

GREED 141

Chapter 141 Tandrak Vs Gehaldirah.

There was no blind spot in his divine sense. He saw and processed everything that he saw. That's why he was able to perceive the vine and why he noticed the numerous ones rising to take a swing at him.

"Shit" He cursed and picked up speed.

He couldn't dawdle or he would be soon surrounded. His legs began to blur as he moved through the forest. Suddenly a root he was about to step on moved up, he would have tripped but he somehow maintained his balance. His body made the maneuver because it remembered that the ground isn't there until you actually step on it. So he was able to shift his foot instantly and on a reflex. It freed up his mind and divine sense which allowed them to notice that another root, massive this time, was trying to smash into him from the side.

If this root succeeded in smashing him backward, the vines pursuing him will be able to catch up to him. He used his other foot to step on the root that tried to trip him up and vaulted over the incoming attack. His jump took him just over the massive root and then he used it to push himself further away.

"I won't fall for that." He smirked.

He was elated that he got the best of their combo attack but his happiness was short-lived. Some sort of seeds shot towards his airborne form at incredibly high speeds. He seemed like he was trapped but he smiled and engaged the coiling dragon technique to boost his potential energy which he unloaded as soon as the seeds arrived. His hands blurred and knocked back the projectiles aimed at the vitality spots on his body.

But another attack came at the height of his jump. A tree branch swatted at him. He couldn't do anything as the branch hit him

He was slammed back down to the ground. The root he had initially stepped on moved in swiftly to receive him and bind him. Then came the massive root and the whipping vines. They pounced on his compromised form.

His vision blackened before returning to the entrance of the training room. He was once again at the spot where he entered the forest, the exit to the training room was behind him and the pointer towards the finish line was flashing again. His lips twitched.

"There's no way kids my age can get through that. There must be something I'm missing something." He thought back to what he had just experienced and he didn't believe some kids without his life experience could have done better than him.

"I did better than my former self too."

His movements were more efficient, if weaker, than in his past life. He used to move his body with his mind, he could make movements that shouldn't be possible because of the instantaneous acceleration and flexibility granted to him by his powerful mind but they seemed largely inefficient in retrospect. But he still retained the ability to use the divine sense as second nature, so he didn't miss any attack, and yet, he failed.

The attacks came one after the other, if he dodged one another was waiting for him. It was like a net was being created around him. If it was already this difficult for him he doubted others would find it easy to deal with. That didn't mean he was going to give up, he was going to try again and again in order to discover any pattern or weakness he can take advantage of. So began to plan his next course of action.

A voice interrupted his thoughts as he was contemplating.

"Soverick, I have good news."

He recognized the voice immediately but he was skeptical. Could the illusion array be causing him to hear strange voices? "Hadrick is that you.?" He asked with his plant sense.

"Of course it's me. I have news for you." His plant sense confirmed it was Hadrick.

Soverick relaxed but he continued to watch his environment. He didn't want the plants to ambush him while he was chatting. "Good to hear from you. I didn't think you can enter this deep into the battle academy."

"I can enter anywhere in this city. I built the battle academy so it is my backyard."

Soverick shook his head. "What news do you have?"

"We are winning the war against the gods. They lost all their manpower in the main plane. We are now waiting to let them starve before finishing them off when they are weakened."

Soverick shrugged. "It is to be expected. The gods will fall and the plane will be liberated. What I need right now is a way to pass this obstacle challenge."

"Did you use your environment?" Hadrick asked.

Hadrick's question confused him. "What do you mean by my environment? The environment isn't real. It is all an illusion..." He stopped speaking when he realized what he was missing. He never took the environment seriously because he thought it was not real so he did not think to use it.

A look of realization spread across his face. "Oh, I see."

"What did you see? I just wanted to know what you think about the realism of the environment. It is based on an invention of mine called the world engine. I'll tell you about it later, for now, I want to talk about the war." Hadrick seemed excited by something.

"We can't talk for long. I could be attacked here anytime."

"This place is a safe zone. You won't be attacked until you leave."

"Oh"

He wanted to go ahead for another try but chatting to an old friend was also appealing considering that there's no other source of entertainment around here. It won't hurt since this place is safe.

"Fine." He agreed, then he sat on the ground at the entrance of the training room into the forest.

Hadrick began regaling with him about the happenings of the war. He told him about the one guy that can swim in the ground as if it were water. This guy uses his ability to ambush the enemy to great effect. Then there's this guy who can shoot fire from his eyes, he had a variant of their divine ability called eyes of the blazing world. The eyes didn't come from a world of fire instead, it turns this world into one. The talk of divine abilities made him anticipate the first awakening of his eyes when he finally becomes a mana entity.

They talked more about special individuals and Tandrak came up. The efficiency of Tandrak's ability on the battlefield was perverse. Anything beneath the strength of a titan of law will be defeated by him immediately and with ease. Those in the titan stage can only resist for a few seconds before they are defeated. Only other sovereigns can match him but Tandrak can easily defeat someone he has fought before. It is like he has acquired the weakness of someone as long as he has the vibration frequency of their being in his database. Most sovereigns refer to the phenomenon as being similar to knowing the true name of a demon.

Soverick had a favorable impression of Tandrak. He liked Tandrak's succinct personality. The talk about Tandrak's ability made him compare who would win between Tandrak and him when he was still a sovereign. He understood how fearsome Tandrak's ability is from hearing about it but he was sure he could still beat Tandrak.

Tandrak's ability erodes matter by siphoning or supplying the energy that bonds them together depending on the vibration of the particles that make up matter. Soverick could heal almost all types of damages done to him but he doubts he will even need it.

As a sovereign of life, he can simply change the physical parameters of his being and reset the effectiveness of Tandrak's ability on him. His damage output will be nowhere compared to Tandrak's because he specialised in life while Tandrak specializes in destruction so they will be even for a while. But that will change as long as he can get close enough to Tandrak to do physical damage.

He can only be effective with physical attacks because his magical attacks won't be very effective against Tandrak. He has weaker magical attacks because he didn't specialize in something destructive, so his weak magical attacks will be easily disintegrated by Tandrak's domain. He had seen something like it too at the tower of heaven. There was a lady that could resolve all attacks thrown at her.

He could visualize the fight right now. Tandrak on his lightning drake with a domain of destruction around him. Him running about pathetically but undying. He is sure that his mind and his hold on mana are also more powerful than Tandrak's. Only dragons have a mind as powerful or more powerful than a high Elf, so he will be able to use that to push his body forward to catch up to Tandrak.

Tandrak will ultimately lose because he isn't really wielding true destruction. A dragon sovereign that is wielding just fire will be able to deal more damage than Tandrak. Tandrak's ability is versatile but he has seen high elves that chose fire over life and they can do what Tandrak can do too.

Tandrak's concept is complex but it needs something before it can be utilized. It needs a vibration frequency. Without it, it is useless. With it, it is versatile and very effective. That vibration frequency is both the strength and weakness of Tandrak's concept. Soverick just happened to counter him.

Chapter 142 Experiment On The Creation Of Authority.

A sovereign of law's strength is dependent on their concept. It is a fact that the more complex the concept is, the more powerful it will be. But there are exceptions to it. A weaker concept can defeat a stronger concept if it counters it. Even more bizarre is that some creatures can shrug off the effects of any concept attacking them. Complexity does not mean absolute strength. That's why the power range of Sovereigns is too wide. A sovereign that you can't beat can be beaten by a sovereign that you can bully.

Dragons are the creatures that come to mind in a situation like that. They are incredibly resistant to all types of physical, magical, and spiritual damage. Tandrak's concept will work on a dragon but it will be agonizingly slow especially if that dragon has acquired their special divine body. Dragons always trump drakes. Even if that drake has the power of thunder.

"I have the Godhood you asked for. It is also of the celestial grade in the plant domain." Hadrack told him when it was finally done with its story.

"Wow. That's very good." He was in awe of the power of the Ghastorix family.

