



Smurfskip 2 (Or: How Jokey Smurf Invented Parkour, Again)

Les Schtroumpfs | The Smurfs · Not Rated · 6661 words

by Arukir

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Jokey pranks a fox, insults the universe, and has a very bad day... over and over and over again.

Basically the same fic I posted last year, but with some minor edits and updates. Happy Groundhogs Day, everysmurf!

Trigger warnings: Temporary character death, some blood, depression

This is a bit darker than the stuff I usually write, but I hope you enjoy it anyways! :)

Chapter 1: [01:15]

Loop 1

Jokey is running. He does that a lot. Not every Smurf likes his pranks, after all. And not-Smurfs? Yeah, they tend to like them even less...

"C'mon, it was jus' a joke!" he protests, looking behind his shoulder at the pursuing fox. He bursts into giggles when he again sees its unnaturally bright green fur. "Doncha hava sense o' humor?"

The fox growls, speeding up. Jokey yelps, trying and failing to go faster. He likes to think of himself as rather quick, one of the fastest Smurfs in the village even, but that doesn't really mean much when compared to a fox. Especially since he's already been running for close to an hour, and can feel himself tiring out.

Jokey isn't afraid, though. Things always work out for him in the end, it's been that way for nearly three centuries now, so why should this time be any different? Ha, in fact, he bets he'd be perfectly fine even if he turned around right now and danced on the fox's nose! Yeah, he has nothing to worry about, the universe is just adding a little flavor to his life.

"Stupid universe," he giggles, making a sharp right turn between some trees, heading towards the safety of Blossom, "doncha know th' joke's always funnier when it's not... on me?"

He freezes, blinking wide eyes at the clearing that *should* have had his home village snuggled safely within it, filled with guards much stronger than him and more than capable of dealing with a fox. Instead, he finds himself facing a large stone cliff, covered in glowing, twisting runes he doesn't recognize.

Before he can decide what to do next, he feels hot breath on the back of his neck. He twists around with a gasp, realizing that the fox is *much* too close to his face. He backs away, looking around wildly for an escape, but there isn't one; jagged rocks block him on two sides, the cliff is behind him, and he's being cornered by the fox in front.

"N-nice doggy-thing..." Jokey chuckles nervously, his retreat halted by cold stone pressing into his back. Surely somesmurfs are going to come and rescue him now, right?

The fox inches closer, its golden eyes flashing, its teeth bared in a menacing snarl. Jokey gulps, pressing himself into the cliff, making himself as small as possible. He tells himself it's fine, because it's always fine — somesmurfs will come, a falling boulder will hit the fox, any minute now *something* will get him out of this!

...right?

Chapter 2: [02:17]

Loop 2

Jokey's eyes fly open, the phantom feeling of teeth closing around his body pricking through him, gnashing and tearing and... He jolts up to his feet with a scream, looking around for the fox, finally seeing it—

Sleeping. It's sleeping on a mound of grass, and it's still red-orange, and Jokey is on a tree branch far above it with a bucket of color-changing potion he sto— borrowed from Alchemist. There are no cliffs or jagged stones in sight, Jokey doesn't feel the least bit exhausted from running around for an hour, and he's still in one piece.

Jokey breathes out a sigh of relief, leaning against the trunk of the tree. He must've just dozed off in the middle of a prank and had a rather vivid dream. Nothing more. He chuckles, grabbing the bucket of potion. He really should go ahead and dump it like he'd planned, but...

Maybe he'll call off this particular prank, just this once.

He turns to climb down the tree and head back home, already looking forward to getting Brainy with his exploding gift box again and soothing his frayed nerves. His foot catches on a dip in the wood he could've sworn wasn't there before, making him stumble.

The bucket goes flying, spilling its contents on the fox below. The fox, now purple in color, wakes up with a snarl.

His dream still far too fresh in his mind, Jokey dashes down the tree and into the forest as fast as his little blue legs can take him. The fox, of course, angrily pursues him. Jokey giggles a little about how pissed-off it looks, because really—

"It was jus' a joke! Doncha hava sense o' humor?" Jokey cackles, diving under a log and continuing on to the other side. His laughter cuts off, eyes going wide, as he realizes how familiar that sentence sounds... He shakes his head, chastising himself as he so rarely does; he says stuff like that all the time, so what if it matches his dream? No need to get paranoid, Jokester Smurf.

