

## BIOLOGICAL 221

### Chapter 221: The Gas

Erik was inside the shelter, worrying about the situation. He didn't know why, but he had a bad feeling about the situation. Having no one in the world besides his friends, he sent Amber a text message asking her where she and the others were.

Immediately, the young woman replied and told him they were inside the Red Palace shelter, calming the young man down. Apparently, the teachers brought the students to the Red Palace before the attack, so they were inside its shelter with many other students.

Erik was seated on the ground while reading the text, and after a short conversation with Amber, he stopped worrying and started training again. There wasn't much to do inside the shelter but wait for the situation to be solved. But a few minutes later, everything, including the walls, started to shake, which alarmed Erik and the other students right away.

"What the hell?" Someone said.

"Is this an earthquake?" Another shouted.

Erik's worry increased. It was unlikely that there was an earthquake.

<What is happening?> Erik thought.

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Outside the shelter, the Blirldoth was sniffing the air and advancing with slow and heavy steps toward the Red Palace. He could smell humans around him, but he could not see them. However, it was able to understand that the scent they emanated came from the front, inside a huge garden with many weird structures inside.

The creature relied on his senses to search for the humans, but it wasn't easy since countless bodies were scattered on the streets.

The monster saw some corpses on the ground, and a strong urge to give a couple of chomps to them arose. It spent a lot of time eating, getting its strength and energy back, and soaking up the mana that was inside their bodies.

As the beast ended his meal, it started sniffing the air again; there were still humans to eat, but it could not find them, which sparked its rage. It grabbed cars and threw them toward the nearest buildings; the sound of the collision reverberated through the place and could actually be heard by the students inside the shelters.

The smell came from around it, but it was stronger inside a certain building. The Blirldoth turned around toward the tall building, the Red Palace, which was thick with the scent of living beings. The beast walked slowly towards the structure, but once it was near the walls surrounding the place, massive turrets came out of holes in the ground and aimed at the creature.

After a couple of seconds, the defensive systems started shooting at the beast, but the bullets couldn't pierce the tough skin or the mana armor protecting its body.

The Blirldoth didn't care about these small projectiles; it simply stepped forward when they shot and continued walking forward until it stepped inside the Red Palace garden. The weapons kept shooting at it, but the Heniate's avatar seemed uncaring as well.

Once inside the gardens, the Blirldoth moved through the trees, looking for the source of the scent; however, it started releasing its poisonous gas as the defense system started getting on its nerves. The surrounding vegetation started withering, and the cannons stopped working after a short period of time.

The creature was still unable to find the humans, but the scent became stronger. The Blirldoth looked at the huge, tall red building reaching the sky; it sniffed the air but couldn't smell anything from it. The source of the smell didn't come from it. Nearby, there was another building, a yellow one, and from there, the Blirldoth could smell several scents. It was clear there were people inside.

It decided to check what was going on over there, so it went deeper inside the garden, heading toward the Yellow Palace, where Erik was currently hiding. As it approached the building, the Blirldoth noticed that the scents were getting stronger and more distinct, making it even more curious about what was happening inside. It cautiously made its way toward the entrance, ready to investigate.

The Blirdoth then started spreading its poisonous gas into the air. The miasma started seeping inside the shelter's air vent, slowly entering the room. People started coughing, and the poisonous mist became visible to the naked eye; it was brownish, so it was hard to miss it.

The people inside the shelter quickly realized the severity of the situation and started covering their mouths and noses with whatever they could find. Panic ensued as they tried to figure out how to block the air vent and prevent further exposure to the deadly gas.

"Damn," Erik said. He didn't know what was happening; however, the gas had strangely the same effects as a thaïd he knew. Though it was weird, the beast in question couldn't produce so much gas since, to do so, it needed to be several times bigger and stronger than it normally was.

The truth was that Erik was right—the gas belonged to a Blirdoth, but he had no idea how dangerous this particular one was.

COUGH COUGH COUGH

A cacophony of coughs started like deadly music inside the shelter room. The miasma accumulated to dangerous levels, and people started having blisters; their skin became as red as a tomato. For some, it started becoming painful, so they started moaning in pain.

"AAAAAAAHH! HELP ME!" someone shouted. His skin was peeling off on itself.

"Fuck," Erik said. The situation was turning for the worse, and he couldn't understand why.

<How can this mist enter the shelter?> Erik thought. <The ventilation system should filter it!> He realized that the ventilation system was clogged with dirt and debris, which was preventing it from functioning properly.

Erik had to get the hell out of there. If the filtration system didn't work, then the only thing that awaited him was death. The young man saw the other students coughing and noticed the previous effects the miasma was producing. Some people started losing their skin; others had their faces partially melted. Others lost their eyes completely, while most of them just screamed in agony.

"Goddammit," Erik whispered. "I'm screwed. I'm really screwed this time." He quickly realized that the chemical spill was much worse than he had anticipated and that he needed to get out of there as soon as possible before it was too late.

The first person who was exposed to the poison gas died. A girl with blonde hair, wearing a black dress, was crying. Her face was melting like wax. Her skin was peeling off, exposing the muscle underneath, and she let out a horrible scream, followed by silence.

She collapsed onto the floor. Thus generating panic inside the shelter room. Unbeknownst to Erik, the gas didn't reach the Red Palace, so Amber and the others were safe for the time being.

The young man stood up and rushed to the door; the other students started doing the same. Erik didn't want to waste more time and risk death and decided that he had to leave the shelter right away. However, someone was already at the door.

"Open the door, open the door!" A girl suddenly screamed; she then ran toward the metal entrance to the shelter; she pressed a button, and suddenly the door opened, and she went out of the room. She started coughing badly and taking deep breaths of fresh air. The pain was unbearable.

The other kids started rushing outside in droves. They knew how to fight and had suffered their share of pain due to training and sparring, but what they were feeling today was unbearable. Their bodies felt hot and burned, and their lungs ached terribly.

They all wanted to vomit, but nothing came out; instead, they kept dry, heaving uncontrollably. However, they were all relieved to be finally out of the cramped shelter, and they eagerly looked around at their surroundings, hoping to find a safe place to hide.

The girl who had opened the door looked back at the shelter with a shudder, grateful to be free from its claustrophobic confines and far from the corrosive gas.

Erik got out of the room, too; his head was spinning, his vision was blurred, and everything around him seemed weird. He heard people screaming and smelled something burning. However, if he heard them, the Blirldoth did too. In fact, as most of the students came out of the shelter room, it found the source of the scent, as it thickened once the students came out.

It was at that moment that a roar reverberated throughout the Red Palace. It could be heard for kilometers, and everyone in the vicinity froze in fear, wondering what could have caused such a deafening sound.

However, it was clear that it wasn't anything good. The ground beneath their feet started to shake, which was due to the massive size of the Blirboth, which was following the scent and heading toward the students' position. Panic spread like wildfire as people tried to flee the area, realizing something terrible was about to happen.

"We are fucked," Erik said.

## Chapter 222: The Dome (1)

At that point, Erik got out of the shelter room with the other students. He was sure that if he remained a minute more, he was fated to die. More than a hundred people followed his lead, but others were already dead because of the Blirboth's miasma.

"Fuck, Fuck, Fuck!" Erik shouted. He was trying his best not to freak out. Whatever produced the miasma had to be powerful, and he didn't want to see it for himself. The young man then started to run away. He couldn't risk staying near the corrosive gas.

He ran as fast as possible towards the nearest exit from this underground base, which led him outside into the open air. There, he saw dozens of people who looked like they were in agony. They all had their eyes closed tightly while breathing heavily. Some even vomited blood onto themselves or on the ground around them. It was hard to believe there was something with power so horrific outside.

It was similar to Amber's power but much stronger than hers.

However, as Erik was outside, the young man looked at his surroundings. Countless insect-like creatures were running on the surfaces of buildings, clearly defying gravity. Some of them jumped, pinning down people in the process and then slicing their throats with their razor-sharp insect jaws. The students tried to fight back, but the monsters were too powerful.

"FUCK!" Erik shouted. He was attracting multiple monsters toward him. "RUN! RUN!" he shouted to his fellow students with all the voices he could muster, and everyone started running.

Erik turned left and right, looking for an escape route. However, whenever he found one, a monster would appear before him. Erik was way more powerful than the other students, and he knew he was able to fight those monsters.

These creatures were Eganesus, eight-legged invertebrates with angular heads covered with deep grooves and very long antennae, two compound, narrow, dark green eyes situated high on their heads, and a protruding jaw.

The Eganesu had skinny thoraxes with segmented waists and stunted swollen abdomens. They also had four enormous, powerful wings; two long, powerful forelegs that ended in hands with adhesive pads; and six stubby, thick hind legs.

