

BIOLOGICAL 101

Chapter 101: The tournament (17)

"Do you think Erik is going to win?" Floyd asked Amber.

"Yes," She replied while Gwen nodded.

It was clear for all to see. Erik was able to take advantage of his opponent's mad rush to attack, successfully getting rid of Euan's distance advantage. By masterfully parrying, deflecting, and avoiding every attack Euan made, Erik was able to keep his strength while slowly making his opponent burn his stamina and mana.

Though, the fight was not as simple as one could think since Euan's bladed tail was basically like fighting another person in terms of stats.

The tail's strength was much higher than Euan's. Its speed was incomparable to his, so Erik took quite a bit of effort to dodge those attacks, which were coming at high speeds with great power behind them.

In addition, he had no armor on his body, only clothes. So when Euan attacked, Erik risked serious damage if he didn't parry or deflect the move properly. He was already hit on the chest by one of such attacks making him bleed profusely.

"Though Erik must pay attention as this is the most crucial part of the fight. He must be able to exploit Euan's tiredness and push further while keeping himself safe. Dodging that tail seems like no easy task," Gwen added.

In the meantime, Erik was parrying, dodging, and deflecting non-stop Euan's attacks while attacking him at the same time. He used punches and kicks, but since Erik covered his arms and legs in sharpening mana, his punches were as dangerous as knife slashes. Though, even his movements started to become slower due to fatigue.

Erik's movements became sluggish as he dodged the deadly bladed tail with agility. In the end, he couldn't avoid everything. Some blows did manage to find their target, even though they weren't lethal. One particularly hard strike landed below Erik's rib cage, leaving a deep wound.

It wasn't fatal, meaning Euan wasn't out of the fight. However, it would definitely complicate things for Erik from that point onward.

Slowly but surely, Erik started wounding Euan more and more. The young man couldn't gain distance since Erik trapped him near the ring's edges.

"He is almost there," Amber said.

"Yeah, he just needs to push a little bit more, and Euan will be his," Gwen replied.

"Why do you say so?" Floyd asked.

"Because Erik is clearly faster and stronger than Euan, and his power is a melee one, meaning that he has an advantage in close-quarters, while Euan is a mid-range fighter.

It doesn't matter that he is better than Erik in terms of martial might since Erik, by using his power on himself, basically made Euan unable to attack him with his bare body, lest injuring himself against his opponent's sharpened arms."

"C'mon, Euan! Make that asshole cry!" a woman from the crowd shouted.

"Make him suffer, Euan!" a man said.

Most of the people who saw Erik's previous fights looked at the match, hoping he would lose. Clearly, there was also Euan's opposition. The parents and friends of the opponents Euan defeated came to see the match too and were currently swearing at Euan, hoping he would lose the match.

They were delighted to see the same man that took away from their friends, sons, and daughters the opportunity to join the Red Palace in an unfavorable situation.

Though, they were less vocal than Erik's haters since they were much more than Euan's due to his previous status as the school's trash. Many people thought Erik didn't deserve his awakening, but only because they didn't know him.

Whoever saw Erik train knew very well that the guy didn't rest a little bit and was very serious about training. Not only that, but Erik showed remarkable fighting skills during sparring sessions and even during actual fights.

Those who saw him train knew how much the young man had improved; that was no easy feat. Besides, Erik also showed impressive battle senses, which only people who trained for years and had many life-or-death encounters could have.

Many people who saw Erik's behavior before his awakening didn't know this side of the young man, and they saw him as a coward because of it.

Someone so feeble and helpless that all he could do to stop Logan, Conal, and Orson from hitting him was plead. He was a man who wouldn't respond angrily to insults or stand up to bullies. So, they had no idea the young man possessed such extraordinary skills.

The truth was that Erik's maltreatment throughout the years had planted the seed of something dark within him, something that had been emerging gradually since he received the system and something that would ultimately burst forth anytime the young man got into a physical altercation.

After Euan's last attack missed its intended target, Erik had the opportunity to attack. He suddenly burst toward him in a short but insanely fast dash that ended up in a kick in the stomach that knocked his opponent off balance.

Before Euan was able to understand what had happened, Erik grabbed his head between both hands and slammed his forehead into Euan's nose, breaking it cleanly.

This resulted in blood gushing everywhere and Euan having trouble standing. Erik, though, didn't waste time.

He immediately followed it up with a knee straight into Euan's face before grabbing hold of his arms and slamming him down onto the ground, pinning the boy under his feet.

During the fight, Erik's face slowly morphed into a smile, which soon turned sadistic as he was finally able to attack Euan.

A punch in the throat came upon Euan, which made him lose control over his bladed tail and force his mouth open in a vain attempt to catch his breath.

Erik looked at his opponent with an evil glint and a sinister look. He was enjoying the fight and was going to beat Euan into submission. Another punch was launched and landed on Euan's gut, forcing him to spasm uncontrollably and gasp for air.

But he wasn't done; after putting his knee on his opponent's neck, Erik delivered three consecutive punches in the head that caused Euan to go unconscious.

Gasp of shock resounded through the crowd. As Erik kept beating Euan despite him having already lost consciousness. The referee and the healer had to quickly jump inside the ring to stop Erik from trashing his opponent further.

"Erik, STOP!" Amber shouted.

Many people shouted in outrage against the young man, but he was basically deaf to their rumblings.

Who knew the old Erik was witnessing a different side of him. He no longer was the pitiful wretch begging for mercy, that was true, but he wasn't even someone who merely dared to stand up and fight back, whose heart beat strong and true, who was confident and brave.

He was a ruthless demon who didn't even stop attacking his unconscious opponent. The people who saw him fight against Priya already knew that, but they were not many. Not even Amber, Floyd, and Gwen knew this side of him since he never showed it.

"What the hell is he doing?" Floyd said. The referee was finally able to stop Erik from going further. At the same time, the healer rushed to Euan and started treating him.

"STAND BACK! OR I WILL DISQUALIFY YOU!" The referee said. It was at that moment that Erik snapped back and regained clarity. He observed a bloodied Euan on the ground being treated by the healer but was unable to say anything.

He stepped away from the boy, who was still out cold. Erik knew he had done something terrible, but something inside of him prevented him from feeling sorry for the man. Not only this, but he was slightly ecstatic about the outcome.

Inside him, a feeling of freedom and accomplishment spread. It was the same thing he felt when he killed Logan. There was no remorse whatsoever nor any sense of guilt.

Erik quickly jumped off the ring without looking anyone in the eyes nor talking to anyone, not even Amber, Floyd, and Gwen.

"THE WINNER IS ERIK ROMANO!" the referee said without enthusiasm with a raging crowd around the ring.

Chapter 102: The tournament (18)

"Why did Erik do that?" Floyd asked.

He had just beaten Euan senseless, and now the boy was in the corner of the ring, lying motionlessly on the floor. His face was covered with blood from many wounds, some small but some large enough for him to have a bad awakening.

The ring floor was stained with both the contestant's blood, but it was clear that Euan's was the most present.

"I don't know," Amber said. "It was like he wasn't himself anymore..."

Then Gwen asked, "Is it possible that they already knew each other and had some problems between them?"

"Not that I know it," Amber replied while shaking her head.

She seemed genuinely puzzled by Erik's behavior and wondered about what happened during the fight as if nothing short of insanity would explain such conduct. It was true that Erik got constantly beaten and bullied at school by Logan, Conal, and Orson. Still, it was mostly the trio who did it, while the other people insulted him at best.

Besides, even if they did beat him, it was not as bad as the trio of bullies, so Erik's behavior was weird by anyone's standards.

As Erik and Euan left the stage, the janitors quickly went up to the ring and started cleaning it, and soon, the referee called for the next match, the one where Anderson and Mikey were going to fight.

The two were good friends, but before joining the tournament, they agreed with Aaron to fight with all their might in case they would have faced each other.

Aaron and Mikey already knew that they were going to lose against Anderson. However, they wanted to fight him because it would be disrespectful to their friend if they didn't.

"Wait for me," Amber said to her two friends. "I will go talk to him..." She quickly left the area while Anderson and Mikey went up the ring.

"Don't go easy on me..." Mikey said to Anderson.

"I won't, don't worry," Anderson replied.

A staredown ensued, with the audience silent until a sudden cheer broke out when it became evident that there wouldn't be any holdups or tricks.

Then the referee shouted, signaling the start of the match, and the battle began. Mikey knew that in order to win this match, he had to take full advantage of the fact that Anderson wasn't going to use his power, lest he would blow out any people watching the fight.

