

Innkeeper 39

The Innkeeper

Chapter 39: Trial

"I refuse!" The words weren't spoken loud but clapped like thunder in Lex's ear. He froze in surprise, unaware of how to react. Mary, who was secretly watching, also froze in shock! The system itself forgot to give the notification for the failed quest as the present circumstance was so unexpected.

Marlo's body began to tense up and his muscle slightly flexed, preparing for any reaction. Lex, with his low cultivation, would never have noticed the minute changes on his own but the aid of the system and the Host Attire made him cognizant of anything happening around him while he was there. He let out a defeated smile, Marlo was adamant in his answer even if it meant he might encounter a fight.

"Relax," Lex said, "the choice is yours, no one will force you. But if you don't mind me asking, why did you decline? I don't think our offer is lacking."

"For anyone else, it's not. I've spent half my life with a crippled core and never heard of anything that could fix it, but your contract I could feel a chance to heal. I've spent my entire life looking up to the Nascent realm, but out in the universe I can't even imagine what else there is to find...maybe, things I dare not even think of..." Marlo's voice trailed off, as if he was thinking of something. Lex did not disturb him, and Marlo did not leave him waiting for too long.

"But no matter how tempting the offer, if I accept I will become a subordinate for life. I will have to bend my knee, have to bow my head, and that I cannot accept!" His voice was suddenly full of vigor again, his eyes burning with determination. "Maybe to others it may seem like a stupid notion to give up such an opportunity for my pride, but to me there is no reward high enough or threat grave enough to make me yeild! Everything I am, I have built step by step, encountering foe after foe, overcoming death time and time again! Maybe because of this, I will be stuck on Earth for the rest of my life, with no hope of breaking through. Maybe there will be countless others who will surpass me in the universe, reaching heights far greater than my own, but no one, NO ONE, on Earth or in the rest of the universe can ever make Hanson Marlo Bravi III kneel!"

As soon as the enthusiastic giant was done with his speech Lex received the painful notification of failed Quest as well as the 1000MP that he lost. But at the moment he wasn't paying attention to it, his focus was entirely on Marlo. To be honest, he was really starting to admire the man. It was a pity that he could not get him to join as an employee.

"Mary, is there anything else I can do right now?" Lex asked, communicating mentally. "I really don't want to miss out on this opportunity of having Marlo work for the Inn."

The tiny floating assistant appeared before him, her brows scrunched up as if she was deep in thought. After a moment she said, "The influence of the Inn spans the universe, it's services are numerous, and its reach infinite. Naturally, to support all of this you will need to gather subordinates of your own, but not everything has to be done by yourself and your subordinates. That's exactly what the Trials were made for. You can use them as a way of maintaining a relationship with Marlo, the only thing you need to consider is how to reward him. Based on Marlo's current condition, there are two things he currently really needs - firstly he needs his core fixed, and secondly he needs the various injuries in his body healed. Right now you cannot fix his core, but if you upgrade the recovery room once you can heal his body through the RP. That is the opportunity you can provide him."

"Then let's do that," Lex said, suppressing his once again bleeding heart at the MP he'd have to spend to upgrade the recovery room if Marlo completed the trial. But it was a short term loss for a long term gain, he wanted to establish a relationship with the giant. Furthermore, he knew exactly what kind of 'contract work' he could offer Marlo as he had long been trying to figure out a way to get his hands on some special items.

"I admire your spirit," Lex said aloud to Marlo. "Normally, if someone were to reject my contract - which has never happened before, just by the way - I would simply send them back. But you...I feel like offering you another path... a trial, if you will. If you succeed you will get a reward, if you fail you get nothing."

Marlo frowned when he heard the offer, not immediately accepting it. "Why would you offer me another 'path'? You don't stand to gain anything from it."

"Think of it as me taking an interest in you. I've shown you a path to surpass your world. If you have the guts to take it, if you have the strength, that remains to be seen..." with that Lex waved his hand again and another contract appeared before Marlo. It stated the conditions for the Trial, and the option to accept or decline. If he accepted he would be transferred to the location of the trial, and if he denied he would be returned to Earth. Before Marlo could finish reading the conditions, Lex disappeared. There was nothing left for them to talk about, and if Lex tried to persuade Marlo that would diminish his image as the Innkeeper.

