

The assistant invigilators quickly vacated the room, leaving the applicants alone. All of them had been informed the exam would begin the moment the doors shut closed. They'd maintained several meters distance from each other with their guards up and their alertness at max, eyeing the gigantic dome sealings and its many closed hatches. The tension was palpable, everyone knew that the carelessness could end up meaning a slow and painful death.

With the doors closed, they could rely on nobody but themselves to survive and pass this round.

Suddenly, a squeaking sound shook everyone as they directed their gaze to its source. The hatch at the top of the dome in the center had opened. Yet nothing came out.

('This is unnerving, I'd rather they just begin.') Rui complained.

A transparent blob appeared through the hole.

('Here it com-')

His thoughts were interrupted as ninety-nine other hatches opened simultaneously, and a bouncing slime appeared out of each one of them.

('Oh fuck me.') It was difficult to fully appreciate the difficulty of tasks you've never attempted. Only after the hundred bouncing slimes appeared did Rui understand the gravity of the second round.

Yet despite all that, he had the audacity to smile. No, not just smile, but grin like a madman.

All one hundred bouncing slimes dashed off towards the unwitting applicants, and what followed was the most chaotic experience Rui has ever undergone.

Bouncing slimes doing as promised; bouncing, and applicants doing as expected; getting bounced at.

Rui had already been hit multiple times.

('Damn, this fucking hurts!') Rui cursed a slime rammed into his ribs. They were as large as soccer balls, meaning their force somewhat concentrated. He shook it off and concentrated. He had already made several plans, he just wanted as few of his competitors to catch on

('The biggest obstacle here is the fact that the attacks are omnidirectional, they can come from anywhere. With our limited field of vision, it is impossible see them all. In that case...')

He turned to the closest applicant to him, who was also thirteen. This was by no accident; Rui had already known that the AoE nature of the ordeal would make it difficult to avoid getting hit.

He had decided to team up with an applicant and watch each other's backs, and call every attack heading their way that they saw. He intentionally chose to be near a young applicant like himself, the odds of them agreeing to team up was much higher with a younger applicant, who would also be disadvantaged against older applicants.

But before he could say a word to the applicant, he spoke to Rui of his own volition.

"Hey, wanna team up?"

Rui was taken aback.

('Not bad, the fact that he was able to realize the merits in this alone means he's worth teaming up with.')

Rui nodded, before they both faced their backs to each other. And the effect was noticeable quickly, although they didn't dodge all the attacks from their

blind spots, they did so at a higher rate than when they were relying on themselves.

Still, Rui was getting hit more often than he didn't.

('Thank God getting hit doesn't give you negative points otherwise probably not a single person here would score above zero... But this isn't enough.')

Right now, his performance wasn't really exceptional compared to the others. He needed to ensure he passed this round, in order to that he needed to dodge more. Though he didn't have a concrete plan yet, he had already made several astute observations.

('I had only suspected it initially, but these slimes are cannot seem to control their trajectories.')

Their trajectories were too random and inefficient; they really did bounce around like a non-living super-bouncy ball.

('Specifically, their bounces obey the laws of motion and reflection far too much. This implies that the only thing determining their trajectories are the initial launch and the laws of physics, if they were manipulating their directions, their bouncing would most certainly not be consistent with kinematical predictions of their trajectories.')

Rui grinned.

('It's one thing if they could control their motion after the initial launch... But if their trajectories are driven by physics, then they can be predicted it.')

Of course, this was not a perfect solution, first of all predicting all the slimes was absolutely impossible, he couldn't even see more than half of them because the rest was in his blind spot. Furthermore, predicting a large number of slimes, even if not all required an extreme amount of focus which would almost certainly tire him out. He wasn't sure he would be able to predict the ones he could clearly see, but he had to try.

('Don't react after they bounce in your direction, react before they bounce. The laws of reflection are extremely simple. The reflected trajectory and incident trajectory will be in the same plane, and the angle of incidence will be equal to the angle of reflection, it's extremely simple to verify whether or not a ball will bounce in your direction. The problem is the number, I need to maintain realistic goal, I can forget about those in my periphery vision, but I should be able to manage the balls in my primary perifoveal vision.')

He decided to ignore the slimes in the extremes of his vision, clenching his body and protecting the sides of his heads with his hands, focusing only on the slimes he could clearly see. But unlike the other applicants, he wasn't looking at the balls that had already bounced off the dome sealing. He was looking at the ones that had yet to. Quickly confirming or denying their future trajectories, he also reduced his movements to a minimum to make his task of observation easier. Suddenly-

"Duck!" Rui warned his partner.

His partner crouched, but the slime came a split second later than he had expected. He was surprised Rui had managed to give him such an early warning. The same thing happened over and over, until he realized Rui hadn't fallen down or grimaced in pain in the past twenty-minutes. He was dodging all the slimes from that came from the front and back, while permanently using his arms as shields to minimize damage from attacks from the side.

('Interesting, his physical capability doesn't seem to be too high. But he's dodging them almost as good as I am. Furthermore, that hair and eyes of his... Could he also be a genius?') The boy wondered.