

Dimensional Descent - Chapter 22

[Hey guys, I know I only just started the powerstone bonus chapter system, but I'll have to retract it for now. I've been having some pain in my left pinkie finger for a while now, so I've had no choice but to switch to an ergonomic keyboard. My typing speed will plummet so if I give too many bonus chapters, it will eat into my reserves too quickly x). I'll bring the system back once I'm back up to speed. So for now, I will only upload 1 chapter a day]

“Use this belt.”

Aina, who had all sorts of belts and pockets strapped across her body, somehow managed to pull out another one.

Leonel accepted. Strapping things to the band of his sweatpants was really too inconvenient. He felt he was using more energy than he cared to admit making sure his things didn't fall out mid-battle.

He buckled it around his waist, strapping the three rods of his bike to it along with his atlatl. After that, he strapped the meter or so tall silver box that contained his darts to his opposite waist. If he was still a normal human, it would impede his movements too much to place it there. But the current him found it much more convenient.

To his surprise, the box actually shrunk. From only a couple inches from touching the ground, it shrunk to stop just above his knees. It also shortened its width, ending up with dimensions only about as thick as his thigh.

“It's an ability of the belt.” Aina explained simply, leaving it at that.

Leonel nodded. He used the strap of the man who previously owned the spear to hold it to his back, then fitted the small round shield to his left arm.

Sensing that Leonel was ready, Aina took off, knowing that Leonel was following closely behind.

Leonel tacitly understood his role, this was why he put his spear away.

[Aina Brazinger]

[Strength: 0.99; Speed: 0.85; Agility: 0.80; Coordination: 0.95; Stamina: 0.95; Reactions: 0.97; Spirit: 0.06]

Aina's stats hadn't changed much since he last looked. She was fundamentally a front line fighter. In that case, it was his responsibility as the only one among them adept at long ranged attacks to cover her.

However, he was curious. Aina's Spirit was the highest he'd seen aside from his own. Even the Priest was only at 0.05. Maybe he was still underestimating her.

The two ran through the small village in a line, just ten meters apart, their speed far beyond that of normal humans.

Aina's ax was suddenly wrapped in a reddish-gold glow and floated from her back to her hand. She held it off to her side with two hands, sweeping out the moment she entered the range of an enemy - PANDA-NOVEL.COM

Her ax was like a blur, hacking Englishmen apart with ease.

Blood and organs splattered through the air, but not a speck touched her as she flashed by, dodging them as though they hadn't dared approach her.

Leonel could only sigh as he watched her silently. He always knew there was something special about Aina. There were simple context clues everywhere. Something as simple as her tanned skin could tell him this.

Girls her age were obsessed with taking care of their skin. Some used tans for cosmetic reasons, but Aina's had always been a level beyond that, as though she spent her days toiling under the sun. Yet, she didn't appear any less elegant or noble, always appearing in a beautiful dress like a dainty goddess.

His infatuation had always been due to small tidbits of her hidden truth like that. He had originally thought that her 'abrupt change' would lessen his feelings for her. But, even as she slaughtered mindlessly, he felt that he had always subconsciously known this was hidden within her.

'Is this what I'm drawn to...?'

Leonel's gaze sharpened. With quick movements, he pulled a dart out from his side, hooking it into his atlatl and swinging his arm sidelong.

He continued running as though nothing had happened. But, 100 meters away, an archer watched as Leonel's spear flew through a window, out a wall, and directly between his eyes. He hadn't even managed to climb to a proper vantage point, let alone knock an arrow.

Leonel wasn't fond of killing. But, even in his aversion, those who would attack a village of innocents like this ranked at the top of those he would be willing to bloody his hands with.

Aina and Leonel just numbered two. But in less than ten minutes, the state of the battle completely flipped. They dashed around the village like two specters, Aina manning the front and Leonel taking out everything out of her range.

'Once again, this Zone seems mostly made up of normal humans.. This era should have gunpowder as well, but they probably won't appear on this battlefield..'

The blaring horns of retreat sounded just as Leonel and Aina burst out of the village's boundary of broken wooden fences.

A plain that should have held crops stood. But much of it was trampled to the ground under the hooves of swords and foot soldiers. With such conditions, the likelihood this village would survive through the winter even with Aina and Leonel's actions were near zero.

Leonel's jaw clenched.

The surviving village dwellers looked toward Aina and Leonel as though they were twin gods, none of them daring to approach. PANDA NOVEL

At that time, long after the English had disappeared over the horizon, the sound of hooves filled Leonel's ears. However, this time, it came from within the village. No, more accurately, it should have been another army approaching from the opposite exit and cutting through the village.

As expected, Leonel soon found a group of armored men riding horses coming toward both he and Aina, causing the village members to part like the sea. Except, this time, they weren't Englishmen but were rather Frenchmen.

The head knight looked down toward Aina and Leonel from his horse, a picture of confusion with a dash of arrogance.

'Who are you?'

The question was directed toward Leonel despite the massive ax in Aina's hand. It seemed this era still took their misogyny quite seriously.

“... I can't speak French.” Aina said, looking toward Leonel.

Leonel blinked. He had become so used to not being able to understand anyone after entering a Zone that he forgot he could actually speak French. Finally, it seemed his language studies would come in handy.

Leonel thought for a minute. What was the best way to approach this... Suddenly, he smirked.

“We're messengers of God. Me and my partner are guardians sent to protect Joan of Arc. Bring us to her immediately.”

The head knight frowned. He wanted to refute, but there was only one reason the English would retreat. It had to be related to these two.

“I will take you to the General. Whether you can meet the Savior or not will be up to him. Bring them a horse!”