Marlo noticed the Innkeeper disappearing, but returned his attention to the trial conditions. It read: 'Within 7 days kill 10,000 tier 1, 1000 tier 2, 100 tier 3 and 10 tier 4 zombies and recover their cores. After 7 days, or when you have recovered the cores you will automatically be returned to the Inn. Reward: Heal all injuries in your body besides the core.'

From talking to Lex he had some idea that the tiers reflected Body Tempering, Qi Training and Foundation realms reflected tier 1, 2 and 3 respectively so tier 4 probably was also equivalent to Golden core. Considering he couldn't afford to get scratched this was a difficult task, but when had he shied away from difficulty? Marlo let out a mad grin and accepted.

As soon as he disappeared, Lex and Mary reappeared, looking at the place where the giant once stood.

"10 tier 4 zombies might be too difficult, don't you think you made it too hard?"

"Since he wants me to pay for his recovery, he should also pay the price." Lex would not admit he was slightly bitter about being rejected. It was totally to cover the cost of his MP.

When Marlo reappeared, the first thing he saw was war! He was standing on a cliff, looking down at a city under siege. The city had walls over thirty feet high and ten feet wide, made of some kind of metal. The walls were covered in some kind of forcefield that started to burn any zombies that came within, but the burning was not enough to stop the zombies. Massive cannons and turrets shot nonstop at the endless hordes, and soldiers unleashed their techniques at any zombies that were nearby. But all that firepower barely caused a ripple in the horde that looked like it contained several million zombies! Not to mention, not all zombies were the size of regular humans. Massive beasts that looked like giant twenty feet tall lizards with six legs as well as wings formed what looked like a cavalry as they charged at the city from the skies, only to be shot down by air turrets as well as cultivators flying using some kind of strange body suits.

Although Marlo had lost his spiritual sense when his Golden Core was crippled, his instincts had been honed when he cultivated his body, and his instincts were telling him that Golden Core level cultivators were dime a dozen on this battlefield, and there were many who surpassed that realm. This was the most astounding battle he had ever seen, and instead of fear he was filled with endless drive and excitement. Earth had become too boring for him, and since his cultivation journey had come to an end he barely had anything to drive his ambitions. Although he had discovered some ways to increase his strength without increasing his cultivation, it was a slow and new process so it was unknown where it would lead him. But in front of him now was a new world with a much broader horizon, and it was up to him to reap its gifts.

The first thing he did was analyze the situation. Someone who only knew of his reputation might find that strange, as they would have expected the excitable giant to charge right in. But he was not stupid, in fact he was quite a bit smarter than anyone knew. He did not reach his level through blindly charging into fights, he was actually quite meticulous. His massive appearance and excitable personality were in fact his greatest ruse, to trick people into underestimating him. He loved being underestimated, especially when people underestimated his intelligence - it made his tasks so much easier. Furthermore, he was cultivating his body using a method he came up with himself, but it also filled him with unstable power that often hurt his body and caused him great pain. When he was unable to keep from yelling from pain, he would start laughing and use that as a cover to scream.

Right now, the most foolish thing he could do was to attract attention, from the zombies or the people of the city. He would attack the hordes from the sides and slowly complete his trial. He kept observing for a few hours, and when he had a good understanding of the flow of battle as well as the terrain, he jumped off the cliff and right into the edge of the zombie horde. It was time to begin the trial!

The Innkeeper

Chapter 40: Mad Marlo

Although he jumped from a great height, Marlo landed on the ground softly as if he were a feather floating in the wind. The millions of zombies in front of him didn't seem to notice him as they were busy stampeding towards the city mindlessly, which was perfect for Marlo. He looked through the horde and could easily tell that various tiered zombies were mixed throughout. 10,000 tier 1, 1000 tier 2, 100 tier 3 and 10 tier 4 zombies were a lot, but to Marlo it was nothing difficult, he just needed to decide the best method to do it.