The beasts were completely pastel green with dark purple swirls. Erik decided that the best thing to do would be to run away from the Yellow Palace, so he went forward toward the entrance gate and the destroyed defensive artillery. However, an Eganesu barred his way, forcing Erik to unsheath his Flyssa and engage in combat.

He swung his sword at the creature, hitting its abdomen. The beast howled in pain before flying up into the sky. As soon as it did, another came after Erik. However, the beasts were too weak for him at his current level, so he swung his sword again and killed the thaid.

The other students observed Erik fighting and tried to do the same. However, the beasts were too powerful for them, so they had a lot of problems. The older men and women helped the students protect themselves, but they were not enough to save all of them. However, Erik started gaining experience from the kills.

[MULTIPLE HOSTILE EGANESUS 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. 4005 EXPERIENCE POINTS AWARDED TO THE HOST.]

[LEVEL UP.]

As Erik was able to open a path, he shouted to the nearby students, "RUN!" But before he could do as he told the others, one of the beasts lunged at him with frightening speed, almost knocking him off balance. He quickly grabbed the creature by one of its legs and threw it to the ground, plunging his blade into its head.

Once it stopped moving, Erik briefly turned behind, and as the students and the others started running away, all the other monsters started targeting him.

"Shit!"

He started running, but after a couple of meters, a giant creature went past the building and started following Erik and the other students. The other students were several hundred meters away from him, but Erik knew that he had to reach them if he wanted to save himself. He was planning on using them as bait.

However, Erik quickly turned to look at the monster. He immediately recognized the beast; it was a Blirdoth, but its size was off the charts. He understood that it was this creature that released the corrosive gas since Blirdoths had this kind of power.

The thaid was leisurely strolling, running slowly toward the group of fleeing humans to savor their fear. Erik looked back at the monster's body. There were signs of wounds and injuries as if the thaid had come up from a battle.

That was most likely true since it had to get past the army to get here, and since the eastern gate had been breached, it was clear it came from there.

The Blirdoth looked at the running prey with an amused look; it stomped the ground with its massive paws and kept chasing the running students with a hungry look.

Erik turned around to see the enormous creature pursuing him; its face was horrifying, and the idea of dying by something like that gave him chills.

<What the hell do I do?> he thought. Erik quickly scanned the area for any possible escape routes, but there were none. He then wondered how the Blirdoth could become so gigantic and what the hell was happening. Erik's heart raced as he realized that he was in a highly complex situation. As things progressed, there was no way for him to escape death. He took a deep breath and ran faster.

Among the fleeing students were the old men and women working for the Red Palace. Staying with them was the right thing to do, but he wasn't sure they would be able to do something against this monstrosity.

While Erik was lost in his thoughts, he managed to arrive at the other students. Multiple people were looking at him, wondering how he was able to close that much distance between them and the Yellow Palace, reaching them so quickly.

"We must do something," Erik shouted at the students. "If we don't try to fight it, we will end up dead!" The others looked at him as if he were crazy—who could possibly try and fight this beast?

However, the Red Palace workers knew that he was right and that they had to try at least to stop the beast if they wanted to save themselves and the students. They weren't aware of how strong the beast really was.

The workers started channeling mana to use their brain crystal powers. The students knew they had to join the adults at that point, as it was clear how the thaids were slowly gaining ground. Erik saw one of the Red Palace workers channel an insane amount of mana, and after a couple of seconds, a translucent shield appeared.

The shield was strong enough to repel the thaids' attacks, giving the workers and students a moment to catch their breath and regroup. However, they knew that they couldn't rely on the shield forever and had to come up with a plan to defeat the beast if they wanted to survive.

At the same time, attacks were flying in the direction of the smaller monsters. The students were unsure they could manage them, but they had to try. Clearly, they were going to be useless against the bigger thaid.

The attacks finally hit what they were meant to hit. Several beasts were set on fire, making tongues of smoke that went all the way to the sky. Some were electrocuted or pierced by wind arrows, among many other kinds of attacks. Despite their efforts, it was evident that the group's attacks were no match for the Blirdoth.

The beasts shrieked and screamed before their deaths; their bodies were then trampled by the other thaids as if they were nothing.

At a certain point, another adult created a giant dome that enveloped part of the group and left some of the students outside. Erik managed to get inside, so he was safe, at least for the time being. The dome provided a temporary shield against the Blirdoth attacks. Still, it was clear that the group needed a more permanent solution if they were to survive in this hostile environment.



"Let us in!" someone shouted, pounding at the dome. But the dome remained impenetrable, and the group was left to witness the gruesome scene of the thaids approaching their comrades.

"Don't let me die! Please!" another said. Erik felt a pang of guilt as he watched his fellow students being attacked, but he knew there was nothing he could do to help them from inside the dome.

What ensued was a bloodbath. The students outside the defensive perimeter tried to use their brain crystal powers. Some summoned creatures to fight or run away, but it was futile; the creatures quickly overran them.

#### Chapter 223: The Dome (2)

The Blirdoth came crashing against the vast barrier and stopped. It looked to his left and right; multiple monsters were already eating the students, some while they were alive.

The beast roared, causing the ground to shake, and immediately all the bugs stopped doing what they were doing. The Blirdoth's eyes glowed with hunger as it turned its attention to the bodies. It then approached the dead students individually and started munching on them, one at a time.

The people behind the barrier observed the scene with fear and disgust. They couldn't even run away as the barrier surrounded them; besides, it was the only thing that kept them alive. Some of them couldn't help but wonder how they would survive this ordeal, while others silently prayed for a miracle to happen.

The Blirdoth's feast seemed never-ending, and the people behind the barrier could only hope it would eventually leave them alone if it satiated.

The thaid ripped arms, legs, and heads off, but a few students who were unlucky enough not to have perished before started being eaten alive.

People's pained screams and shouts were ringing in the ears of those present, including those who made it past the barrier. They were traumatized and would never forget the horrifying scene they witnessed. They would need counseling and support to cope with the incident's aftermath if they managed to survive this mess.

The sounds were so ghastly and inhuman that they alone could give nightmares to whoever heard them, and the ensuing scene was enough to make several people puke.

After the beast was done, the people went out of their stupor and started channeling mana. The Blirldoth glanced at the humans behind the barrier and started unleashing its poisonous mist.

The ones behind the barrier were terrified and frantically searched for a way to escape, but their options were limited, with the Blirldoth's poisonous mist spreading all around the barrier.

It is evident that they required immediate assistance to survive this horrifying ordeal, and they could not even flee because the fog would have killed them had the barrier fallen. However, not everyone believed the miasma was enough to kill them, and they tried to escape.

"Be careful; this fog can liquefy things!" Erik shouted. A look of shock appeared on the students' and adults' faces, who didn't know what the fog could do. Some of them stepped back, while others covered their mouths in horror. They had never seen anything like it before and feared what could happen if they got too close.

It was at that moment that a man came from outside the garden. It was Tom Van Dyke, the Red Palace principal. His timely intervention was a godsend; however, Erik wasn't convinced the man was enough to kill the beast.

Tom Van Dyke had a reputation for being a skilled thaïd hunter, but Erik knew that this creature was unlike anything the principal had ever seen. The fear in his heart grew as he watched Principal Van Dyke approach the beast with his weapons drawn. Something inside of him told him that the Blirldoth wouldn't be defeated.

"Prepare something to repel the miasma!" the man said. Tom Van Dyke had a brain crystal power that allowed him to use black flames with chilling power. It could freeze any creature, but it behaved like a flame physically.

The principal quickly got to work, summoning his black flames and channeling them into a powerful attack that he believed would stop the Blirldoth. He knew this would be his only chance to save the students, and he was determined to protect them and the workers at all costs.

"Yes, sir!" All the students who could do so then used their brain crystal powers to send the fog away. The miasma enveloped the other thaïds, the Eganesus, as a veil and liquefied them alive. In a matter of minutes, all the monsters except the Blirldoth died.

The students and workers cheered as they watched the monsters disintegrate into nothingness. Unfortunately, though, Erik was too far, and the biological supercomputer couldn't absorb the mana the creatures released at their deaths, leaving him upset but otherwise fine.

The principal sighed in relief, even though he knew the Blirdoth was still alive and well.

However, there was no way for the students or Tom to know if they would be able to kill the beast. Though the militaries had briefed Tom, they told him that the creature was insanely powerful and that he had to play it safe if he wanted to see another day.

The beast was angry because it wasn't the first time its prey had made its poisonous mist useless. It then emitted a deafening roar; it was so loud that it almost made some people deaf. Tom quickly realized that the military's briefing was not an exaggeration as he watched the beast unleash its fury, causing chaos and destruction all around them.

