

Chapter 100: Difficulty: Impossible tutorial

The waves were crashing against the fine sand. Endlessly, the ocean tried to sweep the rest of the world into its depths. It had to remember the time of the flood, when it was the sole master.

Priam was ecstatic, contemplating the power of nature. The warm wind and late afternoon sun warmed his body. A simple white T-shirt and sky-blue swimming shorts clothed the young man.

Eyes gazing at the horizon, Priam wondered about the meaning of his life. After six years at university, he was about to finish his science studies. Now, he had to choose a profession that would allow him to survive until retirement. Teacher, engineer or researcher. These were the three main paths open to him.

None of them made him dream.

It was a hot summer's day, and Priam wondered where he belonged.

"Lost in thought, handsome?"

Priam smiled as he turned around. Victoire was nimbly scaling the blockhaus on which he was perched. The Atlantic coast of south-west France was covered with these remnants of the Second World War. These massive concrete blocks had sheltered Germans waiting for the Allies to land.

The young man stood up to help his girlfriend finish her climb. Grabbing her outstretched hand, he pulled the young woman to him.

Turning to the sun, he smiled, "I wonder what to do with my life."

"Vast question," replied Victoire as she sat down on the edge of the blockhaus. Her legs hanging in the air, lit by the sun, she was beautiful. Priam sat down beside her and drew her against him.

"It's easy for you. You're going to finish medical school and help others. That's noble..."

Victoire turned to Priam. "You don't have to be noble, you know?"

"Yeah... I like my fellow men, but not enough to dedicate myself to them, I guess."

Victoire laughed. Priam smiled upon hearing it.

"Still, you take good care of me. I've known a lot of assholes, and you're not one of them."

"You're not a stranger, that's why. You're my girlfriend, and I have a responsibility to you. You make me happy. I want to make you happy too."

Victoire stared at the horizon without answering. After a minute, she sighed.

"I make you happy... You sure about that?"

Priam looked at her, astonished. "Of course. I love being with you!"

"It's not the same. I like being with our friends," she said, pointing to the group of about ten people a hundred meters from them. They were playing beach volleyball, and one of them scored. Their cheers reached the couple. "When I'm with you, it's different. I feel complete. I feel listened to. Most of all, I'm never tired of your presence. That's not how you feel about me."

"..." Priam remained silent. He respected his girlfriend too much to lie to her. She was right, of course. He liked being with his friends, but sometimes he was weary. He liked being with Victoire, but sometimes he needed to be alone.

No, it's more than that. Sometimes, his girlfriend's presence annoyed him. Irritated him.

Because I'm not in love. He dated Victoire because she was the prettiest girl in the group. Intelligent, cheerful and generous, she had it all. Everyone wanted to be with her, so Priam came on to her.

To be like everyone else.

Like a wolf wearing a mask among sheep.

All his life, he'd worn a mask. The good student in front of his teachers. The funny guy before his friends. The perfect boyfriend to his girlfriends.

He was reserved with strangers because he didn't know what mask to wear. How to please them as much as possible? How to be accepted? How to be loved?

Priam wanted to be the ocean: with a dream and the power to make it come true. The waves crashed relentlessly on the sand, for Poseidon's domain never tired. Priam was sometimes tired. Tired of wearing his mask, he sought solitude. At such times, the proximity of others disturbed him.

He was so lonely.

The sun was setting over the horizon. As if waiting for the green ray, Victoire's breath quickened. Just as the sun was about to disappear, she let slip the thought that had been weighing on her heart.

"Do you love me?"

For a moment, Priam hated her. He loved sunsets. He loved the simple nature that never judged him. He loved the calm. Victoire's question destroyed that calm. For he knew the answer.

Priam opened his mouth, a half-lie on the tip of his tongue. The sun disappeared, and a green flash reached his eyes. Priam winked. A second passed. Then two. The ray remained green.

"Wha..."

*Humanity has been chosen by the Seven Great Concepts.
Congratulations!*

*The Tutorial is about to begin.
Complete it to find your starting place in a new Universe.*

*Choose your level of difficulty.
Time: 60 seconds.*

Victoire was trembling in his arms. Eyes fixed on the blue writing that invaded his vision, Priam felt his heart quicken.

"What the... You see that too?" asked Victoire.

"The blue text? Yes."

"Shit. We have to find the others!"

The swear made Priam smile. He had never heard Victoire insult anyone, but he had to admit that the situation was exceptional. He reread the text.

"No Vic. No one is going to help us in less than a minute."

Priam didn't take drugs, and he knew he wasn't dreaming. The *System* had a kind of persuasiveness that infused these few lines. Instinctively, he knew it was all true. He could try to deny reality... Or he could embrace change. Mentally, he concentrated on the end of the introduction.

"What are the levels of difficulty?" he asked. An entity powerful enough to stop the sun had to be able to answer him. If it wanted to.

*There are seven levels of difficulty.
Free, Easy, Normal, Hard, Perilous, Nightmare.
Time: 50 seconds.*

Priam sighed with relief.

"What is the difference between the different levels? Their survival rate? Are there some prerequisites?"