The glow of the tattoo on his neck increased before small gold colored sand-like particles started coming out from it and spread over Marlo's body to form a full body armor. The tattoo on his neck was actually a Talisman. A Talisman was a special kind of product made by cultivators that basically performed a function - any function. How a Talisman was made, how it functioned and what were its limitations was a complex science that eluded everyone except for the most accomplished academics. The only thing most people cared about was that Talismans could accomplish various tasks, and even perform attacks like spirit techniques, and used up no spirit energy from the user which is why they were always in high demand. But unlike ordinary talismans, the one on Marlo's neck was made up of hundreds of smaller talismans, each with their own use. Even superheroes in movies these days used Nano-bots as if they were candy bought from a store, so why couldn't he, a dignified cultivator, use 'Nano-talismans'? The concept was his own, and these specific talismans were invented and are still created only by a company that Marlo founded - though the best of this kind of Nano-spirit tech he kept for himself. People tried to plagiarize the idea - Marlo personally escorted those people to their own funerals.

The golden armor quickly changed colors once it was complete, and produced a camouflage effect. The man pointed a finger at the nearest zombie, a dignified tier 3 zombie, and a needle shot out from his armor hitting the zombie in the brain killing it. Marlo pulled the dead body towards himself and retreated to a cave in the cliffside. He examined the zombie's body thoroughly, but its biology made no sense to him. Broadly it still resembled a man in that it had two arms, two legs, a torso and a head, but that was where the resemblance ended. It's skin was almost metallic to touch and its internal body was nothing except bones, muscle and what he assumed were meridians - there was no other organ in the body! The head had a wide mouth and two eyes as well as abnormally large ears. When he cracked open its head he did not find a brain, but instead a crystal in its skull suspended by what Marlo had earlier assumed were meridians. The needle Marlo shot earlier had torn all the meridians to pieces, but the crystal was completely intact!

He reached to pick up the 'crystal' but as soon as he picked it up, it disappeared from his hand and he received a mental notification that he had submitted 1 Tier 3 zombie core to the Midnight Inn.

"So that's how it is..." he murmured softly, before bringing out his signature mad grin. It was time to hunt!

This time he did not bother being subtle, and slammed his body directly into the horde as if he were a bull charging through a wheat field. Within a few moments the momentum of his body had already killed dozens of zombies, but the needles he shot out were numerous and extremely precise! In but a few moments all the zombies within fifty feet of him fell onto the floor, dead! Yet his achievement was akin to a drop of water compared to the raging tide of zombies, and before anyone could notice the dead zombies, more had filled the area.

Thoroughly in the center of things now, he did not release anymore needles and stuck to killing those zombies within his reach. Unbeknownst to anyone else, small grains of sand fell off his armor and clumped together on the floor until they formed a small, robotic looking snake. The snake slithered to the nearest zombie Marlo had killed and quickly swallowed its core, before moving onto the next.

Marlo did not stop killing zombies for even a second as this happened. The armored glove on his fist changed shape to add spikes, so that each of his punches tore directly through the tough skin of the zombies and attacked the core. In but a few minutes he had already killed over a hundred zombies - what their tiers were, he did not bother keeping track of. Some zombies tried attacking him, and he was so thoroughly surrounded that it was impossible to dodge, yet they could do nothing to his defenses. That is until, three tier four 4 zombies took notice of him and surrounded him, signaling the lesser tiered zombies to keep distance from Marlo.

"Surprisingly organized," Marlo murmured, his grin still ever present. Three tier 4 zombies, meaning 3 enemies equivalent to Golden Core surrounded him, but he was not intimidated. This was but a warm up, his real goal, one even beyond what the trial had asked of him, was far greater than this!

After Marlo left, the first thing Lex did was question Mary.

"What's a Prime Human? Why is it written differently from a normal Human?"