Nearly an hour of hard running later, a panting Jokey spots the trees that secretly mark the entrance to Blossom. After a brief second of irrational hesitation, he scurries between them, more than ready to be home.

Unfortunately, he doesn't find home waiting for him. Instead, he finds a cliff and some jagged rocks. The exact same ones from his dream.

The fox snaps at his back, and Jokey yelps, running forward and trying desperately to climb up the smooth stone. Just as he spots a tiny handhold in the rockside, he feels hot breath surround him...

Chapter 3: [03:21]

Loop 3

Jokey inhales harshly, his eyes snapping open. He's back on the branch, bucket balanced precariously nearby. Before his memories can entirely catch up to him, before he even knows why he feels so panicked, he snatches the bucket and holds it close to his chest. What if it fell? What if it hit the fox? What if...

What if he died again?

But that doesn't make any sense, Smurfs don't just die and come back to life!

(Well, except for Boo Smurf... But that's different)

Tremors shake through Jokey's body as memories of flashing teeth and ripping claws shake through his mind. He's died, been *eaten*, twice now. It isn't possible. He can remember it. It can't have happened. It has to have been a really weird dream-within-a-dream. Yeah, that's it! All it was is his overactive imagination.

In fact, maybe he never went out to prank the fox in the first place! Maybe he's still safe in his Mushroom, about to wake up in his own bed. And maybe he isn't standing on a tree branch, clutching a bucket of stolen potion like a lifeline, too scared to move for fear of tripping and spilling the potion inside it again.

He'll just stay right here, unmoving, until he wakes up. This plan, unfortunately, doesn't last very long. A beam of sunlight pierces through the canopy above him, shining right in his eye. Jokey sneezes. The bucket goes flying.

This time, Jokey runs the opposite direction, towards Gargamel's hut. It's dangerous, sure, but far less dangerous than *dying* again. After an hour, much longer than it should take, he finds the path up the hill that leads to the wizard's house. He dashes up it, hoping the old man's short on fox fur for his potions, smacking straight into—

The cliff, in the woods, far away from the hill.

He actually manages to get a few inches up the stone before the now yellow fox catches up to him.

Chapter 4: [06:32]

Loop 6

Jokey's heading down the tree trunk almost before his eyes are open, the accursed bucket abandoned on the branch. He's most of the way down when a squirrel jumps onto the empty branch, its tail knocking into the bucket as it leaps to the next tree.

"Ya've gotta be smurfin' me..." Jokey mutters to himself, hopping down the rest of the way and running into the woods, ignoring the bruises he gets from the short fall. He runs in a random direction, a horrible hunch telling him that it doesn't really matter what his destination is.

An hour later, he's back at the cliff.

"Smurf this," he growls, turning around and diving under the confused, sparkly pink fox. No way is he trying to climb the cliff again!

He runs back into the forest, the fox stumbling over itself as it tries to turn and follow him. Ha, he's actually getting ahead! Maybe this time—

He skids to a stop, looking up at the cliff that is once more in front of him. Nonono, how?!

It doesn't matter how. What matters is that Jokey has a longer headstart than usual this time, and he's going to make the most of it. He grabs at the handholds in the rock, pulling himself upwards as quickly as possible. He isn't strong by any measure and climbing isn't even close to his speciality; it would be hard work even with regular handholds.

But these handholds are tiny even by Smurf standards, partly hidden most of the time, and so smooth that it's almost impossible for him to keep his grip. The fox appears out of the forest, sits itself beneath the cliff, and looks up at him. He tries to ignore it.

He's a third of the way up, farther than he's ever gotten before. He sees a rock jutting out slightly, the best handhold he's seen so far, and reaches out for it with hope in his heart.

The rock crumbles in his hand, sending him tumbling towards waiting jaws.

Chapter 5: [10:00]

Loop 10

What if he holds the bucket and stays still again, but with his eyes closed this time?

Answer: the damned squirrel comes back, and he doesn't even get the chance to run this time.

Chapter 6: [10:46]

Loop 12

Okay, so how about he just presses himself against the tree and stays there?

A large beetle knocks the bucket over this time, but it doesn't matter. He's safe in the tree, far above the (ironically Smurf-blue) fox.

A bird flies out the canopy above him. Its wing hits straight into Jokey, pushing him roughly off the branch.

