

## Analysis

For the first time he truly felt a soul die. Zach's had spent a lot of time sharpening the sense of his soul. He had never imagined what it would feel like, to see it in such a way. Anrosh's soul had cried out in a soundless tone as it was torn apart. There was only one way to describe such an act, and that was evil. In a world where immortality and afterlives existed, killing in such a manner could only ever be an act of pure malice.

*"A Runesmith?"* The voice from Zach's sword said. *"A Ra of my people."*

The yeti, Ra'azel Equinar was a monster unlike anything that Zach had faced before. His power strange and unknown. Orbs appeared around him, floating in the air, each giving off a different Essence.

He looked at the yeti, trying to find some purchase with his **Of Precision and Sealing** but he felt nothing that he could touch. There was no Class, no Cultivation, no Skill. Whatever the yeti was doing, Zach didn't understand enough yet to target.

There was a finality to the yeti's words, as if what had happened so far was nothing but a prelude. Zach was frozen, his eyes looking at the place where Anrosh used to be. He did not know Kri's mother well, but the few words they had exchanged had been kind. She did not deserve such a death, Zach felt himself reaching toward the plane of Time, then stopped himself. He steeled his heart and leaned on his anger. All was not yet lost.

Before he could do anything, the yeti's orbs started firing at him and Naha. His hand raised in Ender's direction. The man was powerful, but he was no fighter, he still reacted. Zach felt perks and abilities activating. Plants bursting from the ground all around them.

Zach dashed forward empowered by his perks, he activated everything that he could, and Naha followed. They weaved through the attacks from the orbs, bolts of Fire, Ice, and many others that he didn't have the time to recognize. He leaned his will on his **|Perfect Mind Training Analysis|** seeing the patterns teaching himself the best way to evade. The orbs were compensating as he closed the distance. He pushed on his skill breaking through the plateau that held it back.

**|Perfect Mind Training Analysis: My Mind, Seeing Patterns|** showed him more. He saw the flaws in the orbs construction, and he switched his Blade to **Windsong**. He danced in between attacks that scorched and turned the earth beneath his feet. The wind carrying him and helping him turn faster.

The yeti fired his black lightning at Ender before Zach could reach him. Ender burst into petals, the lightning lashing through. A tree that had sprung from the ground nearby blossomed, petals fell and Ender reformed. Roots and branches, thorns and thin streams of liquid burst from all the plants around the yeti, attacking him and his orbs.

He didn't move, his armor flashed and a shield sprung around him, protecting him from everything. Zach focused his mind and will. With **|Perfect Field of Frozen Time|** he froze all the orbs in the air, with **|Perfect Aim: My Strikes, Always True|** he marked his targets. Then he unleashed his **Shattering Song**, his blade sang, and vibrations blasted out of his blade, tearing the orbs apart.

He stepped and wind pushed him forward, his sword raised high as layered a perk into it, **Double Aspect Strike**, and struck at the shield around the yeti. His sword blurred and struck the shield twice in quick succession, the weight of a wind behind it. It rebounded as if it was nothing.

*“Change directions,”* the voice from his sword said, Ra’vallim. *“A Runesmith is prepared for all eventualities, but he must see and then respond, the speed by which he reacts is his only weakness.”*

Zach nodded, Naha stepped in from behind him and stabbed the shield, cracking it. Zach stepped back then took to the sky. His body ached from a hundred tiny cuts, from the attacks that he didn’t understand. He reached for his perks and unleashed a few in a quick succession. **Rift Shout** shook the space around them, and **Greater Rift Tear** caused a shockwave of surging wind to explode into the clearing, turning the already devastating wind even more deadly. Zach stepped into the rift and then out immediately, then he used **Essence Elemental**.

He burst into the Wind, turning into a master of it all, he used [**Aspect True Sight**] to see and then he howled as he took control of all the Wind around him. As he pulled more out of the rift. Naha stepped back, and out of the range. Ender was somewhere in the distance. Zach called to him the Wind, and then sent it all down against the yeti’s shield.

Everything was drowned out in the howls of the Wind crashing against the earth, destroying dirt into dust, pulverizing stone. Shockwaves exploded all around the shield as Zach flew in a circle, as his Wind shattered Sound Essence and bent Space.

The shield cracked, and more constructs came into being all around the yeti. His sphere of protection hung in the air, anchored to space as Zach cratered the Earth all around him, leaving him suspended against nothing.

The constructs appeared outside of the shield and Zach took a moment to study them, he let them fire into the air, storing the knowledge for his **|Perfect Mind Training Analysis: My Mind, Seeing Patterns|**.

Then he slapped them out of the sky or ripped them apart with the might of the wind.

There was nothing that could stop him now. The yeti's shield cracked further, but Zach could tell that he was doing something inside. More, Zach needed more. He turned all of his will on his skills, forcing them together.

**|Perfect Mind Training Analysis: My Mind, Seeing Patterns|** and **|Perfect Mind Palace: My World, My Rules|**, merged together, and he saw more as **Of Mind, Analysis, and Prediction** came to be. He saw constructs, and in his mind another battle took place, he fought a dozen battles at the same time, trying different things. He broke the shield and surged inside, constructs appeared and halted the wind, froze him in space, then black lightning hit and he was no more. Low probability, he knew, the yeti wanted him alive. But he did not know this opponent, did not know the point where he would decide that Zach was too much of a problem and end him.

No, more and more. Zach had to kill him quick, Ender's plants could overwhelm his constructs, rise in an instant. Naha could get close and strike. More and more played out in his mind, not enough, not enough still. He needed more information, more knowledge. A risk then, he decided. He felt for his new perk, **A Path Forward**, and saw how he would draw more of Ra'azel's might.

