to worry about just one...'

Leonel sprinted forward. As he did, he dropped one of his silver rod's three sections away, leaving it at a manageable length for his one arm. It took some teeth grinding to use his left arm to pin it in place while he did this, but he managed to push through.

The Invalid struggled to stand, but despite losing an arm, it was still too heavy. In addition, with its poor coordination and relative strength, maneuvering with just a single arm was too difficult. To make matters worse, its only remaining arm was still in the form of the blade that pierced Leonel's shoulder.

It had only barely managed to get to its knees when Leonel appeared before it, swinging down with all his might right onto its skull.

The loud clang of metal bashing against metal sounded under the otherwise quiet night sky.

Leonel's actions seemed foolish. It was impossible for his blunt weapon to kill the Invalid in this way, and with its metal skin, he couldn't injure it either. However, something shocking happened in the next moment.

The Invalid stumbled. From its position on its knees, it wobbled as though dizzy. By the time it reoriented itself, another strike had come downward, bashing its head again.

This time, unable to brace itself, its head rebounded against the concrete.

It was exactly as Leonel expected. If this Invalid could bleed, if it had normal muscle fibers, its internal organs were likely normal. In such a case, what would happen to a soft brain rattling inside a metal box that was being hit so hard?

Not only did the Invalid's metal body start ringing, but so did the rod in Leonel's hand. Leonel smartly didn't focus on striking down with as much force as possible anymore. Instead, he focused on finding the resonance frequency of the metal, making it store more and more energy.

Leonel's senses locked onto the perfect striking strength. With his unmatched coordination, he swung his arm in perfect rhythm, neither using too much or too little power.

By Leonel's tenth strike, his breathing was like hot coal to his body. The Invalid lay twitching on the ground, but Leonel madly continued. It was too strong. If he let up and let it recover, it would be him who died here.

Unwittingly, in his fatigue, his mind settled into a primal near bestial state, his hidden imposing aura blooming forth and blanketing the area more and more with every swing.

Leonel didn't even notice that blood began to ooze along with an unknown white substance from the Invalid's ears. The only so-called 'twitching' was of its fingers just barely scraping against the ground, the last movements of the dead.

It wasn't until Leonel's rod slipped through the motes of lights it became and hit the concrete, almost shattering his wrist, did he awake from his stupor.

[Leonel Morales]

[Strength: 0.75; Speed: 0.70 (+0.1); Agility: 0.80 (+0.1); Coordination: 0.99; Stamina: 0.81 (+0.05);
Reactions: 0.99; Spirit: 0.10]

The improvement was shocking. Maybe even more shocking was the fact that over 90% of it had come from this lone A-grade Invalid. The other six had hardly caused a shift.

Leonel realized that his rating system was too flawed. If he couldn't accurately predict things in this way, it had little value. But in truth, this wasn't what was on Leonel's mind at this moment.

He had killed again. But this kill... It was very different from the others. He had done it subconsciously, as though there was a beast lying in his mind... as though his 'morality' was just fake posturing he used to absolve himself of responsibility.

"Look at that, he really killed it. Damn, I knew I should have bet."

"Too late. Who asked you to reject free money?"

"You dodged a bullet and now you want to gloat? Weren't you the one just saying the kid was definitely dead?"

"Shut up the two of you."

Leonel frowned. He hadn't picked up these people before. They had definitely been waiting outside the 50 meter radius of him.

In meditation, Leonel's senses were near perfect within 50 meters. In a state of wakefulness like he was now, 20 meters was his best. But, he still had vague inklings of the goings on up to 50 meters away. In addition, he could gain a very rough picture of a few hundred meters if the targets had large enough energy signatures, like the A-grade Invalids, for example.

With how he had sharpened his battle experience in the Mayan temple, he would never lower his guard so easily. He had been constantly scanning the area in case other Invalids came to interrupt his fight. But he had never thought the ones to come would be other humans.

"Hey, kid. We can make this easy on you. After all, we're fellow humans. You seem to have gotten some good stuff out of your Zone. That rod looks particularly useful. How about you share some with us and we'll let you go unharmed?"

Leonel's face remained expressionless. His rod? This was about the only thing on his body that wasn't a reward from the Zone he entered. It seemed not everyone was able to see through treasure grades as easily as he could.

But that inadvertently gave Leonel another thought. These treasures in his hand were gifted by higher level worlds. Obviously they didn't come from Silver Zones that one could take treasures out of or else they'd be higher grade. Didn't that mean these weapons were created? In that case, could Earth do the same?

'I'll just shatter their knee caps with my darts and leave them to karma —'

Leonel went to reach for his dart and froze, a sharp pain flying through his body.

He hadn't broken his wrist. But... His right shoulder was dislocated!

Even as Leonel was thinking of running, a figure came crashing from tens of meters above him, landing to his side with a BOOM.