He's pretty sure his arm breaks in the fall, but at least he gets to run this time.

Chapter 7: [11:28]

Loop 13

Closer investigation reveals that neither the squirrel, nor the bird, nor even the beetle can be found hiding around the tree. What he does find is a swarm of very angry bees that most certainly weren't there before.

Chapter 8: [13:39]

Loop 15

Jokey picks a new direction this time. It brings him to a series of logs, most of which don't have big enough gaps to duck under. Thankfully, he's starting to get a bit better at climbing.

Say, there's an idea — what if he just climbs up the tree and travels across the canopy, over the cliff?

Chapter 9: [14:12]

Loop 16

Answer: bees.

So. Many. Bees.

At least he spots a river while crashing down towards the forest floor, giving him a truly *spectacular* idea.

Chapter 10: [15:01]

Loop 17

Things Jokey has learned:

- 1) Foxes are evil.
- 2) He *can* indeed stop laughing.
- 3) He *can't* actually swim all that well.
- 4) Drowning is worse than being caught by a fox, albeit by a very slim margin.

Chapter 11: [18:39]

Loop 20

He pushes the bucket off the other side of the branch this time.

The fox rolls over, directly into its path.

The fox gets splashed with the potion.

He makes it a third of the way up the cliff again.

Chapter 12: [19:00]

Loop 21

He *throws* the bucket.

The wind catches it, blowing the potion all over the fox.

The fox is angrier this time around.

He doesn't make it to the cliff.

Chapter 13: [20:12]

Loop 22

He dumps the potion on himself.

He turns red.

The fox wakes up anyways.

He makes it a bit farther up the cliff.

Chapter 14: [21:03]

Loop 23

He kicks the bucket right at the fox, shouting profanities at it.

He still gets caught, of course. He doesn't even reach the cliff, in fact. But at least he feels a little bit better.

Chapter 15: [22:40]

Loop 25

The squirrel or the beetle knocks the bucket over, or maybe it's the wind this time; he isn't paying much attention, he's too busy ripping up his white vest and using it to tie himself to the branch.

The bird flies off, the bees come out, the wind howls. They all try to force him off the branch. He's bruised and stung and hurting — but he's still there, still holding on, still safely on the branch.

He cheers in victory, pumping his hands into the air, and makes a taunting face at the teal fox far below him. Now all he has to do is wait for it to get bored and leave, then... figure out something from there. Whatever, the point is that he's lasting longer than a smurfing hour this time.

A loud CRACK! splits the air. The branch tilts slightly downwards. Jokey's eyes are wide as he turns his head towards where it meets the tree. The ground below shakes in a mini quake. The branch snaps a bit further.

"Oh, fer smurf's sake!" Jokey screams, just as the entire thing falls, crushing him beneath it.

Things Jokey has learned:

- 1) Foxes are evil.
- 2) He *can* indeed stop laughing.
- 3) He *can't* actually swim all that well.
- 4) Drowning is worse than being caught by a fox, albeit by a very slim margin.
- 5) Being slowly crushed and deprived of oxygen is worse than being caught by a fox, by a considerable margin.

Chapter 16: [28:48]

Loop 30

Jokey sighs, eyes opening to the familiar sight of the branch. He dully pushes the bucket off, turning to head down the tree trunk. He's gotten faster with practice, it takes half as much time for him to reach the ground as it used to.

Still, the fox is sitting calmly at the bottom, yawning as it patiently waits for him. He blinks tiredly up at it.

"That sure of yerself, huh?"

It shrugs, then stands and shakes itself off, dropping into a chase stance.

He sighs again, deeper this time, and turns to run. He doesn't care which direction he goes in. It doesn't matter anymore.

He has to cross the river this time. He jumps across some stones, almost slipping a few times in his haste to get to the other side.

He tries to ignore the phantom feeling of cold *wet can't breathe nonono help* .

He makes it to the cliff after about an hour, as always. He climbs up in practiced movements, having the stable and unstable handholds nearly memorized by now.

The fox is at the bottom of the cliff, playing with some twigs while it waits for him. He does his best to tune it out.

He hates how used he's gotten to ignoring it.

He pulls himself up slowly, taking his time to get each step right. It's almost peaceful, almost enough to make him zone out, grabbing each handhold after the other almost without thinking. He pauses, unable to spot another handhold, idly trying to remember where the next is hidden.

