

## 4 Seasons, 1 Task

I'd shaken his hand on the first day of spring - 21st March. Confident, driven, and with the warmth and brightness of the season shrouding me in its comfort blanket, I was ready to embrace the task I'd agreed to undertake. A task that would challenge me but that, on completion, would reward me with endless springs, brighter suns and a golden future.

I couldn't fail. To fail would darken my entire world.

Spring effortlessly merged into summer. I bathed in its heat, but my rigorous determination ensured it did not distract me from the task in hand. I would reach my destination well before I was due, well before the threat of change, and I would deliver my promise and bask in my achievement.

I looked around me as I strode with purpose along the streets; towering above me the grandeur of old buildings, their impressive detail sharp in the sun. Faces swam by me, every person carving out their own adventure, creating their own success. But I know how far behind me they were, I could read their expressions and taste their desperation. And it pushed me harder.

Autumn brought an unwelcome deterioration in pace. Something had shifted, and as the shadows became longer and the sun faded earlier, I felt a prod of discomfort. Was this a sign that things might become more challenging?

Although I still moved with gusto, my feet pounding into the ground and creating tremors that could be felt by those close, my impact had somewhat diminished and the first realisation that I may not complete the task I'd been set prickled at my skin.

Winter threw my balance. The sharp snaps of frosty air and the lashing rain burnt my face as I struggled through darker streets. I could no longer see anyone else. My eyes were half closed to shield from the cruel elements that relentlessly tore at me, whipping and biting, tormenting and mocking. I knew spring was close, but that only served as a harsh reminder that I was about to fail. My destination was close but my determination was plummeting.

With only one day to go before my task expired I knew I was too far from the end. And when I had just one hour left, even though the faint whispers of spring were beginning to tease, I stopped. I lifted my eyes to look to the top of my scene and watched as my credits fell to zero. I took off the virtual reality headset and stepped out of the gaming booth.

Written by Jo Ash © 2024