Tom knew that he had to act fast and use a powerful attack to defeat the creature, but he also knew that it would not be easy to kill the beast due to its massive amounts of mana. He couldn't afford to lose another student because of this beast. With a look of concentration, he focused on the creature, "I'm going to have you die here today!" he said to the Blirdoth.

He took a deep breath, focused his mind, and channeled mana, then unleashed a black flame, and the temperature in the surrounding area started decreasing. One of the thaid's paws started freezing.

The thaid began to have difficulty moving around, giving the others valuable time to attack. However, the Blirdoth didn't stop releasing the miasma, hoping to prevent the ice from forming.

Then he turned behind him and said, "Attack as much as you can!" He then looked at the other people, "You," he said while pointing at the two workers with the barrier powers, "Keep the barrier up, and you," he said while pointing to some students, "Keep using your brain crystal powers to stop the fog from getting to us," some others had to attack the beast instead.

The attack proceeded, with students and workers unleashing attack after attack. The only ones who could do nothing were those with weapons conjuring brain crystal powers. However, they were ready to protect the others as best they could.

However, despite the situation, it looked like the Blirdoth wasn't going down, and the students, because of this, started panicking, which affected their aim.

Only Tom Van Dyke remained calm, as he was the strongest and most experienced of the lot. He further channeled mana through his neural links and unleashed another impressive amount of black fire. It was a deadly attack that required a lot of mana from him.

As the fire traveled through the air, the Blirldoth observed the flames going toward its position and panicked. It could sense how intense the flames were and how much mana they contained.

The bodies around the Blirldoth started to freeze as the black fire went forward. The other members of the group were in awe of Tom's power and watched as the black fire hit the Blirldoth, causing it to screech in pain.

A weird scent spread in the air, and a chilling wind fluctuated around the humans; it wasn't pleasant. However, what most upset the people still alive was seeing the half-eaten corpses of the students being encased in ice as if they were put inside coffins. Tom's power was overwhelming, and it was clear that he had unleashed something beyond their comprehension.

However, even that wasn't enough to stop the Blirldoth, as it kept moving and struggling to break free while releasing as much gas as possible. The Blirldoth's power seemed to be inextinguishable, as it was able to resist Principal Van Dyke's power.

The principal released a strong enough attack that could freeze the students' bodies instantly and emit a strange aura that made the air thick and hard to breathe. The survivors were left with a feeling of dread, not only because of the beast but even due to their leader.

The Blirldoth tried to back away, only to be reached by another fire a couple of seconds later and after being encased in a giant pillar of ice that restrained all its movements. As the students and the principal observed the thaid, they heaved a sigh of relief. This time, the principal had been strong enough to trap it.

"Well done, everyone," Tom said, "Now let's finish this thing off." Tom quickly ordered the students to get their weapons ready and start attacking the Blirldoth before it could break free from the ice. The students took their positions, ready to fight and defeat the dangerous creature once and for all.

Erik was grateful to the principal for his bravery and quick thinking in stopping the Blirldoth. However, he couldn't shake off the feeling that the beast wasn't done. He wondered if they had truly defeated it or if it was just a temporary solution. Erik knew that they needed to remain vigilant and be prepared for any possible outcome.

With a deep breath, Tom unsheathed his sword and was ready to plunge the blade inside the creature's skull. However, the ice encasing the beast started trembling and falling apart. Erik was right; the Blirdoth was strong enough to free himself.

#### Chapter 224: Getting ready

"This is Amanda Ravithier speaking," the woman said on the phone. On the other side, it was General Becker. The man asked for the woman's help some days prior, and she and her troops quickly reached New Alexandria.

"Hello, Miss Ravithier."

The fierce Lioness received the general's call as she predicted. She was grinning from ear to ear due to the situation unfolding, as she knew she was going to reap a lot of benefits and money from this whole ordeal.

"It's time for you and your troops to step in," General Becker said.

"I know," Rebecca's mother replied. The woman was wondering what the reason was why they hadn't asked for their help earlier, as the situation was very dire. To be honest, the reason was simple. The army assured the general they would be able to solve the problem, and the second one was pride.

The general was an extremely prideful guy and didn't want to resort to the mercenary help if he could avoid it. He was the damn strongest person in Frant; admitting he wasn't controlling the situation was a blow to his ego and reputation.

"When can you mobilize your troops?" The Becker asked.

He knew that waiting for the mercenaries' deployment would be a mistake. Still, if he asked for their intervention, then not only the army's but also his credibility would plummet since he was the organization's leader. But not having called the mercenaries before the monsters came in showed the general's inability.

"The troops are ready," the fierce Lioness replied.

"Good, send them immediately; we are having huge problems here," Becker said.

"All right. Is there a particular place you want me to send the soldiers first?" she asked with a conflicted tone.

"I need your men on the wall; there are too many thaids, and we are having problems stopping them at the moment," Becker replied.

At the same time, the fierce Lioness smiled, and she then said while grinning from ear to ear: "Then, if there is nothing else, I-"

"Wait," the general stopped the mercenary from closing the call. "We need you to go to the Red Palace," he said.

"You want me to kill the Blirdoth, I presume..." It wasn't hard to guess.

"Indeed," he replied. Not only the future of the nation was in that place, but also the awakener was there. He had a lot of plans for the young man, and he couldn't risk him dying while he was still a little chick.

"All right, I will go immediately." She said as she hung up the phone. Now the mercenary had a look of focus; she was already thinking about how to deal with the Blirdoth. She was aware of the situation at the university since she scattered some drones all around the city, and she knew that she had to be fast, or many people would die.

"Adina, I want you to mobilize the troops; send them to all the battlefields, but focus on the monsters outside the wall."

"As you wish," Adina replied with a solemn look. Her eyes were filled with determination, and her body language suggested she itched for a fight.

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The mercenaries sat in a briefing room, getting information about their mission. The quest was situated inside the city, which was very different from what they usually did. Most of their quests were located inside the forest spreading throughout Etrium.

"You have to be particularly careful about this particular beast." Different Blirboth images flashed on a flat screen hung on the wall. One image depicted a giant dog-bear monster, its maws open wide, looking down upon the humans who were running away.

Then another picture appeared, in which the Blirboth was shown again, but this time it was standing on only two legs and letting out poison gas. It had a human-like look that gave it hints of intelligence.

"This is the Blirboth roaming around the city. It is a rare specimen since it is several times bigger than usual Blirboths. Normally, as you should know, these creatures are rather meek and do not search for fights so often. However, Frant's army thinks that an Heniate is currently using this thaid as an avatar, which is also why this specimen is so big and aggressive.

Besides, compared to other Blirboths, this one increased the strength of its gasses, which can now melt living tissue in a matter of seconds. Reports say that it is due to this creature that multiple Frantians' military squads disappeared." A female voice spoke from behind a table.

They all turned to face the speaker; she was a tall woman with long red hair and wore black leather armor decorated with golden trinkets. She looked like one of those adventurers that used to frequent the taverns back when they lived in the capital. Someone raised his hands.

"How do we kill it?"

"It is not your task to kill it; that's the boss's task. If you see it you have to retreat immediately," Officer Laria said.

The weaker and newest members started murmuring as they couldn't believe that there was a creature so strong that their leader had to fight it directly.

When the experienced warriors saw pictures of the Blirboth, they thought fighting such a dangerous monster was impossible. Only the boss, the Fierce Lioness, could do something about it. Avoiding this beast was of the utmost importance.

"If you don't mind me asking, sir, how many soldiers does the boss have?" Someone asked.

Laria sighed before answering. "I cannot give out any more details regarding the boss. Now, it would be better for you to focus on my orders; if you do, you'll make it through this alive." Murmurs spread again among the group.

A short guy with dark skin stood up and addressed everyone. His name was Darnel, and he was the youngest member among the people present. He didn't really care much about the fact that the boss was a legendary warrior; all he cared about was surviving the day, proving himself, and of course, earning money.

"Enough with the chat; we have work to do..." Laria said.

After the briefing, every person in the room went out to change into their combat attire.

They walked over to their locker, where they stored their gear. On top of them lay large backpacks, which contained everything the soldiers needed to perform the quest. Inside the pack were various items: food rations, water bottles, first aid kits, weapons, and tools.

After everyone was ready, the group met inside a hangar filled with vehicles, whether cars or trucks. Each group went inside a vehicle; a couple of those mounted machine guns, and naturally, some people manned them.

Everyone jumped into the vehicle. Each of them had been customized to suit the needs of the individual squads taking part in the operation. Some of them were armored; others carried extra fuel tanks. Others had mounted machine guns and anti-thaid cannons. The machines were designed to move quickly across rough terrain, even though they weren't meant to take heavy fire.