His attention snaps fully back as he realizes he *can't* remember where the next is hidden.

Because he's never gotten this far before.

Because he's halfway up the cliff!

He shouts in triumph, clinging tightly to the cliffside as he looks carefully around for the next handhold. Huh, it must really be hidden well, he can't–

He slips before he can find it, falling into a crumpled heap on the ground. The fox sniffs him almost curiously, whining.

"Oh, jus' smurf it over with already!" Jokey demands, glaring at the fox. It nods, opening its jaws wide. The Smurf whimpers, trying to push himself away. He's too injured to get very far. "Wait, no, I smurf that ba–"

Chapter 17: [31:37]

Loop 32

This time, he comes to the conclusion that the very middle of the cliff is simply devoid of handholds. He decides to investigate further to the left.

He adds a new unstable handhold to his mental guide.

Chapter 18: [31:58]

Loop 33

Jokey takes a new path with a few too many roots. After tripping and spraining his ankle, he decides to avoid that path in the future. As much as 'future' really applies anymore, anyways.

He doesn't make it to the cliff.

Chapter 19: [34:40]

Loop 35

The left side is blank, and there isn't a path to get to right side without going back to the ground, where the fox is. It's laying on its back, looking up at him with its tongue lolling out.

Is it bad that he thinks it's kinda cute?

After a few minutes of thinking and more fruitless searching, Jokey decides to take a risk. He swings and launches himself away from his current position, reaching desperately for a handhold on the right side of the cliff.

He just barely misses it, falling and landing right onto the fox's belly.

Oh well, it's not like he actually thought it would work.

(To be fair, though, he almost made it)

Chapter 20: [35:47]

Loop 36

He doesn't quite make it to the halfway mark this time.

But he *does* get a better understanding of where the safe-ish handholds are. So that's something.

Chapter 21: [37:04]

Loop 37

His first proper investigation of the right side of the cliff doesn't yield much.

Chapter 22: [38:12]

Loop 38

Neither does his second.

Chapter 23: [40:27]

Loop 40

...

Maybe he should check the other side again?

Chapter 24: [42:24]

Loop 42

There has to be another handhold, right?

Chapter 25: [45:07]

Loop 45

He just hasn't found it yet.

Chapter 26: [46:56]

Loop 47

It's there, he knows it is. If he searches a little bit longer...

Chapter 27: [50:09]

Loop 50

He'll find it eventually. He just has to try harder, that's all...

Chapter 28: [51:26]

Loop 51

There has to be one, somewhere!

...please?

Chapter 29: [53:30]

Loop 52

There isn't another handhold. The middle of the cliff is completely smooth, and utterly impossible to climb, from one side to the other.

Jokey holds on to the very last handhold, staring at the rock in front of him. All this work, all this time...

Has been for *nothing*.

He bursts into giggles, barely managing to not slip off the cliff, distantly wondering why he even cares at this point. His laughter is not a happy sound. It's slightly deranged, filled with tears, the kind of sound that only somesmurfs like Jokey are really capable of.

Maybe it's minutes later. Maybe it's days. Either way, exhaustion eventually creeps in. His laughter turns to strangled sobs. Even those die down, after a while. His grip loosens. His eyes slide shut.

He falls.

The fox is waiting.

Chapter 30: [53:35]

Loop 53

Jokey lies down on the tree branch. He stares at the leaves above him for a minute. He closes his eyes, wondering if he can just fall asleep and miss this loop. Or maybe miss a few loops. It's not like he has anything better to do, after all.

A strong gust of wind blows a large leaf into Jokey, knocking him down with the bucket. He's not even entirely sure if the fox catches him. Maybe this time it was the branch itself, or the ground.

He doesn't really care.

Chapter 31: [53:40]

Loop 54

Jokey lays down on the branch. He looks up into the leaves above him. He doesn't bother to close his eyes, knowing he doesn't have enough time (something deep in Jokey laughs weakly at that) to sleep. Too bad, he really misses sleep.

The wind blows.

The bucket is knocked over.

The leaf hits him.

Jokey falls.

Chapter 32: [53:45]

Loop 55

Jokey lays down on the branch. Jokey stares up at the leaves above him.

The wind blows.

The leaf comes.

The Smurf falls.

Chapter 33: [53:55]

Loop 57

Lays down. Stares.