He had asked for any Godhood of the plant domain, but they brought out one that belonged to a celestial. Celestials are difficult to kill but it is not a matter of strength. A sovereign won't be able to kill a celestial just like it won't be able to kill a low god. Killing a god requires you to strike down the main body of the god. Gods never leave the divine realm with their main body so one will have to storm the divine plane where all the gods stay. Even if there is no suppression, an Origin god will be hard pressed to face all the gods at once. It has happened before too. Origin gods have very little to fear so attacking the base of gods is something on their bucket list. They have very little that they fear.

He was also surprised that Hadrick was giving it to him. He could have given him a weaker Godhood instead of something this powerful. He hadn't even told them what he wanted to do with it.

"When can I have it?" He asked eagerly. A small portal opened beside him and a golden ball of light came through it. Soverick grabbed it and examined it.

"Hadrick do you know what Godhood is made up of?" Soverick asked.

"Not particularly. My guess is some sort of energy."

Other people might see it as a ball of multicolored light filled with possibilities but he could see what it truly was.

"You are mostly correct. It is made up of divinity, domain, and meaning. Divinity is created when divine energy is transformed by the domain. Divine energy is simply mana and will. A domain is made up of authority and meaning. I have done a lot of research about this and I have something to test but I need your help for it to succeed."

Hadrick was surprised by Soverick's knowledge about the divine and he was already intrigued with listening so he was ready to participate in this experiment whatever it was. Besides, he doesn't much on his hands. An idle hand is the devil's workshop.

"Count me in." Hadrick's ancient voice rumbled with glee.

Soverick just smiled. "Authority is a special thing. It is unlike laws and more like an imitation of concepts. Authority is bestowed by the plane on an individual with sufficient meaning. Meaning is created when there is enough faith. When meaning and authority fuse they become domain. When a domain and divinity fuse we have the core of a true God or what is known as a celestial god. So the entire path of godhood aims to complete this fusion and achieve full Godhood."

"I knew about the aim of gods but I didn't know what it was really about. Do you want to create a path forward after this step?"

"Yes. But first I must understand authority and how to create it. Authority is queer, it may be powerful but it has a glaring weakness. It becomes useless when a god is outside of his domain, literally and figuratively. If a god leaves his divine kingdom his power falls but it is only slightly. What the god loses when it is outside the divine kingdom are sovereignty and absolute control. Since they retain their combat strength, this loss is overlooked. If the god leaves the divine plane and descends to the main plane, then that God will lose its combat prowess. If the god attempts to leave the main plane entirely, then that God will either fall, lose his life, or both. There's almost no difference between falling and dying, each can lead to the other."

Hadrick asked, "Most of what you just mentioned is known. What is your aim?"

"I want that first ability that gods lose. The ability of sovereignty and absolute control. This ability is why you can't win a fight with a god in his divine kingdom without the strength of numbers. It is because the entire world will be against you, just like when facing titans of law. That isn't the end of it. The will of the god becomes sovereign, just like a sovereign of law. The will of the god can be made manifest, just like an Origin god. To top it off, a god can create and do absolutely anything within their divine god as long as they have divine energy. That means they become world gods as long as they are within their divine plane. This power is not limited to the level of the god, all gods have it because all gods have authority."

"Wow. I never thought about it like that. It makes a lot of sense. Where did authority come from? How does the plane bestow it? How does faith find gods? How is it transmitted? What is faith? Now I must participate in this experiment of yours." Hadrick was really enthusiastic.

"I don't have the ability to decipher the make-up of authority. That's where you come in. You have the ability to convert energy from one form to another. I'm not clueless like others so I know the significance of your ability, it is not as simple as diluting Origin essence with mana. Your ability will make world gods even frantic."

"But why? Apart from a little help when I am forging Origin artifacts I don't see what his so special about it."

Soverick shook his head. "You are being limited by your imagination that's why you haven't been able to use it to its maximum potential. The ancestors of the high elves had this same ability and they used it to create life essence. Even that was a result of their desperate attempt to starve off death. Imagine what you can do with your being alive."

"I didn't know that. Hmm, so how should I go about it?"

"Take this Godhood and analyze it like you would any artifact. Break it down to its components and its basest form. Let's start from there and we will see where it takes us." Soverick returned the glowing ball. Hadrick created a portal and a vine came out of it. It snatched up the Godhood and disappeared with it.

"Bye," Hadrick said before it disappeared. It was going to be busy trying to decipher the Godhood.

Soverick grinned. His grin split his face like a predator. He had a lot of things he hadn't mentioned to Hadrick. He didn't speak about his conjectures about the source of authority or his plans for the information that Hadrick will get from the analysis.

His life tree clone is also trying to assimilate Godhood but it can't decipher it because its ability has been fixed into life transformation. It isn't as flexible as Hadrick's untapped potential. But things will change if Legion can get the language or law used in coding Godhood from Hadrick.

While he had been fixing his weakness with close combat his other clones had been making progress. The information he shared is a result of his knowledge and the recent findings of his other clones. The way you view and solve a problem will change when you have 9 different perspectives at your disposal. 9 minds as one, marshaling their forces for the moment when he will burst forth. That moment will come, and when it does, even world gods will tremble. They will tremble at the name of Legion.

"But for now I must pass this obstacle. Nothing will stop legion." He muttered. The experience he gains here not only improves him but the other eight, just like they improve him too. It's just that he can't use the knowledge he got from others for now. The clones that he is really looking forward to haven't been born yet. His dragon clone is slow going in the hatching process.

Chapter 143 The Forest Obstacle.

"So I should use my environment." He muttered as he wondered how best to use the environment.

Then he began the second run but this time with a spear he fashioned from a tree branch around his clearing. He went in the left direction this time. The trees had ignored him when he was sitting down at the entrance. But when he moved 19 meters in, he began to notice the odd gazes. Then it became more and all of a sudden, multiple gazes fixed on him. All the trees in the surroundings were watching him.

This became the signal and the vines attacked. Their sneak attacks couldn't escape his perception so he dodged them easily. He was like the wind, slippery and deft. He escaped from their sinewy grasp time and time again. His stick spear came in handy in tricky situations where he would have to expend more energy or lose his form if he were to dodge. He would knock the attacks aside just like he learned in the blocking challenge.

But they didn't give up. Instead, they upped the difficulty. Next came the tree roots. Numerous roots, thick and thin, long and short, tried to ambush him or trip him. He prevailed against them by hopping and jumping gracefully from one spot to another. His feet created small blasts of force each time he stepped on them.

The blast was so powerful that it propelled him forward and shredded the barks of the roots and trunks. They tried to block his path or make him go higher but he slid beneath the barricade and kept low to the ground so that the tree branches couldn't reach him. The exploding seeds were then released at him. The spear in his hands twirled into a blur that blocked the ones that he couldn't dodge.

"Is that all you've got?" He laughed and taunted. He knew it was a bad idea but he was just fearless. What's the worst thing that can happen? It is just a challenge. He would fail at most and have to restart.

But then the forest became serious. He could feel a sinister change in the atmosphere. He didn't have to wait long before he could hear the droning buzz. His face fell.

"I'm screwed big time." Years of experience made him identify the new enemy before he sighted them and he picked up more speed but they were catching up to him.

The sight of the pursuing cloud of giant blood wasp and the increase in his knowledge about what he would be facing did not cheer him up. He did not plan to win this round, he aimed to make the forest bring out more of its trump card but this was too much. Still, he ran.

Blood wasps are like giant mosquitoes in that they also feed on blood. But Blood wasps have a stinger meant to paralyze their prey. The venom in the stinger will also break down the body into a blood bag which the blood wasps will slurp with their surprisingly delicate proboscis. Blood wasps have bigger wings than mosquitoes. They are also red in color while giant mosquitoes are black.

It became a chase much like that of a cat and mouse. He tried to thin down their numbers using the surrounding trees as obstacles. The tree blockades were a nuisance to him as much as they were to the blood wasp. So his plan worked for a while but then the forest withdrew most of its attempt to stop him and used only the vines occasionally. The reduction in the efforts of the tree also gave more room to maneuver which he took advantage of to lose the bugs. The wasps were fast but they had a problem making sharp turns. As long as he swerved and changed directions quickly, they wouldn't be able to touch him. He used the trunks of trees as a foothold as he zig-zagged through the forest.

