

BIOLOGICAL 1321

Chapter 1321: The Azure Thaid (1)

—[Analysis]—

Name: Lacustris Alligatoridae

Physical Description: The Lacustris Alligatoridae has a deep blue dorsal coloring and a light yellow ventral surface. Its body is protected by interlocking scales that form a natural armor. The creature has an alligator-like head connected to a muscular 10-meter-long neck. A 15-meter-long tail wrapped in spikes serves as both a defensive and offensive weapon, as well as to swim into the water.

Brain Crystal Powers:

Hydraulic Cutter (B58B): Generates high-pressure water jets capable of slicing through solid matter like trees and stone. The cutting power increases with water pressure and multiple simultaneous streams.

Aqua Sphere (B59D): Creates and manipulates spheres of concentrated water that can be used for defense or launched as projectiles. Multiple spheres can be combined for greater damage.

Inferno Beam (Bε2F): Projects an energy beam that ignites everything in its path. The heat intensity multiplies when multiple beams converge on a single target.

{Attributes}

STRENGTH: 733

INTELLIGENCE: 15

DEXTERITY: 692

ENERGY: 1754

{Others}

Power Level: 1864

Estimated experience per kill: 300,995,573.50

—[End]—

Erik looked at the status. The creature was slightly stronger than him in power level terms, but not that much. The creature had higher attributes than him, but he had much more mana.

This meant Erik could win the fight, but it would be hard. There was also another problem: the thaid could control other monsters to fight, albeit he didn't know how, so Erik would need to ask the Chimaeric Demons for help if they wanted to win.

However, they couldn't do this now. He knew that if he engaged right now, the others would likely suffer casualties in the crossfire. The priority was to wait for them to move to a safe distance, away from the thaid's attacks or controlled monsters.

Erik created multiple barriers and water jets, killing more and more creatures and preventing the others from chasing him and the remaining Dark Shapes.

Erik swam upward through the murky waters. The clones flanked him. The fishlike creatures chased them, reaching out to grab anything within range.

<Keep moving!> Erik said.

The massive *Lacustris Alligatoridae* launched itself from the lake bottom with extraordinary speed. Its jaws snapped at the closest clone, missing by centimeters, but only because the Chimaeric Demon was lucky.

Erik channeled more mana into his Absolute Wall brain crystal power, making a series of barriers between them.

The smaller thaids crashed into them, stunned. Some recovered quickly enough to resume the chase again.

Though the alligator-like thaid shattered some of the barriers Erik made as protection, and the other thaids chased, getting dangerously close to him and the clones.

<I hate this. Here on Mur Thaids make barrier masters look like jokes!>

[Yeah... they are strong enough to shatter most barriers. Well, unless you pump a significant amount of mana into it, something you can't do right now, or if you ask other barrier masters to join you.]

<I can't ask the Chimaeric Demons. They need to protect the others...>

[Yeah...]

Erik made a water blade and sliced through the monsters. Blood clouded the water as the creatures died.

<We need to move faster,> Erik said to the rest of the clones following him. <They're adapting to our defenses.>

The largest thaid opened its massive jaws. A bright glow emerged from deep in its throat. Erik understood what the creature wanted to do.

<Be careful!> he said through the mental link.

The creature released a concentrated beam of energy that cut through the water. Erik erected another barrier, thicker than before, and powered up by a significantly higher amount of mana. The beam struck the barrier, sending ripples throughout the water. The barrier held, but Erik felt the drain on his mana reserves. Luckily, he had enough to sustain it.

Two clones went beneath Erik, pushing him upward with greater force. The surface grew closer—fifty meters, then thirty.

The alligator monster circled below, gathering smaller creatures to increase the pressure on Erik and the Dark Shapes. Through the water, Erik saw it was about to attack again.

A large group of monsters shot upward. Erik created a counter-current, diverting them away from him and the clones.

Then another blast from the Lacustris Alligatoridae ripped through the water. Yet Erik's barrier held.

Twenty meters from the surface, Erik spotted the silhouettes of multiple creatures converging from all directions. The alligator monster had called for more than just a few reinforcements.

<Shit!>

Erik created a powerful water blade, killing a dozen monsters and clearing the path ahead, but there were still many, and he was inside the waters, at a clear disadvantage.

