

## [David Lance POV]

I followed Wioska into a cave, where she said the last part of my training would take place.

What exactly would I do there? She didn't care to elaborate, but if the challenges she had made me do so far were anything to go by, I knew it would be difficult.

As we walked further and further in, the cave became more treacherous, to the point I had to be careful not to slip on the slimy rocks or touch the eerie glowing fungi that lined the walls. Each step became more and more dangerous.

Eventually, we came to a stop in front of a deep pool of water, where Wioska motioned for me to jump in.

I nodded. But before I could take a single step into the pool of water, she gave me a strong shove from behind, blasting me into the pool with massive force.

In pain from her hit, I gasped as I hit the water. It was freezing cold and, at the same time, burning hot, a combination that made my lungs cry for air.

I struggled to get to the surface, it was almost as if the water was holding me down by a force I couldn't see. Not only that, but I could also feel my strength draining and my vision starting to fade as the seconds went by.

I didn't need to know more to know this water wasn't normal by any means. Growling under my breath, I pushed as hard as I could, trying to free myself from the grasp of this treacherous trap, but the more I tried to escape, the harder it became.

I had no choice.

I had to use the ring if I wanted to survive this.

However, before I could even will myself to actually use the ring to escape this trap, Wioska's face appeared in front of me, and with a quick movement of her right hand, she grabbed my arm, yanking me out of the pool.

Out of the water, I gasped for air, coughing up water as I collapsed on the ground beside Wioska, who simply stood there, looking at me with a satisfied smirk on her face.

"The greatest enemy any warrior can face is nature," Wioska said coldly. "That pool drains pure energy, no matter the shape this one takes. Be it Chi or electricity, this water will drain the body dry."

I looked at the water with a frown. A body of water that absorbed all forms of energy that was dangerous, too dangerous.

"Why are we here?" I asked, not really expecting an answer.

I mean, normally, she would simply ignore my questions or tell me I was supposed to figure that shit out by myself. But it is like they say, you don't lose anything by asking.

"Well, that's simple, my young student, all you need to do is find a way to cross this water and reach the other side," Wioska smiled, giving me a strange look before she turned around and started to walk away, leaving me alone in front of the pool of death.

I stared at her, retreating back for a moment before I turned my attention back to the task at hand. How was I supposed to cross this water? Jumping across it was beyond my capabilities, thanks to the seals Wioska had in place.

Swimming across was also out of the question.

I could probably build a raft if I found the right materials. But now that I think about it, I haven't seen a single tree in this world, only rocks. I suppose I could try and carve a boat out of rocks, but for that, I would need to calculate the weight of water I'm gonna displace in order to ensure the result is greater than the weight of the boat going into the water, as

well as making sure the center of gravity of said boat remains above the waterline.

I could do that. However, without the proper tools, that would take me more than a day.

And I don't think Wioska would give me that much time.

I could try to find a way to resist the water's power, but without any knowledge of this world, that would be a long shot.

Taking a deep breath, I stared at the ceiling of the cave, trying to come up with a solution.

But no matter how much I racked my brain, I couldn't think of anything. And it was here when it hit me; I could use the ceiling.

The cave had plenty of rocks that could be used as handholds and footholds. Sure, most of them looked unstable; but I was careful I was certain I could make it to the top and continue to the other side, bypassing the water altogether.

It was a risky plan, needless to say, but it was the only one so far that felt viable.

"Let's do this," I muttered, my ring glowing red as it enunciated the words.

And with that, I started to climb.

From the get-go, the climb wasn't easy, the rocks were slippery, and more than once, I nearly fell into the water below.

But through blood and pain, I pushed on, driven by the desire not to fail now that I had gotten so far.

Eventually, after an hour of pain and sweat, I made it to the other side, and as soon as I was out of the water's reach, I collapsed on the ground, panting and exhausted.

I was more exhausted than I expected.

Perhaps even from afar, the water was dangerous. It would certainly explain why I felt like I ran two hundred marathons in less than a single minute.

The qualities of this water were unlike anything I had seen before. If I could find a way to use it without affecting me... I can't even begin to imagine the possibilities.

Before I could continue with that line of thought any further, Wioska appeared in front of me then, a pleased smirk on her face.