For this reason, the young man's first step was to birth a small swarm of flesh-eating bugs, which immediately started to fly above Anderson's head.

Though, the young man wasn't intimidated the least, as during this last month, Anderson was able to make another neural link, bringing him to the RHO3 rank on the Idor scale.

Consequently, his strength, speed, and reflexes improved greatly during this month, allowing him to fight against any opponent easily. The match between the two friends then began.

Amber followed Erik amidst the crowd, he was heading toward the gym, and she was following him through the corridors, trying to keep quiet without attracting too much attention. Erik didn't notice Amber yet, as he was too deep into his thought to pay any mind to anything else around him.

<Why are these pricks so enraged by what I did?> Erik thought. <I don't get it; when it was me who was beat up that way, no one said anything. So, why? Why that reaction? It is not fair!> Erik thought while rage filled his heart.

"ERIK!" Amber shouted once they were alone.

"AMBER?!" Erik said, turning toward her friend. "Did you come here to scold me?" he added with some rage in his words.

"No, this isn't the reason why I came... I'm just worried about you... Did something happen between you and Euan? Why did you do that?"

Erik didn't know what to reply. After all, what could he have said to his friend besides, I simply did it because I liked it?

And what would she think about him if he said there wasn't a reason for what he did and that he simply got carried away by the heat of the moment?

Something was wrong inside of Erik since he killed Logan. It was like an urge had sprouted inside him, and he had trouble suppressing it whenever it resurfaced.

"Nothing happened between us..." Erik said.

"Then why?" Amber asked.

He still didn't say anything and stopped talking right there, unsure whether he should tell her everything that was troubling him or not. After all, he never talked about it to anyone.

The look on Amber's face changed entirely from being concerned over Erik's mental condition to astonishment. Her mouth opened wide open, and she looked at Erik with an expression that showed how disappointed she was that he wasn't telling her anything. Didn't he consider her a friend? Then why didn't he talk?

However, she noticed that Erik looked more tired than usual and also pale, probably due to the exhaustion from the previous match. And after seeing how he looked, she realized he needed to rest badly.

Amber sighed; taking Erik by the arm, she dragged him to the infirmary. Erik was confused by Ambers's sudden move but didn't oppose it.

"Whatever the reason was, Erik, I'm on your side. Whenever you think you are ready to talk to me, you will always find my doors open," his friend said.

"Thank you, Amber, really..."

Erik then sat on the infirmary's bed and tried to rest. Amber patiently sat beside him and waited until he fell asleep.

After a few minutes, the young woman decided to leave and return to Anderson's fight. She knew he would win, but he still wanted to study Anderson's fighting style to be prepared in case the two ended up against each other.

Anderson and Mikey were fighting. The first was spending most of the fight avoiding Mikey's swarm, trying to attack him whenever he had the opportunity.

Though it wasn't simple since Mikey himself was a good fighter, and he kept his distance from Anderson, trying, at the same time, to attack with his swarm. Mikey knew that it was just a matter of time before his opponent found a way to get close to him, and at that point, the fight would end.

Amber finally arrived where Floyd and Gwen were waiting. They watched the fight between Anderson and Mikey with rapt attention so as not to miss even a second. For now, things looked like they were in Mikey's favor, but it was clear that the young man had a look of apprehension plastered on his face.

Floyd and Gwen saw Amber coming toward their position and waved to her. Soon the young woman reached her friends.

"What did he say?" Gwen asked with her usual directness.

"Nothing, he told me nothing..." Amber replied.

Gwen looked at Amber with a contemplative look on her face but didn't say anything further. As for Floyd, he was worried about Erik, but since the bond, he shared with Amber was more profound than the one he had with him, he kept silent and trusted his friend's judgment. Everything was good until he said he was fine.

"Anyway, let's watch the fight, okay? There is nothing we can do for him. He must sort things out himself, as I think this must be related to the kind of life he lived until he awakened. Maybe a trauma or something of the sort," Amber said.

Both Floyd and Gwen nodded and turned their heads to watch the fight between Anderson and Mikey. Things were turning serious inside the match since Mikey sped things up by increasing the size of his swarm. But even with that, Anderson could keep the bugs out of him, and everyone marveled at the young man's prowess since it looked like he was doing all that effortlessly.

Chapter 103: The tournament (19)

Anderson zigzagged on the ring, chasing Mikey like a madman while, at the same time, avoiding the swarm of mana insects conjured by his opponent. Anderson's opponent was growing frustrated.

Was it really possible for a man to avoid a swarm of flying insects for fifteen minutes while simultaneously chasing him all over the ring without batting an eyelid?

It wasn't only a matter of physical prowess here but also of environmental awareness, reflexes, and critical thinking. How insanely strong was Anderson to pull a feat like this?

The swarm prevented the young man from directly going at him. Still, several close calls during the fight made Mikey have shivers down his spine. Anderson was a monster; there was no say in the matter.

While Mikey thought about this, Anderson thought about his friend's power. The mana bugs had been an annoyance as they'd forced him into strenuous, evasive maneuvers, which would have left any other person with sore muscles afterward.

He was far from being tired, but he was annoyed by the bugs. He knew that Mikey wasn't someone to be underestimated or taken lightly, and now he realized how much so. Though, he believed that with the mana optimization coming from new neural links, Mikey could create a swarm so big as to kill entire Thaid's nests alone.

After almost twenty minutes of content use of his power, Mikey was running low on mana. And after a lot of time running away from Anderson, his legs felt heavy and sluggish.

It was clear how things were going to end for the young man. The crowd cheered at Anderson; he wasn't the most popular guy at school for nothing. They saw what he could do: he was one hell of a fighter, had amazing looks, and was insanely clever.

"ANDERSON!"

"ANDERSON!"

"ANDERSON!"

The crowd shouted. Many female students were screaming for him, trying to get his attention, but Anderson didn't care. The only thing that he wanted to do at that moment was getting Mikey.

He kept dodging those pesky little insects as best as he could until finally, Mikey slipped up, making the swarm attack Anderson but badly missing. The insect's body slammed against the ground, causing the swarm to disperse.

Though, Mikey began slowing down a couple of minutes earlier as fatigue overtook him. His breathing became labored and rasping while sweat poured off him like waterfalls.

Anderson took the opportunity to finally get close to him, who was just standing still, panting heavily. Anderson grabbed the young man by his shirt collar, throwing him into the air and slamming him down hard on the ground.

As Anderson did this, Mikey temporarily lost control of his power, and the swarm ceased to exist. For a few moments, everything went silent around them except for the sounds of their breath and heartbeats. Then the crowd started encouraging Anderson by cheering loudly for the young man.

Mikey looked at the crowd before turning back toward Anderson. "I can't win against you," said the boy, but he tried to get up, using an advanced move to free himself from Anderson's constraint.

He was successful, but at that moment, Anderson said, "Sorry, Mikey," and then proceeded to kick him hard in the stomach.

His opponent gasped for air, feeling nauseous. He got up again, looking at Anderson, who had a slightly concerned look on his face. But even though Mikey knew he would lose the fight, he was determined not to do so without putting up a fight.

Though, facing Anderson for real was like a bucket of cold water, as their fighting prowess was vast. Mikey assumed that this huge disparity would shrink by using his brain crystal power. Still, he was mistaken and couldn't help but feel weak compared to his friend.

Mikey deeply admired Anderson; he could win against all his opponents without even using his power; it was incredible.

But despite these feelings of weakness and defeat, Mikey stood tall and straightened his posture, ready to take another swing at his foe. As soon as he recovered enough, he rushed forward, punching his adversary with fast attacks.

But Anderson's prowess was incredible; he effortlessly dodged his friend's attacks and made it look as easy as breathing, sending the crowds into raptures.

The fight continued. The two friends fought like warriors, neither wanting to give way. Neither willing to yield. However, Anderson's situation was much better than Mikey's, who was breathing heavily and having difficulty standing. Finally, Anderson gave a small smile. "You are doing great, Mikey."

Mikey was already aware he couldn't fight for much longer and decided to try one last thing. If it worked, since Anderson was bound to become big inside the nation, he would be able to at least say that he was able to land a hit on the mighty warrior during his young days.

Otherwise, he would have known he did whatever he could to win the fight. So, the young man summoned his swarm of mana insects again and tried to attack Anderson from his blind spot, but the latter evaded the move easily, as if he had eyes behind his head, making Mikey realize there was nothing he could do more.