<We can go through now!>

The Lacustris Alligatoridae launched itself toward them, its massive body speeding up at a frightening speed. It released another attack, this time a concentrated water jet that shattered the barrier Erik made. Though the barrier had enough mana to stop the beast's attack.

At least partially... Two clones were not as lucky, and upon being hit, they got dismembered.

<Motherfucker...>

Five meters. The water grew lighter, the pressure less intense.

The Lacustris Alligatoridae lunged forward, jaws spreading wide enough to swallow three men whole. Erik channeled mana into a concentrated jet of water, the pressure strong enough to slice through steel. The beast twisted its body sideways and pulled back, avoiding the deadly stream.

Erik and the remaining clones broke the surface.

"GET THE FUCK OUT OF HERE!" Erik said.

The Dark Shapes shapeshifted. Black feathers sprouted from their skin as they took the form of large ravens. They flew into the sky, circling above Erik to observe.

On the shoreline, Erik spotted the rest of his group watching in alarm. Mira's bow was drawn. Emily stood with her rifle raised, ready to shoot.

"Run!" Erik said, his voice carrying across the water. "Everyone out! Now!"

The water behind him churned. Dozens of creatures breached the surface.

Erik swam toward shore with monsters pursuing, their movements no slower on the surface than beneath it.

The Chimaeric Demons shapeshifted into Erendus to get the others out of there. Then the clones used their undead puppets to stall the monsters chasing Erik.

The others mounted the clones, and as they did, the water behind Erik exploded as the Lacustris Alligatoridae breached the surface.

"Go!"

Erik turned to face the beast and allow the others to escape. He started levitating using telekinesis.

The Erendus galloped away from the shoreline, carrying their riders to safety while the Dark Shapes circled above, watching over the fleeing group.

Erik backed away from the water, never taking his eyes off the monster.

The Lacustris Alligatoridae slowly swam toward the shore, the water levels slowly decreasing. They reached it headfirst, then fell to the shoulders, then the ankles. It was so big that every movement it made caused waves as it displaced the water.

Erik kept backing away, measuring the distance between himself and the fleeing group. They needed more time to escape beyond the monster's reach, and given how fast it was, that distance needed to be massive.

The Lacustris Alligatoridae opened its jaws, drew in a deep breath, and its chest expanded.

"Shit..."

Erik made another barrier. This time, pumping more mana into it.

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The water boiled as the energy coalesced between them, forming a giant sphere of fire. Erik created a barrier between them, but whether it held depended on how much mana the beast used compared to how much he used.

The thaid released the fireball. It struck the barrier, creating a shockwave that rippled across the lake's surface.

The barrier shattered from the impact, flames and heat surging outward where Erik stood moments earlier. He suspected that was going to happen, so he leaped sideways, given the barrier gave him enough time, and countered with a barrage of water bullets.

The creature roared, more annoyed than injured. Yet Erik understood how much he had to increase his mana expenditure to injure the monster.

"This thing's tough," Erik said.

He channeled more mana, creating blades of compressed water. The thaid charged again, its enormous claws tearing chunks from the shoreline each time it tried to reach Erik.

Erik dodged, sending the blades at its flank. They made shallow wounds but still drew blood.

The creature turned with unexpected speed—despite being outside of the water—and slammed its tail into him. His defenses held, but he was still sent skidding backward from the impact.

Erik caught a glimpse of Emily watching the battle. The distance wasn't as safe as he hoped, and she wore a worried expression.

The rest of the group had retreated away from the lake. Emily was with them, but she must have turned at some point. The Dark Shapes and the Chimaeric Demon she rode were standing guard around her.

As much as he preferred thinking about Emily and her beauty, the thaid didn't give more time for Erik to think about something that wasn't his safety.

The creature's jaws gaped wide as energy gathered in its throat.

"Ah... Shit..."

Erik pulled more mana into his barrier, then a beam struck it with razing force, vaporizing the earth it touched. Erik's barrier held, but he felt the drain on his reserves.

While the attack threatened to shatter his barrier, Erik prepared some spears of concentrated water and hurled them at the beast. It avoided most of them, but one struck the creature's shoulder, going much deeper than his previous attacks.