Aina frowned seeing that there was just one horse. Plus, there was no way a horse would be capable of withstanding the weight of her ax.

“It's fine, lead the way. We will run.”

The head knight's eyes widened. Humans keeping up with horses?

“The... the path is long...” ρ□□□□□□□□

Leonel only shrugged, slotting his atlatl into the belt Aina had given him.

“The messengers of God aren't limited by such things.”

The heart of the knights trembled, each of them swallowing hard. Their encampment was 50 kilometers away. It would take a human a day to cover such a distance. A good runner would take about three to four hours. But, a horse could do it in less than two. If they could really keep up...

They soon received their answer.

Aina and Leonel not only kept up with ease despite their heavy load. On top of this, they didn't seem to be too tired. Leonel could have taken out his bike to make the process even easier on himself, but it didn't sit right with him letting Aina run alone.

When they could see the large tents of the encampment, Leonel's heart inadvertently thumped as something clicked in his mind.

'My stamina just increased by 0.01...'

Leonel immediately confirmed that he really was correct. There was something more special about his father's concoctions than the latter had let on. In addition, this world really hadn't blocked it like the previous Zone had.

'What's different about that one and this one? It also seems that whatever medicinal strength dad's brew had can be forced out quicker if I'm doing an activity conducive to it... Should I start running sprints and lifting weight?'

Leonel's strength wasn't bad, but his speed and agility were abysmal. The only reason they were passable currently was due to the Tier 5 Black treasure on his feet currently.

Now that Leonel was paying very close attention to his body, he realized that the ticks up in his stats while he was fighting those A-grade Invalids had felt exactly like this. Why hadn't he realized there was a hidden strength churning in his body before?

'I wonder why dad decided on this incredibly slow approach... I'm sure he had a reason...'

Leonel frowned, his mind going to the scar his father mentioned. Could it be related to that? He didn't really understand, though. There weren't really any important organs or vitals in that place.

Leonel didn't get to think more about it as they finally made it to the encampment. He could immediately tell that Joan of Arc wouldn't be here. Encampments like this one held forward squads and battalions that placed pressure on the enemy in no-man's-land.

According to history, Joan wasn't a fighter, she was rather a morale booster. The so-called 'Merlin' mentioned in the quest introduction was the man who prophesied of her arrival, but there was no real wizard or mage in history.

This was all to say that Joan wouldn't be in such a small army. She would be with a larger number so her presence could have the greatest effect.

'Joan of Arc was executed for cross dressing as a man...' Leonel sighed, looking at Aina's clothing.

Leonel found his education at Royal Blue Academy to be quite useful currently. When one chooses a language study, it isn't just about learning the dialect itself, but also about learning in the language.

Leonel had thus learned many things about French history in these past few years.

Leonel and Aina waited patiently as the head knight contacted who he needed to. Not long later, the two were being ushered into the largest center tent.

Unsurprisingly, this 'general' didn't have much of a say in the matter either. He could only wait until the next opportunity to bring Aina and Leonel back to the Orleans stronghold.

The next time their battalion would be allowed to return was a month. Until then, they could only continue fighting skirmishes and protecting the 100 kilometer radius of villages and towns.

Following this, Aina and Leonel were taken to a tent of their own. Leonel already knew that Aina had a tent of her own that she'd likely bring out, so he didn't disagree. Plus, it wasn't particularly good for the two of them to separate.

Surprisingly, though, Aina didn't immediately pull out her own living space and instead invited Leonel to sit on an animal skin left in the tent.

"The mission specifics, I haven't had time to explain them properly to you yet, so I think I should do so now while we have a small bit of time."

Leonel nodded, that was true.

"The wrist watch is correct. This quest is about Joan of Arc. I'm not sure how this Merlin is related, but maybe you can fill in the blanks?"

"Yes. Merlin was a bard and professed prophet from the 500's. He was known for a few of his connections and prophecies, namely his connection with King Arthur and his prophecy on Joan of Arc.

"If I recall the quote directly, his prophecy went... 'France will be lost by a woman and saved by a virgin from the oak forests of Lorraine.'

"The same usual vague prophecy that will eventually become true if enough years pass..." Leonel ended a bit skeptically.

PANDA-NOVEL "I don't think we can take anything at surface value like that anymore." Aina said softly.

"... Maybe you're right."

Aina shook her head. "The main quest and side quests are actually conflicting. And, the hidden quest is nearly impossible."

“You can see hidden quests? Isn’t the point that they’re... hidden?”

“My detection device can’t, but I used an S-grade Information Ticket on it. I have a feeling that this quest may actually be of the SS-grade, which plummets the accuracy of my device to just 70%.”

Leonel’s gaze narrowed in his seriousness. He had only completed a C-grade Zone before, but now he was in an SS-grade one? Where was the fairness?

“There’s also a possibility that it’s a Unique Sub-Dimensional Zone.”

“Unique...?”

“They’re Zones that are ungraded due to the fact the variables within follow the Chaos Theory.”

‘Oh... Just fantastic...’ Leonel thought to himself. Chaos Theory was a branch of mathematics that gave even him a headache whenever he thought about it. At least back when his mind worked within normal human limits, that is.

“Either way, I will tell you what I know.

“There are two side quests. One is to kill 1000 Englishmen. The second is to kill 10 000 Englishmen.

“The main quest is to... kill Joan of Arc.”

Leonel rubbed his forehead with a hand. As expected, this wasn’t a simple matter at all.

“The hidden quest is to recapture Paris.”

Leonel’s lips twitched. She was the ‘Boss’ of a potentially SS-grade Zone, yet even she failed to recapture Paris in her lifetime. But, they were supposed to?