After a few more seconds, Mikey stopped attacking altogether since he figured whatever he tried wouldn't work and shouted, "I surrender."

Cheers erupted, and people screamed. The crowd started chanting Anderson's name while Aaron felt sad about Mikey's defeat. He knew how hard it was to fight Anderson as the two sparred countless times before the tournament.

Anderson went toward his friend and placed his arm on Mikey's shoulders, and with a brotherly voice, he said, "Don't worry about having lost the match. I know how tough my friend is. You are a good fighter, Mikey. Don't let this loss make you bitter."

"It won't, Anderson, don't worry..." he said with a smile on his face. The duo quickly went down the ring, and Aaron reached the two fighters. He congratulated Anderson and cheered Mikey up.

Amber, Floyd, and Gwen were looking at the three friends, Floyd was slightly annoyed, but Amber and Gwen were satisfied with the fight. They knew that Mikey did everything he could to defeat his opponent and had a great fight against someone like Anderson. They also knew what kind of fighter he was, so losing to him wasn't something terrible or shameful.

Amber knew there was no humiliation in losing against such a powerful individual. Besides, this was an expected outcome. So, everyone was happy and contented after seeing the fight's result.

"The winner is Anderson Worthington!" The referee shouted, and then the healer went toward the two fighters and started healing them both.

Despite Anderson never being hit, he received the healer's help. Mikey was, instead, slightly injured, with a few minor bruises and cuts all over his body. The wounds didn't seem too serious, but the healer had a job to do, so he healed him regardless.

"Let's go see where Erik is," Floyd said. Gwen and Amber nodded and left the area while heading toward the infirmary. When they arrived, they saw Erik sitting by himself.

"How are you?" Floyd asked Erik.

"I'm fine now... I've calmed down..." Erik replied.

Floyd wanted to ask Erik why did he assault Euan while he was unconscious but refrained from doing so. After all, he didn't say anything to Amber and didn't want to sound rude to his friend. However, he was unaware that Erik reflected on his actions and understood that he had a problem. The urge he felt was something he had to learn to control.

"Will you come to see my match?" Amber asked Erik, who immediately nodded. The young woman was the last one to fight today, and many people were waiting for her turn in earnest.

Though, most of the students remained to see the matches only because of Anderson. When they returned to the ring, Gwen noticed that there weren't many spectators around, probably because the other matches seemed far less interesting than the previous one.

In fact, only a handful of people came near the arena to watch the upcoming battles between the students. Only family and friends were there, basically. However, it wasn't like people had left the school. They simply weren't interested in other fights, despite being fought by the top students. The only good one was going to be Amber's.

Chapter 104: The Tournament (20)

The following fights were very good to see since all the people were top students. Erik did know each of them but wasn't on friendly terms with them, so their win or loss didn't matter much to the young man. Though, he had to admit that some of the powers were terrifying. For example, Darragh Montgomery had an earth manipulation power, which he could use for defense and attack.

For now, the young man didn't have much control over his power, so he had a fighting style similar to Adam Bond's, with him sending small earth projectiles to his opponent.

Clearly, Darragh won but not without creating a mess all around the ring, and the fight ended with many angry workers having to fix the damages he created.

The following match was between Jacob and Serena, and saw the first one win. The guy had a cloning ability which basically made the match a 3v1. He couldn't make more clones than that, but Erik had no doubt this would be a cheat-like power at high levels. The guy won easily, and the fight was spectacular since Jacob had a very acrobatic fighting style.

The last match before Amber's was between Charley and Stefan, with the latter having a phasing power that made him invulnerable to physical attacks and that gave him victory in the end.

Erik noticed that it had Priya's power same deficit, which was that before attacking, he had to materialize himself, giving any opponent a chance to attack him. Though, the fight was not simple since Charley had a psychic brain crystal power to which Stefan was not immune.

Now it was time for Amber to fight; her opponent was Brittney Santiago. The girl was a top student with brown eyes and long blond hair.

She had a very bulky figure and wore an outfit that showed off her well-toned body. Her breasts looked rather large from what little of her chest you could see through her clothes, and her waist was huge. She looked like an ox.

The woman had a very nasty power. She could emit sonic screams so strong as to generate airwaves that threatened to make you jump out of the ring and rupture your eardrums, causing confusion and loss of equilibrium. However, it was nothing Amber couldn't deal with

The fight wasn't going to be simple. Still, Erik couldn't see Amber lose since her power was a highly destructive one.

She could, in fact, create a highly corrosive gas with her brain crystal. Since basically everyone knew this, all the people waiting for the fight to start decided to stay as far as possible from the ring, lest they got injured by her power.

"Are you ready?" Gwen asked Amber.

"I am, don't worry," The woman replied.

"Good, let Brittney see who the strongest between you is..." Gwen said, and Amber nodded.

Then the announcer called Britney's and Amber's names.

"And now, Amber Joyce and Brittney Santiago will fight the day's last match! A round of applause for the two contestants!"

The crowd erupted in cheers when both women entered the arena, but it was clear who they were cheering for.

Despite Brittney being a very intimidating young girl, when Amber went into the ring, she stole the spotlights. The young woman was a sight to behold. She had short red hair that swayed with every step she took, her skin was tanned, her legs toned, and her ass was perfectly rounded.

She wore a pair of black glasses that gave her a sexy look, and her breast was at the perfect size, not too big or too small. Amber was wearing very tight black leggings and a tank top that hugged her breasts tightly. It also revealed part of her belly button, promptly sending all the males in the audience into a frenzy.

When the two contestants entered the ring, they approached each other and then hugged, showing that there was no enmity between them. Thanks to her kindness and friendliness, Amber was well-loved by everyone, and the girls loved her like a sister.

Then, after a few seconds, Amber broke away and faced her opponent. This time, on her face, there was a look of pure focus.

Amber took a deep breath and exhaled sharply, letting the sound of her voice reverberate throughout the crowd. At that moment, the bell rang, and the battle began.

Amber wasted no time and immediately unleashed a very dense and corrosive fog inside the ring, not only creating problems for her opponent to move but also to see past the fog. Since Brittney knew Amber's power well, she wasn't very concerned also because her own power could counter her if used effectively.

As the fog spread and quickly approached Brittney, the young woman started inhaling as much air as possible. She channeled mana through her lungs and throat, releasing an ear-shattering scream that dissipated the dense fog in front of her.

Though Amber wasn't stupid as she too knew Brittney's power, and while her opponent was busy channeling mana, she started running toward her.

Once Amber was close to the young woman, a battle ensued. Still, from the first minutes, it was clear to everyone, Brittney included, that Amber was much stronger and more experienced than her opponent, despite both being top-ranked students.

Amber unleashed a roundhouse kick at Brittney's head, though the latter was a skilled fighter and avoided the move cleverly. However, Amber's experience and skills were high, and she wasn't done yet.

Using the momentum she gained from the last kick, she spun in the air and kicked the young woman in the stomach with the back of her left foot, pushing Brittney several meters back and making her bend forward.

However, Amber didn't have the time to make another kick, so Brittney had enough to recuperate before Amber went into attack mode again. This time, Brittney didn't want to leave her opponent to do as she pleased.

She channeled mana and unleashed another sonic scream at Amber, who barely had the time to cover her ears with her hands, but she was thrown in the air inside the fog she had created.

For Brittney, it was impossible to attack Amber since she fell too deep into the gas. For this reason, the red-haired woman leisurely stood up since her opponent wasn't attacking her and started channeling an insane amount of mana through her body.

A couple of seconds later, a massive amount of gas spread into the air, and Brittney started to panic. The ox-like woman channeled mana again into her lungs and released another sonic scream, much bigger and stronger than the previous one.

She created another corridor inside Amber's fog, but now she didn't see the young woman rush at her; she was nowhere to be found. The fog quickly mended itself and started spreading toward Brittney again as its owner released the gas into the air.

She panicked at that point, so she channeled mana again and released another sonic scream. At that moment, Amber went out of the fog, unleashing a flying kick at Brittney and disrupting her channelization of mana.

The sonic girl did her best to defend herself but could do nothing as Amber trapped her in the corner of the ring. The young woman had no more space to move.

There were two alternatives: the first one was to fight while going inside the fog, but that would mean that she would be burned by the corrosive substance, but at least Brittney would have enough space to fight.

The second was to engage in melee combat inside the small corner of the ring, but that would mean that she would fight with a handicap. Since Amber was much better than her fighting, that would mean her defeat.

However, the young woman wasn't aware of the fact that Amber grew bored of the fight and was planning to end it once and for all.