Machine guns were enough to kill some low-level beasts, but they were not omnipotent and were mostly used to keep the monsters at bay whenever the situation required. After all, their power was enough to make at least the creatures suffer.

As the vehicles left the hangar premises in which they were kept, a column quickly formed. Initially, they were all going the same way, but after a while on the road, they split and went in multiple directions. Some trucks headed south toward the main square, while others traveled north to reach the city's northern exit.

Others took off westward to search for thaids, especially the Blirdoth. One of the convoys moved down the streets, heading east, until reaching the city's outskirts. The convoy passed the countless defenses that had been placed near the eastern gate and headed straight toward the city's entrance.



Later on, they arrived; the group of mercenaries stopped as they reached the eastern gate.

The mercenaries arrived near the breached door. There were still people trying to close it, but very few people remained due to the Blirboth attack. They were barely enough to ensure no more monsters entered the door.

The vehicles were parked next to each other, forming a defensive line around the entrance. Behind them, the mercenaries placed themselves in position; they got off their cars and trucks; the artillery pointed toward the door, and the mercenaries channeled mana to shoot at the beasts crawling from the door gap.

"Secure the perimeter!"

"Help the injured!"

"Get ready!"

Orders were shouted to the mercenaries. They obeyed as if it were natural, but they were not dogs; no, they were hounds, and they came here to kill.

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At the same time, in another location, the police could be seen battling the group of thaids that gave chase to the citizens. The creatures were munching on the corpses of multiple people, almost making the police officers puke.

Guts and gore could be seen everywhere, and puddles of blood were sprinkled on the asphalt.

There were still people alive amidst the myriad of insect-like legs skittering on the ground; some screamed as dog-like creatures as big as tigers ate them alive, while others could only make some light noises. The police knew it was just a matter of time before they lost control of the situation, and they already had many problems protecting the citizens.

Suddenly, multiple car engines sounded from a distance as the vehicles that produced them drew closer. It was obvious that reinforcements had come.

"Quick, give me a binocular," The chief of police, Grimes, shouted to one of his men.

He took the binoculars and looked at the insignias painted on the hoods of the cars; they depicted a head with pointy ears and one eye only, which recalled the mythological figure of a cyclops.

"It's the band of giants," Luca said. Gratefulness sparked inside the chief of police's heart as there was still hope to save the kids from the thaid's jaws.

#### Chapter 225: Escape

The Blirdoth roared as it emerged from the ice encasing it. His face showed rage; it was weird for a thaid to be that human-like, but that was what was really scary about sentient thaids. They were intelligent. The Blirdoth's massive size and strength already made it a formidable opponent, and the fact that it possessed human-like traits only added to its danger.

As the creature came out, it looked at the humans with contempt. Not even Principal Van Dyke's black flames were enough to make a difference. However, this didn't mean that the creature did not take any damage; in fact, its fur showed that it suffered a lot due to the black flames, as the ice made the fur fragile, and it quickly fell off while the beast got out of the ice.

The problem was that it became apparent there wasn't anyone among the presents which could kill it once and for all. However, it was clear that if not even Principal Van Dyke could do anything against the beast, then no one inside the Red Palace could do anything about it. This beast exceeded Frant's expectations.

As it finally freed itself, the beast charged at the barrier with all its strength, shattering it as if it was made of glass.

People gasped in shock as the beast made its way toward them, leaving destruction in its wake and shattering all their hopes. The students started trembling, and a look of resignation appeared on all their faces. If even the principal could not stop the creature, then they were doomed.

The sound of breaking glass and crumbling concrete filled the air as the beast drew closer, and the crowd began to scatter in all directions, desperate to escape its wrath. Panic set in as they realized there was no way to outrun it.

The beast then began madly swinging its paws left and right, slashing and tearing everything with its razor-sharp claws. Its poisonous mist remained ineffective due to the other students and teachers, who were not targeted by the beast, using their attacks to repel the miasma. Still, the unfortunate people who ended up behind the creature were instantly liquefied in a puddle of goo.

The Blirdoth's claws cleaved people in half; it was something scary to watch, but there was not a single person who missed it. Not looking at the monster would lead to certain death.

The principal, the workers, and the free students were still trying to damage the creature with all the power they could muster. Unfortunately, aside from the principal's, all the attacks were useless.

Besides, most students had weapon-conjuring powers, meaning they could do little against the powerful thaid. Approaching it in close quarters was akin to suicide at that moment.

Erik found himself in a pinch. If he combined his powers, he could maybe weaken the beast with Logan's power. The problem was that he wasn't confident it would work, and he wasn't sure that if he used the mana he had available, he would be able to survive later. There was only one thing the students could do now, and that was to run.

If they split, the monster would have to choose who to follow, meaning that the others would be able to survive.

As he battled the Blirdoth, Principal Van Dyke decided he had to try one last time to kill the beast, and this time he decided to pour all his mana into his next attack. That was his only way to kill the creature, and even that was unknown.

However, that would put him in a dangerous situation, as he wouldn't be able to fight back against the beast later from a safe distance, and he would be forced to engage in melee combat while severely weakened. The problem was also that the principal was unaware that many powerful people had already tried to kill the Blirdoth while it was still on the walls and that they had failed.

They were weaker than him, yes, but they were powerful nonetheless.

He then started channeling mana and prepared his black flame again. This time he poured his entire mana reserves into the attack, hoping it would be enough to kill the beast. Though, that required a little bit of time.

"Keep the creature at bay the best you can," he shouted to the others.

"Yes," the students and the workers replied in unison. They knew they had to hold on until the attack was ready and prayed that the principal's efforts would be enough to defeat the beast. With determination in their hearts, they stood their ground and prepared for battle, but with a heart full of fear.

Soon after, attacks rained on the beast. Even the melee students tried to stall for time. They guessed that if they were going to die, regardless of what they did, they could at least try something; however, fighting the fear of death wasn't simple.

Trying to keep the creature at bay by constantly moving around it, the students successfully distracted it and were able to make its focus shift to them, leaving Principal Van Dyke free to channel mana. However, most of the students weren't strong enough to avoid the creature's attacks, and many ended up dying.

Erik did the same, but it was clear that he had an advantage compared to his fellow students and came out of the confrontation unarmed. However, his mana wasn't sufficient to make the Flyssa sharp enough to wound the Blirdoth.

One by one, the students fell. Some tried to kite the Blirdoth, but it wasn't easy as the creature was too fast and agile for them. Its razor-sharp claws and beak made it a formidable foe, and no amount of defense could save the students. The one with the power to create shields protected them as best as possible, but it wasn't easy.

There were many of them, and the Blirdoth's attacks were too powerful. The thaid grew more aggressive as the students fell, seeing its prey dying and the number of opponents decreasing.

The principal yelled for everyone to retreat to safety once he sensed they were going to be hit, but it was too late for some. The Blirdoth's attacks were causing a lot of damage, and the students were having a hard time fighting back. Tom knew he had to be fast.

All in all, the strategy was working. The students were keeping the beast at bay, but only a small number of them remained. There was, however, no attack that got past its defenses.

As Principal Van Dyke was ready, he channeled enough mana to power his black flames. He hoped that was enough, but he was skeptical.

"Stay away from the beast!" he shouted out loudly again. The thaid roared and charged toward him. Principal Van Dyke stood his ground, his eyes fixed on the charging beast.

At that moment, everyone backed away, making backward jumps and retreating far away from the beast; they accomplished their mission, but fewer than fifty people were now alive.

Principal Van Dyke unleashed his attack, the black flames. His neural links were pumping mana at an astounding speed. A black fire horizontal vortex appeared on the battlefield, directed toward the humongous beast, which was still cleaving in half every student in sight who couldn't back away on time.

A strong, fiery gale threatened to throw the creature in the air while freezing it alive. The attack's power was enough to inflict significant damage on the creature. Coupled with the wounds it had already sustained in the previous battle, it seemed that the situation was finally taking a positive turn.

The beast resisted with all his might, trying not to be swept away by the vigorous attack created by Principal Van Dyke. The black fire was quickly freezing it, stopping its movements, and destroying its cells at an alarming pace. The Heniate knew that an attack of such calibre could kill its avatar; it had to do something to prevent this outcome.

The creature backed away, but the flames were already on it. However, the frost fires were so many and so powerful that the attack started to affect even the humans.

"Fast, conjure another barrier," Principal Van Dyke said to his colleague, Luke Yera. He and the one with the shield conjuring power started immediately pouring mana into their bodies and releasing it into the air through their neural links, and the barriers finally appeared.

Principal Van Dyke had used all his mana. He hoped that was enough. Maybe the attack would scare the beast and make it run away. It was clear that this was the right time to make the students run, so he ordered.