All was well until he sensed a sudden attack from his front. A fast-moving object was upon him the moment he sensed it. His hand sprung like a spring and the spear followed in intercepting the attack. The coiling dragon technique had always been primed for moments like this. He tried to deflect the attack but its force was too much for that. The stick spear in his hand bent and Soverick made the split second to go along with the force, Instead of facing the attack after the spear broke.

So he went along with it and was pushed to the side. The attack bolted past him, missing his torso just slightly. He survived the sneak attack by what looked like a titan frog. But he lost his arm to it. That projectile was its tongue. It was strong and fast enough to pierce through his body if it had hit him.

He looked at the stump of his other arm and sighed. He didn't have hopes of thwarting another attack of that Caliber without his arm or his spear. The attack was just too fast. His perception and reaction had been superb but it had only let him dodge most of the attack not block it, and that was with something to redirect the force. He couldn't stop either to get another stick spear or he would be overwhelmed by the wasps.

The titan frog is a colossal frog 20 meters in height and 35 meters in length. It will look like a huge rock when it isn't moving but becomes terrifying once it springs into action. The lashing tongue isn't its only attacking ability but it is convenient and swift.

Just like he feared the attack came again. The tongue flashed like a bolt of lightning but didn't aim at him. It struck the cloud of wasps chasing him. It pierced through multiple wasps and strung them together like a kebab which the titan frog withdrew into its mouth in a similarly swift manner.

Soverick was surprised that the titan frog was just content with attacking the wasps. It ignored soverick and continued preying on the bugs. Soverick shrugged and focused on escaping but then another crimson bolt came at him. It was the tongue of another titan frog.

"There's more than one?" He asked in exasperation as he tried to dodge the strike.

But it was simply impossible. He had just propelled himself using a tree trunk so he was mid-flight. It was like the frog had timed the attack for this moment of weakness. The tongue touched him and his vision blacked out.

He returned to the entrance again. He screamed in frustration. Then he calmed down and began grinning. The obstacle course was difficult enough to be challenging. The attacks just keep coming, relentless and uncanny. His only advantage will be the experience from multiple attempts. It's just like his past challenges, difficult at first but becomes easier when he learns and adapts. Only when something is difficult to achieve will he feel the euphoria of success. He was looking forward to that euphoria.

"I'll show you." He said as he went about his work.

He decided to prepare well enough this time. He rubbed soil and leaves against himself to give him some camouflaging ability. He picked sticks and fashioned multiple spears which he tied to his back. He also created two shields from the barks of the trees surrounding the clearing at the entrance. He could only carry two without losing his mobility. The trees didn't move throughout his preparation.

"So they won't attack me no matter what I do in the safe zone. That's good to know. Should I go forward this time?" He thought as he considered his options.

He had chosen to take a side path during his last two attempts and there had been no difference between them up until the moment when he encountered the blood wasps. He considered charging straight ahead this time to see if anything will change. So he did.

"If there's something different, I don't see it." He muttered as he was being chased by the blood wasps again. Everything had gone exactly the way it happened on the left path. There were vines, roots, and exploding seeds. As if on cue, the bugs started their harassment, and the forest let up its attempt to catch him. He took things in stride and prepared for what he considered was the main event.

"I have my six spears and my two shields. So bring it."

The forest answered him and brought it. He had just jumped when it happened. The first attack struck him impossibly fast, it was like something appeared in his peripheral vision and had appeared right in his

face by the time he turned to identify what it is. Like you were chatting amicably with someone, then out of the corner of your eye, you see their hand moving to slap your face. The attack was abrupt and unexpected.

Chapter 144 One Failure After The Other.

The tongue flashed forward like a crimson blur and struck with the force of a titan. Just like before Soverick succeeded in blocking it but he had to sacrifice a spear and his right hand that was holding it. The attack was too fast and too strong.

He cursed and toned down the sensation of pain from his mangled arm. The tongue was too fast. He couldn't swerve his body in time to avoid the glancing blow. Even that glancing blow was strong enough to deal crippling damage. He gritted his teeth and continued. He maintained his balance and resumed his escape from the blood wasps. Those adamant bloodsuckers haven't given up. Their numbers might have been reduced by the attack of the titan frog but they were still out to get him. He zigzagged through the trees and remained vigilant.

A second attack appeared but he was ready. At least mentally ready. He couldn't be physically ready because the attacks arrive when he is physically compromised. They would always come when he was mid-flight and helpless. It didn't help that he had only one arm but he still blocked the attack with a shield this time. The titan frog responsible for the second attack also chose to watch him leave and ate the wasps instead.

Things didn't end there. More of the titan frogs attacked him. By the time he had resolved the fourth attack, he had lost his other arm but he still had 3 spears and a shield hanging at his back. The loss of his two arms affected his balance more than he thought it would and made him lose his footing when he was about to make another jump. He slipped and fell. The wasps were able to catch up to him and he returned to the start.

He shook his head this time and began to prepare for another try. He got stronger spears and shields this time. He doubled down on the camouflage. He added leaves and twigs to his ensemble in hopes of dissuading the titan frogs from attacking him at all. It is clear that he isn't their main target as they will ignore him after their first attack.

"Things will be easier if I could spot them." He thought.

It's just that the camouflaging ability of the titan frogs is better than his, even with their size. They usually look like a rock covered with vines and moss which helps them to blend into the forest. They will then use their covert advantage to strike with deadly accuracy. He considered briefly the idea of moving

through the tree covers to avoid the titan frogs but he didn't want to be smoldered by their branches. Their exploding seeds will also be able to surround him from all sides with a constant barrage.

"No use dilly-dallying. Time for another run." He said as he took off into the forest for the fourth attempt.

After deftly escaping from the grubby hands of the forest came the bugs and then the titan frogs like clockwork. He appeared at the entrance of the forest a few minutes later. It was another failed attempt.

This time he sat down and began to review what happened. "There as to be something I'm missing."

Nothing new had happened. The titan frogs had attacked and he had lost. This time he didn't survive the third attack. His vision darkened but he is sure he was skewered like the kebab the tongue makes with the blood wasps.

He thought of many strategies to test during the fifth run then prepared and took off. He failed again and considered the information he had gathered. Then he made some changes to his strategies and tried again. It wasn't until the eighth run that his strategies paid off.

"Finally, some progress."

He laughed as he survived the fifth tongue attack. He had adopted a new blocking strategy after testing other ideas. He just had to commit his two hands to use the shield and use it to deflect the attack. It had failed in the past because any resistance in the path of the tongue will be punched through including his body.

So he decided to go with the flow and let the tongue push him aside. It is incredibly demanding on his body and mind. Even though the attacks always occur mid-flight, there hasn't been any pattern in when they actually attack him. So this strategy needed him to prime his body to fail the block and take advantage of it to survive. It is also incredibly difficult to run when carrying a heavy shield with two hands while you hope from tree to tree but he made it work

He had ditched the camouflaging attempt by this run. He didn't want to create a new camouflage every time he failed especially since it wasn't working.

"I'll beat the forest at this rate." He smiled at his progress.

This was his first time surviving the fifth tongue attack and he had also survived the previous ones without an itch. So he was confident of surviving when he sensed the next attack coming. The tongue brushed against his prepped shield and pushed him aside. The next will be orientation, finding his balance, getting support for his feet, and finally jumping away. Any failure in these processes will lead to him falling down and the blood wasps catching up.

Still, he wasn't flustered by that possibility. He remained focused as he was about to orient himself. But then something unexpected happened. Another attack came as he was floundering in the air. Needless to say, he was sent back to the entrance.

He sat down with a stony expression as he considered what just happened. "Two attacks. One after the other. Two attacks." He kept mumbling.

Even though he felt like screaming in frustration he didn't. He thought himself more mature than that. It was really frustrating but he wouldn't throw a tantrum. Instead, he calmed down and planned his next course of action. And so began another round of testing and adjustment.