Chapter 105: The tournament (21)

Since Brittney's power wasn't enough to dissipate all the fog inside the ring, she decided that the best thing to do was to fight against Amber in the small space that remained available in the ring.

Her back was facing the side of the ring, and she was in a fighting position, ready to fight with all her strength against Amber. Instead, the latter was in front of her, ready to send Brittney KO.

SWOOSH

Amber's punch traveled through the air toward Brittney's face, but the young woman tilted to the side and avoided the move. She counterattacked with an uppercut, but Amber blocked the move.

"AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAH"

Brittney released another sonic scream, but this time it was smaller in radius and very concentrated. Amber had barely time to avoid the attack. A small ring patch was cleared from the fog, meaning that Brittney had more space to fight.

She started pushing hard, but it was clear that winning against Amber was easier said than done. The girl kept pressing harder, finally obtaining some ground and making things complicated for Amber.

A slight grin appeared on the young woman's face, sending all the boys watching the fight into raptures. Amber suddenly increased her pace; she avoided Brittney's last punch and grabbed her arm.

Once she had a firm grip on the young woman, Amber kicked multiple times at her opponent's side, making Brittney lose all the air inside her lungs due to pain.

"ACK!"

The young woman gasped for air, but her brain was still fully functioning, and she started despairing. The young woman had just gained a slight advantage against Amber, but their skills were too far apart, and the Amber made Brittney pay for her recent push.

Then the gas manipulator threw Brittney in the air making her fall with her back on the ground. Brittney gasped as if she couldn't breathe anymore but recovered quickly since Amber wasn't attacking her anymore.

Though, as soon as she raised her head, Brittney's eyes opened in surprise. She was in the center of the ring, in a part where it was free of any gas, but the substance was floating all around her.

"You fell into my trap Brittney! Surrender, or I will make the fog gather on you!" Amber said while releasing much more gasses inside the ring.

Brittney channeled more mana into her lungs and tried to create the biggest sonic scream she had ever created. However, the young woman couldn't see where Amber was, so she couldn't correctly aim.

Though, she had a general direction since she heard Amber speak. The young woman inhaled deeply and then released a bewildering scream that dispersed all the fog in front of her.

The crowd had problems at that point since the attack reached even them. Some were sent flying, others were keeping their ears with their hands as they felt the pain, and some even lost consciousness.

The healers rushed out to fix their wounds, but there were simply too many of them, and the situation wasn't simple.

Though, Amber was nowhere to be found.

"Where are you?" Brittney shouted. "Show yourself!"

But Amber didn't, as she had had enough of the fight. The truth was that the young woman purposefully toned her attacks down to allow Brittney to show her capabilities to the people spectating the fight, as she didn't want to humiliate her in front of her parents and friends.

That was Amber, a kind person who thought of the others even during a fight, though the young woman herself had pride, and she, too, didn't want to look weak in front of the others.

It was at that moment that the breach inside the fog mended itself, and the substance started converging toward Brittney.

"FUCK!" the girl shouted. She channeled mana again, inhaled, and released another sonic scream, dispersing part of the fog again. However, the amount that Amber could create was much more than what Brittney could dissipate. The fog mended itself again and kept converging toward Amber's opponent. 5 meters, 3 meters, 1 meter.

"AAAH!"

Brittney released an inhuman scream as the fog made contact with her. The skin on her body started to burn and take on a red shade inside Amber's corrosive gas.

"Surrender now Brittney!" Amber said as she saw how close she was to victory.

Brittney's skin started slowly melting, sending a jolt of pain. The young woman kept her eyes closed in a vain attempt to protect her eyes, but it was futile.

"Brittney!" Amber shouted.

The woman released a weak lament and shouted, "I surrender!"

Immediately Amber dismissed the gas and ran toward Brittney to check on her condition. The healers did the same; once they saw the state she was in, they were very worried.

Amber toned down the strength of her gas, but it was devastating nonetheless. Brittney's skin was a mess, red in every spot and partially melted in others.

She was unrecognizable, as even part of her lips melted. Nothing that the healers couldn't fix, but in truth, they were worried about her mental state. Judging by her condition, Brittney suffered a lot, and some amounts of pain could really traumatize people.

Despite seeing the state in which Brittney had been reduced, the people watching the fight couldn't stop cheering for Amber.

Not only was she a very kind person, but she was also a strong warrior. Her gas was a devastating power, and if one day she could spread it for kilometers, she would be able to unleash death to countless thaidis in a matter of minutes.

She would become a terrifying weapon indeed. Though, many doubted she could do something like this due to her character.

"Remember me not to make Amber angry for any reason," Erik said to Floyd.

"I can't promise it," the young man replied with a smug look, and Erik replied with a laugh.

"THE WINNER IS AMBER JOYCE!" The referee shouted, and cheers erupted again. Then Amber jumped out of the ring and went to his friends.

"Congratulations, Amber," Floyd said.

"Thank you!" she said, smiling.

Erik got shivers down his spine. He couldn't understand how she could smile so radiantly despite having almost melted down a person. Though Amber was like this, always optimistic and cheerful, no pain, fights, or misery could change her.

"It was a good fight, Amber!" Gwen said, "But you were too soft as usual. The next time, just end the match as soon as you can. There is no worth in giving your opponents the possibility to fight back!" It was clear that Gwen noticed what Amber did. After all, she was her best friend and knew her like her pockets.

After that, the group went to the gym, where Amber and Erik took a shower. Once they were out, they quickly dressed and went to the main entrance, where the electronic board was kept.

Though, as they observed the device, they saw that the following day's matches had already been announced, and everyone could see them on the board.

1. Floyd Valdez Versus Anderson Worthington

2. Karl Moran Versus Luisa Zamora

3. Natasha Pope Versus Darragh Montgomery

4. Jacob Humphrey Versus Gwen Lindsay

5. Allan Grimes Versus Stefan Strickland

6. Erik Romano Versus Nathaniel Mc Conel

7. Enya Levy Versus Patricia Elliot

8. Amber Joyce Versus Aaron Greig

"SHIT!" Erik exclaimed. Floyd, Gwen, and Amber looked at Erik with ashen faces. His next opponent was going to be a tough nut to crack. It was Nathaniel.

"What do I do?" Erik asked with a worried tone to his friends.

"I don't know, it will be a tough fight for you..." Amber said.

"I don't think you can do much," Gwen said.

"You can only try not to be humiliated," Floyd said, "Because you are going to lose... Erik..."

Chapter 106: The tournament (22)

"Why? Do you think I won't be able to win against Nathaniel?" Erik asked.

Floyd, Gwen, and Amber looked at each other with embarrassed looks. That was precisely what they were thinking. Nathaniel was out of Erik's league; there was no doubt about it. Even Erik knew that, but his recent winning streak made him get his head up.

"Let's go grab something to eat; we will explain things once there," Amber said.

The four friends took Amber's car and went to the nearest ice cream shop. Erik had work to do that evening, so he couldn't stay for long, but they had to put Erik on guard against Nathaniel.

Once they arrived, each ordered a sweet and sat on a nearby bench. The shop they went to was near the park, so they ate with birds chirping and children playing in their ears as background music.

"So, why did you think I have no chance against Nathaniel? I know he is strong, but i think I can put up a good fight at least, no?" Erik asked.

"Look, Erik, we know you improved a lot during this month, but Nathaniel is in a league on his own," Floyd said.

"As you are well aware, he is considered the third strongest student in terms of martial might only, behind Amber and Anderson. This is not something we came up with, but what professor McAllister said, so you can trust us on this. On the other hand, you recently started training in martial arts after your awakening."

Erik nodded slowly. He could understand how he would appear weak compared to Nathaniel. But then again, even though he wasn't experienced as him, Erik did fight people who trained much more than him, and he still managed to come out on top.

The young man thought that if Nathaniel didn't use any special powers or techniques, he should still stand a pretty fair chance considering his stats were so high compared to people his age.

"So, he is more experienced than you fighting, he often sparred against Amber and Anderson, and he even managed to win sometimes, and that is only by using his martial arts. Though, as you know, this competition allows people to use their powers..." Floyd added.

Erik looked at him with a slight tint of annoyance. It seemed like all of his friends didn't have faith in him!

"I know his power is strong, but surely it won't be as bad as Zakir's one?" Erik said.

Amber turned to look at him. She shook her head slightly.

"You don't really believe that, do you?" she replied.

"What do you mean?" Erik asked.

She pointed at him with a spoon full of chocolate vanilla swirls.

