

Leveling up the World

Chapter 5: Ring Guardian

RING GUARDIAN

Species: COLOSSUS

Class: BRONZE Statistics:

- Health: 75%

Skills: UNKNOWN

Weak Spots: UNKNOWN

Twenty-five percent with one hit? Dallion wondered. It felt suspiciously easy, to the point he feared it might be a lie. There was no way his mother could lose to a four-hit enemy.

The guardian paused. With time returning to normal, she passed a hand over the area of her head that was hit. Her cold grey eyes stared at the boy, after which she smiled.

Uh oh. Dallion felt the pressure like two fat cats resting on his shoulders.

The whole stats and floating panels thing had given him the impression that the battle would be a long and arduous experience in which he'd keep continuously evading attacks, while chipping away at the enemy's health. The opponent's smile sent shivers down his spine; it meant that the guardian wasn't a brainless automaton following a predefined set of actions.

Taking a step back, the guardian brushed her metallic hair with a flair, then entered a low combat pose. The green lines Dallion was seeing changed into cones. Considering everything so far, it was safe to assume that any part touching his body risked receiving serious damage. Given the damage on the walls and floor, one good hit from the guardian could well be enough to knock him out, or worse. What was more, a second pair of cones emerged, starting from the guardian's feet.

Hands AND feet? Dallion wanted to shout. At the same time, he was also impressed, and somewhat envious. If martial arts training had been like that when he was younger, he would never have skipped a lesson.

The guardian lunged forward.

Dallion barely managed to evade her strike, when a green cone formed an arc through him.

High sweep kick, Dallion thought.

There was no time for him to move out of reach, so he did the only thing left dropping down. Tendons and muscles screamed in agony, reminding the boy how much he had been neglecting them the last few years. Dallion pushed through the pain, instants before the metal leg sliced the air above him. If that had made contact it wouldnt have just made a mark, it would have thrown him across the room like a rag-doll.

Green footprints appeared on the ground, visible from the corner of his eye. Yet, instead of following them, Dallion did the unthinkablehe attacked.

Squeezing what remaining strength he had, he jumped to his feet. As the guardian was finishing her action, Dallion swung his left arm, hitting her neck with the edge of the buckler. A resounding clang filled the air as metal struck metal.

CRITICAL STRIKE

Weak spot found!

Dealt damage was increased by 150%

A white rectangle appeared inches from Dallions face. It was precisely in that moment of euphoria that he realized that he was in serious trouble. His gamble had rewarded him with a critical strike, more than doubling his damage yet it proved insufficient to kill the colossus.

Four green circles as large as flying pans covered his body. Playtime was over.

Damn it! Damn it! Damn it!

There was no time for thought or elegance. Dallion jumped back, scrambling to avoid attacks in the process, and possibly get a guard step right. Both hands, and buckler, were placed on the back of his head in an attempt to shield him. It was a sloppy tactic, unlikely to offer any real defense. Thankfully, he didnt get to find out. The guardians arm missed him by a hair, scratching the surface of the shield in the process.

Wait! Dallion shouted, still scampering forward. Wait!

All green markers disappeared. Glancing over his shoulder, the boy saw that the colossus had remained still, a puzzled expression on her face.

RING GUARDIAN

Species: COLOSSUS

Class: BRONZE

Statistics:

- Health: 12%

Skills: UNKNOWN

Weak Spots: Neck

I I the boy turned around, gasping for breath. I have a proposal.

Attempting to reason with an overpowered enemy after a sneak attack was usually a bad idea. At best the underpowered party would lose the element of surprise, at worst they might suffer significantly more pain just for being sneaky. To Dallions astonishment, the guardian entered a neutral stance and gestured for him to continue.

Uh uh, Dallion thought. He hadnt expected this to actually work, so hadnt thought that far ahead.

Were both at one hit health, he began. So, instead of dragging it out, why not finish it?

The guardian put her hand on her chin.

One final charge, me against you. You know my skills and I know yours. *At least some of them*. We both give it all we got. That way neither of us will have any regrets. And just to be on the safe side, the boy bowed once more.

The seconds dragged like hours. After a while, Dallion could take it no longer and peeked up. The guardian had crossed arms and had the sincerest expression of amusement he had seen in his life. Before he could say a word, she winked at him, then made her way to the opposite part of the room.

Thanks, Dallion whispered.

The final battle more like a duel: the guardians attack versus his defense skills. His increased reflexes gave him some advantage, although now much was yet to be determined.

The boy looked at the floor. There were no guiding footsteps, despite the saying attack wasnt the best form of defense. In order for his guard ability to help him, he had to be under attack first.

Ready? he shouted.

Across the room, the guardian nodded.

Well, here we go.

Both darted forward almost simultaneously. The guardians speed was twice that of Dallion, her steps resounding as she approached. The boys mind raced. It all went to a single second the instant before the colossus could perform her attack. If the guard skill markers were something, he could achieve all would be well, if not

One second passed. Then two. Then three. Another and the guardian would have reached him, and still there were no indications. Maybe it was a bad idea to take this approach after all?

Just then the green footsteps appeared, only this time not all of them were on the floor. Three steps away they suddenly shot up, continuing in almost vertical fashion. For anyone familiar with physics, such an action was unachievable. People could float in the air as much as bricks. However, there was also a point at which one had to have faith.

Letting go of all fears, Dallion followed the first few steps. Just as he was to do the next, the guardian started with her attack. Her left knee bent down, while her right arm moved back, ready for a side hook. At that point, Dallion made contact with the footprint marker. No longer in the air, it was on the guardians knee, then her hip, her hand

Similar to a mountain goat, the boy climbed up the metal body, avoiding all attacks, until there was no place to go. Time froze.

Just like a statue, he thought. Somehow, despite everything, he had managed to avoid her charge and trigger the guard skills effect. He had done what the village chief thought he couldnt. Now there was one thing left to do.

Sorry. Dallion slammed his buckler on the guardians head with full strength.

RING Level increased

The RING has been improved to BRONZE.

Your GUARD skills have increased to 2.