

Training

Tali watched from above as Ryun moved through the glade leaving dead monsters everywhere he went. At first he stood high enough up that they couldn't reach him, but by now he had gotten lower, just a meter or so above the ground. Giving the monsters a chance to strike, and a few even had, though their attacks couldn't even get through his armor.

He was unleashing techniques with every passing moment. By now he had timed his techniques in such a way that he always had three orbs above his head, creating a new one just as another fired. She could see why he called the technique a flicker, it lasted for just a split of a moment, so fast that most might miss it. He was using his focus to fire the same stage of his technique now, and she could see that he was trying to switch his stats around in bursts, putting everything in dexterity and strength when he fired his flicker. He was probably trying to kill as many of the monsters with it by "flicking" his hand fast enough to cover a large area before the technique ended. He had sacrificed the continuous effect for speed. She knew that he had tried to extend it, but to get a beam of such speed required a rapid discharge of charged Qi. They had tried to tweak the technique, but were unsuccessful, if he wanted a continuous effect, he needed to sacrifice speed.

Soon he was moving through the thousands of monsters trying to overwhelm him. Looking at him now, she couldn't help but think that his sensory skill truly was unfair. He was leaping around, looking as if he was jumping on air—which he was—wearing heavy armor that he obviously didn't know how to properly move in. He looked clumsy, his movements were... untrained, yet they weren't exactly wrong either. His skill, **|Enhanced Adaptation|**, let him correct himself. She doubted that he even noticed it. Every time he made a step that threatened to put him out of balance his body corrected itself, it adapted. It didn't work just on his body, it worked on his entire being. Such passive skills were always incredibly powerful, even though they might not seem so from the outset.

He was adapting to a new style of fighting incredibly quickly. She could literally see him improving as he was fighting the monsters. The horde of monsters wasn't a true test, of course, he had always been good against hordes of enemies. The only thing that they've changed to his approach against such opponents was that now he tried to keep his distance. A balance of always keeping himself in range that let him use his techniques to the fullest, but staying far enough away that they couldn't touch him. The times of him using physical stats to overcome opponents were gone. They've based his style on one thing and one thing only, survival. The less he got hit, the more Qi he had available to throw at his opponents.

He wasn't killing many of the monsters, his beams were cutting through them, but he was killing dozens at a time at most. And thousands more were waiting for him to make a mistake and land a blow. Then she saw him stop using Void and switch to Stillness.

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A hedza was soaring through the air, the monsters had started building web-like platforms to get more height, get closer to reaching him. He had played around with Void enough, he had gotten a good sense of how to tether techniques outside of his body in combat situations and what that would afford him. With his sense he could fire them in any direction, cut apart anyone coming his way without needing to really move his body or fire from his hands. Aiming was an issue, but he just needed to learn how to rely more on his skills for that.

Now, as a hedza neared him, he switched his Qi type and shaped a different technique. With a **{Twilight Shaping Cast}** he created a small box of space filled with Stillness Qi, the area which hedza was passing through. All Essence that his Stillness touched came to a stop, anchored in space. The result wasn't at all what he had expected. He hadn't practiced this against monsters, not against anything living, only against Tali's techniques.

He had missed, or half missed at least. His box was off center, and he had caught only a third of the hedza in it. What happened was... a third of the monster was stilled in place, and two thirds weren't. The monster screamed, flapping with six of its legs in the air, a crunching sound happened the moment his technique caught it. But now... He saw flesh bulge, blood start to seep through its orifices, within moments the monster died. It was hanging up in the air with a third of its body frozen and pristine, and the other two were... a mess.

Ryun's mind was faster thanks to his perks, it allowed him time to think during situations such as this. What happened? Well, it was easy to imagine that he had managed to still part of its body while it was moving, the momentum had torn things inside of it as it came to a sudden stop, but more than that... This monster was flesh and blood, blood circulation had been interrupted, flesh had ripped itself apart as muscles that were half stilled tried to move. He had caught its back side, severing bones with the momentum of its leap, maybe the spine too, if what he was sensing even was the spine.

What happened probably didn't matter, what did was that he could do it in the first place. Could he just... still someone's heart? Blood trying to enter an area where Essence was stilled, hitting a wall and... not having anywhere to go? Would it just rupture veins? Or would it just... slow with nothing beating to pump blood. Or would a person with its heart stilled just rip themselves apart if they moved while a part of them was bound in place. He would need to practice all of that, but not now when he was in battle. He would need a much more meticulous way of testing. Already he had a suspicion that the tier of Qi and the power of the target would have something to do with how much he could still them. He doubted that he could just affect Tali's body like that. His Qi would have to penetrate through her body, her Qi, it wouldn't get far.

