

# Chapter 2

I guess it WAS a tiger

I don't know whether I was a prophet or Milo Murphy, but it was a tiger—nay, a tiger<sup>2</sup>.  
I mean, why is this thing so big?? Why haven't these people hunted down all this megafauna?

My useless rambling about the biodiversity of this world aside, I was in some serious trouble.  
I needed to somehow escape alive. I couldn't go back to the village—they would sacrifice me if they found out I was a fraud.  
I needed to escape into the forest. The tiger's home.

I was thinking about this as the tiger started to approach. As it moved forward, its body became more visible—flesh-red skin decorated with piercing black stripes. Its teeth were dirtied red with the dried-out blood of its prey... which would soon include me.

I had no ability.  
I had no skill.  
The one who brought me here gave me nothing.

The tiger had taken its leap.  
I was about to die.

Now.  
...  
Any second now...

Confused, I looked up and found the tiger frozen in place.  
There were words floating in the air: "serious...", "warrior...", "stop..."

I heard a strange robotic voice announce:

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The words floating in the air all flew toward me and stabbed me one by one.  
There was no blood, but that strange sharp pain returned.  
I slowly felt my eyes blur.

My senses felt numb, but not fully gone.  
I could feel a strong wind surging behind me, and my body moving on its own.

There were sounds of stabbing and slashing.

There was blood on the ground.

It seems someone has come to save me. That's... the... only... possibility...

Hah...

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I woke up.

The sky had turned an apathetic Nile blue, with a yellow gradient slowly emerging.

All I found near me was my own sword—covered in blood—and the tiger's head.

Looking at it, a devious little idea clawed the back of my mind.