The monster bellowed in pain and rage. It stomped the ground, creating shockwaves that rippled through the area, reaching Erik despite him being quite far from it. The trees at the edge of the lake swayed. Small fissures appeared in the ground beneath them.

"Erik! Stop! The lab!" Erik turned around, only to see Emily dangerously close to the battle.

<What the...? She is too close!> Though Emily made Erik focus on the cracks spreading around, he realized that if their fight went on here, the shockwaves could damage the lab, like Emily said.

The thaid gathered energy for another attack. Erik created a massive barrier between them, buying time to consider his options. Then he mentally turned to Emily.

<That thing is territorial.>

<I know.>

She was looking at the lake with a thoughtful expression.

<Did you see something in that vision of yours that might help us with the current situation?>

She turned to him while he pumped more mana into the barrier. <Actually, yes. I know what to do,> she said. <Follow me.>

Before Erik could answer, she took off running. She got first far from the shores. Erik noticed the thaid had stopped attacking when they got far enough from the lake.

That wasn't the point, though; they didn't need to escape but rather to kill that thing and search the lake.

The beast retreated into the water, but Erik knew it was still there, watching them, thanks to Instability.

Then Emily followed the shore while keeping her distance. The monster didn't attack, but it followed, as much as the Dark Shapes and the Chimaeric Demon did.

"What are you doing?" Erik said, flying close to her.

"There's a place," she said without slowing. "A place we can fight where it won't affect the lab."

It was hard, considering the beast didn't stray too far from the waters. If they left the lake, the beast would simply retreat into the waters again, putting the lab in danger again.

"The vision?"

"Yeah, the vision. The one I told you about."

Erik matched her pace, keeping close to her side.

"It's following us," Erik said, nodding toward the water.

"I know. But it won't attack—not yet. We are too far."

"You seem very confident about that. Besides, how the hell did you know the creature would stop attacking?" Erik asked.

"I didn't. But I got some clues in my vision."

They continued along the shoreline. The terrain grew rougher, with more vegetation crowding the edge of the lake. The tree line drew closer to the water in this section, creating pockets of shadow despite the daylight.

"Where exactly are you taking me?" Erik asked.

"Just ahead. It's far enough from the lab that your fight won't damage the structure, but just barely. You wouldn't have noticed, but thanks to the vision, I saw that the part of the lake where the lab is supposed to be shouldn't get affected. There might be more," Emily said, "but it's better to fight where we know there won't be problems. The ground is more stable there too, and the trees will help me."

"Help you do what?"

Emily paused.

"You can't kill this thing without me," Emily said.

"Why? I can injure it, and the beast has less mana than me."

Emily nodded. "I know you can, but you will not be able to if the other Thaidis join the fight."

"Why? What did you see in your vision?"

"That the two of you destroyed everything," Emily said. "But the lake has a lot of monsters, and they are not as weak as the Thanatocoleoptera. They can make you lose time, distract you, and make you lose focus."

"So, are you going to do what?"

"Help you," Emily said. "I and the clones will kill the weaker thaid comes to help so that you can focus on the beast."

Erik wasn't entirely convinced, but he trusted Emily's judgment.

They ran for several more minutes. The monster continued to shadow their movement beneath the water, but did nothing else aside from being a creep.

"There," Emily said, pointing ahead.

The shoreline opened into a small clearing. A large, deformed tree stood at the water's edge, its twisted roots partially submerged. The surrounding ground appeared solid, with exposed bedrock visible in chunks.

Emily slowed as they entered the area. "This is it. This is exactly what I saw."

Erik examined the area. The tree stood alone at the edge, separated from the denser forest behind it. Its trunk and branches hinted at ancient age. The water in front of it was deeper than the surrounding shallows.

"Are you sure about this?"

"A hundred percent sure. This is where the battle needs to take place."

It was also the farthest place from the lab.

Erik sensed the monster circling in the water before the tree, as if aware of their destination. Its movements became more agitated, its circles tightening.

"In my vision, this is where you fought it. The ground here is more stable—reinforced by the bedrock. Your fight won't cause the same structural damage to the lab as it would if it were closer to where we found it, and if the beast comes out of the water, then even better."