He leaned on his will on **Of Time, Movement, and Space**. He had prepared, had hoped that he would have more time to do it properly. But now he understood that even when he could touch the time he never had enough time. Perhaps if he was faster, he could've stopped Anrosh from dying, perhaps he could've ended the yeti before he had a chance to deploy his power.

He pushed his skill to evolve, seeing the flaws in the cracked shield with **|I Focused And Saw All Flaws|** his elemental form of a giant swirl of wind surged. His skill broke free, a desire to be on time shaped it—**|I Arrived Always On Time|**.

Through space and time he stepped through the shield, breaking through the flawed cracks, a blade of wind forming around him.

His will poured into his strike, and with **For Every Second, Two, Across Time**, and **Ancient Heritage**, he struck.

Constructs inside of the now tumbling piece of earth rumbled and blasted the wind. He felt pain as his Essence body was torn apart, but his attack went out, through time. Constructs brought out to defend the yeti came out a moment after the strike passed through, his blade fashioned of wind hit the yeti across the chest.

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Ra'azel was growing frustrated. The storm of wind lashed out at his shield from all directions. Something was wrong, he could tell. Attacks were coming when he did not expect them, things were not as they should be.

Then, his shield shattered and a maelstrom of wind was inside it. He blinked, unsure how he had missed it, it was almost as if his shield cracked after the elemental was inside it. He pulled out constructs, others already on the ground activated. Bindings and implosions tore at the elemental, but still it attacked. A blade of wind surged at Ra'azel and he

felt his body cutting open. His eyes widened, he saw the blade coming ahead of him, but he felt the pain before it had hit him.

Time, he realized. The cut opened up across his chest, boring deeper, and he pulled himself into his own mind. He settled in a place without time and thought, planning. He pulled strands of his soul, fashioned a rune out of the threads. He did not like enhancing his own body, it required too much of a price, and he did not like being helpless. A rune inside his body flashed, then lamenting the power it would take he activated it.

His body hardened, the blade faltered, he felt a will trying to overwhelm his body and cut into it. But he knew already how these skills worked. He did not meet that will out in the world, he did not oppose it for the domination of the reality around them. He fought it with his own soul in his own body. And Ra'azel was old, his body was his alone.

The cut vanished, and he felt blood spilling down his chest as his armor tore open a moment later. Time, that was tricky. He pulled out a sphere of coalesced Essence of Time then slammed it against the hole in his armor, with will he shaped it into a patch to repair it and empower it.

Immediately he saw his opponent clearly. What had a moment before been strange movements and bursts of speed became a smooth perception. He moved in the moments between moments, gaining more than others had. Interesting.

His constructs were torn apart by the wind, but they gave as much as they got. The wind was forced back and it returned back to the shape of a man.

Then, without his shield, the platform of Earth he was on fell to the ground beneath, making him stumble as the storm of Wind around him settled and grew quiet.

His shadow trembled and Ra'azel reacted, the rune on his gauntlet reacted and his armor turned his body and lashed out without him doing anything. He caught the shadow as it stabbed into his neck, the runes of protection shattered her knife and he squeezed her throat. Her will felt sharp and almost imperceivable, like a shadow. It was great, but it was not as vast as that of the other one.

Hands of shadows appeared all around and he saw everything darken, then something bubbled out of the shadowy form.

*—Grasp of—*

Ra'azel lost his patience. The rune of obliteration flashed in his hand and the shadow was turned to nothing.

“NO!” He heard a yell behind him and turned.

Plants exploded out of the ground, and his old friend flew toward him, his blade and sword flashing with light. Annoying and troublesome. The battle was too long, he detected more coming his way. No more.

He pulled out a spear, fashioned out of a horn of a dragon of light. He named a target and let it go. It flew off, stabbing through a tree to impale the target behind it, then it burst into an explosion that obliterated the plant user into dust. A second construct followed, a soul catcher that flew behind the spear and collected the soul for later use.

His old friend paused, then continued on. Ra'azel raised a hand as a flurry of attacks came at him. But now he could see the attacks coming across the short dilation of time. Three shield constructs came into being

and blocked all the attacks, surprising his target. He carved the runes in the air as his old friend cut through his shields.

A blade came down on Ra'azel's throat, but he finished his verse. Runes flashed in the air next to his hand, carved by will and soul.

**Nem—Iour—Wior—Los—Dor—Rem—Ka**

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Zach's attack nearly reached Ra'azel's throat. He killed Naha, and Zach had to force himself not to react, to continue, even when he saw Ender die a moment after. He had to move, to force him to do more, to show him everything.

And then, just as his attack was going to hit, he was wrenched back, his body suspended in the air with his limbs sprayed wide. He felt something press on him and his limbs were crushed into paste then ripped apart. Zach's mind went blank for a moment from the pain. He was kept bound in the air, blood spilling from his body where his hands and legs used to be.

“It was a good showing,” he heard Ra'azel's voice said. “But now it ends.”

Zach looked down on the yeti, his armor scared and damaged. He was so powerful, but he wasn't invulnerable.



Zach glared at the monster with rings in his eyes. “No,” Zach bit through the pain. He opened himself to Time fully, plunging deep into the River of Time, as deep as he had been only once before. He reached for that wave that pushed ever forward, for the foundation of the river. And then he pulled.

The yeti tilted his head, the eyes seen through the visor flashing with something.

Zach smiled. “Now it begins.”

**And So It Was Once Again.**