"All the students, you have to go to the closest shelter; a couple of them are inside the buildings on your left and right. Go now! Get the hell out of here!"

Erik knew he had to run away, but the problem was that the closest shelter was the Yellow Palace's, and it was clear that wasn't enough to stop the Blirboth's miasmas. The Red Palace's shelter was too far, so the only thing the students, Erik included, could do was leave the Red Palace's garden and head into the streets.

He wasn't the only one who had this thought, and the kids all headed toward the gates leading to the city, and Erik took his time to split from the group. He was faster and stronger than them; staying with them was only detrimental.

"What the hell are you doing?" Principal Van Dyke shouted as he saw the students going away. The workers stayed behind to help the principal.

"The Yellow Palace's shelter has problems. It couldn't stop the creature's gasses!" Luke Yera said.

"FUCK!" Principal Van Dyke shouted.

#### Chapter 226: Camille and Ramon

In front of the breach, Camille was on top of a car in front of the breach, shooting left and right at every beast in sight; every bullet used corresponded to a death. Even though there were so many beasts, Camille stayed calm and focused, and her years of training helped her kill each one with deadly accuracy. She knew failure was not an option; her pockets depended on it.

Camille thought the creatures were underwhelming, which was probably because only low leveled, and small thaids could pass through the door's breach. However, these beasts were low leveled for her, but that didn't necessarily mean they were for the others.

Camille looked at Ramon, who was using his telekinesis abilities to control multiple weapons simultaneously, and he was currently cleaving the thaids in half. He could kill more than one beast at a time, and whenever he was about to be hit by one of them, Camille acted by killing the creature. It was a bullseye every time the girl fired.

Camille admired Ramon's skills and was grateful to have him as a teammate. Together, they made a great team and were able to take down the thaids efficiently.

Ramon was armed to the teeth; he had five swords levitating all around in a circle; they were all made of robust materials and created by skilled artisans; some even employed Etrium's newest technology, one that allowed them to harness thaids' powers. Some weapons, in fact, had wind powers imbued into them, and some could produce fire.

However, these weapons were a little bit unstable since the technology was new, and they were currently testing it out.

Camille was looking at her friend and comrade with an amused look as he cleaved beast after beast in half. Around Ramon, countless soldiers and mercenaries were doing their job and killing any thaids unlucky enough to get closer than 5 meters from them.

However, thanks to her power, Camille did most of the work and killed beast after beast with surprising ease. Frant's soldiers were left stunned by her power and were even slightly jealous of her since she could do something they wouldn't be able to do, not even with a hundred years of constant training.

Camille's power was a rare gift that she had gotten from her brain crystal power, and it made her a formidable warrior on the battlefield. She knew that the Frantian soldiers would have struggled to survive on this dangerous and unforgiving battlefield without her and Ramon.

"Care to leave something for me?" Ramon barked at his friend. "You're making too many kills." He said while still fighting off several thaids, but he wasn't paying attention to any of them anymore; his friend just pissed him off.

Camille smiled and winked at him before firing two bullets straight toward two of the beasts that Ramon was targeting. The bullets pierced their two creatures' brains, killing them on the spot and adding two more dead bodies to the ground, which was now littered with gore, blood, and ichor.

"HEY! STOP IT!" Ramon shouted again.

"What did you say? I couldn't hear you! ahahahahaha!" Camille then started shooting again at the thaids, increasing the number of bodies around.

"Crazy psycho..." Ramon muttered.

However, Frant's soldiers looked at them as if they were both crazy. After all, even Ramon was a killing machine in a different league than the other people on the battlefield. He and Camille were killing more creatures than any other person there, and this happened in just ten minutes since they reached the breach.

Ramon and Camille's skills on the battlefield were unmatched, and their reputation preceded them. Frant's soldiers couldn't help but feel a sense of awe and fear towards the two warriors fighting alongside them, wondering what would happen if they ended up as their enemies.

While the mercenaries and a few soldiers fought the thaids, some people tried to close the breach; they were almost done, but this was not an easy process with all those thaids trying to kill them. Camille did her best to kill the thaids who tried to come through the breach, but she had to be careful not to kill the people repairing the door, and she was not that good at that.

"Hey, isn't it time that these fuckers do their job and repair the breach? If we were in Etrium, they would have already been kicked out by the army for their incompetence!" Camille said.

"Shut up, don't be so vulgar," Ramon said, as he hated when people cursed or used bad words.

"Besides, it's not easy to close the door if you keep shooting in their direction!" he added.

"It's not my fault if more and more thaids keep rushing through the hole!" the woman replied.

The duo then proceeded to go toward the door, where they could see that there were still thaids attempting to enter through the breach, preventing the soldiers from closing the hole.

"Ahhh!" Ramon shouted out loud. "We have to find a way to stop the creatures from approaching the door, or else we will never be able to close the hole," he added.

"Call Frant's militaries then," Camille said.

"Good idea, but I do not think they will be able to do much..."

Frant's soldiers now looked at the two with angry looks. They were blatantly insulting everyone, including them, and belittling their nation.

Ramon went to one of the cars and took a phone from the holder. He dialed a number and then spoke to someone unknown.

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On the walls, Colonel Tiwana received a call from someone from the communication department. The colonel listened for a while before nodding his head in agreement with what her subordinate said. He then turned back toward the group gathered on the wall overlooking the palace grounds.

"They are saying that they already killed all the beasts behind the breach but that they can't close it because the thaids keep crawling into it," the man on the other side of the phone said. The problem was that, previously, Tiwana had to redirect the artillery toward the horde and stop to kill the monsters at the eastern gate's breach.

This reduced the number of monsters who rushed there but didn't stop them completely.

Tiwana heaved a sigh of relief once he learned that the monsters on the other side of the breach had died, but there was still much to do.

"Finally, this hell is coming to an end," Tiwana murmured.

"What do we have to do?" asked the soldier.

"Redirect four to five artillery units toward the door; kill any creature approaching it," he replied.

"But sir, this will significantly increase the pressure on the melee troops!" the man on the phone said.

"I know, but we will give enough time to the mercenaries to close the breach, and then they will be able to join us on the main battlefield," Colonel Tiwana stated.

Tiwana then looked behind the wall, where the barrier and the eastern gate were, and he looked directly at the breach. He could see creatures on top of each other, trying to reach the hole, which was now in a too-high position for the thaids to reach it easily.

The creatures killed and squished each other, and only the bugs like thaids were able to crawl on the door and go to the other side. However, someone promptly blew them apart; it was Camille from the other side of the gate.

He then spoke again to the man on the phone. "Do as I said; give the order now."

Immediately, five cannons turned their attention to the thaids in front of the eastern gate's breach and started blasting them with all they had. Some soldiers even joined the fray and started unleashing their power against the monsters.

The explosions not only directly killed the monsters trying to enter the breach but also destroyed the bodies in front of it, bodies that previously created a sort of ladder for the monsters to climb.

The artillery took less than thirty seconds to destroy everything in its path.

A few more minutes passed until the last monsters fell dead or retreated. When the barrage stopped, everyone waited tensely.

Once the situation stabilized, Tiwana told one of his men to contact the mercenaries behind the eastern gate and tell them to close the breach since there were no beasts for the time being.

Then he ordered the artillery to concentrate again on the horde, lessening the soldiers' burden. He then looked at the battlefield and saw an excellent opportunity coming. He then sent another message: "All units, prepare for action! We need to secure our right flank ASAP!"

The soldiers immediately did their job and started concentrating on the fire there.

At the same time, Camille and Ramon received their orders, and the two mercenaries helped Frant's soldiers close the breach. They could see that. Finally, there weren't any creatures trying to reach the hole, and soon the mechas started closing it. Part of their mission had been completed; now they needed to go outside the barrier and kill as many thaids as they could.

Chapter 227: The Alikar

"One goal has been cleared," Ramon said with an accomplished look. "We have to go help outside now." He wiped the sweat off his forehead.

"What are we waiting for?" Camille replied with a grin on her face. The battle junkie couldn't wait to join the new battle. She knew that behind the barrier, the situation was a juicy one, so she was in a good mood.

"Time to make some beasts lose their heads," she said. She then started humming; every person who saw her could only say one thing about her. Crazy.

"Can you stop, please? You are embarrassing me..." Initially, Ramon was weirded out by Camille's antics; after all, there was nothing worse than having a total psycho as a close colleague.

However, as time went on and the two kept fighting together, he got used to such behavior, and he stopped caring at a certain point, but when they were in front of the others, he couldn't stand the woman's behavior, as it was embarrassing.

Camille then made a small run and went in front of Ramon. "C'mon, we don't have all day," she told her friend.

