

Hell Difficulty Tutorial

Chapter 14

It's painful.

It's tiring.

But I get up and squeeze the bloodied half-spear in my right hand. The rusty smell of blood hits my nose. My other arm is uselessly hanging along my body. Broken somewhere under my shoulder. I can't even move it without pain making my vision spin.

The goblin shaman is standing there with one of his hands pointing towards me and mumbling something under his nose.

I let go of the broken spear and grab a stone from the ground, instantly throwing it at the goblin.

Surprisingly, his chanting pauses and he frowns. Instead of hitting him, the stone slows down as it approaches him and then falls down about a meter away from him.

I do it again and get the same result.

His mumbling stops, and the stone slows down around 3 meters away from him and then just falls down, again. He screams something, and I quickly jump behind a tree, but there is no terrible noise, and the tree doesn't explode. Instead, I can hear him chanting something once again.

Then I hear a gunshot.

All of us freeze for a second, and unnatural silence fills the surroundings.

Another gunshot.

Hadwin is pointing his gun at the shaman. Surprisingly, the green creature isn't dead. Not even wounded. The same thing happens to the bullet as to stones.

As it enters an area close to the goblin it slows down and we can see it slowly traveling through the air. Then it stops and falls down.

"Damn..." Hadwin's voice is tired, and he is slowly limping.

Yet he seems to be in the best state out of the three of us. Sophie is holding a piece of cloth on her wounded hand while glaring at the goblin shaman. Damon is sitting on the ground and leaning against a tree. I'm not even sure if he is conscious or even alive.

The goblin looks at us, and his gaze is full of hate. He bares his sharp teeth, and a deep hissy growl escapes his mouth.

I move my tired body toward him, and the only thing I can think about is killing him.

I throw a few things at him as I walk closer, a stone, a branch, a piece of hardened dirt. Every time, they just slow in the air and fall down near him. But every time I do it, his chant pauses, and his face becomes angrier and angrier.

"You don't like that, do you?" I smirk and I can feel the blood in my mouth.

I spit it out while continuing to walk closer and throwing stuff at him.

"Fucking piece of shit."

He keeps letting out terrible noises, maybe even words. He doesn't seem worried at all as I stop just a few meters away from him.

Is that a smile on his face?

Fucker.

I stab my spear at him, but at some distance away from him, it starts feeling weird, as if the spear is moving through molasses, and the feeling becomes worse the closer it gets to the goblin.

After around one meter, my stab loses all its strength.

When I try to quickly pull it back, it becomes even worse, as if it's stuck in something.

So I just let go of the spear, and it slowly falls down to the ground, almost like a feather.

The goblin's grin becomes even wider, and he chants faster.

You are so dead.

I step towards the goblin, and for a moment, his smile becomes even wider.

Then it instantly disappears from his face, replaced by sheer shock.

I enter the zone around him while moving really slowly. I am not attacking him at all, just taking a step toward him. Really slow step.

There is some resistance, almost like moving underwater and when I try quickly moving with just my finger, the resistance becomes much stronger.

So that's how it is.

Amazing.

His smile disappears, and it seems like he did stutter for a moment before resuming his chanting.

I continue slowly moving toward him. My body is turned slightly with my wounded arm facing him.

After entering the zone an arm reach away from him, I feel the resistance weaken slightly.

The goblin finally gives up his chanting, and a dagger appears in his hand. He is moving slowly, also affected by the field around him.

I focus once again and try to send the last drops of mana through my body.

The shaman seems to be an even worse fighter than the other goblins, as he just stabs at my chest.

I am already dodging even before he makes a stabbing motion.

His feet's placement.

His stance.

The way he turns his body.

I predict where he is going to stab and move my body slightly to make him barely miss me.

When his dagger enters my reach, I notice fear in his eyes. He slowly realizes that he is going to miss, and I can see his body struggle. Muscles twitching, his expression turning darker and darker.

Why did you stop smiling?

Is it not fun anymore?

Smile for me.

He is trying to move as much as he can and change the direction of his stab. Then he tries to quickly pull his attack back. There is panic in his movements.

But he can't. He is also restricted by the unnatural field around his body.

As he starts pulling back his dagger for another stab, I grab his throat with my fingers. I focus most of my remaining mana into my hand and try to bury the tips of my fingers into the front of his neck.

The monster tries to escape, but I follow him at the same speed, and he keeps panicking more and more.