"Nathaniel is considered the strongest student in the whole school, Erik, and not because of random luck," Amber said.

"I know that, but I'm confident I can win!" Erik replied.

"You won't," Gwen said, leaving Erik stunned as she agreed with them.

"Did you forget what we told you about him the last time? Nathaniel can generate force fields and use them as shields. Moreover, the same energy can be used to attack. Not only is it already rare for someone to have a defensive and offensive power simultaneously, but the power's sheer strength makes him a terrifying foe.

It is so strong that he can even destroy walls with a powered punch, and his power can easily be used in martial arts. Imagine you are fighting against Jacqueline but with him sending blasts of powers capable of crushing your ribs at every punch. He doesn't even need to hit you directly. All he needs is to spread the blast at a meter radius, and you will be hit," She concluded.

"Is he really this strong?" Erik asked with disbelief.

"Yes," Amber said.

"Many people have tried to defeat him since joining the school, and none have succeeded. That's if he used his power. Otherwise, he is a talented fighter but not as much as Anderson or me," Amber added.

Erik was a little bit disheartened hearing those words. He knew how strong Nathaniel was, but he refused to believe he had no chance.

His pride stemmed from winning many matches where people believed he would lose, but he did manage to win. So, he did believe he could do it again.

Still, despite all of this, what his friends said to him wouldn't stop him from trying to fight him. There was nothing else to say.

The conversation quickly trailed to Floyd's fight. He was going to face Anderson, so he wasn't in a better situation than Erik. Though he was more experience than him, so the situation wasn't as dire, and he didn't risk facing humiliation.

After eating, they left the shop and accompanied Erik to the train station. They offered to bring him to mister Fox's farm and even wait for him as he worked, but Erik refused.

He told his friends that he didn't want to bother them, but the truth was that he planned to go to the breach and farm a couple of thaids.

He hoped to level up, but he knew that was extremely unlikely. Erik estimated that to do so, he had to kill at least twenty-four Lomalins. Not only it was not simple to find them, but he didn't even have time to do so. Still, 6-7 kills were better than nothing.

Erik knew that Lomalins usually roamed in groups of a hundred, and he was not sure he could kill them all. Probably not, to be honest. He didn't want to risk being eaten alive by overgrown bugs.

"We'll see each other later," Amber said.

"Bye, Erik!" Floyd replied. While Gwen simply nodded.

The young man went to buy the train tickets, and after waiting for ten minutes, the train finally arrived. Erik had much time to think during the trip to the northern district, and it was during that trip he realized that he was going to join the Red Palace.

Though, winning the tournament and getting a brain-stimulating serum would be helpful for him since he had many neural links to make.

The scenery changed slowly as he traveled. It went from the monotonous grey that characterized the city's landscape to the vibrant green that defined the countryside. The houses changed too.

They went on from being giant skyscrapers hundreds of meters tall to being two or three stories tall with large windows and balconies on top.

A lot of people also appeared along the way, tending the fields and working on the farms. Some of them were even carrying huge bundles of hay which they were most likely brought to the barns.

The scent of fresh grass filled Erik's nostrils as soon as the train stopped. His eyes caught sight of the fields where some farmers cut down the wheat stalks, preparing them for harvest.

Everything would be much simpler if he could own a farm and work the fields. Still, unfortunately, this stupid country's rules forced him to join the military. However, Erik was confident enough to flee from the country in a couple of years, but to do so, he had to train hard and get the most out of the Red Palace.

If he managed to increase his rank to three or four levels, there shouldn't be any problems escaping the country. But he also needed extensive research about Frant's surroundings and had to decide where he wanted to escape.

That was not a problem since Erik had the biological supercomputer, and getting information was a matter of minutes.

With that thought in mind and filled with determination, Erik started walking toward the breach, hoping to find as many weak monsters as possible and not to come across other Leylarhads.

Erik knew that meeting the beast around here wasn't normal, and something was definitely happening around New Alexandria. Still, his will to improve and become stronger was higher than any fear. He didn't want to give up on his only edge against the other people, the system, and all its perks just because of anxiety.

<I will take my life into my own hands...> The young man thought, <I will be able to escape from who wants to control me... I will get a comfortable life. I will live free and happy...> With these words in mind, the young man finally reached the breach.

Chapter 107: The Criculs (1)

Erik quickly passed the breach and walked inside New Alexandria's forest. The young man was now accustomed to this view. However, he couldn't stop marveling at it.

The place was a stark contrast to the city, starting from the colors, which were predominantly green instead of the dull gray or black that characterized New Alexandria.

Then there was the atmosphere that seemed more pleasant than that in the urban area. It was something that Erik attributed mainly to its lack of artificial lighting.

Another reason was that the place had no trace whatever of the stench characteristic of most urban centers, the smell of soot and smoke, but also for the freshness and purity that characterized the air.

The feeling of natural beauty was intensified by the fact that everything about the forest, the trees themselves; their foliage; even those things such as fallen leaves or twigs lying on the ground was hardly present inside the city.

Everything became even more astonishing when Erik reached the edge of the woods and saw how far away they really lay on either side: beyond them stretched countless trees with leaves whose shades ranged all along the spectrum, white through yellow into red.

Here and there, some parts of the ground showed patches where the foliage had been stripped bare by the occasional vegetarian thaid.

Above the trees stood a cloudless sky, and in the middle of it, the sun shone brightly down upon everything like a god's benign benison.

It would be hard for anyone who had never seen such an expanse of woodland before to imagine it. All the people below the age of sixteen were only used to the crowded streets of cities and never set foot outside. Only the adults, who had to join the militaries mandatorily, knew what lay outside of the city. But Erik was an exception.

Though he was aware of the dangers lurking out there, as he met them firsthand in the form of dangerous thaids, he even killed several of them.

However, Erik thought this place wasn't the only dangerous one around. If one wanted to see danger, one could look no further than the overcrowded city itself.

There were plenty of thieves and murderers within its walls and little chance of escaping from them because the police force was far too inadequate. At least here, Erik had a chance.

The young man walked several meters inside the forest, searching for suitable thaid to kill and paying attention not to come across something he couldn't manage.

Erik was later lucky enough to stumble across weird creatures he had never seen in the flesh before. Though, since he downloaded information about the thaids inhabiting Frant, he knew what kind of beast they were, Criculs.

These were strange goats-like creatures of massive size. The Criculs' wool was short and thick, more like a bison's fur than a goat's. The color was brown or black, like a brand-new penny or a rich cup of coffee, only a little bit darker.

The most striking feature of the creatures was their horns. They were one or one and a half meters high, broad-bladed, thicker than the average human arm holding a sword, and curved towards their backs.

Their eyes were ruby red, shining as two pools in the shadows. To be honest, to Erik, they resembled some cows with goat heads, but they didn't move like those.

They jumped and moved with agility, so they had to be strong thaids. It was evident they had a strength they shouldn't have based on how agilely they moved their massive bodies.

There was something about them, though, which Erik knew but that he had the unlucky chance to smell for himself. The smell of urine, sweat, and musk hung in the air like a smelly armpit.

This smell came from the creatures; Erik knew it. It was so strong that he could smell the nasty odor from afar; it was powerful and almost made the young man throw up. Was that a defensive mechanism? He wasn't a thaid expert, so he didn't know if creatures usually did that.

Their race had a brain crystal power that allowed them to transform their horns into deadly metal weapons. Still, they also had a strong constitution that enabled them to adapt to any environment. Because of this, they were one of the most common creatures around the globe.

They fought in groups and tended to move as such. The beast was used to find new mates during each breeding period, and it was notoriously lazy.

Their smell still disgusted the young man, who kept observing them cautiously, especially since he knew the creatures were abnormally strong.

In addition to their seeming power, the beast was a herbivore. But Like many other thaids, they did chase you to kill. Plus, the species was highly aggressive.

The number of creatures was approximately twenty, and their size ranged from a meter to two meters tall beasts with ripped muscles and deadly horns.

<Well, at least not all the thaids are man-eating monsters. The only monstrous thing here is their smell,> Erik thought while staying at a distance.

These beasts were Leylarhads' natural prey and usually lived far in the east of the nation, where the wolf-like creatures usually resided.

Erik wondered why both prey and predators were so west of their territories. It was an unnatural occurrence.

He suspected that a pack of Leylarhad had to be nearby since the Criculs were around here. That explained why he saw the Leylarhad cub days before lurking around the breach. It was probably a young one attracted by the Cricul's nasty scent.