Then the man told his team to follow him to the vehicles so they could get ready for the next battle. "Remember, follow my lead," he reminded them before jumping into an armored car. The others did the same and went out of the just repaired eastern gate. Most of Frant's soldiers followed them, except for a couple of them who stayed behind to reinforce the door further.

There wasn't any creature now that could destroy it easily, but it was better to be careful since a considerable number of thaids could still break the repairs they did perform if they put their mind to the task. The group cautiously made their way towards the walls outside the city, scanning their surroundings for any signs of danger.

As they moved forward, they could hear the growls and roars of the monsters that lurked beyond the barrier.

The mercenaries' and soldiers' cars wreaked havoc as they traveled to the front line. Shooting down thousands of thaids who went past the wall and slowly creating a corridor through which they could safely pass and join their companions on top of the walls.

"HAHAHAHAHAHAHHAHAHAHAH" Camille laughed like a lunatic while supercharging her car's machine gun's bullets with mana and blasting every thaid she laid her eyes upon.

Ramon's face paled as he saw how weirded out Frant's soldiers were. They were facing a crisis that could potentially lead to their capital destruction, and she was enjoying her killing time. All of this while the sound of the battle could be clearly heard from their position.

As they progressed, the number of thaids started to increase, but thanks to the Band of Giants' mercenaries, the soldiers managed to reach the base of the wall. Camille took off the machine gun from the car, and with it on her shoulders, she and the others went up the wall.

After they finally arrived on top of the eastern gate's first line of defense, they observed the situation. The other mercenaries, including Ramon, were astounded by the sheer number of thaids before them, but Camille was overjoyed.

"Be glad, my friends! There are enough kills for everyone!" she shouted. Camille's excitement at the prospect of battle contrasted with the other mercenaries' apprehension, who were concerned about the overwhelming number of thaids. However, they trusted Ramon's leadership and prepared for the fight ahead.

The girl laughed out loud again as she could not contain her excitement. Her friend saw her crazy behavior again and sighed as he noticed how she sent shivers down the spines of every person on the battlefield. She was irredeemable.

He asked himself, "What did I do to deserve this?" hoping that a god would respond and possibly save him from her.

The duo and all the others, militaries and mercenaries alike, started placing themselves strategically, going where they were most needed, and closing each of the gaps in the army that allowed the thaids to get past the wall.

However, they quickly noticed there were still millions of beasts at the bottom of the walls, and an equal amount were on top of the wall fighting Frant's army.

The duo soon spotted their next prey—it was an Alikar, a giant furry spider that could release freezing venom from its two gigantic fangs.

The creature also used its spiderwebs to fight. It released them into the air to trap their prey but also used them to gain momentum and move at a fast speed. The creature was also an exceptionally agile jumper, as it was capable of going more than 30 meters in the air with a single jump.

On the northern side of the wall, the furry spider was wreaking havoc by trapping mechas, slowing down the artillery, and killing people like they were flies.

A group of soldiers was trying to stop it, but they weren't strong enough and were having trouble repelling it since there wasn't anyone nearby able to stop it.

The duo took out their weapons and then dashed toward the spider. The beast sensed danger and made a giant leap backward to avoid Ramon's attack. The Alikar moved with agility and grace, its eight legs carrying it effortlessly around the attacks.

At the same time, Camille started firing bullet after bullet at the creature, which then used its powerful webs to stop the incoming projectiles.

The creature then, while still in the air, used its spiderwebs, launching them toward the floor, closer to Camille's position, and by using them to gain momentum, the creature launched itself at her at an alarming speed, baring its fangs. If she ended up being hit by the sudden attack, she would be dead meat.

Camille avoided the attack with a hairbreadth by rolling forward and placing herself behind the creature. She then shot at the Alikar, making a couple of its legs explode.

The creature roared in pain, but it could do nothing to stop the duo from wounding it.

Ramon dashed again in the spider's direction, its swords in tow. He suddenly launched three of them at the creature, who made another jump and avoided the attack. It then used its spiderwebs, but this time to gain distance against its foes.

The other soldiers constantly attacked the creature, but they were mostly ineffective and only served to enrage it further. That was becoming more and more aggressive as time went on.

The beast then used the thread to make a circular movement on the ground; the Alikar spread its remaining legs and gained so much speed that Camille was not able to avoid the attack.

It ended up hitting her with its legs and sending her to the ground after making her fly several meters in the air.

Ramon jumped forward and slashed at the beast repeatedly. Slash after slash, the Alikar avoided the mercenary's attacks; one slash, two slashes, three slashes—it was impossible for Ramon to hit the creature.

Then he launched the swords toward the creature, trying to get it with this tactic. The speed at which the swords traveled was astonishing, but nothing the colossal spider could not avoid.

Ramon used the opportunity to attack again, this time in close quarters, and he was able to land a couple of hits on the thaid, which found itself without enough legs to sustain its gigantic body.

Camille stood up; she wanted to scream in pain since a couple of her ribs had shattered. She had a thaid armor on, so most of the damage was mitigated by the mana shield that the armor automatically deployed, a technology only Etrium had, and that made them proud.

However, the armor was not impenetrable; for starters, the monster's attacks were not easy to avoid, and had she been hit in the head, she would have for sure lost her life due to the concussion.

Camille then went, not without difficulties, toward the spider-like thaid, which wasn't able to stand anymore. She raised her machine gun at the thaid's eyes, and with a mad but pained grin, she said: "Eat this."

BOOM

The sound of gunshots reverberated through the battlefield as she unloaded a whole bunch of bullets into the beast's head. The thaid's body convulsed and then went still, its remaining legs sprawled out in all directions. Ramon let out a deep breath, feeling a sense of relief wash over him as he surveyed the aftermath of this small fight.

The soldiers who were previously fighting the creature were left astonished; these two were able to kill the beast that was giving them a lot of trouble in just a few minutes. They could finally breathe and rest a bit and were particularly grateful to the two mercenaries for their help. They had been unable to deal with the thaid, but everything went well in the end.

In the meantime, as the duo finished their work, Ramon went to a mercenary healer to help Camille. Even if they had an odd relationship, with Ramon often enduring Camille's bizarre behavior, they were still friends who cared for each other.

Chapter 228: The wall

The old man found the healer and then brought her to Camille.

"Can you see if she is OK?" he asked.

The healer approached Camille and examined her, checking her pulse and breathing. She then used some devices to check her condition, and after a few moments, she turned to Ramon and said, "She broke a couple of ribs and dislocated her left shoulder, just give me a couple of minutes, and I will fix her," she said.

The healer was not particularly worried about the girl's well-being, which reassured Ramon.

"Good, fix her up then. I need her to be in tip-top shape."

"Yeah, I want to fight as soon as possible." Camille was a battle junkie, so Ramon was expecting something like that, contrary to the healer, who instead looked at Camille as if she were nuts.

They both sighed, and then the healer used her brain crystal power to fix her up. "All done," she said as she completed her job. Ramon was relieved to see Camille back to full health, and he hoped that something like that wouldn't happen again.

Despite being strong, Camille wasn't as skilled or powerful as him in a melee fight. As the healer left, Ramon reminded his friend that they had a mission to complete and that they needed to stay focused.

"Good. Are you ready to fight Camille?" Ramon smilingly asked the girl.

"Let's go," she replied. Her grin was more prominent than Ramon's one. The other people looked both of them in the face and then realized that Ramon was as insane as the young girl was.

They both laughed and walked away, not caring about the judgmental stares. Some mercenaries shook their heads and sighed inwardly, wondering what kind of trouble they had just gotten themselves into and why they had to fight with them.

Nevertheless, they followed the two as they made their way toward the frontline. Under the wall, there was utter chaos. The mass below was unrecognizable, with humans and thaids crammed together in a chaotic frenzy, screaming, shouting, snarling, and killing.

The mercenaries knew right away that this was going to be a tough battle, but they prepared themselves and got ready to fight this new battle. Many mechas were now ablaze, and the sound of screams echoed through the air. The duo looked at each other, and after a quick glance, they descended the wall and joined the fray.

"HELP ME!"

"KILL THE BEAST!"

"AAAAAAH!"

The voices of the soldiers asking for help were drowned out by the deafening roar of the beasts that were going to eat them. The few lucky ones died after a thaid slashed their throats or bashed their heads; however, the others had a far scarier destiny awaiting them: being eaten alive. Ramon and Camille quickly started doing their jobs.

The woman helped as many soldiers as possible and shot at any beast she laid her eyes upon. Ramon protected her with his floating blades and killed an untold number of monsters. They fought side by side, taking down any monster that crossed their path, but the thaids were relentless.