Wind.

Leaf.

Falls.

Chapter 34: [54:10]

Loop 60

Lays down. Stares.

This time, it's the squirrel that knocks him over.

Chapter 35: [54:15]

Loop 61

The bird.

Chapter 36: [54:20]

Loop 62

The bees.

Chapter 37: [54:25]

Loop 63

The wind again.

It's an endless cycle.

Chapter 38: [54:35]

Loop 65

Jokey hasn't gone this long without pulling a prank since...

Chapter 39: [54:40]

Loop 66

Jokey's *never* gone this long without pulling a prank. Not since he was a Baby Smurf, at least.

Chapter 40: [54:50]

Loop 68

This is actually getting a little boring.

Chapter 41: [55:00]

Loop 70

But what's Jokey supposed to do? How can he fight *magic*?

Chapter 42: [57:31]

Loop 71

The fox is turned silver, this time. It catches him as he falls, its jaws unusually gentle around his body.

It carries him along for a while. He doesn't know why. He doesn't care. At least it's something new.

The fox hops over a log. Trudges through the river. Winds around tree after tree. It feels like they're going in circles. Maybe they are.

An hour passes. They arrive at the cliff.

The fox sets Jokey down on a small rock, sitting quietly next to him. It looks up at the cliff, golden eyes softly glowing.

Jokey considers it for a moment. This monster. This elegant, magical monster. He looks towards the cliff.

They sit and they stare for a long time, until the fox apparently gets bored.

Or at least hungry.

Chapter 43: [56:12]

Loop 72

Jokey's bored.

Jokey's tired and miserable and half insane.

Jokey doesn't want to get up.

There's nothing he can do to stop himself, though. Something inside him screams, throwing itself against his numb mind over and over again.

Jokey is a trickster at his very core; tricksters don't do *bored*.

He groans and lifts himself back up, kicking the bucket over for old time's sake. The fox (white furred for this loop) jumps around the base of the tree excitedly, yipping as it watches him actually move again. Maybe it was bored too.

Jokey gives the fox a tired smile. "Ready?" he asks it.

It yips again. Jokey dashes away, the overexcited fox right on his heels.

He doesn't quite make it to the cliffs.

Chapter 44: [57:13]

Loop 73

Jokey wonders if it's really worth it; he's just going to get caught again.

He tries to climb the jagged rocks this time. They're even sharper than they look. His hand gets sliced open against the rough surface.

The fox reaches him before he even gets his feet off of the ground.

Chapter 45: [59:18]

Loop 75

Even if he *does* somehow manage to escape, manages to get over the cliff and back home, there's every chance the timeloop or whatever will just start all over again anyways. What's the point, really?

He's more careful this time, actually making it to the top of one of the rocks. Impossibly, all that's on the other side is a steep canyon that shouldn't exist anywhere in the forest, its bottom disappearing into pure darkness. But it must have a bottom, because he definitely hits *something* after he falls.

Chapter 46: [64:30]

Loop 80

There's a more important question than *what's the point*, one that spurs him onwards despite everything — *what's the alternative*? Just let himself be caught, over and over again, for eternity? Everlasting pain and *boredom*? No, thank you.

Jokey picks up a sharp stone as he runs, tucking it into his vest. He climbs up the cliff again. He barely has to think about it, holding on like a squirrel with one hand and his feet as he retrieves his stone. He slams it into the cliff, thinking maybe he can use it to climb.

The small stone shatters. Jokey falls.

Chapter 47: [67:52]

Loop 83

Jokey misses his friends. He misses a lot of things.

He tries another stone. It shatters worse than the last few, cutting into his hand until he can't feel it anymore. He pulls another out of his vest, ignoring his injuries.

He's getting good at that.

Chapter 48: [71:04]

Loop 87

Jokey misses the small smirk Grouchy gives him sometimes, when nosmurf else is looking; his silent appreciation for all the trouble Jokey tends to cause.

His hand slips, sending the newest stone flying. It hits his eye. He finds out what blind Smurfs see.

A new plan may be in order.

Chapter 49: [71:36]

Loop 88

Jokey misses Vanity's habit of insulting others, when nosmurf else can hear, listing small flaws caught with shockingly keen eyes from behind the safety of his mirror. He misses his delightful observations that he shares with so few, Jokey lucky enough to be among them.