Erik had enough energy and a multitude of power to allow him to hunt at least one if he paid attention. However, it wasn't that simple since the first thing he had to do was to make it so that one of them left the herd, and that was easier said than done.

He had to do this while avoiding detection since the Criculs were very aggressive, and fighting against so many of them was akin to suicide.

The first thing Erik did, though, was to scan the creatures with his analysis to find the weakest of them.

<Analysis,> the young man thought multiple times, using the biological supercomputer's power to find the herd's weakest link. It didn't take a lot of time before he found it.

- Name: Unnamed.

- Brain crystal power: Metallic Horns.

-Race: Cricul.

-Physical characteristics: Approximately 1.47 meters tall. Estimated weight 720 kilograms.

-Power Level: 43

-Approximate Strength: 25

-Approximate Intelligence: 2

-Approximate Dexterity: 12

-Approximate Energy: 82

...

...

...

<This is perfect,> Erik thought. The other Criculs were not only much stronger than this one, but also significantly larger, so he couldn't possibly kill them easily.

Erik had a plan in mind to use an insane amount of mana with Logan's power to weaken the creature.

Use Orson's to strengthen his bones to avoid crippling attacks and use the sharpening power to make a deadly weapon out of a branch.

There were more combinations that Erik was thinking about. For example, he could simply throw a bunch of seeds and make countless trees fall down the Cricul as he did against the Densoph. If that would be effective, he didn't know.

Still, the problem was that Erik needed fighting experience above anything else. He needed to learn how to face different creatures with different perks and abilities, so he decided to fight melee against the Cricul and tried to come up with different ways to use his powers.

This kind of tactic was only possible now that he had enough mana to sustain all these powers at once. He couldn't have possibly used it before.

So, Erik started to slowly channel mana. The first thing he did was to strengthen his bones enough to sustain the beast's attacks once or twice, hoping that moment would never come.

Then he picked up a branch from the ground and injected an amount of mana he deemed long enough enough to cut through the beast's tough skin in total safety and then started creating a mana dart imbued with a good chunk of his mana.

As the deadly weapon was ready, Erik aimed at the weakest thaid. After breathing in and out to calm his nerves, he threw the dart to the beast, hitting it on the back leg a couple of moments later.

Chapter 108: The Criculs (2)

As soon as the dart hit the Cricul, the beast started to bellow and blare. The beast got agitated, and, feeling the stinging pain in his back leg, it started running away, alarming all the other Criculs that ended up following him in his mad dash for safety.

That was the most challenging part of the fight since now Erik had to follow the beasts through the forest. He hoped the creature got weakened enough to become isolated from the herd and wished no other beast set their eyes on him or the creature.

The young man was very much concerned, but he did not hesitate a moment before starting to give chase to the Criculs while keeping his distance and avoiding detection. The creatures continued on their way hurriedly toward the woods beyond, unable to find any predator nearby.

The Criculs ran at least ten kilometers through the forest, reaching a part where the trees started lessening, and an odd number of rocks started taking their place.

Most of them were huge, and they created a natural obstacle course that slowly made the herd disperse. However, the weakest Cricul, due to the poisonous mana inside its body, was almost exhausted, and it could no longer keep up with the rest of the herd. His own mana was already starting to fight Erik's, slowly improving its current condition.

The beast had to stop to rest while the other Criculs kept running away in a panic. Erik waited until the last of the beasts was far away from the weakest one, and it was then that Erik sprung to action.

He wielded the branch like a sword and immediately ran toward the injured Cricul. The beast, despite being weakened, was all but out of combat, so it immediately started charging at Erik, pointing his sharp and long horns against him.

Erik noticed three things during this short period. One was that the system didn't give him any quest.

This was probably because during his fight with the Leylarhad, the Biological supercomputer exhausted all its energy reserves to reward Erik. As already announced, it could not give him quests outside of the daily ones.

The second thing the young man noticed was the stench of the creature. As he got closer to it, the smell started to become unbearable. It was a mixture of shit, urine, and even rotting meat, despite Erik's inability to understand this particular odor's origin.

There was something he was certain of, though; the smell was so strong it made him want to puke.

The third thing Erik noticed was a particularly concerning one. The beast started channeling mana as soon as it saw Erik, and it got quickly redirected toward its horns.

The deadly protrusions started changing; from their initial light creamy color, they started assuming a metallic luster.

Erik could swear he saw the horns sharpening at the naked eye, and he got immediately aware that if he got hit by the Cricul's horns, he would die a miserable death.

The beast quickly gained speed, not as much as its initial fleeing burst but enough to reach Erik in a matter of moments.

Though, the weakened thaid, at his actual state, wasn't particularly hard for Erik to fight. All thanks to Logan's power. Erik couldn't wait for his mana to be enough to kill any creature with this power alone, who quickly became his favorite.

The beast tried to gore Erik, who immediately avoided the horns like a matador during a bullfight.

With a swift movement, the awakener swung his makeshift sword over the beast's neck, creating a gaping wound that, however, wasn't enough to kill the beast. The creature started flailing and writhing due to pain, kicking the air and almost hitting Erik in the chest.

The Cricul turned to look at Erik with an enraged look, one that, nevertheless, hid a slight fear and charged at him again. However, due to the short distance, the thaid couldn't gain enough speed, and Erik effortlessly avoided the move.

At that moment, Erik swung the sharpened branch with a swift motion, aiming where he previously hit the creature but missing the spot and creating another wound, this time on the creature's back.

Blood poured down from the wound, and the beast faltered for a moment. It looked at Erik with its glowing eyes, which seemed to say, "Why have you done this?"

Though the beast was mighty and side kicked at Erik, hitting him on the right shoulder and sending him flying into the ground.

The young man felt some bone crack under his skin, making him wince in agony, but having used Orson's power, nothing major happened.

Since he had total control over his bones, Erik started channeling mana, mending the cracks, and feeling better after doing so. He, somehow, acquired a healing power in the end.

As he rose up from the dirt floor, Erik realized that the thaid was now bleeding heavily and its wounds were getting worse. Its movements also slowed down considerably.

The beast lifted its head and looked at Erik, revealing deep sorrow and regret. But despite feeling a little bit sorry for the creature, Erik knew that this world was governed by the law of the jungle and that he couldn't have pity.

Besides, Erik was feeling a sort of urge to kill the creature that was clashing with rational thoughts. He was sorry, but he wanted to kill it. It was very weird.

The beast was now having problems moving. Erik then approached it with quick steps, with the Cricul still looking at him with scared eyes.

Erik didn't want to make the thaid suffer more than he already made it, so he channeled more mana through his body, increasing the output of the ethereal substance that sharpened his branch, and by avoiding one last goring attempt by the creature, he plunged his weapon into its head killing it on the spot.

Though, to do so, Erik had to almost deplete his mana reserves, putting himself in danger if another thaid attacked him along his way back.

Having few neural links proved to make his fights harder, and the only way to solve the problem would be to train more. Erik did hope that the system would be able to find a way to improve the neural link-developing process.

[HIGH-LEVELLED HOSTILE CRICUL KILLED: MANA ABSORBING PROCESS STARTING.]

[0%...1%....5%...30%...70%...100%]

[MANA SUCCESSFULLY ABSORBED, STARTING CONVERTING PROCEDURE.]

[3...2...1...0]

[MANA SUCCESSFULLY CONVERTED INTO EXPERIENCE. 261 EXPERIENCE POINTS AWARDED TO THE HOST.]

"Only this much?" Erik said with a sad tone. "Well, It didn't have the same amount of mana the Leylarhad had, and I didn't even get a quest, so..."

Then Erik leaned down toward the beast's body, and he dipped his finger inside the beast's wound.

[CRICUL'S BLOOD ACQUIRED. STARTING THE ANALYSIS.]

[ANALYSIS COMPLETE.]

[50 DNA POINTS ARE REQUIRED TO EXTRACT THE DNA.]

[1740 DNA POINTS DETECTED. COMMENCING EXTRACTION?]

"No," Erik immediately replied.

Then another notification appeared in front of his eyes, it was unexpected, and Erik even forgot about this.

[CRICUL'S DNA HAS BEEN FOUND COMPATIBLE WITH THE BRAIN CRYSTAL POWER "ANIMAL SHAPESHIFTING" TO STRENGTHEN THE POWER, THE HOST IS REQUIRED TO DRINK AT LEAST 20 CC OF BLOOD.]

"What the hell?" Erik said in surprise. This was the first time something like this had happened. Though Erik recalled what the system had said to him twenty days before, and everything clicked inside his mind.