"As I already told you before, there are many subspecies even among humans. This is merely one of them. Prime humans, or a Prime of any physical lifeform, are those that focus on growing stronger by elevating their physical body. They are distinct from body cultivators, as body cultivators still use spirit energy to temper their bodies, but Primes directly alter and elevate their genes. They are commonly also mistaken for bloodline cultivators, because of the various similarities, however there is one distinct difference between the two. Bloodline cultivators often absorb the bloodline of stronger beings and merge with them, taking on some of the traits of the stronger being. Primes, however, only use other bloodlines as nutrition to elevate their own inherent bloodline. This form of cultivation is extremely rare in the universe, and extremely difficult. You may not encounter a single Prime in a million worlds, not because others don't try it but simply because the chances of dying are so high."

Lex accepted the answer, and silently gave praise to the mad giant in his head. He truly was a unique character. But for now none of that had anything to do with him so he returned to the Inn and started exploring all the extra land that the Inn had gained. It was flat land, without the few sparse trees he had previously planted, and looked very mundane. Originally Lex was of the mind to simply add more trees, but then decided to alter the landscape a bit. West of the main Inn building Lex started altering the land to form a few hills. Originally he wanted to add more foliage and include a few hidden areas as well, but when he looked at the cost he was incurring he simply decided to cover the hills with various flowers. For now this would do, but Lex's eyes glowed as he envisioned all that he could do in the future when his income increased. For now, this small expense of 200MP to add the hills and flowers was already a burden on him.

When he returned to the Inn he learnt that Brother Chen and Blane had already left. As soon as they stabilized their new realm they returned to the forest where they came from as they were anxious to get back to their caravan. It was unfortunate that Lex missed their departure, but he was hopeful that they would return. Or at least pass on their keys to others.

But with almost all guests gone, Lex turned his attention to other things. He returned to his apartment on Earth and logged into the Bluebird portal to investigate something that had been on his mind. It took him only a short while, but he had his answer. He promptly changed his clothes and left, catching a cab to a nearby gym. The gym itself was pretty normal, and was of a popular local chain of gyms in the city, but when he showed his Bluebird identity token at the reception he was led to a storage closet towards the back instead of the gym. As these things normally go, the storage closet was actually an elevator that took Lex deep underground.

"Nice cover," Lex commented to the receptionist who was escorting him.

"It's not a cover, the ground floor actually belongs to the gym. Bluebird is just subletting the basement. Getting your own space is too difficult, property is prime in New York."

Lex's lips twitched. And here he thought the gym was a clever disguise like in spy movies. When the elevator opened he was welcomed to a sight more fitting to what he had been expecting: a shooting range. His aim with the Heavy Harley was horrible, and he absolutely could not expect to use it without practice, and what better place to practice than a shooting range for spirit tech?

Although it was quite expensive, as he soon learned. You could not bring your own weapons, and had to get one from the armory in the shooting range. A single spirit magazine for the Heavy Harley cost him \$12,000 in the shooting range! Given, a single magazine had 100 rounds but still! Fortunately he had plenty of money to spare, and couldn't be bothered to find a cheaper alternative. To be fair, a large portion of the cost was because the shooting range would provide him with a private room in which he could practice shooting, and the room had been reinforced to be able to take damage from all the spirit weapons. He also had access to numerous video guides on how to best use the weapons available via augmented reality in his private room, which should speed things up.

When he entered his room and received his weapon, he set his target to be around fifty feet away and took his stance. He took his time to aim and fired a couple shots. He missed both of them entirely! Dumbfounded, he brought the target closer and tried again, barely hitting it this time.

Eventually he turned on the AR tutorial for the Heavy Harley, and before him appeared a stunningly beautiful girl holding the same weapon in her hand!

"The minimum base required to use the Heavy Harley is 4th tier Body Tempering, and that too is only for the spirit bullets! This is not only because of the heavy recoil, which the body has to absorb and adjust

for, but also because repeated use will harm the joints and tendons of the body unless the body is strong enough.

