

## Chapter 81: Spear versus Bow

The fissure was small, but it was there. Priam turned quickly to Mercury's man.

"Get my father to safety," he said before running off toward the Ducal Palace. Mercury had promised to find Alain and keep him safe until his reunion with Priam. Only until then. Of course, Priam wanted to see his dad again, but the situation was terribly dangerous. His father's safety was more important.

With a heavy heart, Priam raced towards the Ducal Palace. Located in the center of New Earth, the building sparkled under the light of the wyvern's attacks. Its green and silver reflections would have blinded most men, but not Priam.

Leaping from rooftop to rooftop, avoiding the panicked crowd running through the streets, Priam pondered about his last question. It was due to expire in a few minutes, and a thousand questions were on his mind. *How to survive my Tribulations? How to overcome my Tribulations? How to get the most out of my Tribulations?*

Running across the green roof of a stall, he looked up. Before him, a wide street separated his building from the next. Stepping on a few flowers, he jumped. His shadow silhouetted against the trees lining the street below, Priam asked the most open question possible.

*What do I need to know?*

*Answer: Set aside your flesh, absorb Damocles' cloud in your Domain.*

The last answer had been given. As usual, it was cryptic, but Priam nodded. He understood.

Landing on the next building, Priam heard a terrible creak. He wasn't yet dense enough to cause structural damage to the building. The sound resembled a crack in an iceberg, and its source was high up. A second fissure had appeared. Clearly, the wyvern wasn't tired.

In response to the crack, a terrifying roar was heard. Looking up towards the Ducal Palace, Priam chuckled. Apparently, he wouldn't have to make the whole trip. In the distance, the Palace gates opened. Priam resumed his course, modifying his trajectory. The Lord of the Dome was coming to meet him, and he had no intention of confronting him in the middle of the city. The loss of life would be tragic...

Five steps later, his Perception screamed. Throwing himself to his right, Priam barely dodged a projectile. Raising himself in a single movement, he spotted the arrow finishing its course in a building, exploding it. The attack had almost impaled him in mid-air.

Closing his eyes momentarily, Priam understood how his Perception had alerted him about the supersonic attack. He'd never noticed it before, but the dome was also covered in a mist, so fine as almost imperceptible. His new Title and Perception gave him heightened sensitivity. It was this mist that had saved him by spotting a fast-approaching projectile.

At the origin of the shot, a colossus was once again bending his bow. Or rather, a cyclops. A few meters from the heavy Palace gates, the Lord of New Earth had decided to take matters into his own hands. Far from resembling his stupid cousin Polyphemus, his single eye sparkled with intelligence. His movements were graceful, and Priam found himself admiring the dexterity with which the Lord was once again bending his bow.

If Sphinx had unlocked Domain, cyclops had unlocked Micro. Maybe less magical at first sight, this Supremacy was terrifying when its user knew how to use it.

Priam straddled the mist to dodge a second shot that destroyed several buildings behind him. Nobody could have said how many humans had died from this single attack. *Shit.*

Confronting the cyclops on open ground seemed a mistake, and the rooftops offered no security. Priam jumped into an alley below to cut off the archer's line of sight.

So far from the Market, the fleeing men and women were fewer. But there were enough of them to keep Priam from running at full speed. Quickly looking up at the walls, he gained momentum and attempted a wall jump. The idea was to move from facade to facade.

His right foot brutally crushed the stone of a beautiful house, leaving a trace in the rock. Taking off toward a house on the opposite side of the street, Priam smiled as he flew over the crowd. His other foot landed on a ledge before his powerful muscles, manipulated by Micro, propelled him again.

In a matter of seconds, Priam crossed a hundred meters, flying above the street. *It's working!* The sensation was exhilarating as he discovered a new way of getting around. In the distance, the silhouette of the Colosseum loomed like a shadow over the luminous dome.

*Lvl Up: [Art of Movement] lvl 20*

*AGI +1*

*PERC +1*

*DEXT +1*

*[Art of Movement] has reached level 20. As a rare skill, a bonus is available. Choose one of these three options:*

*[Great Art of Movement] - You perfect your art. POT -30*

*[Spatial Movement] - You consider the three spatial dimensions of an environment to optimize your movements. POT -30*

*[Micro Movement] - You learn to use your whole body to optimize your movements. Synergizes with Micro. POT -30*

Priam hesitated for a moment. The three upgrades looked tempting, but only one of them was possible.

As one of his wall jumps destroyed a window frame under the power of his leap, the mist detected a projectile. **[Kinetic Control]**. Priam accelerated while in air, dodging an arrow

that would undoubtedly have been fired from above. The Concepts must have downloaded a wealth of ballistic knowledge into the monster's head, for the shot was perfect.

*Lvl Up: [Dodge] lvl 11*  
*AGI +1*

The arrow penetrated the ground in an explosion of dust and rock debris. Fragments of cobblestone flew, penetrating defenseless bodies. Several people fell to the ground screaming.