The squirrel shows up again. Jokey grins like the madsmurf others often accuse him of being, jumping at it right as it knocks the bucket over. His hands latch tightly onto its fur, getting pulled along as it bounds back into the treetops.

His arms wrap tight around its chest. It screeches, running and jumping and twirling in ways Jokey didn't know was possible, trying to force him off. It's so fast, even the bees can't keep up with it.

Jokey's arms are sore, his stomach is flipping into itself, he's holding back both bile and screams — but he's managing to hold on. The treetops reach over the cliff, over the deep canyon; if he can find a way to direct it, maybe he can ride the squirrel over the cliff!

The squirrel screeches again, louder than before, and spins in the air. Its back hits a tree trunk *hard*, slamming the air out of Jokey's lungs. He wheezes, feeling more than hearing his bones crack from the blow.

Jokey loses his grip, falling to the forest floor below.

Chapter 50: [73:00]

Loop 90

Jokey misses the way Brainy always opens his gifts, how he seems to fall for his tricks every single time, despite both of them knowing that the nerdy Smurf is smarter than that.

The bird is even less cooperative than the squirrel.

On the plus side, now he understands why Pilot likes flying so much. The air rushing past him, the sky on all sides, the bird breathing beneath him — he could happily get used to something like that, he thinks.

The feeling of the ground rushing towards him is considerably less pleasant.

Chapter 51: [75:17]

Loop 93

Jokey misses the way Clumsy falls for his pranks, over and over and over again, yet still always greets him with a genuine smile. It may be a small thing, but it's more than he can expect from most Smurfs.

The bees are, perhaps, the least cooperative of all. He vows to never again get on the wrong side of Honey Smurf if he can help it; he's had more than enough experience with stings for one lifetime...

(Please don't let this last a lifetime)

Chapter 52: [76:25]

Loop 95

Jokey misses Lantern, and Sweepy, and all of the other Smurfs that he really should talk to more often but rarely does. He'll fix that, he decides, once he gets back to Blossom.

The wind catches him by surprise this time around. It's stronger than usual. Much stronger.

Jokey decides that 'being slammed into a mountain by a tornado' is his least favorite way to go.

Chapter 53: [78:06]

Loop 98

Jokey misses Nobody. Jokey misses Everybody. Jokey even misses Hefty, and Smurfette, and Alchemist — spoilsports that they usually are.

Jokey tries to use a large leaf as a boat, and his stolen bucket as a rather unusual paddle. The potion leaks into the water. Brightly colored alligators, which definitely should not live in the forest, make a few complaints about this fact.

Jokey decides to keep his adventures to land from now on.

Chapter 54: [80:37]

Loop 100

Jokey misses all the little Smurflings of Blossom; they, at least, usually laugh at his jokes. He misses Greedy's cookies, and Painter's art, and somehow even the sound of Harmony's smurfsforsaken trumpet would be a welcome one right now.

Jokey jumps between the jagged rocks, strips of leaf tied around his hands as make-shift climbing gloves. It's slow going, taking him nearly twenty minutes to investigate the entire perimeter, discovering the canyon bordering every side except parts facing the forest and the cliff.

Or maybe it does border the cliff, on the other side. Maybe all he's heading towards is another long drop. Maybe this really is for nothing.

He tries to jump from one of the rocks to the cliff. He doesn't even come close to making it.

Chapter 55: [86:10]

Loop 105

Jokey misses the way Magician... just everything about his Mushroomate, actually. Even the stuff he usually complains about. How she rolls her eyes at him, and scolds him for his pranks, and smiles at them anyways when she thinks he's looked away. He should tell her that, he muses, if when he sees her again.

There's some really, really tall rocks right next to either side of the cliff. Maybe he can squeeze past them..?

The tall rocks feel like glass cutting into him, slicing purple lines into his bruised body. The fox watches in curiosity, not bothering to pounce on him quite yet. He falls backwards and doesn't try again, accepting that even a Smurf isn't small enough to squeeze through — not without being turned into confetti, anyways.

But, still, maybe he can climb up the stone? His clothing tears and skin burns as the rock cuts into them, but he ignores it. He's getting higher, almost there—

His vision clouds over, dizziness overcoming him. His body goes numb. There's a lot of purple smeared on the stone, he realizes dimly. His thoughts feel like they're squeezing through thick gauze, painfully sluggish and only barely reaching him.