He keeps trying to move faster than he can and keeps getting restricted while I just slowly follow his movement at the speed the field allows me to.

There is another stab coming. From the way he moves, I know that if I dodge it, he will continue and try to stab the hand holding his neck.

I should dodge.

It's smart to dodge.

But I just shift my body, and his dagger enters my broken hand instead.

The pain is terrible, much worse than I expected. The dagger is slowly penetrating my skin, tearing my muscles, and scratching my bone.

But I don't let go. Instead of that, I squeeze his neck harder and harder. He is already scratching my right hand with his remaining hand, leaving deep bloody grooves on my forearm.

I am almost worried that I will break my teeth from how much I am clenching them. It's easily the most pain I ever felt in my life.

He then twists the dagger inside my hand, and I feel tears running down my cheeks.

I can't help it, but a painful groan escapes my mouth.

But I don't let go.

I squeeze even harder and harder.

I feel the blood from his neck on my fingers, and then I finally penetrate his softer skin of the neck. It feels disgusting, and I am sure I will never forget this feeling.

Blood flows down his neck and on my hands as I grab his adam's apple and start pulling it out of his neck. In the process, I lose the last drops of my mana.

Then I hear soft noise, as if something is breaking, the necklace on his neck falls apart.

The feeling of my body being deep underwater instantly disappears.

The goblin shaman falls down on the ground while putting his hands against the hole in his neck. There is blood flowing through his fingers, and he is letting out noises I already want to forget about.

After a few seconds of struggling, the light disappears from his eyes.

Only a terrible, hateful, expression stays on his face, as until the last moment, he kept staring at me.

Chapter 15

[You have defeated the Goblin Lvl 3]

[You have defeated the Goblin Lvl 2]

[You have defeated the Goblin Lvl 3]

[You have defeated the Reanimated Wolf lvl 2]

[You have defeated the Goblin shaman Lvl 5]

[Lvl 2 > Lvl 3]

I instantly put two points into constitution and one into mana.

My body feels terrible. Every muscle feels as if it's about to tear and I feel weak.

I'm also so terribly hungry.

"Are you fine? Do you need..."

Just leave me alone.

"Nathaniel." The voice becomes louder.

Fuck off.

I slowly calm down by breathing.

Calm down.

Focus on breathing in and out.

Filter out the pain. A little bit is fine.

Good.

Now put more strength into your legs.

Good.

Now fall down and scratch your knees and palms, adding to your wounds.

Goo...What?

...

Fuck.

I clench my teeth.

Deep breath and again.

Yes, like this.

A bit more strength into the left leg.

Good.

More strength in the right leg.

Nice.

Now turn to Hadwin and try to look a bit more friendly, and not like someone who tore off the neck of a living being. Do it slowly so that your head won't spin.

When I turn around, I see a worried look on his face. I notice the fact that he's still holding a gun in his hand. I'm sure that it's just a coincidence that he's pointing it slightly in my direction.

Just in case, I try to predict the way he would lift it up if he wanted to shoot, and slightly shift my body.

If he moves that way, I can rush him. Forget about using my hands, I will hit his nose with my forehead.

He might be able to shoot me, but before he does so, I can slightly move his hand so it won't kill me.

Probably.

"God damn, Nat. You look terrible."

No shit

No fucking way!

Really?

Damn, that's craaaazy!

Asshole.

I nod slowly, not wanting to waste my precious energy on talking.

Hadwin puts his weapon away, and I feel the tension in my body dissipate. Instead, I focus on our surroundings.

"Let's keep our guard up. And I need a weapon," I mutter.

I lower my body slightly, and another wave of pain attacks me as I grab the shaman's dagger with my right hand. Before grabbing it, I wipe the blood on my fingers onto my once-white shirt.

I also grab pieces of his broken necklace and put them into my pocket.

"We have to go quickly. Sophie and Damon are also wounded, but they should be okay. Thankfully, they leveled up and put all their points into constitution. That should help them a little bit," Hadwin says, looking at me.

"How are you?" he asks.

"I'm fine. Let's move."

The points I invested seem to be doing their part. Just a little bit, but it's not like I can complain. Of course, I still feel terrible. The hunger I'm feeling is like there's a big empty hole in my stomach, and I bet soon enough, my stomach will start digesting itself.