At first, he attempted to right himself from the impact of the first attack but that was impossible. The second attack came just like the previous ones, at his moments of weakness, when he has been further destabilized by the first attack. He gave up on that idea after three runs without success.

"Dodging doesn't work. Blocking doesn't work either. What will work?" He growled at the entrance after his recent failure. The worst part is that he has to start all over again every time he fails.

"Only parrying is working, but that's partial. What a minute." He stopped as he got an idea.

He had indeed been parrying but his parrying was wrong. Parrying is meant to redirect the attack. It is used when dodging and blocking an attack is not favorable. This is either because the attack is too fast to dodge or too strong to block. Instead of deflecting the attack, he had been using it to swerve out of its path of attack.

"Of course, it's so simple. I can't believe I have been missing it all along. An attack can either be blocked, dodged, or parried. Those are the basic options anyway." He said as his eyes lit up.

He has been used to fighting with his mind. Many other options become available with the mind. If he used his mind, he can slow down an attack if not outright block it or deflect it without having to come in contact with it. He wasn't experienced with using the body to defend but he understood that parrying will be challenging.

He grinned and said, "I'm up for a challenge."

He became encouraged because he had a feasible idea. He began the twelfth attempt with gusto. The tree and vine obstacles up to the point when the titan frog attacks were not a challenge anymore. He was a fast learner so his body practically went through the motions. He didn't even bring his spears anymore. It was until the tongue attack that he became serious.

He didn't plan to reach the fifth attack but to figure out how to parry the attacks first. He tried to use a shield to parry but it failed. He was totally outclassed by the attacks. The only way he was able to parry the attack with the shield is to use it to slam the attack aside but that's subpar. Apart from it being too difficult to do while he is mid-flight, it needed both his arms and will also leave him open to another attack. Even if another attack doesn't come, he finds it extremely difficult to find his footing after the stunt, which makes the blood wasps catch up with him.

"Too big. Need something smaller." He said after the fifteenth run and the fifteenth failure.

Parry with the shield wasn't working. He needed something smaller that will help him succeed. He has an idea about what could lead to his success.

Chapter 145 That Was Intense.

He began to fashion a buckler. Something much smaller, more compact, and more difficult to use. The large shield will allow for some errors in accuracy and precision while the buckler won't. This will make the already tricky parrying even more challenging. The advantage of the buckler is that it is lighter and can be used with only one arm so he can wield two at the same time.

"Let's go" He cheered himself for another run.

The sixteenth run ended in another failure. The tongue attack struck the buckler and shattered it along with his arm. Then it went on to pierce his chest. It is the first time he suffered such a defeat on the very first titan frog attack. He had been able to resolve it the first time he encountered the attack without any prior knowledge of it. So this failure was worse because he had been prepared for the attack.

"I just have to get the hang of it." He said while his eyes burned with determination.

"I also have to make stronger bucklers."

He tried again, and again, and again. It was until the 22nd run that he got the hang of it. The buckler demanded a high perception, quick reaction, and high arm strength in order to parry the tongue attack. It also required making the point of contact between the buckler and the tongue at an angle such that the attack is deflected properly. Everything clicked as soon as he got the proper measurements and muscle coordination. His perception and reaction time is excellent but his arm couldn't move fast enough to intercept the tongue. So he used the coiling dragon technique to acquire the necessary reaction and arm strength. His arm would simply spring forward to intercept the attack, so he resolved all the attacks up to the fifth attack.

"Here comes the moment of truth." He said as he prepped himself for the consecutive attack of the 6th and the 7th titan frogs.

The first attack came and he was ready for it. His arms went from being still to suddenly blurring to meet the tongue. They met with a loud clang and he parried the attack. His other arm was ready for the second attack, but it didn't come.

"Huh." He was startled by the development but didn't lose his composure. He reorientated his positioning and was ready to land on another trunk, which he will use to leap. He had to maintain his zig-zag pattern of movement or the bugs will catch up to him.

His feet were about to land on the trunk of a tree when the second attack came. His attention was on trying to make a proper landing but he will also have to resolve this lightning-fast attack. The two actions are very complicated and demanding. He had to perform them both or he would fail them.

"Motherf**Ker." He cursed.

The attack was meant to distract him so that he will not be able to find proper footing or find a proper footing but fail to defend against the attack.

Unfortunately for them, his mind is much too powerful to be tripped off by something like this. He was more than capable of multitasking, even in a highly stressful and delicate situation. He parried the second attack and leaped. His body flashed from tree to tree.

"Haha, sucker." He laughed.

He was happy that he thwarted their plan but he didn't let that distract him. He was still ready to face another attack. He was aware that the weakest moment for a person is when they had just experienced success. Their body and mind will relax which will make them slower to react to another attack. But nothing came after this attack. So he continued the bugs and battle sage monkey chase.

"Their stamina must be getting low by now." He mused.

Another weakness of blood wasps is their poor stamina. They may be very fast but that's only for short distances. Their speed will start to reduce as their stamina falls. He didn't have to worry about his stamina because the output of his vitality core is well above his current body. He wondered how other kids will be able to cope with the intensive mental and physical requirements of the obstacle course.

The eighth attack came and he was ready for it. He released the potential energy he stored in the muscles of his right arm through the coiling dragon technique to make the arm accelerate. He wasn't surprised when the second attack in a row came. He expended the coiling dragon technique in the other arm to resolve that one too. And just like he suspected the third attack in a row happened. He wasn't surprised by it but he wasn't prepared for it too. He only had two arms and has already expended the stored strength in both of them. He lacked the required strength but he still tried to deflect the attack. It worked partially, he survived but he left his arm and a good chunk of his chest behind.

The impact of the tongue on his body hurt more than his ripped flesh. The tongue brushed past his chest and that part of his chest simply gave way. His vision threatened to darken but he held it back through the sheer power of his mind. That was before the pain hit his mind and he almost fell.

He gritted his teeth and ignored the pain in order to make the next jump. But he stumbled and fell short of the usual height he used to reach.

"I'll be back." He swore but continued to run. The blood wasps behind him picked up speed when they perceived his blood. He knew that it was only a matter of time before they catch up to him but he didn't give up. He also knew that without his two arms, the chances of him Surviving the next attacks from the titan frogs have been reduced to practically zero. He still had more of his chest to give but if they also attack him in quick succession, then his poor chances will become absolute zero. Still, he gritted his teeth and ran.

Suddenly all the tree trunks around him disappeared to reveal a clearing.

"You have got to be kidding me." He complained and gritted his teeth when the pain threatened to overwhelm him again. He couldn't afford to stumble this time.

Without trees, he won't be able to make quick changes to his direction. Then the wasps will have a straight path to reach him. Stumbling here will seal in his failure.

"What am I supposed to do now? Am I supposed to leap about like a frog?" He shouted. Then he laughed. He ignored the pain in his chest and laughed hard.

He continued to run but it was a doomed endeavor. He knew it but he didn't give up. He continued if only to collect more data about the next attacks.

The blood wasps had been hindered in the forest but now there was nothing between them and Soverick. They were rapidly gaining on him.

'Something has to be done about these blood wasps. It seems they will be the end of me.' He thought about his current conundrum.

He is already prepared for failure and is planning for the next run. This situation wasn't so bad. Without the trees and his jumping actions, the tongue attack will not be able to catch him in a moment of weakness. The titan frogs won't be able to hide too. He will be able to spot them with his eyes. There is no tree cover to obstruct light.

Plus his feet are on solid ground, so he will be able to dodge the attacks better. But this situation will also allow the bugs to gain on him. The thought that other kids will have to go through the same thing didn't make him feel better. He isn't like the other kids and was never one. He felt pity for them instead. The obstacle course was too difficult.

He was in thought and about to be caught by the blood wasps when he crossed a line and they froze. He received a message through his wrist logger.

"You have reached the next safe zone. You will start from this point onwards."

"What?" His eyes widened in realization.

"I made it? I made it."

His amputated arm and punctured chest were restored immediately. He plopped down on the ground and began to laugh.