A higher difficulty level gives access to greater rewards.

*Survival rates depend on the species and the individual. The System does not yet have information on your species' chances of survival.
There are no prerequisites.
Time: 40 seconds.*

"... What level of difficulty do we take?" asked Victoire.

Priam looked at the young woman with new eyes. "You're taking this in stride," he remarked.

"You adapted even faster than me."

"I'm amazing, right?"

"You can stop trying to reassure me, you know?" said Victoire. The world had just changed irrevocably, but Priam couldn't help finding her beautiful.

"So?" she asked, smiling. She seemed to be reading his mind.

"... What's the seventh level of difficulty?" asked Priam. The answer cited seven levels of difficulty and listed six. Priam was intrigued.

*The seventh difficulty level is Impossible.
Time: 25 seconds.*

"Is it really impossible?" If so, he wasn't foolish enough to let his curiosity kill him.

*Nothing is impossible.
Time: 20 seconds.*

A lot of risk, but a chance of survival... and certainly rewards worthy of the challenge.

"What happens if I pass this level of difficulty?"

*You'll have the opportunity to be free.
The opportunity to find and realize a dream.
The opportunity to be **you**.
Time: 15 seconds.*

The warm wind continued to caress Priam's skin. Ahead of him, the green ray continued to illuminate his eyes. The phenomenon described the last ray of sunlight as it disappeared over the horizon. These Concepts had succeeded in freezing the sun. Perhaps they had simply manipulated the electromagnetic wave? Or were they controlling time?

Whatever the process, these Concepts were divine. A new wave hit the sand, and Priam's heart raced. He'd found an answer.

"I'm going to take the Impossible difficulty," he announced simultaneously to Victoire, Concepts and himself.

"... I'm with you," Victoire murmured before kissing him.

*Tutorial - Selected difficulty level :
Impossible.*

*

Lvl Up: [Depths Resistance] lvl 13,14

CONST +4

VIT +4

WILL +10

You have gained the skill: [Virus Resistance - Common].

A virus is an infectious agent that parasitizes the body. Some, like rabies or Ebola, are extremely dangerous, while others do not affect the body.

A virus attaches itself to a host - often a cell - and uses it to replicate. Your high level of Vitality makes you naturally resistant to viruses. Unfortunately, viruses that surpass your resistance use this same Vitality to multiply all the faster.

This resistance modifies your cells to fight more effectively against the parasites of this threat. This resistance adjusts your aethereal code to prevent magical viruses from penetrating your cells.

VIT +1

Lvl Up: [Virus Resistance] lvl 2,3,4

VIT+3

Priam grabbed the head of the haunted armor and squeezed. His new muscles, augmented by his attributes and Micro, crushed the metal helmet. Black blood trickled from the openings. Reaching his hands, the liquid burned him as hot as molten metal.

With a cry of pain, Priam tore the head off the armor, which collapsed. Inside was some kind of mutant. The Depths virus had corrupted the alien warrior to the point of transforming it into a monster. Without a bone plate, this mutant had settled in the armor like a mollusk looking for a shell.

It was what awaited Priam.

His Domain detected a presence behind him. Priam leaped to his right. The ghost's surprise attack failed, and the Earl gritted his teeth as he stepped back. Without his Domain, he would already be dead. The many gashes on his body bore witness to the one-sided battle that was taking place.

"Why fight it?" asked Malbius. "If I don't kill you, the virus will convert you. You want to betray your race?!"

Priam took advantage of the monologue to catch his breath. "You're the one talking to me about race? When you're the one who killed his Master?"

"HE WAS TRYING TO FLEE!" shouted the boss before leaping in his direction. The other ghosts surrounded him. Priam continued to use the tactic he had been exploiting for twenty seconds now. He fled. Backed up against a wall, he was left with only one choice. With an elbow, he smashed it and leaped away.

Passing through the partition, Priam landed in a new corridor. Or was it a hall of mirrors? The opposite wall was made up of windows overlooking the Dome. Priam took no time to admire the view. To his right, a suit of armor began to move. Promesse angrily pierced its skull. These were the only enemies he could wound.

Passing through the hole he had opened, eight ghosts crossed the wall in search of him.

"Flee where?" asked Priam to save time.

"... Our Champion had found the coordinates of our old world," Malbius breathed.

"Didn't the Concepts capture your planet?"

"Only the main one. Like any advanced civilization, we conquered our entire solar system. There aren't enough resources on a single planet to support twenty billion people."

Priam coughed, almost embarrassed. Human civilization was advanced!

"And you didn't want to return to your old world?" questioned Priam.

Malbius froze. Slowly raising his eyes to Priam, he began to tremble. "We were doomed. I accepted it, and they didn't. They would have corrupted the last children..." Suddenly, the boss's claws dug into his own spectral flesh. With a shrill cry, Malbius fell to the ground, and the ghosts advanced again.

Cursing, Priam tried a new tactic. Manipulating the aether was useless. **[Tribulation Piercing Spear]** was useless. It was time to do something stupid.

Priam's tenacious spirit left his body to meet the various ghosts. For the first time since the battle began, they paused. The specters seemed to hesitate over their target: to kill the spirit or the body?

