Dimensional Descent - Chapter 19

Leonel closed his eyes, a deep unwillingness sinking into his heart.

That day, when the virgin sacrifice almost strangled him to death, he really had resigned himself. He had even said goodbye to his father. Yet, he woke up.

How was he supposed to feel about that exactly? Was he supposed to think he was forgiven for the 1000 deaths that lay squarely on his shoulders?

Uncle Montez had said it clearly. Sub-Dimensional Zones were points in Earth's history where an event that connected to the Fourth Dimension occurred. In other words… They were real.

Every throat he pierced, every head he severed, every life that slipped away. They were all real.

Leonel had a hard time dealing with that. The reason he had smiled so brightly when he finally saw Aina again was because he thought that she was his light, the only pure thing remaining in his life. But she shattered that image barely a moment later.

In truth, Leonel didn't even know what he was fighting for anymore. He guessed it was just some primal instinct to survive, but he couldn't think of much else. Clearly his parents weren't that much of a motivating factor considering how easily he had given up in the temple.

'What the hell is wrong with me?'

Leonel might have just turned 18, but he was just a kid in the end. He knew that he didn't want to be a quarterback for the rest of his life, but he never really thought about what exactly he wanted to do outside of that.

Leonel chuckled to himself as seven A-grade Invalids converged. By now, it wasn't just them anymore, but numerous lower level Invalids who crept forward as well.

'The most important part of my identity all that time was just liking her, huh… I don't know whether I should be sad or laugh some more.'_{pANDA-N0vEL.COM}

The truth was that Leonel was trying his best to find a reason to fight back, to put his life on the line once again and bloody his hands once more.

For his parents? He had already tried that once before. For Aina? He didn't even know if he still felt the same way about her. For his friends…?

Leonel thought of James. His best friend for as long as he could remember. To this day, he still didn't know why James tried to throw the Championship Game. He didn't know why he hadn't just let him do it either. They had already won three times, and winning a fourth would have been meaningless.

"I know you too well. You don't like to lose, but you're too soft-hearted to call me out on my bullshit too. So, you'd find a way to protect our friendship and ignore it, all while winning the big game anyway. Am I right?"

James' words to him reverberated in Leonel's mind. He suddenly felt his hands moving of their own accord, sliding three silver bars out and screwing them together.

'I guess it'll just have to be that simple then…'

He didn't like to lose.

It was an immature thought. One you would expect from an 18 year old boy. If Leonel thought any more deeply about it, he too would find it ridiculous that he was trading what he thought was his

moral code for a will to win. But the reality was that Leonel was looking for something, for anything, to give him a reason to keep going. The reason never mattered at all…

Leonel clicked the hidden button on his silver rod. The moment his bike fully formed, he jumped onto it, riding up the side of a massive slab of broken wall and jumping five meters into the air.

In that instant of time he spent in the air, his gaze captured everything. <small>pANDA NÜVEL</small>

'Two are within 100 meters. Four are between 100 and 300. The last one is further than 400 meters away.'

It wasn't that Leonel's gaze landed on them all. Rather, it was that he found it easier to feel out the fluctuating energies without so many buildings in the way.

Leonel had run across A-grade Invalids before, in the last three days, that is. He knew how sensitive they were to humans. It took a lot of effort to shake just one off. If these seven caught sight of their base, Leonel would no longer be able to guarantee everyone's safety. Even James' ten-second shield could only block a single A-grade attack.

The higher the grade, the exponentially more difficult the Invalid was to handle. Their 'stats' not only became more well rounded, but their intelligence wasn't so easy to fool anymore either.

Leonel's knees bent as he landed on the ground, expertly using his high coordination to balance on the rubble before shooting forward once more. He controlled his bike with a single handle and used the other to grab a dart, shifting it around in his fingers until he could both grab his atlatl and fit it to it at the same time.

In a flash, Leonel rounded the corner of a building that seemed just an inch away from falling completely over. Half of its top was completely shaved off, having fallen to the other side of the street.

He made eye-contact with those cold, emotionless white pupils. They locked onto Leonel with a concealed murderous intent as though it was still slinking in the shadows.

The Invalid was long and lanky, having a back so arched that the back of its hands almost dragged along the ground.

Despite its lazy appearance, it dodged Leonel's first dart with ease despite being just 20 meters away. Its lanky body curled at an impossible angle, its head arching back so far that its skull nearly cracked against the ground.