The battle was intense, and the odds were against the human side. They were more than the thaids in terms of numbers, but many beasts were far stronger than them. The monsters were the result of their highly competitive and deadly environment. Frant's army was struggling to keep up with the fight's pace, and their energy was slowly depleting.

However, the mercenaries' untimely help started changing the tide of the battle as they quickly eliminated the stronger beasts throughout the battlefield, giving Frant's army a chance to catch their breath and regroup.

With renewed energy and determination, they were able to push back the thaids and gain ground. In the meantime, with their strength and skills, Ramon, Camille, and many other mercenaries kept decimating the thaids.

Their joint efforts produced a miracle. The Band of Giants' two members fought ferocity, their weapons slicing through the air and striking the thaids with deadly precision. They moved in perfect unison; their steps were fluid and synchronized. They fought as one, each covering the other's back.



Thousands of thaids were felled by them alone. As the battle raged on, Camille noticed that Ramon was starting to tire. It wasn't simple to keep up with the mana and stamina expenditure in that sea of monsters and bodies.

She knew he couldn't keep up the pace much longer, and she needed to do something to give him a break. She signaled to the other mercenaries and ordered them to cover for Ramon while she took the lead. This meant that her comrades had to keep the thaids at bay and away from her while she killed them one by one.

"Thank you!" Ramon said to her friend after having rested for a couple of minutes. "I needed that," he added.

"How are your mana reserves?" the man asked to the young woman.

His friend replied, "They're a bit low, but I should be able to manage for now."

Ramon nodded in understanding, and they continued to kill the monsters. At that moment, the sound of Frant's artillery started getting closer to their position. That meant only one thing: they were able to ease the situation enough elsewhere for them to redirect their aim. This also meant that the situation in their fighting zone was particularly nasty.

Ramon and his team knew they had to finish off the monsters quickly before the artillery fire got too close, or they would risk being caught in the crossfire. Ramon charged forward, his swords glinting in the sunlight.

He fought his way through a group of particularly troublesome thaids, cutting down any monster that stood in his way. He was a force to be reckoned with, and a primal fear arose amidst the thaids.

Camille watched in amazement as Ramon fought his way through the horde. His movements were graceful and precise, and he moved with such speed and agility that it was almost like watching a dance.

As Ramon fought, Camille took a moment to catch her breath. She looked around and saw that the other mercenaries and Frant's army were holding their own against the thaids. She knew they still had a long way to go to win the fight, but the situation looked promising; besides, she was having a lot of fun. Ramon finished off the last of the thaids in his path and turned to face Camille.

"Are you OK?" he asked, concern etched on his face. Camille nodded, a grateful smile on her face.

"Yeah, don't worry, and keep doing your job," she said, this time grinning.

Ramon replied, "Don't worry and mind your business," with an amused smile. It was clear he was having fun too. As Camille and the rest of his team followed his lead, they noticed the thaids starting to retreat, realizing they were no match for the skilled warriors.

With the monsters halting their advance, the artillery finally started bombarding them, decimating the creatures with precision and efficiency.

Ramon and his team had a chance to regroup and prepare for the next wave, and they managed even to rest a bit before the fight resumed. The team breathed a sigh of relief as they saw the monsters die under the artillery fire.

However, they knew they couldn't let their guard down as many of the monsters were still alive and kicking, and another attack could come at any moment. He quickly ordered his team to stay alert and ready for any surprises.

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Rebecca was looking at the Red Palace fight; she saw the gore and carnage the Blirboth left behind following its assault. She almost had a mental breakdown; the things she had to see did take a heavy toll on her mind.

Her mother forced her to look, and she also left a couple of people to protect her and ensure that she did watch what she wanted to see. However, she was also looking at the situation with curiosity, a weird feeling, given what she saw and how she felt about it.

"Do I have to keep watching?" she meekly asked the guards standing by her side.

"You have it; it's the boss's order," the guard replied.

She didn't really want to see more, but being forced, she concentrated on one person in particular. A young man wielding a Flyssa, much more powerful than all his peers and able to kill many thaids with relative ease. She was watching Erik's fight.

Rebecca was able to see what was taking place, and she witnessed the exact moment the Blirldoth came. She witnessed how it began ripping the flesh of the children who had been unable to enter the man's barrier in time, and she saw the beast as it came dangerously close to being killed by Principal Van Dyke's assault.

Despite this, it was obvious that none of the attempts were successful. From her perspective, the future did not look good for the young guy in whom she had so much interest. Nonetheless, she had a nagging feeling deep inside that things were going to end up differently.

As she saw Principal Van Dyke join the struggle, even though she did not know him, she prayed that he and the others would be able to escape harm.

Chapter 229: Escape...?

Erik kept running as the battle between the Red Palace's workers and principal Van Dyke, raged. He often glanced back to see how the situation was, and it wasn't pleasant. The Principal was now fighting in melee, but he was clearly exhausted since he had used a lot of mana to perform the previous attack.

The young man quickly left the Red Palace's huge garden, but it took some minutes to do so. Once outside, he reached the streets, where he was by no means safer. At that point, Erik felt like he had been running for hours as his heart pounded vigorously in his chest and adrenaline pumped through his body.

There was only one thought in his mind: to put as much distance as possible between himself and the Blirldoth.

Erik had barely escaped from there, thanks to the principal's intervention, but he knew that Blirldoth wasn't something the older man could kill based on what he saw.

Typically, Blirldoths were not that powerful; even he could kill one with a little bit of effort. However, this beast was clearly a deviant or, worse, a sentient.

The young man was now in a part of the city that he had only seen while traveling to and from the Red Palace and that he had never visited before.

The buildings were tall and imposing as if to match the Red Palace's grandeur. They stretched to the sky and cast huge shadows across the narrow streets. The young man felt a sense of unease as he

walked through the unfamiliar streets, and the sight of the towering buildings only added to his discomfort, as there could be monsters at every corner.

If he were lucky, he would be able to kill them, but in this situation, that wasn't assured. He couldn't shake off the feeling that he was being watched.

"Fuck..."

Erik kept running, but he was aware that it was just a matter of time before some thaid would confront him. That meant that his best shot at surviving was to use his other powers; however, doing that was dangerous. He could be seen by someone hiding in one of the buildings or be spotted by cameras.

"System, do a surrounding scan and check for the presence of cameras around here."

[UNDERSTOOD. COMMENCE SCANNING. 3...2...1... SCAN COMPLETE. 15 CAMERAS AND A DRONE HAD BEEN FOUND IN THE SURROUNDING 100 METERS; DO YOU WANT TO CONNECT TO THEM?] The biological supercomputer asked.

"Do it and turn them all off! Do it every time you find a nearby device! I don't want to be seen by anyone," Erik said, wondering what the hell a drone was doing around there.

[CONNECTION COMPLETE. ALL DEVICES TURNED OFF. THE BIOLOGICAL SUPERCOMPUTER WILL DEACTIVATE ANY DEVICE THAT GETS WITHIN A 100-METER RADIUS.]

At that moment, Rebecca's connection with the drone got severed, and she lost sight of what the young man was doing.

Erik then took his backpack and grabbed a mask from it. He wore the same one he used when he killed Logan, Conal, and Orson.

"With this, at least, no one will be able to recognize me," he said to himself. Then he kept running, hoping that no beast would find him. He thought about hiding in one of the buildings, but he could risk being trapped by thaids if they found him, while being on the outside at least gave him a chance to run away.

After a couple of minutes of running, however, what Erik feared happened. Some Thaid's managed to find him. He was made aware of that due to the system's notification.

[WARNING: MULTIPLE HOSTILE DETECTED.]

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<Quest: Kill the beasts.>

-Rewards for completion: 5000 experience points, 1000 DNA points, and four intelligence stat points.

-Failure Penalty: Death.

-Description: A group of thaid's is trying to kill you. Murder them before they can harm you. Show the result of your training.

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"Oh god..." he said once he saw the quest and the notification.

Suddenly, a group of thaid's emerged from the corner. It was another batch of Eganesus, nothing the young man couldn't manage, but it was still very troublesome to deal with as their stats were very similar to his. However, this wasn't the main problem, as that role would fall on their numbers.

They were at least 20, and after carefully analyzing them, the young man understood he was in trouble.

The thaid's attacked him all at once, their fangs bared, and they moved quickly under the bright sun. Erik took his flyssa out of its sheath and drew bared it against the monsters, preparing for the fight of his life.

An Eganese tried to bite the young man from the left and another from the right, and some were trying to do the same while running on top of the other thaid and simultaneously preventing Erik from moving. There was only one way for Erik to escape the monsters. Going upward.

At that moment, Erik jumped on top of the first thaid, stepping on its head like a stepping stone, and jumped on top of another monster, using it as a ladder to escape the encirclement.