Taking advantage of their indecision, Priam approached the nearest ghost and threw a punch. He had put all his spiritual strength into it. Instead of passing through, his attack hit the ghostly flesh, and Priam exulted. For the first time, he had hit one of these specters. *At last!*

The next instant, his smile disappeared. Thrown backward, the ghost howled in pain, waking his comrades. They charged at Priam's spirit, who was holding his spectral hand and cursing. He felt as if he'd hit a concrete wall - with the brittle bone disease. *My spiritual body is weak!*

Behind the approaching barrage of ghosts, Malbius stood up and sneered.

"I'll enjoy your heart as an appetizer and your mind as dessert!"

Opening his mouth and displaying his triple row of sharp teeth, the boss pounced on Priam. His body was too far away to flee. Gritting his teeth, Priam concentrated on his draconic instincts. [Mirror of the Soul] opened, and the steel concept infused his spiritual body. His arms were now more robust.

Thanks to them, Priam managed to block two spectral attacks. Malbius was now before him and Priam parried his attack. Grabbing the ghost by the wrist and shoulder, Priam lifted him before bringing him down to his knees.

For the first time, he heard a spectral bone crack. A sweet sound.

His mist warned him that a suit of armor was approaching his unconscious body, and Priam turned back.

Reintegrating his body, he kicked the armor, throwing it backward. It smashed into a wall, and Priam went after it. Without giving it time to get up, he crushed its head with his heel.

Dizzy, Priam clutched at a piece of furniture that had miraculously survived to keep from falling. The invasion of the Depths virus and the associated corruption were weakening him. He hesitated to activate the regenerative power of **[Three-Headed Hydra]**. A hundred gashes covered his body. He'd lost too much blood. A drop trickled into his eyes, and Priam wiped it away with his hand.

*Lvl Up: **[Hemorrhage Resistance]** lvl 10
VIT +1*

A ghost protruded from a wall behind him and, tired, Priam tried to slap it away. His hand passed through it. The specter screamed as it recoiled. Half his face was gone. Bewildered, Priam looked at his hand. He hadn't done anything special, but the ghost had been hurt.
Why?

The other ghosts arrived, surrounding Priam.

[Bullet Time], **[Focus]**. Priam knew the answer was near. He needed this answer... [Eidetic Memory] and Vivacity were fully deployed. His mental attributes enabled him to think almost thirty times faster than a human. In the space of a hundredth of a second, Priam understood the difference between this attack and his previous ones.

A quarter of a second later, he dipped the tip of Promesse in his various wounds. A tenth of a second later, boosted by his attributes, Micro and **[Kinetic Control]**, Priam began to move. His right foot came forward, cracking the parquet floor.

[Spear Strike] x8.

It took half a second for Promesse to strike the heads of the various ghosts.

Shockwaves erupted under the power of his acceleration, destroying most of the room's walls. The ceiling cracked.

"Hey Priam, load-bearing walls aren't called that for nothing, you know?" Diamond's voice sounded worried.

The fatigue was becoming too much, and Priam simply grunted.

The ectoplasms vanished, leaving behind them a kind of suspended dust. Only Malbius remained alive. Screaming, the creature covered its face and seemed to disappear. Promesse fell once more on the boss without doing him any more damage. The blood infused by [Tribulation Dragon] was insufficient to vanquish it.

Frowning, Priam observed his latest notification.

Title won!

[Pseudo Immortal Slayer - Silver] - There are many ways to escape natural death. One of them is to turn into a ghost. It is not enough to escape from you. After refusing Death's kiss, you send it new prey. Will this be enough to make amends? You have put an end to the pseudo-immortality of some beings. Keep up the good work. When fighting immortals, your instincts can whisper to you their weaknesses. The longer the fight goes on, the more distinct this whisper becomes.

Priam turned his gaze to Malbius. He'd have time to face the Master later. *For now, let me understand how to kill a ghost...*

The ceiling creaked again. His mist tipped him off to a new enemy approaching. The armor was still far off, but Priam could attack through the walls. Raising Promise, he hurled it at the oblivious armor. The spear shattered three walls before piercing the enemy.

The beams could no longer support the weight of the upper floors. With a sound like the end of the world, the mansion collapsed.

*

Status: (Average value for a Homo sapiens male before integration: PHY 10 / MEN 10 / META 0)

PHYSICAL:

Strength 236

Constitution 377 (+4)

Agility 294 (+16)

Vitality 382 (+12)
Perception 485 (+17)

MENTAL:

Vivacity 280 (+2)
Dexterity 331 (+6)
Memory 70
Willpower 434 (+28)
Charisma 366 (+30)

META:

Meta-affinity 234 (+17)
Meta-focus 178 (+9)
Meta-endurance 119
Meta-perception 76 (+5)
Meta-chance 198
Meta-charisma 12 (+12)

Potential: 5875 (+62)
Tier 0

[He Who Eludes Death] charge: PRIMED

[Tribulation]: No Tribulation pending.

Future Tribulations delayed until:

Time: 180 days 21 hours 43 minutes 48 seconds.