As I'm walking, I let some mana flow through my body. It's not a big difference, but it's slowly becoming easier and easier. A small, really small, but noticeable difference.

Damon is still unconscious, and Sophie is breathing weakly while holding her hand with a terrible wound on it. I'm surprised she hasn't passed out.

"Nat," Hadwin says.

"Take Damon. I will follow with Sophie in a minute."

"...be careful on your way back."

He puts Damon over one of his shoulders while holding the gun in his free hand, and he disappears between the trees.

Huh, he agreed pretty easily.

After a few seconds I start counting.

One minute.

Two.

Sophie starts nervously looking at me.

Three.

"We should-"

She cuts out when I lift up my finger.

"We should talk."

"There is no time for talk. We don't even know if there aren't more of them..." She moves closer to me, trying to hide, but I can see that she is getting nervous. "We can talk when we get back."

Does she still think this is Earth?

I put my hand on her wounded hand and squeeze.

A painful scream escapes her mouth.

I feel a slight urge to let go, but at this point, I don't even know if these are my feelings.

"W-what are you doing?" she screams while attempting to move away from me, but I hold her and squeeze harder.

She screams again but quickly quiets down while looking around with teary eyes.

Looking for help? Scared that there will be more monsters?

I am also worried about that, but right now, there is something much more important.

My mind is only mine.

Seeing her expression, I realize that I am hurting her more and more without even realizing it.

Am I really that angry?

Hmm.

Let's think about it logically since I can't trust my feelings at the moment.

"..."

I think what she did is something that would make me angry. Really angry.

Like really really angry.

My freedom is one of the most important things to me ever since I was young.

To be honest, I am surprised I am not angrier.

Is she influencing me even now?

Her chest moves up and down as she keeps her wet green eyes on me, almost pleading.

In the end, she is just a young girl.

"Let's talk later. Please?"

Her voice is shaking, and there is a drop of blood on her bottom lip from how hard she is biting it.

"Let's just go..."

"Did you...are you using skill on me?"

"..."

"Answer."

"... We need to go."

For a moment I don't say anything.

She avoids my gaze, and I can feel her muscles tensing. Her mouth opens slightly, but no sound escapes her.

Shock? Guilt?

I stay quiet.

"I don't know... I don't know what you mean."

A scream of pain, more tears in her eyes.

"You need to calm down and listen to me..." She puts her free hand on my shoulder, pleading. "We really need to go. It's not safe here."

My anger weakens even more.

Is her skill stronger with skin contact?

"We can talk when we get back."

"..."

"Nathaniel?"

"..."

My feelings are one big mess.

"One more chance, Sophie. No more lies, okay?"

She tries to open her mouth, but I gesture for her to stop.

"Think about your sister before you say something."

Then it hits me.

Terrible, terrible fear I never felt in my life.

I barely stop myself from shaking, and I feel cold sweat running down my back.

I almost want to scream, let go of everything, and just run away.

My heartbeat speeds up, and my limbs become cold.

Chapter 16

So terrifying.

So amazing.

I am clenching my teeth so hard they feel like they are about to break. Goosebumps are all over my body.

I feel cold.

I am shaking.

It's hard to even think and **[Focus]** is only thing stopping me from running away.

Really, amazing.

How does it work? How did she get the skill? Is she using mana? How many emotions can she affect? How many people can she affect? Is it a level 1 skill? If yes, how strong can it get? And probably the most important question, can I use her to survive? Also, can she use it on monsters?

Did she use it only on me during the fight, or on the goblins as well?

Did she use it on the goblins to make them attack me instead of Hadwin and Damon, leaving three of them to deal only with the wolf and one goblin?

Maybe?

"Interesting..." I whisper, and I mean it. The feelings I'm experiencing at the moment feel so real. It's not hard to imagine how dangerous she will be if she gets time to develop her skills.

She could slowly manipulate someone instead of using raw power like she is now, her target wouldn't even have to realize it.

"DO. NOT. DARE." she hisses through her teeth.

How scary.

"I will fucking kill you if you dare to touch her!"

"Good."

"..."

"Think about it this way. For me, my mind is the same as for you is your sister."

"..."

"I hope you understand what I mean."

"I... will kill you..."

I interrupt her, "I think we might have started in the wrong way," I let her lean onto me, and we start walking towards our camp. Well, I am almost pulling her as she resists a lot.

Let's risk it.

Sure, I almost died because of her, but I am alive. In future her skill can become amazingly useful. Hell, it's super useful even now.