"Once you've met the basic requirements, the next thing you have to do is understand how the weapon works. The spirit bullets and physical bullets differ in how they are launched from the weapon! The spirit bullet is formed by first creating a spirit casing, which is then filled to capacity with unstable spirit energy. When the bullet is actually fired, the spirit energy in the bullet is allowed to leak, propelling the spirit casing forward with great momentum! However, since the propelling force of the bullet is the spirit energy within the bullet itself, the farther it travels the slower and weaker it becomes. Upon impact to a target, the spirit casing breaks causing the unstable spirit energy to explode, inflicting damage. From this you can summarize that the closer the enemy the greater the damage the spirit bullet will inflict. The optimal range for the spirit bullet is within 100 feet or 30 meters.

"The physical bullet is different, in that the propelling force for each bullet is equivalent to the entire spirit energy used in a spirit bullet. Furthermore the casing is made from a spirit metal called Haliver-6, which gives its high spirit penetrating properties in addition to its regular physical penetration capabilities. The optimal range for the physical bullet is in fact less than the spirit bullet, because the bullet suffers from a bullet drop effect due to gravity and a greater air resistance, and cannot be reliably used over 50 feet.

"Now that you have a basic understanding of the weapon and ammunition, it's time to tackle usage. For complete amateurs, if you need to use the weapon in live combat it is recommended that you equip an aim assist attachment which will predict where and how you should shoot. However, do not become too dependent on those as they can only factor in a few variables and ultimately only slightly improve accuracy. The best course is for you to become familiar on your own and improve your skills.

"First we will work on your standing accuracy, meaning your stance and shooting accuracy while standing still..."

The AR tutorial continued for hours, teaching Lex various techniques and skills required for shooting that he had not even imagined. By the time he had shot 20 spirit bullets his entire arm started to ache and he could feel that his body was not used to the recoil. However Lex was not concerned, he had a good way to heal if he ever got injured and he was also confident in his cultivation method. The only thing he had to do now was improve his shooting. After a few hours he sighed to himself as he took a small break.

'I'm so hardworking,' he thought to himself, silently admiring his work attitude and diligence.

"DIE" roared Marlo as he split a tier 4 zombie in half from head to toe with a golden scythe. But there was no time to rest as two other tier 4 zombies launched bone spikes towards him. His body vibrated as he used Golden Sparrow, a movement technique to quickly move forward! The ground was crushed from the force of his feet, but he was already gone by the time the cracks in the ground spread.

A tier 3 zombie stood in front of him, trying to stall him, but Marlo simply headbutted the zombie so hard its head was crushed! He swung the scythe in his right hand endlessly, killing all kinds of zombies near him, while holding a three feet wide, circular shield in his left hand to defend himself from attacks.

The original three tier 4 zombies that had surrounded him were long dead, and instead he was now being attacked by six tier 4 zombies and several lesser tiers as well. The golden armor he had originally donned was long gone, broken from the intense fight he was having, yet not a single drop of blood that covered his body was his own.

Three of the tier 4 zombies attacked him, each from a different angle. Marlo, who was surrounded, was not anxious but instead excited!

"Endless Halo!" he roared, activating another talisman from his neck tattoo! A bright white light covered him, before taking the shape of a ring around him and spread out hitting the three zombies. The zombies were burned severely by the ring of light, but it did not stop them - it only slowed them. That, however, was enough for Marlo who swung his scythe with all his strength, launching some kind of spirit attack at them that destroyed their heads! The attack, however, destroyed the scythe as well.

Marlo did not let that stop him, as he activated another talisman that formed a golden double sided sword in his hand. Using Golden Sparrow once again he left his spot just in time to avoid another barrage of bone spikes launched by some zombies. This time he did not immediately attack again, as he retreated for a bit and activated another talisman, making a vial with a brown liquid appear in his hand. He chugged the liquid and threw away the vial, turning towards the three zombies who were only attacking him from a distance.

"I just had 10 shots of espresso, you think a little distance can stop me?" Marlo said while laughing. The sword in his right hand that originally had a golden blade turned bright red and started giving off searing heat. He was using the only technique in his arsenal that was of his own creation. It was a very stupid technique, one that involved filling a weapon with immense energy and launching it at an enemy, but it was extremely lethal!