The fox doesn't even get to him this time.

Chapter 56: [91:13]

Loop 110

Jokey keeps going.

He tries a running leap at the cliff this time. To his shock, he actually manages to run a bit *up* the cliff. But he can't get very high before gravity reasserts itself.

Chapter 57: [96:03]

Loop 115

Jokey keeps climbing.

His back is pressed into the glass-stone, his feet against the cliff. He tries to push himself upwards, ignoring the by-now familiar feeling of blood loss. He's gotten quite good at ignoring things.

Unfortunately, his body is a tad less good at ignoring them than he is.

Chapter 58: [101:20]

Loop 120

Jokey keeps fighting.

He's falling towards the open jaws, an almost boring happening at this point. His fright is dulled enough to think more-or-less, unhindered by true panic, and a sudden spike of NO! goes through his mind.

He twists his body, kicking the fox's snout, making it yelp (more out of shock than pain; Smurfs really are quite tiny). The force of the kick sends Jokey towards one of the jagged rocks.

By complete accident, he kicks the rock as well, sending himself higher into the air.

Jokey catches a glimpse of the cliff. He feels his brain grind to a halt.

There, above the blank stripe halfway up, are *more handholds*. If he can get past the blank spot, he can climb over the cliff!

He cackles in joy, cut off all too soon by his descent back towards the jagged rocks. He falls straight on the point of a particularly sharp one.

Yeah... This is his least favorite way to go.

Chapter 59: [107:00]

Loop 125

Jokey keeps failing. Jokey keeps trying.

That little stunt bouncing between the fox and the rock gave Jokey an idea. He practices on the smaller rocks, bouncing between them and out of the fox's reach.

Running, climbing, jumping — he's still not a very strong Smurf, hasn't built up any new muscle between loops, but he's certainly gotten rather skilled at certain things. Practice makes perfect, after all, even with his body's state repeatedly resetting.

Skilled enough to bounce up the rocks, flipping to the cliff, ignoring the relatively minor cuts he gets from these stunts. None of the rocks are high enough for him to go over the cliff, but he manages to grab a handhold. A new handhold. One *above* the blank stripe.

He's nearly at the top when one of his handholds crumbles to dust.

Chapter 60: [112:24]

Loop 130

Maybe the timeloop will still continue when Jokey gets over the cliff. Or maybe a new one will start.

Jokey climbs up to the blank stripe, flips over to the nearest rock, flips back between the rock and the cliff until the rock isn't tall enough to help anymore. His feet, his back, his hands are bleeding. He doesn't really notice.

He finds a few new stable handholds. He finds a few new unstable ones.

Chapter 61: [120:03]

Loop 137

Maybe there's a monster on the other side of the cliff. Maybe there's nothing. Maybe there's death. It doesn't matter.

He finds the path to the top. He slips, just as he gets there.

He cackles as he falls.

Chapter 62: [131:00]

Loop 148

No matter what else is on the other side of the cliff, there's one thing Jokey knows for sure is there that he doesn't have on this side: *a chance*.

Jokey's spent a few loops reviewing, testing, confirming. He spends this loop sitting quietly, repeating each step in his mind. He thinks carefully, like he does when he's planning one of his trickier pranks, plotting out the best path. By the time the branch snaps, he's ready for anything and everything.

Chapter 63: [131:12]

Loop 149

Jokey's not giving up. Not now. Not ever again.

What he isn't prepared for is that damned wind again. It's almost funny, actually.

Jokey misses funny.

Chapter 64: [132:35]

Loop 150

Jokey opens his eyes with a grin. He grabs the bucket of color-changing potion he sto- borrowed from Alchemist. He sticks his tongue out as he holds it up, aiming just right...

Potion splatters right on the fox's head. Jokey shakes with mirth, hurrying down the tree before the fox has even fully realized what's happened.

Jokey's running — he does that a lot. A black fox is right on his heels. "What'sa matter?" he calls over his shoulder with a smirk. "Can't take a joke?" He cackles as he jumps at a tree, kicking off it to propel him into a flip over a log.

The river's next, but he's over that before he really has time to think. Not a single thought of water pressing down on him enters his mind, a fact he'll be proud of later. For now, he has more important things to think about.

He continues running and flipping through the forest for around an hour, panting as familiar exhaustion begins to creep up on him, turning sharply when he spots the trees that *should* mark the entrance to Blossom. He dashes straight towards the cliff, running partially up it before snatching a handhold.