"Wow, that was intense." He thought back to what he just experienced.

He wasn't the only one who thought so.

In a small world within the battle academy. On a leaf of one of the many trees and plants that make up the forest inside this small silent world, is a tiny fairy and something that looked like a wisp of light.

Shaston and her will clone who were watching the recording also said "wow." At the same time.

Chapter 146 Obvious And Obscure Challenges.

They were watching Soverick's performance on the obstacle course.

"How is this even possible?" Shaston asked in disbelief.

"I don't know what to say, sister. He seems to be a level above extraordinary genius." Came the reply.

Shaston snorted. "That's an understatement. He is practically godly. His ability to make observations, learn and make adjustments are top-notch. It is beyond what is capable for kids his age and level."

It was the will clone's turn to snort. "If you know all of that, then why ask me? We both watched him beat the first choke point in 22 tries, in a day. He took what was supposed to take hundreds of tries and at least months of effort. He took it all and he achieved it in a day, a single day."

The Will clone was laughing hysterically by the end of her speech.

"It shouldn't be a surprise, we should have expected it. If we consider that he has broken all the records for every training he underwent, this should not come as a shock to us. But I expected more, you know. What happened to the wind and the other little traps? He just swept through the entire thing."

The first choke point, also the forest obstacle is made up of smaller challenges that might not be easily noticed. There are other enemies apart from the vines, the trees, the titan frogs, and the blood wasp. They are the obscure challenges. The integrity of the ground beneath the feet of the challenger will change occasionally to mess up their stability. There is the occasional sun glare which they use to blind the challenger's eyes. High-intensity sunlight will pass through the dense tree covers and just happen to land on the eyes of the participants.

Those that still rely on their eyes will find it difficult to pass. Even if they don't, a bright light shown on the eyes should stun them for a while and make them make mistakes. Then there is the wind manipulation meant to change the scent in the air so that those that rely on their nose and taste will also be handicapped.

They also took advantage of the lack of light on the ground to hide attacks and ambush the challengers. Most of the frog attacks occur from areas hidden in darkness. Numerous other little things like a trick of the light and the small, slippery bug on the tree bark that you just happened to step on.

These little nuisances were meant to remove bad habits and to force the challengers to adapt to new hardships. They combine with the obvious obstacles to make the forest choke point a nightmare. The fact that they will have to start the current choke point from the beginning over and over again will force the challengers to quit. Only those with persistence and overwhelming determination will be able to continue in the face of constant adversity and failure to emerge stronger for it.

It was all a carefully prepared challenge, meant to take at least half a year of constant effort to finish. The kids weren't even supposed to beat the titan frog attacks. They were supposed to continue trying though. So the frog attacks will weaken after they have put unrelenting effort. But Soverick just blew through the whole thing.

"How did he even resolve the attacks from the titan frogs? I was so sure they were going to stump him real hard. The first encounter is usually the most hilarious. It's like he saw through the entire thing. Has he awakened his eye? That might explain the ease at which he completed it." Shaston said.

The Will clone shook its head. "While I would say that that's impossible for someone at the vitality core stage to awaken a divine ability. His records have shown that he was born with awakened eyes. But it didn't activate. Or at least his eyes didn't glow with the tell-tale sign that he is using it. I am inclined to think he didn't use it because if he did, he might have been able to complete it in 4 tries. He also wouldn't make those hilarious mistakes."

"I can't wait to know what his eyes are capable of. The records show that it has something to do with perception. It had better be perception or he won't be able to learn my legacy. Speaking of hilarious mistakes..."

The Will clone grinned. "Already on it. Cutting out the hilarious fails and adding it to our collection."

"Nice." Shaston pumped her tiny fist and cackled evilly. "My hoard of secret weapons will increase in number."

She keeps a record of the failures of each challenger. Publicly, it is meant for their yearbook when they graduate. But secretly the directors of the academy have been keeping them to blackmail the challengers. Maybe not to blackmail them exactly, more like to embarrass them. When the challengers reach great heights, these few precious moments of their funny failure will be a blot on their pride. It is a tradition that has been enforced by generations of directors.

"We can use it to blackmail Soverick if he refuses to take your legacy in the future. Too bad we didn't get a lot more dirt on him. We still have more chances though."

Shaston shook her head. "It won't work on him. It will cause the opposite effect. If we make it known, then people will know he made a mockery of our obstacle course. We don't want that."

The will clone nodded. "You're right. But won't people know that during his award ceremony and through his records?"

"We can't help with those, but we mustn't add more avenues for him to ridicule our curriculum."

"The way he just blazed through is totally unnatural."

"It is natural. We saw him get better and better at it. He is just too outstanding. That's why he must inherit my legacy." Shaston's cute face scrumped up.

Back in Soverick's training room.

He rested for a few minutes before deciding to prepare. There were no trees, so he couldn't make spears or shields. The only things he had in this grassy safe zone are grass and stones.

"So it's just me and my faithful buckler." He said as he examined the only buckler remaining. He had lost one when his other hand was coerced to detach with a part of his chest.

"Let's see what this is about first."

Then he left the safe zone. He wanted to do the usual thing he always does in an unknown environment. Sneak around and acquire information. But the droning sound of wings caught him unawares.

"No way." He exclaimed and began to run.

He was genuinely surprised. He thought he had escaped from the blood wasps and they had become a thing of the past since he reached the next safe zone. It seems he was wrong. The blood wasps didn't disappear. They had been waiting just behind his safe zone for him. They began the chase as soon as he came out.

They ran into a grassy plain dotted with small mountains here and there. He had a bad feeling about those rocks but he couldn't point out what was wrong with them. He decided not to get near them. The bug wasps are already enough to stump him, he didn't need more to be added to his plate.

'Is this what the next stage is going to be about, trying to escape from these stubborn bugs?' He thought as he ran in circles to throw off his pursuers. He could keep them at bay as long as he didn't run in a straight line.

Then things got worse. The first mountain he passed by began to shake. It rumbled and rocks tumbled down the mountain as it lifted itself.

"Of course not. It can't be so easy." He complained as he watched the mountain dislodge to reveal a rock person.

"This is very bad. It's someone from the rock tribe. They are sentient. Maybe I can talk them off. But I don't know their language and the range of my divine sense isn't that far. I'm screwed this time."

The rock person sat on the ground. It was more than 100 meters tall even sitting down. It is completely made up of rocks. It has two arms, two legs, a torso, and a head, all made of rocks.

It rubbed what can be considered its eyes and groaned. It loved to sleep and something woke it up. It located the source of the disturbance immediately. The sleep waker was a tiny thing running around. It just had to make the tiny thing stop running and it can get back to its sleep. Simple enough plan, easy to execute, and foolproof.

So it grabbed some rocks and mashed them together with its giant hands. It held the resulting giant ball of rocks in one arm. Then it swung that arm in the direction of the sleep waker and released the rocks at it. That should snuff out the disturbance.

Chapter 147 The Heavy Sleepers.

Soverick watched wide-eyed as the rock projectiles blanketed the sky. These projectiles outclassed the ones he faces in training by orders of magnitude. There's no way he can knock these aside with a stick.

He looked down at his trusty buckler and shook his head. His trusty buckler is totally out of its depth and so is he. An idea came to his mind. Jump up to meet the rocks and escape my predicament by jumping from rock to rock.

"It is crazy. But it just might work." He laughed and prepared to face his doom.

He operated the coiling dragon technique within the muscles of his legs. He had to stop running to do it. He crouched down and waited for the rocks. Either the rocks will get him first or the bugs. He couldn't face the two of them at once. Thankfully the rocks didn't disappoint. They entered the range of his jump so even though the bugs were much closer, they were not a threat anymore.

"Here goes nothing." He said and jumped.

He had to time his moment of contact carefully. He was currently speeding up while the rocks are speeding down to meet him. It was not going to be easy for him to avoid a collision. What's worse is that he must not avoid the collision completely. He has to grab onto the rock and then use it as a stand to jump higher. Then he has to repeat the entire sequence again and again. It needed accurate perception, quick reaction, and very precise muscle control.