I pause and terrifying thought flashes through my mind.

Is she manipulating me now?

Did I switch from killing her to using her because of her mind manipulation?

I will have to think about it later.

I know I am playing with fire, but I think I can now recognize when she is trying to manipulate my feelings, and her usefulness can outweigh all the risks.

Obviously, in a perfect world, I wouldn't have to be worried about all of that.

Now I will have to become stronger faster than she is. That way, she won't be able to control me.

I believe I can do it.

I trust in my decisions and my skill.

I trust in myself.

So let's keep her around. I won't get rid of a weapon I can use to keep myself alive, and if she does try something and I survive, well, that will be the end for her sister. The thought of hurting an innocent kid disgusts me, but if I had to pick between me and her life, I wouldn't hesitate.

If me and Sophie fight I will either go after her sister, or the little girl won't be able to survive without Sophie in case she dies.

Who else would care about a little girl they don't know when fighting for their life?

Sophie isn't dumb.

“So let's start over again, yes?”

But I won't forget. I will always remember that she tried to use me as a shield, pushed me into fights without even caring about my life.

I don't care that she was scared or that she tried to take care of her sister.

I let a small smile appear on my face.

“Let's be allies, Sophie.”

I won't forget.

We stay quiet for the rest of the way back.

Thankfully, we don't meet anyone while moving back to the bus. Our way back takes even longer than before because of our state,

My wound isn't bleeding anymore, but my arm is still useless, and it hurts every time I bump into something, also my wounds feel like they are burning.

The effect of an increased constitution is noticeable, but there are questions as well.

Do I require more calories now? 5 thousand? 10 thousand? Are there animals and monsters that can give me more calories, or will I need to eat all the time? Will there be a point where I can't get enough food, or won't need to eat at all?

Do I even need to sleep? Well, I feel tired, so probably yes, but what if I invest more points into constitution?

Another thing is that all my smaller wounds such as scratches are either fully healed or close to it. It's not like I can see the wound closing right in front of my eyes, but they are healing quite quickly.

Hadwin quickly joins us as soon as we leave the forest, and I leave Sophie to the boy who is following him.

“I was starting to be worried. It took you a long time.”

Sophie just glances at me but stays quiet, and I shrug my shoulders.

As we get closer to the middle of the clearing, I notice Damon lying on the ground.

Unmoving.

Pale.

"He didn't make it..." says Hadwin quietly.

His face is empty, maybe slightly sad? It's really hard to read.

Did he...?

Damon didn't look like he was about to die the last time I saw him.

The clothes around his chest are terribly bloodied, and his expression is anything but peaceful.

His eyes are closed.

Sophie seems to be fairly shocked. "We talked just a few minutes ago... how could it..." she cuts off.

There were no last words.

No meaningful fight.

Just one goblin barely reaching his chest and one undead wolf.

In a fight where three of them fought against two opponents and yet Damon still died.

The wolf moved even slower than the first time we met him, the goblin was only level two, and they were armed. Hadwin even had a gun, and yet... he still died.

Just like that.

How?

How are they that weak?

Should I bother staying with them?

"Nat..."

I might be better on my own.

"Nat."

I am stronger than all of them.

"Nathaniel."

Should I even waste my time by helping them to develop? It might be better to invest all of that time into myself.

I feel someone touching my shoulder, and I feel as if I woke up.

What happened?

I notice my palm bleeding from my fingernails digging into it as I did squeeze my fist hard.

Oh.

Seems like Sophie isn't the only one shaken.

I glance at the blonde girl holding my shoulder. She is and always was taller than me, even though she is younger.

Her steel gray eyes are calm, and for a moment, we just look at each other.

She smells of cigarettes.

Focus on breathing.

I let out a little bit of mana and feel myself entering **[Focus]**. Just a little bit.

One heartbeat.

My heart pushes mana through my veins. It is flowing in the same pathway as my blood, just slightly faster.

Two heartbeats.

All unused mana is circulating back to my heart and then is sent back to my body.

Three.

Tension slowly escapes my body.

Four.

Slow and deep breath in. Yes, good.

Five.

I exit **[Focus]**, and I feel as if the haze covering my mind and eyes disappeared.

"Can you hear me now?"

I nod.

"Good, let me help you with your wound."

She pulls me towards the bus, and I follow her without words.

My head hurts.