He switched to his branch technique as the Stillness Qi ran out and the monster fell to the ground. A dozen of the monsters were mid leap, and he released another technique. The **{Field of Twilight's Calm}** hit all of them, this was a lot less targeted blast of Stillness, nor was it nearly as intense, it was like a he threw a curtain of mist at them. The monsters hit

slowed in their leap, the air around them stilling as well as the outer layers of their bodies, but nothing as extreme as what had happened before.

He moved, walking on air, pushing through the Stillness Qi he filled the area with and getting out of their range before the effect was done. A few moments after they were moving again, but he could tell that the technique had done some damage. The monsters fell to the ground, some collided, and were then disoriented.

Before he had a chance to do anything else, the ground shook, and just as his narrowed sense caught something beneath the ground the monster ripped through the dirt, sending scores of the smaller hedza flying.

Horde Queen-Hakza (Tier 17)

The much larger hedza had only four legs, muscular and long with wicked claws tipping six fingers. She was as large as a school bus, with the same triangular head and hollowed out fang at the front. The main difference were the legs, and the spiked tail on her back. She bent her legs and then jumped, spraying something that wasn't at all like the web-like threads of the males, but instead something like a geyser of liquid. Ryun wasn't about to let that thing touch him, so he used **|Pouncing Rush|** to move out of the way. He lowered the effects of gravity on himself, allowing his body to move faster and farther into the air. Once he was high enough up, he stopped his momentum and then completely nullified the push of gravity on his body. He stood high in the air, watching as the monster landed and turned to look up above. He grinned, as he saw more queens jumped out of the ground. That was what he had been waiting for.

He pulled out a javelin and then pulled on his Qi.

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Tali watched as Ryun pulled out a javelin, a copy of the masterwork weapon that he had decided on using. Her attention was on him as he started his attack. They had tried hard to find a way for him to be able to do damage at a distance, he was now hundreds of meters in the air above

the monsters, too far for them to reach him. He could probably fire his flicker technique and hit them, but that technique had limitations. Against more powerful opponents it wouldn't quite be enough, not at such distance. Some would be fast enough to avoid it, others would have defensive techniques that could protect them, or deflect the attack. His only high damage move was his main Path's fruit technique. His cut skill and perk were strong too, but ultimately, they were mid-range, and better left as an ace in case he got surrounded or someone closed the distance with him.

No, they had decided on something else. Something that most would consider insane, but... Ryun as always was unfair. She watched as he moved his Qi and pushed it all into the javelin, shaping a technique at the core of the weapon. The masterwork weapon was filled with Qi, something that it was never meant to channel. Violet cracks spread through the weapon, it was becoming unstable, but its durability was increased enough that it would survive for a few more seconds at least. Plenty of time it seemed.

Ryun pulled his arm back and she saw him aim, still pushing the Qi into the weapon and probably using his targeting skill. Then he threw it with great strength. He had most likely moved some of his stats into his physical ones, as the glowing javelin flew through the air and hit the monster queen in the back. The javelin pierced the flesh and then it gave out. The metal handle cracked fully, and the technique was released.

A sphere of black and violet expanded, a **{Final End}**. A hundred meters of the forest became a crater filled with nothing, the queen and all of the monsters surrounding it nowhere to be seen. With a lot of his stats pushed into wisdom, his technique was one of the most destructive things Tali had seen. Not as strong as some out there, but close. Ryun had charged the technique fully; it had taken him a more than ten seconds to fully charge the technique compared to the eight that he needs when doing it in his body. Probably because he had been pushing Qi just through the conduits in his arm and the shaping the technique outside of his body.

She still couldn't help but wince every time he threw one of those javelins, it was hard to remember that they were copies. And it was one of the first things that new formation masters learned how to do. A formation

at its core was just a more developed and specialized technique, bound in an object made to hold it. Most things weren't made for things like that. Techniques couldn't last in them, or as she had just witnessed, the objects breakdown if the Qi pushed into them was something destructive like Void.

No one would do anything like this, ever. A masterwork item was the lowest rarity item that could survive Ryun's technique, and it was only because his awakened forge increased the durability of his items by a high margin. Still, it could only last for a short period of time—though she doubted that even many Eternal items would do much better. Destroying a masterwork item just to throw a melee range technique at a distance was ludicrous, and yet Ryun had his copies. His awakened forge let him treat items as disposable things. Even the armor that he wore was a copy. She could go down and unleash one of her most powerful attacks, destroy his armor, and he would just pull out another set out of his forge. It was... annoying, to say the least.

Another javelin flew through the air, the target leapt evading the attack. But the javelin curved in the air and hit its target—another of the queens—moments later, another sphere of black and violet flashed into existence.

At least he could only have 16 copies, which meant he could use that technique 16 times at a distance... *Just sixteen*—she thought to herself with a shake of her head.

He was so unfair.