

Dimensional Descent - Chapter 6

While everyone was distracted, Leonel had already moved, making it to Conrad and James in a few steps and grabbing a side of the latter's collar himself. Another person might have chosen to fight off

Conrad first, but Leonel was well aware how foolish such a choice was.

No matter what just happened, securing James' safety came first. No matter what happened between them, James was still his best friend. And, luckily, he had the now darkened lights on his side.

As expected, Conrad wasn't able to react. Seeing that Leonel now had a firm grip on James himself, he could only let go, allowing Leonel to pull James up.

"Leo...?" James' words slurred.

It was only now that Leonel realized James had actually been unconscious. It was likely his head that had smashed the window apart, it wouldn't be surprising if he was diagnosed with a concussion.

Coupling that with the fact he was drunk and it was a recipe for disaster.

"Heeey, maaan. You're late, my sister-in-law was waiting on youuu.."

Leonel sucked in a cold breath through his teeth when James heavily leaned on him. He was really in no shape to be taking on such a burden, but he still carried him out, letting him sit on the couch.

"Chef, do you have any gas burners back there? We need some light." Leonel called out.

The Four-Star Chef who had not said a word even when James' life was on the line finally looked a bit shaken. He didn't seem to know what was going on.

“... Yes... We use a blow torch for the finishing touches of certain dishes...”

He absentmindedly fumbled through the dark, pulling out the draw of a hidden compartment to take the torch he was speaking of. But, before he could think to hand it to Leonel, it happened.

In that few minutes, it felt that the planet would collapse. A cacophony of booms so loud Leonel had no choice but to cover his ears sounded. The earth beneath their feet trembled fiercer, the building swaying wildly from left to right.

It was then that Leonel froze. He didn't need to think to know what was causing this... PANDA-NOVEL.COM

The Paradise Islands!

'Dad...'

A bout of worry seized Leonel's chest. No Paradise Islands were allowed to have routes that crossed over important landmarks. The top ten Academies, government buildings, and historical landmarks all fit this description. So, they were safe, for better or worse.

However, Leonel didn't care about his own safety. He was worried about his father.

Higher class Paradise Islands like the ones him and his father lived on had several safety features in case an event just like this one happened, however they weren't perfect by any stretch of the imagination. This was especially so considering the scope of this power outage.

The only slight hope was that Leonel and his father lived on a Paradise Island very close to the surface — the closest they could get, in fact. If their island crashed into some of the high rise skyscrapers first, it could slow its descent enough to save his father's life. These skyscrapers were exactly the very last line of defense for these disasters. They were built with this potential cataclysm in mind.

In the end, Leonel could only force his worry down.

If it was a normal power outage caused by some sort of system-wide failure, he would immediately run out of here, even leaving Aina behind. However, before everything happened, their wrist watches had warned of a Class 9 Code Red. It was very obvious that there was nothing normal about this event.

Setting his jaw, Leonel weathered the shaking earth with his hands firmly clasped over his ears. It was lucky that their buildings were built with the highest earthquake technology, or there was no way it would have lasted this long.

The atmosphere became gloomy. Students who could go here didn't think often of the Paradise Islands above their heads. They would occasionally obscure the sun, but no more invasively than the clouds do.

However, this time, with each crashing boom, they became more and more aware that each represented the deaths of countless innocent people.

Completely unprovoked, several began to heave and vomit. A putrid smell filled the fourth floor lobby along with mute sobs almost completely obscured by the vicious torrent of sounds. PANDA NOVEL

Whatever catastrophe the Ascension Empire warned of had yet to even begin, yet billions had already died. What kind of sick joke was this?

A few who managed to keep their bearings looked toward Leonel with unconcealed pity. Even though he had closed his eyes and clenched his jaw, keeping his visage expressionless as he covered his ears, they knew well what he must be feeling.

Some of them were in the same boat. Even if their families were affluent enough to have a home on the surface, not all of them were able to have a home in those protected zones. Their families might very well die by being crushed by those falling Paradise Islands.

Over ten minutes later, the booms finally stopped, the earth still swaying beneath their feet. Maybe it was only now that they had become aware of just how many of those islands hovered above their heads... of just how many lives they hadn't even cared for to now.

When they did, Leonel began to work as though nothing had happened. He carefully took James' shirt off, being mindful to support his head.

As expected, not only did James have a concussion, but the remnant shards of glass on the bottom ledge of the windowsill had left deep gashes to his lower back.

Accepting the blow torch from the Four-Star Chef, Leonel borrowed a few scented candles from a resident of the dorm and lit them, finally giving them a semblance of light.

Leonel wasn't a medic, but he had taken a few first-aid classes. He was unsure if the medics they had on standby for the game were still here, or if they had left to their homes. After all, it had been over an hour, approaching two, since the game ended. He didn't have the luxury of looking for them.

Cleaning out James' wounds to his lower back as best he could, he slowly removed pieces of glass stuck in his flesh. Finally, he wrapped them after disinfecting with some cooking wine he got from the chef.