"Like a frog. Envision the frog." He muttered as he grabbed onto the first rock and initiated the jumping sequence. His feet found purchase quickly and he flexed his thigh muscles, then he jumped. He grabbed onto the next rock and began to ascend, slowly but surely.

"I'm doing it. I'm doing it." He shouted to the world.

The blood wasps weren't so lucky. They were squashed like the bugs they are. The thought of their demise filled him with happiness. He was on a euphoric high, that was until there were no more rocks to grab onto.

"What now?" He looked around while levitating in the air.

"I didn't think this through." He said as he began to descend.

He shrugged and decided to start collecting more information for his next run. So he jumped really high. His current height granted him a very good vantage point. His eyes scanned his environment and what he saw made his mouth drop. The commotion created by the rock projectiles had woken up the other rock people. The mountains were shaking as they woke from their slumber. Even worse is that the first rock person to wake up was already preparing another salvo. So even if he survived his landing, which is highly unlikely, he would have to face another round of rocks again.

If he survives even that, then the other rock people will also target him. He tried to look even farther to see where the mountains end but he could only see them for kilometers. He was tempted to use the divine ability of his eyes but he opted out of that.

His mind was still working on finding a feasible plan even though he had already given up on survival. He thought about using the striking viper technique to absorb the rebound force of hitting the ground but it wouldn't work. He was too far up so his body will not be able to hold that much force. Plus the striking viper technique needed him to release the force but there was no feasible outlet.

He shrugged. "There's no harm in trying. If it works, then that will be golden."

He was going to smash into the ground anyway. It was better to pull more information out of it. It will be better if it worked. So he braced his legs and hit the ground ready to stand up. He didn't stand back up. He returned to the second safe zone instead.

"Looks like I failed." He smiled wryly. He thought about what he encountered and started to review the information he had about the rock tribe.

They are another race that occupies the Virut plane with the battle sage monkeys. They all descended from the mountain progenitor, a rock that gained sentience and continued to grow strong until it became a Transcendent. The people of the rock tribe are peaceful, it is why they have been able to co-exist with the battle sage monkeys. They love to sleep and will sleep their entire lives until they become Transcendents. Only then do they mingle with other races.

Their life cycle is weird because only Transcendents of their race can produce offspring. In other races, the ability to procreate is something that is easily done by the weak and it becomes difficult to procreate the stronger an individual is. So their primogenitor had to become a transcendent before it could reproduce. Their entire race would not exist if their primogenitor had been killed before it matured. But their primogenitor was content with simply sleeping, it ignored strife and racial discord as it grew from a small rock into a mountain.

Rock people aren't classified as earth elementals because when they are born, they are born with fleshy bodies. They are called rock eaters at that stage. The rocks they eat will transform their bodies into stone. They become a rock person when the transformation is complete.

Their mental capacity reduces drastically with the transformation which encourages them to sleep. They don't become stupid, just slow. This transformation reverts and they become fleshy when they become transcendents. The good thing about their life is that they surely will become transcendent as long as they don't die. They also engage in self-division for reproduction, so they don't need another member of their race to procreate.

They might not need another one of them to reproduce but the requirement to become Transcendent before being able to reproduce has limited their population to within the tens of thousands even after millions of years.

The race of the rock people is protected by the racial council for many reasons. One of the reasons is because the rock people sided with the battle sage monkeys and helped them out during the war for their survival. So the racial council is protecting them because they are allies.

The major reason they are being protected is that their primogenitor is still alive and it is a world god to boot. The primogenitor can sense each of its descendants because they all came from its flesh, so it can easily track the murderers of his kin.

But it doesn't need to. The racial council helps him to preserve the precious lives of his offspring very strictly. The racial council is usually benevolent, kind and behind the scenes, so people might have forgotten about them. Their inaction in recent times within the plane has also made people forget the racial council is made up of the strongest people of the plane. Some of them were pioneers on the path of refinement, but most of them are shrewd, intelligent killers. They have walked over the corpse of those that are part of their race and other races to reach where they are today.

The fact that they chose to do good with their power is because their intelligence made them decide to band together for a common goal, instead of splitting the power of the race. It was a very efficient course of action. They can be efficient slaughterers too if they want to.

Soverick had learned most of what he knew about the Virut plane before coming to the battle academy from Hadrack. Hadrack likes to talk a lot and Soverick used to listen to him as a baby. He would seat by

the window while Hadrick will drone on and on. Hadrick can also be considered ancient but he is nowhere close to how old the primogenitor of the rock people is. Hadrick suspected that the primogenitor was alive even before the realm of high heaven was split into planes.

"That's a very long time to sleep for." He whistled appreciatively.

"Well, the answer is obvious. Don't wake up the rock people. That means I have to sneak past them. Which means I have to get rid of the blood wasps."

The rock people will continue to sleep as long as they are not disturbed. But he will disturb them as long as he is being chased by the blood wasps. The vibration caused by his feet as he moves at his top speed to avoid the blood wasps will cause them to wake up. He cannot survive the attacks of the rock people and he cannot run silently while being chased by the blood wasps. The chase requires his top speed, so he has to get rid of his pursuers.

"How to kill the wasps?" He asked himself.

Chapter 148 Pesky Bugs And Sky Rats.

He couldn't use magic or his mind because it will be considered cheating. It is physical training so he can't use magic, and his mind will first reject the illusion he is in if he attempts it. That will cause a ruckus. He had to use his brain in tangent with his body to figure out a solution. He looked around for what he could use to kill them. His new safe zone is bare, unlike the forest.

"There's nothing here but stones, weeds, and my trusty buckler. How can you kill something with stones..."

He laughed when he realized how easy it was. He had stones littered about him. They are natural ammunition. Even the slow rock people think so too.

"Will need something to carry them with." He thought out loud.

Then he put off his school uniform. He was wearing single underwear but he didn't mind that. It's not as if someone was watching him and even if some were, he wouldn't care. He wouldn't mind being seen completely naked either. His mind has already transcended his body.

He placed the uniform on the ground and began searching for choice stones. He didn't want just about any type of stone. They had to be uniform and must have a sharp edge to them. They also must be able to fit in his hands easily and their weight must be just right for throwing.

"There are about 20 of the blood wasps, So I need 25 stones in total, maybe 30. That should get rid of the pesky bugs." He ruminated.

The amount of the blood wasps chasing him had been thinned drastically by the titan frogs. They were about a hundred of them when they started chasing him. These remaining 20 will still be a challenge because their speed makes them difficult to hit. But their large size and their inclination to move closer together will make hitting them easier. Still, he must have his stones ready so that he can strike them down faster. Bending down to pick stones while they chase him will be inefficient.

He must eliminate the blood wasps in this area around the safe zone before moving on to the area with the rock people. The space he has to work with is very small, so it will be very difficult to endure their chase and throw stones at them too.

"I just have to hit their wings. They won't be able to fly if I injure their wings."

Their fragile wings are another weakness of theirs. He can pick them off if they can't fly.

He gathered his stones in his academy uniform and picked them up with one arm. Then he left the safe zone for the second run. The blood wasps were spotted immediately. He gave them a wide berth but they began to chase him. He tried to make them run in circles within the limited zone and it worked. They didn't scatter to chase him from all directions, they stayed together and he led them around. The tricky thing is throwing stones at them while trying to maintain the distance between them. He succeeded in striking down 6 before they caught up to him and he was sent back to the safe zone.

"They are too fast. I have to tire them out, then it will be much easier to kill them all." He thought as he modified his plan.

The problem isn't hitting them, their speed can't save them from his accurate targeting. The problem is his loss of speed when he turns to aim and throw. They use that opportunity to catch up to him.

He picked more stones and began the third run. This time he didn't seek to resolve the chase early. He was willing to wait and bet his stamina reserves against theirs. Blood wasps have poor stamina. They may be stubborn in their chase but it cannot go on for too long because they will lose their speed advantage as they tire out.