Erik stepped toward the water's edge, feeling the solid stone beneath his feet. "So I'm supposed to just call it out?"

Emily moved to stand beside him. "The creature is territorial, as you saw. It's protecting what it considers its domain. Just get closer."

Erik nodded. He extended his senses into the water, locating the massive thaid. It stopped circling and now hovered in the deep water, waiting.

"It's right there," Erik said, pointing to a spot about twenty meters from shore.

"Yes," Emily said. "This is how it began in my vision."

Erik took a deep breath, gathering his power. The water before them rippled.

Emily stepped back, giving him space. "Be careful."

Erik nodded. The water churned as the creature saw him get closer to the water.

"Come on then," Erik said to the monster.

Emily ran toward the trees, grabbing her rifle. The clones remained behind. Emily told them what they had to do to keep the smaller thaid at bay. She would also help.

The surface of the lake began to stir and bubble as the *Lacustris Alligatoridae* rose to meet his challenge.

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The *Lacustris Alligatoridae* surged from the water as Erik got closer. Erik stood his ground by the ancient tree, feeling the solid bedrock beneath his feet.

Erik met the beast's gaze. It was clearly intelligent, yet its eyes burned with rage.

The thaid charged. Its clawed feet tore chunks from the earth as it closed the distance between them. Erik waited until the last possible moment before moving, gathering mana into his body.

<Let's see who is going to win.>

The beast jumped on Erik, but he avoided the attack. Erik wasn't making barriers because he needed to lure it outside the water.

Erik waited until the last possible moment before moving, gathering mana into his armor. The Absolute Castle still had Nathaniel's ability. The resulting punch came out with thousands more energy than it would have had if Erik didn't use that power.

The thaid's body shuddered from the force as Erik's punch connected. It could do nothing but growl.

Emily shot. The crack of her rifle split the air, the bullet striking near the creature's eye but failing to penetrate its hide.

<I need to use more mana...>

The thaid shook off the impact like an annoying insect bite.

<Its scales are too thick!> Emily recharged the rifle.

The creature recovered, rising to its full height and locking eyes with him again. Erik dodged once again.

Another shot rang out. The bullet struck, but left only a superficial mark on its armored scales.

The Thaid's under the monster's control joined the battle.

<Take care of them.> He said to the clones, who joined the fray.

Erik used the distraction to his advantage, channeling mana into his Elemental Lord brain crystal power and creating wind blades.

He sent them hurling toward the thaid. They struck the monster's hide with enough force to cut through steel, but most of the energy behind them got dissipated by the thaid's natural mana armor and its scales.

Only a few created wounds, since they landed in the gaps between the armored plates.

The monster let out an angry roar, showing its yellow teeth. The sound was so loud it shook the ground and echoed across the lake.

Though barely hurt, the creature was furious. It threw its head back and opened its mouth wide. A ball of water formed in its throat and squeezed together.

Then the monster shot out a powerful stream of water. Erik rolled out of the way, feeling the wind from the attack brush past his shoulder.

The water blade sliced a tree in two as it passed, the top half crashing to the ground.

Erik didn't wait for the creature to attack again. He released multiple wind blades in rapid succession, targeting the wounds he'd already opened.

This time, the attacks went deeper, drawing more blood. The thaid roared in pain and intensified its assault, unleashing a barrage of water jets that forced Erik to use telekinesis to avoid getting sliced. He was also creating barriers to protect Emily.

However, to make sure the barriers weren't shattered, he had to pour a lot of mana into them.

Their battle continued. Erik moved around the creature's attacks while striking whenever an opening presented itself. The thaid matched his movements.

<This one is tough.> Erik said to the biological supercomputer, studying the thaid's movements.
<Its scales are like armor plates, and it still hasn't used some of its brain crystal powers.>

[Yeah, you need to be careful, but at least we are in the open now. The battle is not as hard as it was against the bug queen.]

Here, Erik could fly, and while the creature's attacks could reach him, the distance was still going to make them weaker. Besides, Erik had his armor on, so he would not be injured easily.

<Any suggestions?> Erik asked, keeping his eyes fixed on the monster.

<Exploit the gaps between scales. There is not much I can say.>

<It's not much to work with.> Erik gathered more mana.