"Love you, man..."

James' drunk voice faded, only to be replaced by his light snoring soon after. Those here couldn't help but think he was the luckiest one of them all. Even if they tried to sleep now, they had no doubt that they'd fail.

Leonel smiled and shook his head, his gaze turning empty for a moment. What should he do
now? ρ□□□□□□□□□□

In truth, he knew that the best answer was to stay put. Everyone else knew as well. As one of the
protected zones, they could obviously be among the first to receive government assistance.

But, what was this Code Red? Was it just a worldwide power outage? Leonel had a feeling that it
was more, but he had to admit to himself that he had no real evidence for this being the case. It was
just that... how could the mighty Ascension Empire which unified Earth not be ready for such a
thing?

It made Leonel think that there was something that caused this outage actively. It wasn't a mistake,
but rather an event even their Empire had no means of stopping.

'The good news is that we have room and board. The academy also stockpiles several years worth
of food in an abundance of caution thanks to previous rebellion and hostage situations.

'The bad is that the campus is current above its usual carrying capacity due to the game and the
after party. Also, without power, the large freezers will slowly lose their heat. It'll be even faster if
people are constantly opening and closing their doors.

'It would be possible to take preemptive action and cure what we can. But, not many will listen to my
words, they'll believe I'm being overly paranoid. The food here is enough to last a month easily
before they start to go bad, no one would think that the Empire would be unable to recover in that
time, so they wouldn't be willing to make sacrifices.'

Leonel's thoughts spun quickly. A part of him wanted to act frugally out of caution, but another part
understood that unless people had evidence toward how dangerous this situation was, they wouldn't
listen. This was simply the way human beings were.

In truth, Leonel didn't want to deal with any of this. He only wanted to go and see if his father was alright, he didn't care about anything else.

"Damn, I can't stand this smell."

Conrad's high-bridged nose wrinkled. As soon as the swaying of the building normalized, he didn't want to stand there a second longer. Usually such a mess of vomit would be cleaned easily with their high-tech. But, this was obviously impossible now. It wasn't even a guarantee that they still had running water.

Leonel didn't stop Conrad from walking away, and why would he?

Unfortunately, it seemed that Conrad wasn't destined to get very far.

The building quaked once more. For a moment, Leonel thought that the foundation was too shaken by the previous earthquakes and that the dormitory was collapsing. But in the next instant, he saw something he would never forget in his life.

It was a spatial tear. Leonel was absolutely certain. He had never seen one, nor had he ever read the description of one, but he had a vivid enough imagination to know that if there ever was a spatial tear, it would look exactly like this. Maybe the only thing that deviated from his fanciful image was the fact it lit up the night sky as though it was day.

Other than that, everything else was the same. The abrupt cognitive dissonance, its black, starry innards, the way it seemed to have no, and simultaneously endless, depth...

Leonel's expression changed as it watched it through the shattered window.

'It's expanding! We can't stay here!'

"Milan!" Leonel reacted quickly.

PANDA-N0VEL Understanding what he meant, Leonel's big offensive lineman strung James over his shoulder. Leonel would have done it himself, but his ribs were in no state to be taking on such a load. However, just as they were about to run out of the building, Conrad's voice cause Leonel to pause his steps.

"What the hell are you doing?! Do you know who I am, get the hell off of me!"

Leonel was taken aback. The very same young girl who had vomited during the fall of the Paradise Islands stood in the way of the closest exit, her gaze vacant. No, that wasn't accurate enough. Her irises had completely turned white, even her pupils followed suit.

Her expression was cold. Leonel instinctually felt that it was impossible for the same girl who vomited just at the thought of dead bodies to display such a visage. Just what was happening?

Her small frame suddenly took a step forward, her palm slamming into Conrad's chest.

By all rights, nothing should have happened. Conrad stood an inch taller than even Leonel and spent everyday of his life training as all their athletes did. In addition, he hadn't been injured in the game like Leonel had. At the same time, the small girl was just a Junior dragged to this party by one of her seniors and was barely 5'4".

Yet, it seemed the illogical was the theme of this day.

With a dull grunt, Conrad was pushed back hard enough for him to fall to his back, a stunned expression on his face.

"You..."

A mixture of embarrassment and anger reddened Conrad's face. To make matters worse, he had slipped and fallen right beside the pool of vomit, causing him to inwardly retch.

“Hey...!”

Leonel’s head spun in another direction, only to see yet another student with a gaze as vacant as the small girl’s.

In a moment, one became two. Then two became three. In a flash, ten pairs of white irises shimmered under the blue light of the spatial rift, dully gazing toward them all. Among them, there was even one of his own teammates.

Leonel’s expression turned serious.

“Aina, Yuri, Savahn. Come here.”

This time, the abrasive Savahn had not a single word to say. The nervousness in her expression was clear as she slowly entered Leonel’s circle of protection along with Aina and Yuri.

A spatial tear grew to their backs, their white pupil’d peers blocked their fronts, and an inexplicable feeling of uncertainty and fear pervaded their hearts.