Immediately, the young man leaned on the Cricul and started sucking its blood out of its wounds like a ravenous beast.

During the process, Erik wondered what all of this would imply, but he suspected that thanks to this DNA, he would be able to transform into a Cricul.

By having previously tested Conal's power, the young man was aware that he could fully shapeshift into a lion. The problem was that this ancient beast was no stronger than most thaid's, so he deemed it useless to do it.

But if Erik were able to get even thaid's DNA, then everything would change. However, Erik recalled the Leylarhad blood he had recently absorbed three days ago, and his mood suddenly plummeted.

If the power had been fully unlocked already, he would have probably been able to shapeshift into this powerful beast.

As Erik absorbed enough blood, another notification rang inside his ears and appeared before his very eyes.]

[BLOOD ABSORBED. DNA STORING PROCEDURE STARTED. PLEASE WAIT.]

This time, Erik had no choice to make. The power got automatically absorbed by Conal's power, but since this was a sort of natural occurrence since it was related to his power, it didn't last more than five minutes, and he didn't even feel pain.

[PROCEDURE COMPLETE.]

<Good... Now let's absorb the brain crystal...>

Chapter 109: The Criculs (3)

Erik then smashed open the Cricul's head and placed his hand inside to search for the brain crystal, and after a couple of minutes, he did find it, cleaned it, and swallowed it.

[CRICUL'S BRAIN CRYSTAL ACQUIRED. STARTING THE ANALYSIS.]

[ANALYSIS COMPLETE.]

[50 DNA POINTS ARE REQUIRED TO EXTRACT THE POWER.]

[1740 DNA POINTS DETECTED. EXTRACTION IS NOT ADVISED; THE HOST HAS INCOMPATIBLE DNA.]

[EXTRACTION ABORTED]

With that, Erik was done. He couldn't level up like last time, but at least he got a new brain crystal power. He only needed to find a place to acquire the power in peace, and he wouldn't certainly do so at Amber's house since he didn't really know what happened to him during the process.

With everything settled, the young man started walking back toward the breach. Still, he was several kilometers inside the forest, so it took him quite some time before reaching it.

After returning to the breach, the young man walked ten minutes toward Mister Fox's farm. As usual, he found him working on the fields, with a white tank top shirt and his mechanical arm on display.

"Aaaah, Erik!" he said once he saw the young man.

"Hello, Mister Fox..." Erik replied.

"How are you, young man?" He asked. The old man started behaving strangely around him. It was probably because he didn't want to lose his golden goose, so he tried to talk to Erik in the best possible way.

Mister Fox was making a huge fortune out of Erik's power. He bought new equipment, tools, and machinery for his farm. He even started renovating his house, barn, and stable into something more modern.

Erik was aware of all this, but he couldn't quit his job for several reasons. For starters, he didn't have to work a lot to earn a decent amount of money; he basically came here once a day for an hour at best and grew Mister Fox's crops.

Secondly, the old man was now paying him much more than any other job would pay a man without qualifications like him. Thirdly, he was going to join the military school soon, so he didn't have any reason to quit the job at the farm to search for another.

Fourth, he could say he was going to the farm while, in reality, he went to the breach. It was the perfect cover.

The young man didn't waste time and immediately went to the field to complete his job and started channeling mana as fast as possible.

The young man decided to then return to his home and extract the Cricul's brain crystal power and DNA and then go to Amber's house after he was done with his work.

Instantaneously, the heat wave characterizing his power washed over him, and suddenly, the air became moist and heavy.

The young man's sense of smell was assaulted by the scent of various plants and flowers as the power began to permeate the surrounding greenery.

His power started quickly to affect the surrounding plants making the trees grow larger, their trunks becoming thicker and wider and lastly, bearing fruit so big and so luscious as to look like they were fake.

Bushes and shrubs blossomed in the most beautiful colors imaginable, while flowers bloomed everywhere. Every single blade of grass stood upright, becoming darker in color, denser in texture, more robust in health, and stronger than ever before. All of this was thanks to Erik's higher mana capacity.

The scent caused by the booming flowers caused all the insects within the area to buzz uncontrollably.

Carrots as thick as Erik's palm sprouted everywhere, the crops multiplied at an exponential rate until every plant appeared as if it would explode out of its own soil, and the wheat fields blossomed into enormous golden expanses.

Around the farm, bushes began to bear berries, and the ground beneath the soil began to churn itself up, resulting in the birth of many mushrooms.

<My job is done...> Erik thought. He then went to Mister Fox, who was currently working inside the barn. Clearly, the young man asked for his payment, and once his employer gave him the money, he left the property and headed to the train station.

If it hadn't been for the tournament, this would have been just another day for Erik. Since he got the system, everything became much more peaceful, and he cherished these moments of peace.

Erik later arrived at the train station, and after jumping inside a train carriage, he headed to his house where he could use his power in peace.

The young man thought about what to do in the following days, he still had to buy new furniture for his now wrecked house, and he didn't know if he had enough. Maybe, the next day he would ask Mister Fox for more money. He at least owed him that much.

After a short trip, Erik finally arrived back home, where the scenery of his destroyed furniture greeted him.

Erik sighed; he had no other place to extract the brain crystal power and the DNA, so he had to come here. The young man quickly went to work and asked the system how much time was required to absorb the powers.

[ANSWER: THREE HOURS ARE REQUIRED TO ABSORB THE CRICUL'S BRAIN CRYSTAL POWER. DO YOU WANT TO START THE PROCEDURE? 50 DNA POINTS ARE REQUIRED TO COMPLETE THE EXTRACTION. IMPOSSIBLE TO START THE EXTRACTION; MISSING DNA DETECTED.]

"I know that..." Erik scoffed. "System, start the Cricul's DNA extraction."

[UNDERSTOOD. SYSTEM READY. STARTING CRICUL'S DNA EXTRACTION, 50 DNA POINTS USED. COMMENCING EXTRACTION. HOST IS ADVISED TO LAY ON A BED.]

Erik didn't say anything. He was now used to the procedure, and there was nothing he could do to stop the pain he was bound to feel. As the agony began to wreak havoc in Erik's mind, he moaned and made some mumbled sounds. It was challenging for him to contain his shouts, but he knew he had to avoid attracting

Erik quickly lost control of his body, and the pain quickly spread to his body. The world around him started to whirl irregularly as his thoughts began to slow down. Then the usual tinnitus and gradual deterioration in his hearing ability started until Erik could hear nothing more but whispers.

The amount of pain he was experiencing intensified during the procedure. Still, after fifteen minutes had passed, the pain began progressively reducing until it ceased.

[PROCEDURE COMPLETE. HOST DNA IS NOW ABLE TO ACCOMMODATE THE CRICUL'S BRAIN CRYSTAL POWER.] The system said.

Erik took a couple of minutes to relax. He just went through what he could only describe as a pain as intense as having his organs ripped out and his skin burned down. Once he was ready, he told the system to start the procedure.

"Start the brain crystal power extraction..."

[SYSTEM READY. STARTING THE CRICUL'S BRAIN CRYSTAL POWER EXTRACTION. 50 DNA POINTS USED. THREE HOURS REQUIRED TO COMPLETE THE EXTRACTION. COMMENCING PROCEDURE. HOST IS ADVISED TO LAY ON A BED.]

He wouldn't return to Amber's house late since it was still early in the day, and he even had time to develop his neural links further.

A swirling vortex of mana began to take shape inside Erik's body. It began to go through his body quickly.

Erik imagined all this energy ravaging his body as a fiery tornado. It traversed the land that his body was and began to rip the land apart, flying everything kilometers away with its destructive force and uprooting trees.

Then a sudden heatwave began to permeate the young man's body. It started in Erik's abdominal region and made its way out to the rest of his body by passing through the pores of his skin and, lastly, leaving his body.

After a brief moment of disorientation, Erik started to lose consciousness. His eyes started to feel heavy, so he squeezed them shut and fell asleep soon later.

Chapter 110: The Plant Hugger's power (1)

[PROCEDURE COMPLETE. CRICUL'S BRAIN CRYSTAL POWER "METALLIZATION" SUCCESSFULLY EXTRACTED. CONGRATULATION, HOST.]

It was with that notification that Erik woke up. The young man was lying on his apartment's cold floor with slight back pain.

He spent three hours motionless on the hard ground as the system was working its magic, and this resulted in the current situation.

"Damn... I really need to buy new furniture..." the young man said to himself.

"System, show me the status!" Erik said. He couldn't wait to see what his new power was. If he got the gist of the whole power acquisition, he would get something that would make him turn things metallic.