Erik found himself working harder to stay ahead of the monster's attacks as the battle progressed. But it wasn't easy.

The creature was as fast as the Queen Bug and had a ton of mana. Besides, it learned with each exchange, adapting its strategy to counter Erik's movements and attacks.

Each water jet came closer to finding its mark, forcing Erik to use more mana to avoid them or to pump his armor up.

The thaid then plunged into the lake once again, sending a wall of water surging toward Erik. He used telekinesis and flew skyward.

[Protect Emily.]

That was a large attack, so Erik pumped more mana into his Absolute Wall to make sure she and the clones were ok.

From his position, he could see Emily and the clones were alive and moving to another position, still under the barriers' protection.

Looking down at the churning waters, Erik gathered more mana. He needed to shift tactics. The beast's defenses were strong.

He also got proof of what would have happened if he didn't pay attention when he fought the Queen Bug and went all out with his mana.

He would have destroyed the cave, and that was because, with the amount of mana the alligator-like thaid was going to use, it could do the same for the lake area.

The creature didn't care about the lab; it only cared about the lake, which meant it didn't matter if the lab got destroyed. Yet Erik was once again constrained. Against the bug queen, he would have risked making the cave collapse and killing his friends. Against this thing, he risked destroying the lab.

Getting this far was going to help, since the lab was on the other side of the lake, but if he wasn't careful, he could still damage it.

<Why I only end up in tough battles?>

[You are searching the labs—of course you'd encounter resistance. Still, you're fortunate that the proto-thaids created by the Silverline Corporation are the strongest in this area. They're actually less dangerous than some other thaid variants.]

The creature submerged, Erik channeled mana, and formed a colossal fireball that struck the water's surface.

<I can't pour more mana than this without making a mess...>

Chapter 1324: The Azure Thaid (4)

Steam erupted everywhere, creating a fog that engulfed the battlefield and made seeing farther than a meter impossible. Erik created more Dark Shapes. The number of thaids was quickly getting out of hand, so he had to do something.

It didn't take much for them to mature and be ready to fight. Then they plunged into the waters. The Chimaeric Demon joined them and shapeshifted into a large creature.

Through Instability, Erik felt the clones clash in the murky depths. The Dark Shapes attacked the weaker thaids, while the Chimaeric Demon engaged with the azure thaid.

Even if they were not as strong as the monster, thanks to them, Erik was wounding it more and more.

The water churned as the clones and the thaids fought, yet his clones were dying in droves. The Chimaeric Demon that followed Emily was not faring any better than the dark shapes; it was just that he could heal himself and hadn't died yet, but he went close to it many times.

However, he had many tricks up his sleeve. As the Dark shapes killed the thaids, the Chimaeric Demon resurrected them and used the puppets to kite the azure thaid. Though, whatever the clone resurrected didn't last long, as the azure thaid killed the undead easily.

Eventually, they burst from the lake, locked in combat, and crashed onto the shore. The impact shook the surrounding area, sending tons of dirt and stone flying and flooding the surroundings.

The Chimaeric Demon had the azure thaid pinned momentarily, but the lake monster's ridiculous strength allowed it to free itself.

Another gunshot pierced the air. Emily switched targets, shooting at the smaller thaids that emerged from the lake before they could attack her lover.

Her bullets struck throats, hearts, and eyes. No shot missed, and for each one a life was taken.

More creatures surged through the waters.

It was like a tidal wave of nightmares, an implacable force that swept aside the clones like twigs before a flood. They varied in size and power, but all moved with a singular purpose: to kill Erik and Emily.

"Why are they obeying it?! That thing doesn't have mind-controlling powers!"

It was frustrating, yet it was clear the beast had some kind of dominance over the monsters inside the lake.

The Dark Shapes were doing their best to dominate the thaids so that they would be able to use them to kill the others, and those they killed were used by the Chimaeric Demon, helping Erik.

The controlled creatures lasted mere seconds before being destroyed, both the resurrected ones and those the Dark Shapes dominated.

Every time they got a grip on one of them, it died soon after, devoured by the mass of monsters coming out of the lake.

Emily's rifle cracked, each shot finding its mark and claiming another life. She picked off the smaller thaids, but their numbers continued to grow.