It took a little over 10 minutes before they began to slow down. He waited for another 10 minutes more to make them strained and very tired. Then he began to throw stones at them. He made sure to be cautious and to maintain the distance between them. So it took him 5 minutes to get rid of all of them.

"Whose the boss now?" He shouted at their dead bodies, then he hurriedly clamp his hand over his mouth. He waited for a few seconds before signing when he didn't notice any rumblings.

"It would be silly if my stupid mouth is the one responsible for waking them."

He began to walk in the direction of the finish line.

"This is so weird. I don't need to run and there's nothing chasing me. It's so peaceful."

He said as he strolled by a mountain that is probably a rock person. His feet were light on the ground as he walked. He could run like this, he will have to reduce his speed but he would be able to move silently. But there was no reason to run at all.

The forest obstacle forced him to be constantly on the move. It was either the vines or the wasps. If he had stayed still for a while, then the entire forest would have surrounded and submerged him.

He placed his hand on top of his head and yawned. "This is so relaxed."

His uniform is now tied around his waist and he is walking barefoot. He was hoping to jinx the ease of his passage but nothing bad happened. He passed one mountain after the other and yet nothing happened. It was another hour later of walking leisurely before something happened. He had just reached an area with more stones than grass.

"This place is very bad for running." He observed.

Even if he was somehow fast enough to evade the rocks catapulted at him by the rock people, this section of the obstacle course will reduce his speed drastically. The blood wasps will be able to finally catch up and the projectiles will have reached absurd levels by then.

"It's good that I got rid of the blood wasps."

Then he noticed something moving towards him in the sky. It was fast but not as fast as blood wasps. Even so, he picked up speed to delay their moment of contact. He didn't want to stay and find out what it could be. At first, it was too far to make out what it was but then it got closer and Soverick could identify it.

"It's a Tyngalee. A sky rat."

Soverick stopped as soon as he recognized the threat. He reviewed the information about it and came up with a plan of action. He looked around for a good stone, the ground was littered with them at this point.

"Running won't help me. I have to eliminate it here." He said after selecting a prime stone.

He hefted the stone in his hands and relaxed his arms. Apart from the ground turning into a trap, he couldn't run so as not to wake the rock people. He doubted he will need to move very fast to escape the Sky rat. The sky rat is much slower in the air, so he can outrun them without exerting himself too much. The problem will come when they reach the ground. They will fold back their wings and their speed will almost double while on the ground. This stone-littered surface will not hinder them one bit, their paws will be able to navigate it easily. So his new incoming enemy must not reach the ground. The right decision isn't to escape but to eliminate the enemy before it reached the ground.

Even worse is that sky rats are pack animals. He has to eliminate the sky rat before it calls for help or things will escalate very quickly. He doubts he will be able to handle so many rats without waking up those that must not be awakened. Their only weakness is their weak and sensitive nose. They will be stunned if something damages their nose. The longevity of the stun depends on how much damage their nose sustains.

"They are rats with wings. They may be big, giant even. But they are still rats. I haven't fallen so low to be thwarted by rats, grounded, or airborne. Giant bugs couldn't get me, and neither will flying rats." He muttered quietly.

Then he focused and narrowed his eyes. There's a lot of space between them, so he would have multiple chances to take the sky rat out if he fails his first shot. But he chose to wait. He chose to reduce that distance and ensure the certainty of his aim. Because if he misses, the rat might call for help before he can successfully kill it. Then he will be in a big heap of trouble. So it is a single shot or more sky rats.

Chapter 149 Visualise And Execute.

Soverick sensed the wind direction and velocity with his divine sense. He activated the coiling dragon technique in his arm for good measure. Better to have it and not need it than to need it and not have it.

He breathed in, held in his breath, then he threw the stone at the rat. The stone sailed through the air and struck the rat as it was diving down for the kill. The stone hit the skull and cracked it before lodging itself into it.

The rat continued its downward descent but its flight path was a little off. Apart from that, there wasn't any other visible difference or a sign to indicate if it is dead or alive. It wasn't flapping its wings anymore but that may be because it is diving. Soverick moved from his position and he was sure that the sky rat would crash into the ground a few meters in front of him since the airborne vermin didn't follow his movements. He released the breath he had been holding in and sighed in relief. The threat was averted. Then his face changed.

"You have got to be kidding me." He rushed to the spot where he estimated the sky rat will land. Then he stretched his arms wide to catch it.

"You had better be dead and not pretending." He muttered hatefully.

The sky rat fell into his arms. He gritted his teeth as he absorbed the momentum of the fall. Then he dumped the bird to the ground. It made a soft sound instead of the crash that it would have made if he had let it fall directly to the ground. That crash would have woken up the rock people.

"So distasteful and so insidious. I have to catch it instead of enjoying the pleasure of seeing it turn into flesh and gore." He grumbled and turned away.

If the rock people were not around, he would have preferred that the animal crash into the ground. That will ensure that it is truly dead. A stone in the head might not kill them immediately because of their vitality and he would be terribly injured, if not killed outright, when he tries to catch them. He would have to start again if he is clawed to death by a near-death vicious animal that he so foolishly caught in his arms. The threat wasn't as easy as it seemed. It was layered.

He thought of picking something from the carcass but he didn't because of the same reason why he didn't take anything from the blood wasps. He didn't know what could be useful for his challenge and what would be dead weight. He just left it behind and moved on.

The ground made it so that he couldn't move on fast enough. More of the sky rats targeted him. At first, it was just the single one that he resolved with contemptuous ease. They troubled him again and again but he took them out meticulously. He even struck them twice for good measure before catching them. Then they started coming two at a time. Things became tricky here. One small mistake and he was likely to have a hoard of them after him.

It required quick action on his part to make two accurate successive throws at them in order to take them out. The other option is to hit them simultaneously but he couldn't guarantee a hit at all. He could do it if he had a bow and some arrows, but throwing two stones at the same time with a single hand is currently too much for him.

Throwing a single stone is already difficult with the occasional sudden gust of wind. The problem with quick throws is that he would have to use both of his hands, the right and the left, to throw stones one after the other or it will give the other one enough time to call for help.

What was more challenging was catching the two of them before they hit the ground. He tried when he could to hit them when they had some distance between them so that he could catch them one after the other with relative ease. Things were dicey but he remained calm and didn't make any mistakes. He would visualize the scenarios and execute them perfectly.

The rest of the challenge continued like that. More sky rats continued to harass him. Their frequency of attacks increased to pressure him. A single mistake would have ruined all his work. The entire challenge forced him to be precise at all times and it pressured him with the knowledge that a single mistake will ruin him. He ran through the forest choke point but the distance was short. He could speed through the forest in minutes. This part of the obstacle course may be peaceful but he had been at it for more than 2 hours and was under pressure most of the time.

This pressure is another obstacle that must be overcome. It creates fear which will reduce the mental and physical capabilities of the challenger. Something that can be easily achieved becomes difficult if not impossible when you're afraid of failure or under pressure to achieve success.

It might be a challenge for others but Soverick is capable of thriving under pressure. The reason he is usually expressionless and why his face has that deadpan look is because of the superiority of his mind over his body. The hormones of the body, the swirling vortex of emotions that his body is capable of and the reflex actions of his body are unable to overcome his will. Most emotions don't affect him unless he allows it. So the emotion of fear cannot affect him or reduce his efficiency at bringing down the scummy sky rats.

"There was tension but the run was surprisingly easy. It just needed some delicate work and the ability to work in silence. Not bad but only so so." He commented after he entered the next safe zone.

He heard that familiar notification that meant he can have peace and he plopped down. He had finished the second choke point in the third run. It wasn't as exhilarating or as intense as the first choke point. He found it mild even though he was balanced on an edge for most of it. The second choke point was aimed at the mental aspect of a warrior which is his forte, so he wasn't pressured as much as the previous one.

"So what's next?"

He tried to guess what his next challenge will be by looking around his safe zone. The area beyond the safe zone is mostly blurry so could only entertain himself with what he found around him. The ground had hardened into a complete rock layer at some point. It was also scalding hot. The grasses are the ones cropping up from amongst the rock now. There are no small stones that he can throw.