'Coordination of 0.87. Its host body should have an ability related to disconnecting and reconnecting bones, making it an expert of close combat. It has good speed, strength and reactions.' ρ☐☐ᶌ☐☐☐☐☐☐

As far as Leonel could tell, F-grade beings had stats between 0.50 and 0.60. D-grade entered the up to 0.70 realm. C-grade was usually up to 0.8. B-grade was below 0.85 with A-grade being below 0.90. Leonel wasn't certain about the S, SS and SSS-grades. In addition, the spirit stat seemed to work a lot differently. The Priest had only been a 0.05 on Leonel's scale, but he was most definitely a C-grade threat.

Of course, these were only averages. Some could cross barriers by having less stats, but being more well-rounded.

This A-grade Invalid happened to have more of its 'stats' in Coordination and Reactions. Though its strength and speed were still above 0.60.

'How unfortunate…'

Without hesitation he pedaled into a ten meter radius in a flash, jumping into the air and turning his bike back into a silver rod.

'… your strengths happen to be my strengths. But… I'm a level better."

Leonel clashed with the A-grade Invalid. His movements were wild and almost without reason. Anyone could see with a glance that he had never been formally trained. And yet, those very same wild movements seemed simple and precise to the point of suffocation.

After a moment, you would realize that it wasn't that Leonel's style of battle was usually this wild… It was that he was actually adapting his fighting style to match that odd style of the lanky Invalid!

ᴘᴀɴᴅᴀ-ɴ0ᴠᴇʟ The Invalid's arm suddenly doubled in length shooting toward Leonel, but a step ahead, Leonel had already tilted his head to the side. He had already seen through this Invalid's ability, why wouldn't he be ready for such a change?

Leonel took a strong step forward. His silver rod spun in his hand, its butt rounding in a beautiful semi-circular arc and crushing the Invalid's windpipe.

He released his rod with a hand, reaching to his back and pulling out a dart he stabbed through the Invalid's eye and skull.

Pulling his dart out, he had already turned his silver rod back into a bicycle and dashed away. By the time he scooped up the dart that initially missed and tossed it back into his steel container, the Invalid had collapsed to the ground — dead.

'The other is already closing in. There's no way it won't sense them within fifty meters. But before that, it should be meandering on instinct… I need to intercept it.'

Leonel felt the motes of lights meld with his body, but he didn't have much of a reaction. His face held an expressionless visage to it, there was no joy, nor was there any anger.

He cut a tight corner, riding up the side of a collapsed building and hopping across to the roof of another.

He spun his bike to the side, dragging its tires along the ground to a searing halt that left a cloud of dust in his wake.

Leonel hopped off, eyeing his target in the distance.

He spread out his stance, his base becoming impeccably sturdy as he tightened his torso. A dart appeared in his hand, sliding perfectly into his atlatl.

Throwing a spear while on his bike was one matter. He couldn't rely on his legs for power, only his arm. However… When his feet were planted firmly on the ground… He was a completely different animal.

SHHHHHHHWOOOOO

Leonel's arm shot forward like a canon, his dark whistling through the air with a sharp sound. [Call of the Wind] could only be considered to have been mastered to the entry level by Leonel. Yet, he was already capable of throwing his darts at 250 kilometers per hour.

The target Invalid was almost like a miniature giant. In fact, it dragged its feet around completely in the nude. Obviously, whatever clothes its host had been wearing had been ripped to shreds. What remained was a bestial man that stood at over two meters tall. But what was exceptionally striking was its wide body. It was almost shaped like a box.

Leonel had already seen that its strength stat was at 0.95. It was one of the variant cases of a stat surpassing its grade. However, the reason it could only be of the A-grade is because… Its other stats were too low!

[Hulking Invalid]

[Strength: 0.95; Speed: 0.47; Agility: 0.15; Coordination: 0.56; Stamina: 0.89; Reactions: 0.51; Spirit: 0.00]

Aside its strength and stamina, its other stats could barely be considered of the F-grade, some not even that.

So, when Leonel attacked from just 30 meters away with a dart that looked no different from a shooting star across the night sky, the massive Invalid couldn't even blink before its eye was pierced and half its brain turned to mush.

[Leonel Morales]

[Strength: 0.73; Speed: 0.67 (+0.1); Agility: 0.75 (+0.1); Coordination: 0.99; Stamina: 0.78 (+0.05); Reactions: 0.99; Spirit: 0.10]

Leonel's strength stat ticked up by 0.01. This was the first substantial change he had ever run across after absorbing an Invalid's energy. There probably existed a technique that improved the efficiency… But he didn't think too much about it.

In truth, Leonel more so wished for increases to his stamina. He had only killed two A-grade Invalids, but he already felt it was eating into his reserve strength.

'… Five left…'

Leonel gritted his teeth, pedaling hard.