"Hadron Collider!" Marlo shouted and threw the glowing red blade at the farthest zombie. Before the zombie even had time to register what was happening, it's body blew up - and so did the few hundreds of zombies behind that zombie that the blade ended up piercing!

Marlo tried to activate another talisman for another weapon, but learnt that he had already exhausted all his weapon talisman. He didn't let that stop him though, he activated a different talisman that formed braces around his legs. He used Golden Sparrow once again, his speed increased this time, to launch himself at the other zombies but these last two tier 4 zombies kept dodging him, only using long range attacks. They also commanded lesser tiered zombies to form circles around them and attack Marlo when he approached!

Marlo wasn't too concerned however, he had plenty of ways to overcome the situation. He was simply trying his best to not waste his energy too quickly. He was considering how to defeat the last two zombies as quickly as possible when he heard a voice.

"Ben arth hanguvay shagohath!"

"Huh?" Marlo looked for the source of the voice, but before he could do anything a woman appeared in front of one of the two tier 4 zombies and killed with a simple swing of her sword. She had donned a simple silver armor and held a single sword in her hand, her visage clean and pristine - a large contrast to her environment.

"I don't speak your language," Marlo said, grinning madly at the woman. He could feel a great strength coming from her body. She was a body cultivator as well, and one at a higher realm than him!

"I said," this time Marlo heard a voice directly in his head, already translated to English, "that you are very wasteful with your weapons." Marlo instantly understood that she was using her spirit sense to talk to him, meaning that besides being a Body Cultivator she was also at least a Golden Core spirit cultivator.

Marlo's grin widened, and he burst into a mad laughter. His body let out a golden glow and he suddenly disappeared. His body reappeared, body slamming the last tier 4 zombie crushing it into minced zombie.

"I can't help it, it's been a long time since I've let loose like this," Marlo said, casually killing the lesser tiered zombies around him.

The woman gave him an odd look, but quickly refocused on her purpose.

"You have garnered the attention of a tier 5 zombie. Retreat to the city, I will cover you," the woman said in a very manner-of-fact way. "You've been fighting for almost 12 hours straight and have already fulfilled your kill quota for the month long ago. You can rest now."

That made Marlo burst into a mad laughter. His body started to radiate even more power, quickly attracting even more zombies towards himself.

"Isn't that perfect? I've been warming up this whole time just for that! A tier 5 zombie, meaning a Nascent level zombie! I really want to know what it feels like to fight one!"

In truth, this was exactly Marlo's goal. From the moment he saw the zombie tide, it's size and all the enemies it had, he had already put the trial from the Inn behind him. Completing it was not difficult for him at all. No, what he wanted to do was kill a zombie at a higher level than him. As a child and as a mortal, he had killed a beast with the strength of a body tempering cultivator when his village was attacked. When he started training and reached the peak of Body Cultivating, he killed a rogue cultivator at the Qi Training realm. When he was in Qi training, he had killed an enemy at the Foundation realm, and likewise at Foundation he had killed enemies in the Golden Core realm. He had never seen a Nascent cultivator before, and never thought he had an opportunity to fight one, but now that an opportunity had presented itself how could he retreat?

"Are you sure?" the woman asked, looking at him like he was crazy.

"Of course!"

Upon hearing Marlo's reply the woman left, as she could not afford to waste more time on him. If she ever saw him again, she would ask how his venture went. Most likely, if she ever did see him again, he would be a zombie. As soon as the woman left Marlo felt a hostile gaze fall upon him. All the zombies that were surrounding him retreated and Marlo was left in a rare clearing within the massive zombie horde.

He looked in the direction the gaze was coming from and found a single zombie floating in the air, looking down upon him. This particular zombie did not look like it had rotting skin, but instead like a young handsome man, if you ignore his paleness. His hair was groomed and the most surprising thing was that he was wearing proper clothes, not torn shred left from an unknown time.