"I probably won't face something I have to throw stones at." He said before shrugging.

He gleaned a lot of information from what he saw but it didn't clue him to what he would be facing next.

"Only one way to find out." He said as he stood up.

His uniform is already back on his body instead of his waist. He stepped out of the safe zone. Then he heard a high-pitched screech. He wondered what it could be for a moment before moving on. Then he heard more of them but there was still no enemy in sight. All he could see was the bare rocky ground.

"I'm I on a mountain? Could it be a rock person?" He wondered but continued moving.

Then he saw the familiar form of a sky rat in the sky. Only this time there were more than two. They were more than 50 at his lowest estimate and more were still joining them. They were also making that high-pitched screech sound.

"Now I know what that sound is all about." He said as he began to run.

He made sure to keep the impact of his feet on the ground as little as possible. He has not forgotten that he might be standing on a rock person.

He knew that sky rats can call each other for help but he didn't know what the exact sound is. He had never heard them call for help. Maybe he would know what to look out for if he had failed at preventing them from calling for help in the previous choke point. He would know to run immediately as soon as he left the safe zone instead of milling about.

He didn't run for long when he came upon a cliff with a precipitous drop. He could see that the cliff was as wide as his eyes could see. There was no way down that he could see. The only way forward he observed is a series of very thin rock pillars. The pillars were like tall, wrinkled bamboo sticks that reached all the way to the depth of the cliff.

"No way." He complained but his body was already moving.

He doubted he will be able to make it but he had no choice. So he jumped.

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The pillars might not look reassuring but it was either them or he looks for another alternative while the sky rats gain on him. He knew what the challenge wanted from him as soon as he saw this risky set up so he jumped across the edge of the cliff. He sailed forward and his right foot landed on the pillar. The pillar gave way as soon as his foot stepped on it and he began to fall.

"You have got to be kidding me." He thought as he was falling.

The fall took some time and it seems the challenge will not reset back to the safe zone until he dies, which will be a very long time. The system was probably waiting for him to do something that will get him out of his fate of falling to his death.

He crossed his arms against his chest and screamed. "I've got nothing. You hear me, nothing."

The sky rats had arrived and were patrolling the sky. They were more than a hundred of them now. They screamed back at him.

"They're probably taunting me." He thought to himself.

There's nothing he can do right now to avoid the fate of plunging to his death. The only good thing is that the third choke point just started so the safe zone is too far behind.

Honestly, he felt cheated. He knew the obstacle course was out to get him but the challenges were just savage. He doubted that those rickety pillars could even hold a cockroach.

They were also spaced far away from each other so he would have to lengthen his stride to move from one to the other. The setup is such that he would either fall down or move on. But the pillars were geared like rat traps. The experience taught him what to do though.

Within the Director's Alcove.

Shaston watched Soverick conquer the second choke point in three runs. At first, she and her will clone watched him run from the blood wasps before encountering the rock projectiles. She was hoping for him to be stumped by the strict requirements to pass through the midst of the rock people.

"Impressive but pointless." She commented as Soverick scaled the rocks thrown at him.

"This is where the constant repetition will start before they cry and crack under pressure. We should be able to get a lot of very humiliating videos from this." The Will clone added cheerfully.

Soverick started the second run and he chose to bring down the blood wasps first.

"Quick on the uptake but still lacking in execution." She said when Soverick failed.

The will clone grinned. "I got him in his underwear. I have the feeling that this will be just the start to more humiliating things."

Then he started the third run and killed all the blood wasps. They watched him stroll through the choke point with his uniform tied around his waist.

Shaston watched his carefree attitude before commenting. "Enjoy your peace for now but it isn't over. The Sky rats will put you in your place.

Her will clone remained silent.

Then the first sky rat appeared. Shaston's eyes lit up with expectation. "Anytime now."

This is the usual breaking point. Other challengers that reached this stage usually achieve it after repeated failures. They will try a lot of strategies which will end in failure. Only when they realize that the blood wasps must go before any progress can be made do they find a way to tackle them.

But it isn't easy to eliminate the blood wasps. There is a high requirement for precision in throwing. The challengers will have to be constantly on the move while trying to hit a fast-moving target.

They don't usually employ the stamina reduction plan because they don't have excess stamina to spare. The longer they drag out eliminating the blood wasps, the slower the challengers get because they too are running out of stamina and their aim becomes poorer. They have to kill all the blood wasps or their effort will go to waste. A single blood wasp will spoil the remaining run.

But they will succeed at the end of the day after tens of runs and days of effort. Then they will encounter the first sky rat. Some of them will choose to run for it, a very poor decision. The sky rats will catch up to them either through the air or on the ground because their speed will be inhibited by the stony ground. Most of those that attempt to kill the sky rat will mess it up. Then the sky rat will call for help and it will become a whole new level of difficulty.

For the lucky or the exceptional few that succeed in killing it, the crash sound it will make will render their effort useless. It is only after that failure will they realize that the sky rats must not make noise. Then they will start again, first with the blood wasps and then the sky rats. One single mistake will make them start over.

It is not rare that some of the challengers break down and cry. The determination that they cultivated in their first choke point will be pushed to the point of cracking. Determination is more effective against external threats and disappointment. But the fear of failure, an internal threat that aims to undermine confidence, is something that determination needs to be able to conquer too.

Shaston and the will clone watched the stone that soverick threw lodge itself in the skull of the first sky rat.

"Not bad. I expected as much. Too bad that you will be stumped soon." She was about to go on when her mouth froze. Soverick caught the bird and saved the day.

"Dammit." Shaston fumed.

The Will clone was also disappointed. "I was hoping to see that look of despair on his face."

Shaston consoled her. "Don't worry. We'll get our just rewards. It's just a matter of time. All we need is a single mistake."

"Yes, you're right. It's not as if he will pass through the entire choke point in this run."

It turned out that Shaston wasn't right. They watched him neutralize every threat with calm and ease. He accounted for wind movement and always struck true. Even the tricky situations when two sky rats attacked him at the same time. People usually have a dominant arm that they prefer to use for most

situations. They were hoping Soverick would have such a quirk, it will make him seem more normal instead of the readily adaptable person he seems.

They were silent for a while before Shaston could speak. "I think the traits of Soverick responsible for his outstanding performance, is his ability to learn from mistakes, make adjustments and anticipate outcomes. Of which the most important is the ability to make adjustments. He makes learning seem easy."

It is very difficult for people to change and learning isn't easy. Experience is indeed the best teacher but experience sometimes fails because the person cannot identify what he has done wrong or what went wrong.

If learning to throw stones accurately is used as an example. It will be noticed that some people just can't aim right. There's either a problem with their judgment of distance and depth, hand motions, posture, or muscle exertion. Sometimes, people just can't see what they are doing wrong and will continue to make the same mistake again and again. That is why people watch others and learn from them. It is also why people need teachers to point out their mistakes.

Identifying a mistake is the first step. Rectifying it is the second, and it is more difficult to achieve because of habits. Habits are ingrained behavior patterns. Mistakes will become very difficult to change if a habit stands in the way of making adjustments. The other obstacle is comfort zones. Mental and physical comfort zones will inhibit the very attempts to change. Comfort zones will make it difficult to summon the courage and will to change.

Even when habits and comfort zones have been overcome. Most times, people learn through try and error, after repeated failures and enlightenment. Learning just isn't easy. But Soverick made it look easy. The challengers that trained in the other regimen first will have learned the necessary skills to pass the obstacle course, such as throwing and body precision, but it is another thing to use both skills in tandem and under pressure. They've learned to dodge, block, and parry, but performing them under constant stress and harassment isn't easy.

The Will clone nodded sagely at Shaston's words. Then she said, "You meant to say he is too smart and you will probably fail in tricking him to accept your legacy."

Shaston nodded in agreement. "You're totally right."

Soverick turned out to be way smarter than an average child and he is less than two years. How smart will he be in a thousand years? Shaston doesn't know, but she knows it will be very difficult to dupe Soverick into taking her legacy.