"There are too many!"

Erik found himself fighting on two fronts—continuing his battle with the azure thaid while defending against the horde of lesser creatures that Emily and the clones couldn't kill.

He slashed through them with wind blades and tanked the blows from the others since he was armored from head to toe, all while avoiding the azure thaid's increasingly powerful attacks.

Emily's cover fire proved vital. She eliminated threats Erik or his clones couldn't see or handle, preventing several lethal strikes from reaching his children.

[Hostile creature killed: Mana-absorbing process starting.]

[LEVEL UP.]

<More juice!>

Erik channeled mana and created more wind blades, mixing them with water, fire, earth, or electricity, depending on what kind of effect he wanted to achieve.

He had already wounded the azure thaid quite a lot; he just needed to do more. The mana he just regained was going to be useful.

"Take this, you bastards!"

The resulting attack cleaved through the mass of monsters like a scythe through wheat, leaving piles of corpses in its wake.

[Hostile creature killed: Mana-absorbing process starting.]

[Hostile creature killed: Mana-absorbing process starting.]

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[Hostile creature killed: Mana-absorbing process starting.]

[Hostile creature killed: Mana-absorbing process starting.]

As the creatures died, Erik absorbed their mana.

[LEVEL UP.]

The azure thaid charged with renewed fury, perhaps feeling that its minions were getting slaughtered, or maybe it was because of the many wounds it was sustaining.

It didn't matter. What mattered was turning this lake monster into a gory paste and painting the shore with its entrails.

The beast fired blast after blast of pressurized water, each one capable of slicing through mountains. Erik dodged them all, but the surrounding landscape didn't fare as well.

Trees shattered into splinters, earth erupted into craters, and deep gouges appeared in the bedrock.

This exchange went on until the thaid stopped. Not because it was afraid or fatigued. This thing didn't know fear or fatigue. No, it stopped when its fury reached a critical level. And it channeled mana.

A sphere formed around it, expanding to an enormous size—sixty meters across and growing.

Erik felt the surge of mana and realized it was terrible news.

<GET OUT!>

The sphere grew.

Erik didn't wait to see what would happen when that sphere reached full power. He channeled mana into the surrounding plant life, activating his Verdant Architect brain crystal power, and pumping his mana into Absolute Castle.

The vegetation obeyed his will, growing at incredible speed. Vines thickened to the width of a man's arm, grasses shot up taller than trees, and branches extended like reaching hands.

The mass of plant life whipped and lashed at the thaid, trying to breach the watery sphere. Some vines penetrated, wrapping around the creature's limbs and neck.

Yet the sphere kept pulsing and expanding before abruptly contracting, drawn back into the monster's body.

The creature's throat bulged, radiating a pulsating white glow. Erik recognized the signs of an imminent energy blast and braced himself, pushing more mana into Absolute Wall and Absolute Castle.

The thaid arched its neck, opened its massive jaws, and released a searing white beam that shot skyward. The beam struck the clouds above, igniting the sky in a mindless and utterly ignorant flash. As the light faded, a vast inferno erupted, raining fire down upon the battlefield.

<How is it doing that?> Emily said through their mental link, hiding behind a boulder seemingly enough to protect her in case Erik's barrier got shattered. "It's a water thaid!"

<Multiple brain crystal powers,> Erik said, keeping his shield against the fiery onslaught. <What did you expect? It's a thaid made by the Silverline Corporation, living in Mur for centuries...>

Like cruel stars falling from heaven, burning spheres tumbled from above, their flaming tails drawing ribbons of smoke and flame across the darkened sky.

The smaller ones were the size of basketballs, while the largest could easily crush a car. They struck the ground with ravaging force, creating small craters where they landed and setting the surrounding flora ablaze.

Erik's shield held against the storm, but the impacts sent ripples across its surface, forcing him to pump more mana to protect himself and his allies.

Some of the fireballs exploded on contact, showering the area with scorching fragments that sizzled and cracked as they hit the ground. Others burrowed into the earth before exploding, sending geysers of mud and molten rock into the air.

It was even weird for Erik to describe what he was seeing, since too many conflicting phenomena were occurring before his eyes.