Priam gritted his teeth as he saw a shocked little girl staring at the headless body of what must have been her mother.

Hundreds of frightened humans were running in all directions. As a man with the build of a rugby player threatened to crush the little girl in his panicked flight, Priam straddled the mist. He lifted the child before heading for a nearby building. His Perception detected two whispering voices inside - one relatively high-pitched.

Knocking for a moment on the building door, Priam sighed as he heard the voices fall silent. Nobody wanted to open their door just after an explosion. Yet Priam's proximity was currently dangerous. Deciding to leave the door intact, he jumped out, causing the little girl to hiccup with surprise.

Clinging to the first-floor balcony, Priam broke the window. Pushing the child inside, he shouted.

"Ma'am, there's a little girl upstairs. I'm going to take care of the monster, so help her!"

With one last sad smile for the traumatized child, Priam leaped out into the street. He hadn't taken the time to say a word to the orphan or reflect on his responsibility. His attention refocused: the next arrow was already coming.

*Boom!* Another dodge and other screams. The precision and power of the cyclops' attack were incredible. The shot was also getting faster and faster, and if **[Aether Perception]** wasn't lying, it was only a physical attack. The Lord was a force of destruction without even magically reinforcing his shots. *It is Micro's true power*, Priam thought. The Supremacy could transform a body into an indestructible weapon, and for the moment, he had only scratched the surface of its possibilities.

Referring to the descriptions of his Supremacy and his conversations with Bechar, Priam validated an improvement to **[Art of Movement]**.

***[Micro Movement]** - Learn to use your whole body to optimize your movements. Synergizes with Micro.*  
*POT -30*

Instantly, he corrected himself slightly as he prepared his next wall jump. Not the position of his foot - his movement skill took care of that - but rather the way his muscles positioned

themselves. Tibialis anterior, soleus, extensor retinaculum, triceps surae, and other muscles in his legs were repositioning themselves to improve his jump.

His foot outstretched, Priam arrived on a new façade and executed a perfect wall jump. The cushioning was softer, the support more solid, the extension more powerful. Thanks to the upgrade, Micro now synergized with **[Art of Movement]**. Priam flew between the buildings. Heart racing, he accelerated even more.

Two attacks - accompanied by tragic cries - later, he arrived in the square surrounding the Colosseum. It was empty of people, most of whom were trying to flee to their homes. A third crack appeared in the barrier protecting the dome as if to urge Priam on.

Priam charged forward, aided by **[Kinetic Control]**. **[Micro Movement]** allowed him to use Micro to run even faster. Thanks to his high density - and therefore greater mass - his strides didn't send him skyward. The air pressed against his skin, like a film of fluid trying to slow him down - vainly.

*Lvl Up: [Friction Resistance] lvl 5*  
*AGI +1*

Priam's different skills began to work together, gradually creating a monster.

The mist whispered of a new attack, and Priam, focused on his run, leaped. As real artillery fire destroyed the ground behind him, he flew some twenty meters before landing at the end of his run in front of the Colosseum gates. Placing his hand on one of the doors, he pressed hard to enter. The door remained closed.

"Sorry Priam, but you can't enter the Colosseum with a Tribulation in progress... At least not without the Lord's approval," Bechar's voice whispered in his ear.

"Shit. Thanks Bechar." This was one of the System's advantages: all problems had violence as a solution. Priam was in a violent mood.

A new arrow was coming. Raising Promesse, Priam brought it down on the projectile to deflect it. **[Micro]**, **[Spear Strike]**. With an ultra-violent shock, the arrow flew back like a baseball. *Home Run!*

The backlash threw Priam a meter before he absorbed it. As he landed, Priam shook his right hand, grimacing. Trying to stop - or deflect - a Lord's attack with just one hand was still too early; the message was clear.

About two hundred meters away, positioned on a four-story building reminiscent of a small Byzantine palace, the cyclops watched him, his bow down.

Priam clutched his spear with both hands, determined to protect the Colosseum from another arrow. He still needed it, and he considered the building to be his property already. After all, it would be as soon as he became the Lord...

"You're powerful for a human. I respect that. But using my dome to temporarily dodge your Tribulations is cowardly," declared the cyclops, who magically reached Priam.

Priam let out a growl. "Do you think I have a choice? There's a fucking wyvern out there gunning for me. The locusts will devour my mist and then me. Without the dome and its protection, I don't stand a chance," he shouted. There had to be a technique to project his voice as the cyclops did, but he didn't know it.

"You want to kill me to take control of the barrier," understood the cyclops. "Clever, but it won't hold forever. The locusts are absorbing its energy, the rain is sapping its defenses, and the wyvern is this close to creating a hole in it."

The cyclops was far away and Priam hesitated to attack. His most powerful attack could certainly reach his opponent before he could dodge, but it would leave him in critical condition. A less powerful attack would be parried or dodged.