"I can feel your blood will aid me greatly," Marlo heard a raspy voice in his head. "Slit your own throat, and your end will be painless. Resist your destiny as my prey, and your end will be miserable."

Marlo stared at the zombie with a bit of surprise. "I didn't know zombies could talk." Before the zombie had any time to respond, Marlo appeared in the air before him and launched a vicious attack. "But I have no interest in talking!"

His punch, which had his entire brute strength behind it, could not even move the zombie back from where he was floating. But it did put a small smile on that delicate looking face. "I'm glad you chose to resist."

The zombie flicked a finger and Marlo was thrown to the floor, his so far relaxed expression suddenly turning grave. He coughed out a mouth full of blood and used Golden Sparrow to create some distance between himself and the zombie. His shield, which was in his left hand, crumbled into pieces from blocking that single attack. His weapons breaking had no impact on Marlo but the shield breaking woke him up to a serious reality. Taking on the zombie was no joke, he had to go at full strength and could not waste a single moment testing the zombie. If he ended up taking even a couple of attacks like the one he just blocked directly then it would be unlikely he could survive!

His punch earlier used his complete strength without using any techniques, but that would have been more than enough to completely obliterate any Golden Core cultivator. On the Nascent level zombie however it was not even enough to give him a push.

Marlo summoned all his strength in his body and then, for the first time in his life, activated his hidden bloodline! His giant body started to shrink, and his massively bulging muscles started to withdraw. His aged face slowly became young again, and the crazy glint in his eyes only increased! The pain in his body was amplified, not decreased, and he knew he could only stay in this form for a few minutes as the transformation of his bloodline was not complete yet. But in exchange, the power he received was beyond what anyone could imagine! This was the source of his confidence in facing the Tier 5 zombie!

The now toned Marlo let out one of his signature mad grins, that somehow made him look handsome with his new figure, and attacked! In this form he was unable to use any spirit techniques as his body

was too unstable, but he had already planned for that. The golden tattoo on his neck glowed, and instead of a nano-talisman activating, the whole tattoo was activated! A golden glow covered his fists as if he were wearing boxing gloves. The zombie that was so far treating Marlo as a snack suddenly felt a threat, but could not react in time.

When Marlo's fist connected with the zombie it let out a sonic boom and catapulted the zombie into the horde! But Marlo gave the zombie no time to respond, no time to fight back as he followed the zombie down and continued punching! He was not directly hitting any other zombie, but the constant sonic booms from his attack hurt any of them that were close. Within twenty seconds Marlo had punched the zombie in the face over a hundred times.

The zombie's skin was like armor, and protected it well, but you could begin to see it cracking! The zombie tried to retaliate, but Marlo was relentless and interrupted each of its attacks! The zombie opened its mouth to scream but Marlo grabbed its jaw and tried to pull out its teeth! In the horde of a million zombies and a war beyond normal comprehension Marlo's attacks were but a small blip that no one else paid attention to, but all the zombies nearby could not even understand why they were the ones dying when they weren't even the ones getting attacked!

When sixty seconds passed and Marlo reached half of his power limit, and knew he would only be able to stay in this form for sixty more seconds, he decided he could no longer wait. He focused all his strength and bloodline power in his right hand and released it all with a single punch!

The ground beneath him caved in for a dozen feet and all the debris around him was blown away! All that was left was Marlo, standing magnificently over the headless corpse of a Tier 5 zombie!

Seeing that he had won Marlo used the last of his strength to laugh, his body drained of energy but filled with satisfaction. Even as his body fell backwards he kept laughing, and even as the zombie horde closed in on him, he did not stop. Fortunately, before any enemies that could reach him a fat, golden snake slithered towards him and entered into his tattoo.

He heard a notification in his head:

10,000 Tier 1 cores submitted

1000 Tier 2 cores submitted

100 Tier 3 cores submitted

10 Tier 4 cores submitted

1 Tier 5 core submitted

Trial complete! Returning to the Inn!

And with that, his body disappeared, with no one the wiser of the great feat the once giant man had completed.