The Cricul used it to its horns, but Erik, by comparing this with the densoph power, thought this would probably work in the same way as the sharpening power. As the young man said those words, a bluish-white screen appeared before him.

[Host Information]

NAME: Erik Romano

AGE: 16

SYSTEM LEVEL: 12

POWER LEVEL: 48

EXPERIENCE: 288.825/2480

DNA POINTS: 1640

HEALTH: 840/840

MANA: 770 /770

{Attributes}

STRENGTH: 18

INTELLIGENCE: 9

DEXTERITY: 19

ENERGY: 37

Available Attributes point: 0

[Powers]

{Biological Super Computer Powers}

-Brain Crystal Manipulation

-Brain Crystal Power Extraction

(Allows the absorption of the brain crystal, making the host able to acquire the power contained within. Notice: the DNA must be changed in order to allow the body to use the power. See DNA extraction.)

- (LOCKED)

- (LOCKED)

- (LOCKED)

- Brain Crystal Power Strengthening

(Allows the gaining of the energy attribute points)

(LOCKED)

-DNA Manipulation

-DNA Extraction

(Allows the absorbion of foreign DNA, making the host able to replicate it inside his own body.
Notice: Changing the DNA is a slow process and it is required to use new brain crystal powers.)

- (LOCKED)

- (LOCKED)

- (LOCKED)

-DNA Strengthening

(Allows the gaining of the Strength, Intelligence, and Dexterity attribute points)

(LOCKED)

- Analysis

(Gives the host information about his surroundings, plants, creatures, and ores)

-Brain Information Injector

(It allows the injection of information directly to the brain-Based on touch)

-Device Manipulation

(Allows the Host to manipulate electronic and mana-driven devices- Based on touch)

{Host's Powers}

-Rapid Growth [Plants] (ESIGMA2E-Ranked)

(Allows the host to make Plants Grow Faster)

-Sharpening (ESIGMA1D-Ranked)

(Makes Every things sharper according to the quantity of mana imbued into the item or body part)

-Mana Poisonous Spikes (ESIGMA1E-Ranked)

(Create Ethereal Poisonous spikes from the user's back. The amount of Toxicity and the spike's length depends on the mana used)

-Poisonous Mana Darts(ESIGMA1D-Ranked)

(Conjure poisonous mana darts whose lethality depends on the mana injected)

-Bone Manipulation(ESIGMA1E-Ranked)

(Manipulate, enlarge, and increase the density, shape, and sharpness of the user's bones)

-Animal Shapeshifting (ESIGMA1E-Ranked)

(Shapeshift the body into that of an animal. Animals must be absorbed to unlock their shapeshifting.)

-Mana Exoskeleton (ESIGMA1E-Ranked)

(Create a bone-hardened exoskeleton whose strength depends on the mana used to create it)

-Astral Wolf Bite (ESIGMA1D-Ranked)

(Conjure an astral but solid projection of a Leylarhad's head whose only aim is to bite at whatever target the host is aiming. Notice: the target must be close to the projection)

-Metallization (ESIGMA1D-Ranked)

(Transform into metal, body parts, and items through mana. The strength of the material depends on the quantity of mana imbued.)

{Skills}

-Kyokar hand-to-hand style (BEGINNER)

(A military fighting style developed in Frant)

"Metallization?" Erik read the description of his power. By reading its description, he wasn't surprised it was a D-ranked power.

The power stated that it could transform into metal body parts and items through mana, so it basically worked like Densoph's power, Erik was right.

That was good since he could basically create weapons out of whatever he found around.

Then, the young man thought about how to use it with his other powers, and many ideas sprouted inside his mind.

Erik wanted to test it as soon as possible, so he channeled mana through his newly established neural link and willed it to circle through his skin.

After a couple of seconds, the organ started to slowly change color, but, at the same time, it lost elasticity. As Erik became unable to move his body, he immediately stopped providing mana, and his skin quickly returned to how it originally was.

<Well, I guess I can't use it to create armor out of the skin. That was probably the reason why the Criculs used it only on their horns,> Erik thought. The young man then tried the newly acquired Cricul's power on an item, making it as hard as steel.

"I have yet to try this on other creatures, but maybe I can use it to immobilize them." Erik thought about this for a couple of minutes. Still, then he obviously concluded that by doing so, he would make their skin hard to penetrate and cut.

Besides, the creature in question would probably resist the foreign mana making it hard for Erik to use it on living beings.

The awakener then watched the clock lying on the ground. It still worked, but it had a broken glass; it currently was 21:14.

"I should go back to Amber's house while I still can," he mused, leaving his devastated apartment. Looking at the wreck his apartment had been reduced, Erik's mood immediately plummeted. However, he wasn't completely sad since he still got a new power.

He then headed to the train station. He had to pass through the main plaza as he went there and found many bars and restaurants open on his way.

There were many people drinking and dancing to the loud music, but it was clear that alcoholics intoxicated many of them.

In fact, some guys were molesting the others and were promptly forced to leave. Though, they didn't like being kicked out and assaulted the guys who alerted the bouncers. A fight quickly broke out, but Erik wasn't really interested in it, so he sped toward the train station.

When he arrived there, he waited for the train to arrive, and once he boarded it, the young man only had to wait five minutes before he arrived in the wealthy part of the eastern district.

It was clear that things were much more peaceful and safe there since many mansions and security guards were everywhere.

Though, the place was a little bit empty, as there was not a single person walking through the streets, primarily because those who had the money preferred to take their luxurious cars to go home.

After half an hour of walking, Erik finally reached Amber's house, and once there, he texted the young woman to get the gates open.

Soon they opened, and Erik went inside the house

"Welcome, Erik!" Amber greeted. "Hi, Amber..." Erik said with a tint of tiredness.

"Did you work until now?" Amber asked. "Yes," the young man replied, obviously lying to her. Then the sound of Erik's stomach reverberated through the walls.

"It looks like you are quite hungry, am I right?" Amber asked.

"Indeed, I have not eaten anything since lunch," he replied.

"Come then, I will have the chefs cook you something," Amber enthusiastically said.

The two went to the kitchen, and Amber quickly asked the chef to make Erik dinner. After half an hour, the man presented a pasta dish with tomato sauce cooked with beef.

It was spectacular. Erik only ate something like this whenever he went to fancy restaurants with uncle Benjamin, so he was very happy to have the chance to eat this kind of food.

<For sure, going back to live alone will be traumatic,> Erik thought.

"How did the day go?"

"It wasn't bad," Erik said. "I helped Mister Fox grow his crops and then helped him collect them. We did finish late..." the young man lied.

"You know, I never saw your first power firsthand. I've always been curious about it. As you already know, many people scorned you for it, but I always found it very fascinating," Amber said.

"You know, I can show it to you if you want..." Erik said.

"Yeah, why not? Once you are done with dinner, I'll take you to the garden. You will show me then."

Then the waiter brought many more dishes to the young man. He started with some beef rolls served with a sauce made of red wine and port, and then he brought a salad to the young man.

As the man finished his meal, Amber grabbed his hand and brought him to the garden. She was very cheerful, and a huge smile was plastered on her face. She couldn't wait to see the power that made Erik infamous inside the school.

To say that the garden was big was an understatement. The place was much larger than Mister Fox's farm and housed many flowers.

They had been planted inside different kinds of pots. There were even a lot of flowerbeds that contained roses, tulips, lilies, and other kinds of plants.

There were also trees around the garden, such as fruit-trees, cherry blossoms, and others. At the center of the garden stood a tree that resembled a palm tree. Its leaves were green, and its trunk was brownish in color. A few meters from the tree was a stone bench where they sat down.

In front of them, there was also a huge pond where many carps swam around. A light breeze blew over the area, making everything smell better and feel cleaner.

"This is probably my favorite spot here..." Amber said while looking at the beautifully carved pond. However, it wasn't the pond that caught the young man's attention but a tree covered by beautiful red leaves. Erik had no idea what that tree was, but it was majestic.

Amber noticed the way he was staring at it and smiled.

"My father asked some biological engineers to make that tree for me. It was for my fifth birthday," Amber said.

"Its' beautiful."

Erik stared a little bit more until he was distracted by a fountain shaped like a dragon drinking water from its mouth.

A few other trees were placed near a fence, giving shade to the area during the day. The trees had multiple lights hung on them, which were lit during the night and illuminated the garden. The place looked like a magical world in a faraway galaxy.

"Mind to start?" Amber said.