"I'll get them in one after the other, don't worry about the barrier."

"Really? The locusts will massacre the humans in the dome in a matter of minutes, do you realize that?"

"No, they'll attack the one who started the Tribulation," Priam countered.

"In priority, yes," agreed the cyclops. "But there are millions of them right now. You won't attract them all. The Tribulation isn't just a test of strength, it's also a test of character. Will you let your kind die? I guess we'll never know, because you're going to die here," he said, raising his bow.

Priam gritted his teeth. The cyclops' words were designed to unsettle him. It was working. He had seen the frightened little girl. He knew his father was somewhere in the dome. The System wouldn't let him get away easily. Blood would be spilled today. The question was: whom?

"Damn it!" he swore, raising Promesse. **[Focus]. [Emotional discipline]**. The skills allowed him to focus on the present. The important thing was to face one trial after another. The cyclops was right, it all started now, with their fight.

**[Aether Perception]** pulsed, and Priam's eyes widened. All the aether in the square was shaking. Some of it began to flow towards the bow. The cyclops was continually stringing his weapon, and the amount of energy he was accumulating was awe-inspiring.

Priam grimaced as he looked at his reserves. Thanks to the physical attacks he had absorbed from Sphinx, he had access to far more energy than his opponent. The difference between him and the cyclops was that his enemy concentrated his energy for several seconds, whereas Priam had no choice but to release his energy instantly. It was annoying, as his meridians would explode if he used too much kinetic energy. Impossible, therefore, to snipe at the Lord from his current position.

He needed to get closer.

Concentrating on his mist, Priam created a screen of water vapor. In a second, a massive half-sphere of steam appeared. He then focused on **[Moon Mist]** and **[Stealth]**. The mist was meant to mask his physical and magical presence.

The aether stopped shaking, and Priam smiled. The cyclops seemed surprised not to find his opponent.

Suddenly, a flash appeared in the mist, and Priam's previous position exploded, bombarded by an arrow. The attack had been too swift to detect or dodge. Priam swallowed and approached the cyclops, preceded by the mist. All he had to do now was get closer.

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Bechar, leaning against one of the Colosseum's windows, watched the amateur fight. Priam had made progress since the last time, but it was mainly quantitative. His attributes and skills had increased, but his Supremacy remained pathetic.

The only positive point was the control he exerted over his mist and the improvements he made to it. The Colosseum administrator had no problem detecting the human. The cyclops, for his part, was confused. After all, the mist was disturbing his unique eye.

The Lord began to attack randomly through the mist, and Bechar shook his head. The cyclops had a significant attributes advantage over Priam, but he didn't have enough luck. Or rather, META (Luck). The attribute had many effects, and luck would be on Priam's side in a fight. In addition, trying to hit him blindly was unworthy of a warrior.

As the mist advanced toward the cyclops, he remained static. Bechar sighed at the Lord's confidence - hubris, even. Of course, his bloodline was far superior to those of Priam. But the young human was used to combat, and the Lord's inexperience made him overconfident.

Less than twenty meters from the mist, the Lord put away his bow and pulled out a knife before leaping into the mist.

Bechar sighed. Cyclops were a terrifying race when they gained experience, but they had the flaw of being reckless. *Stupid, even*, thought Bechar.

Of course, a Lord had an image to maintain, but there was nothing cowardly about repositioning when you were an archer. Nevertheless, Bechar wondered how Priam intended to defeat his adversary. Despite his questionable decisions, the cyclops was still a formidable opponent.

The Lord lay in wait in the mist, trying to force his eye to penetrate the obstacle. It was an excellent idea, for their power came from their eye. Every time a cyclops developed their visual organ, they gained power, just as when a Hydra gained a head.

Of course, this kind of evolution was rare and required a tight and bloody duel. Only extreme willpower tempered by nameless violence could help.

Smiling, Bechar watched Priam stealthily approach the cyclops, observing its movements and copying them with Micro. The human was weak, but he knew how to adapt. This character trait, coupled with his Talents, could take him far.

A few meters from the cyclops, Priam charged forward, seeming to merge with his mist for a moment, and Bechar burst out laughing. *He might have had a chance after all.*

"Tribulation Piercing Spear."

The name of the skill resounded under the dome as a fourth crack opened up because of the wyvern.

Both attacks were successful.

\*

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

**PHYSICAL:**

*Strength 170*

*Constitution 289*

*Agility 206 (+3)*

*Vitality 309*

*Perception 370 (+2)*

**MENTAL:**

*Vivacity 183*

*Dexterity 235 (+1)*

*Memory 50*

*Willpower 306*

*Charisma 172*

**META:**

*Meta-affinity 178*

*Meta-focus 111*

*Meta-endurance 101*

*Meta-perception 51*

*Meta-chance 114*

*Potential: 3850 (-26)*

*Tier 0*

*[He Who Eludes Death] charge: PRIMED.*