Jokey's a third of the way up by the time the fox enters the clearing, and to the halfway point when it reaches the base of the cliff. He doesn't slow down, going straight from climbing to jumping, flipping between the cliff and the tallest stone. He almost slips into the canyon more than once, but manages to make it past the blank stripe.

He climbs the new handholds, the exact path he's memorized, ignoring how tired he already is. It's a little slippery thanks to the blood on his hands and feet, but...

But he...

He makes it.

He... made it?

Jokey blinks in disbelief, standing on top of the cliff with shaky legs.

He looks down at the fox below him, wagging its tail, golden eyes flashing. He waves down at it, giggling.

He *made* it.

Jokey breathes deeply, wobbling as he turns on his heel. He takes an unsteady step forward, peeking over the cliff, ready to face whatever obstacle is next...

Chapter 65: [00:00]

(Art made with AI this time)

A few weeks later, Jokey runs into Tracker and his new pet: a red fox.

"Don't worry, Jokey," Tracker assures him. "Priscilla here wouldn't hurt a fly!"

The fox smirks in an oh-so familiar way, golden eyes flashing.

And Jokey just...

Laughs.

Jokey opens his eyes. He's leaning against a tree. His heart falls, tears welling up with the realization. He *didn't* make it.

Then he feels grass beneath him rather than bark, and sees roots around him rather than leaves and open air. He sits fully up, finding himself tucked into one of his favorite hiding spots, barely five minutes from Blossom. The potion bucket is right next to him.

He yawns, stretching, and spots the unblemished skin of his hands. No cuts. He checks, finding no bruises. The only injuries he has are his everpresent burns and the ringing in his ears he's long grown used to, from constantly being around explosions. The only exhaustion he feels is that of one who just woke from deep rest.

He...

He must have fallen asleep on his way to find a woodland animal to prank, Jokey thinks, somewhat hysterically. The entire ordeal was a crazy dream, brought on by too many sleepless nights memorizing Alchemist's schedule so he could steal the potion. Yeah, that's it. Just a dream.

A long, painful, sick dream.

Jokey picks up the potion bucket hesitantly, shaking as he steps out into the wider forest. There's no fox waiting for him. He sighs out in relief, releasing the breath he'd unconsciously been holding.

Just as he's about to head back home (dream or not, there's no way in smurf he's going through with this stupid prank), a scream slices the air. Jokey ducks back into his hiding spot, peeking out carefully.

Brainy runs past, glasses cracked and bent, followed by a hissing Azrael. He hits facefirst into a tree, unable to properly see where he's going, and falls to the ground in a daze.

The cat gets closer.

Jokey checks his hidey hole for extra joke boxes.

Brainy presses himself against the tree he hit.

Jokey can't find any; it's been a while since he properly restocked.

Azrael unsheathes her claws.

Jokey curses.

Brainy whimpers.

Jokey runs past Azrael and partially up a different tree, jumping off it to flip on to the cat's back. She tries to buck him off, but she's nothing compared to the squirrel. He bites down hard on her ear, making her yowl.

He jumps off Azrael's back, kicks against a tree, and flips into a roll to safety just as she runs away. Breathing heavy, Jokey stands, turning to Brainy.

"Ya alright, four eyes?" He sniggers, pointing to the other's broken glasses. "Or maybe that should be three an'a half eyes?"

"Where the smurf did you learn to jump like that?!" Brainy asks instead of answering, eyes wide.

Jokey opens his mouth to reply. He pauses, closing it. He knows *exactly* where he learned how to do that. But it was a dream, it has to have been a dream, there's no way it was real!

It can't have been real, it *can't*! If it really happened once, it could happen again, and he can't– he can't–

Jokey can feel himself starting to hyperventilate, can hear Brainy's concerned voice saying... something. He can't make it out, the sound is muffled, like he's underwater. Again.

That thought doesn't really help.

What does help is Jokey forcefully reminding himself that it *can't* have been real. It *has* to have been a dream. What happened to him was *impossible*.

...except becoming better than Acrobat at flips, apparently. But that hardly means anything, plenty of Smurfs learn new skills from dreams!

...right?

— end of "Smurfskip 2 (Or: How Jokey Smurf Invented Parkour, Again)" —