Erik swung it at a couple of Eganese, separating their heads from their necks.

[MULTIPLE HOSTILE CREATURES 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. 534 EXPERIENCE POINTS AWARDED TO THE HOST.]

"System, turn off all the notifications until the end of the fight!"

[NOTIFICATION TURNED OFF.] The system replied.

Erik managed to escape the encirclement, but the thaid were relentless. They turned behind to attack the young man, and they did try to bite him. Three of them almost accomplished the feat, but Erik killed them by projecting three long and spiky bones from his forearm. Piercing them in the head, he backed away thanks to the space he got while going out of the encirclement.

He killed five, yes, but they were still fifteen and hungry. The young man quickly found himself in difficulty as more than ten Eganese dashed again toward him, trying to bite him.

Erik fought back with all his might, his sword stopping a couple of attacks by slicing the mandibles of the Eganese. Typically, they would have backed away, but these creatures didn't. Once they could not use an appendage, they used another.

Slowly, the thaids were overwhelming him, and Erik knew that he was in danger of being overrun. However, he had some tricks up his sleeve: he used the poisonous astral wolf bite to fight back against the creatures.

Suddenly, the head of a giant Leylarhad made of mana appeared, scaring momentarily the thaids. The head was big enough to bite two monsters at the same time, and if they didn't die, the poison contained in the astral projection's fangs would have done the rest.

Luckily, that moment of distraction was enough for Erik to kill another two thaids, while the wolf's head killed another two. Erik then backed away again; the pressure he had felt suddenly vanished when the four monsters died, and he was now sure he would be able to kill the thaids and come out from this confrontation.

The battle raged on, the sound of clashing metal echoing through the streets. Erik was fighting for his life but was able to hold his ground. He couldn't let his guard down, as there were still more thaids coming at him, but he felt a surge of confidence knowing that he could take them on.

As the fight progressed, he killed more monsters until no more than six were left. Erik avoided another attack by jumping on an Eganesus' head and acrobatically spinning while slashing at its head.

He took advantage of the situation to jump onto a different thaid's body and slice it open by piercing its thorax and slicing it up. The beast started bleeding profusely and fell dead shortly after. Erik took his chance to jump off the creature as another thaid tried to kill him, but he did bend to an impossible degree and slice the beast's head off.

At that moment, a thaid finally bit him. Erik saw it coming toward him, and even though he couldn't stop it, he had two ways to defend himself: the metallization power and the mana exoskeleton. He pumped mana through their neural links and successfully shielded himself from harm.

Erik projected out of his shoulder another bone and pierced the creature's brain, killing it while it was still biting him. After that, the fight was short, as the awakener easily killed the two remaining beasts.

At that moment, all the notifications returned to Erik at once. He quickly scanned through them, noticing that he had gained a significant amount of experience points and had leveled up.

[MULTIPLE HOSTILE CREATURES 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. 4806 EXPERIENCE POINTS AWARDED TO THE HOST.]

[LEVEL UP.]

[QUEST COMPLETED. ABSORBED ENERGY SUCCESSFULLY CONVERTED INTO EXPERIENCE. REWARD ISSUED.]

As Erik leveled up, the biological supercomputer replenished the energy he had exhausted during his ordeal. One of the many perks that the system gave him. He felt a surge of energy as he received the reward for his hard work.

Chapter 230: The Ferele

"Two-level ups today, that's good," Erik said to himself. Despite the situation, he gained a lot today. However, he couldn't increase his stats anymore since they were already growing because of the system's rewards and the neural links he made. From now on, he would only increase his energy.

[WARNING: THE BIOLOGICAL SUPERCOMPUTER'S MANA RESERVES ARE NOW DEPLETED. THERE WON'T BE FURTHER QUESTS UNTIL THE USER KILLS OTHER CREATURES OR THE SYSTEM IS ABLE TO GATHER MANA FROM THE SURROUNDINGS.]

"All right..." he then turned to look at his surroundings. No beast was around; otherwise, the system would have alerted him. However, his thoughts trailed back to ten minutes ago; the system told him that aside from the cameras in the surroundings, it also disabled a drone.

Immediately, he got angry. Was someone spying on him? He was unaware that a curious girl had watched him escape from the Red Palace and was currently watching Aaron struggle on the other side of the city.



Erik ran toward the end of the street and quickly went toward its end. After a couple of twists and turns, the young man stopped to rest a little bit. However, that was short-lived.

He didn't even have time to rest for five minutes before the system gave him another problematic notification.

[WARNING: HOSTILE DETECTED.]

The awakener was immediately alarmed, but at least this time, there was only one beast, and since he leveled up, he got his mana and stamina replenished. The system was wonderful, with all those perks and functions.

A sound that chilled Erik to the bone immediately interrupted his thoughts. It was a low growl, and it seemed to be coming from somewhere behind him. Erik turned to face the source of the sound and slashed at it by instinct. He blocked the fangs of a beast barely a couple of centimeters from him. He was shocked to see that the thaid in question was a very dangerous one.

Standing before him was a thaid unlike anything he had ever seen before. It was big, easily three times the size of a man, and its eyes glowed with a fierce red light. Its jaws were lined with razor-sharp teeth, and its claws were as long as daggers. It resembled a puma, but its fur was crimson red, and a fiery flame burned at the tip of its long striped tail.

He knew about it thanks to the technology he downloaded about the thaids, but seeing the monster up close was another experience altogether.

The creature was a Ferele, a thaid usually spotted near New Alexandria. Erik guessed what the hell the creature was doing here, so far from his natural habitat, which was way far from where the horde came. However, something was clear: The beast had followed Erik all along.

This time, the situation was serious. The Ferele was not only physically impressive but also had a very strong brain crystal power that allowed it to produce and manipulate fire. If it weren't for the fact that Erik knew how dangerous this beast was, greed would have blinded him, making him do something stupid.

He was still wrestling the beast, blocking its mouth with the flyssa, which was still whole because Erik used his metallization power on it, making the sword rather durable. However, he was also pumping a lot of mana into it because the Ferele's strength was high.

The awakener knew he was in trouble. He had escaped the Red Palace and killed the Eganesus, only to end up fighting a beast he wasn't certain he could defeat, and that was definitely more dangerous than the thaids he had just killed.

"Fuck!"

Erik then used his poisonous astral wolf bite to kill the creature; this was a good move for when he couldn't use his hands. However, as the beast felt the mana assembling in the air, it jumped back, releasing its mouth from Erik's blade, and narrowly avoided the attack.

But the beast didn't give up easily. He kept his distance from Erik, looking at his mask and trying to understand if his prey feared for his life. It circled him, snarling and hissing, waiting for him to make a mistake, lose focus, or suddenly move.

By having the possibility of using his other powers, Erik had a more diverse skillset at his disposal, and he needed to understand how to use it. He was also sure no one was observing him; since there was no camera around, and the system deactivated all the devices in the surroundings. It was also unlikely that people were in the nearby buildings, so he planned on going all out.

As he looked at the creature, the beast did the same.

They both stared at each other, but it was at that moment that the Ferele's tail sprouted fire from its tip. The size of the flame increased, and a fiery gale spread throughout the surroundings. The thaid then opened its mouth, and a light came from its throat. It was clear what the beast was doing—shoot at him.

A ball of fire came hurtling toward the young man. Who jumped to the side to avoid the move; however, the Ferele did the same; it followed Erik and lunged at him. The young man slashed at the beast, severing its claws with a neat movement. However, the vast paw ended up hitting him on the chest, making the young man stop breathing for a moment.

The Ferele jumped on him again, but Erik conjured up the astral wolf, who started wrestling with the Ferele. It was the fight between a giant mana head and a smaller but still powerful beast. The

wolf bit the Ferele, and its venom started seeping inside the thaid's veins. But it was too early to have any effect. However, that was at least something.

Erik knew he had to be more careful. He couldn't afford to make any mistakes again, or he would end up dead. He retreated, putting some distance between himself and the Thaid. He could feel his heart pounding in his chest and the adrenaline surging through his veins. He took a deep breath and assessed the situation.

The beast was strong, but Erik still had enough mana to fight against it. The creature kept circling around him, watching his every move. Erik analyzed the beast with the biological supercomputer's power, and a screen appeared before him.

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- Name: Unnamed or unknown.

- Brain Crystal Power: Fire Manipulation (Uncommon).

-Race: Ferele.

-Physical characteristics: Approximately 1.80 centimeters tall and 2 meters long. Lean build. Estimated weight of 500 kilos.

-Personality and traits: The Ferele is a rather aggressive beast. It tends to hunt alone but mates once a year. Females are protective of their cubs until adulthood; males do not care about them at all after birth. They eat meat and prefer to hunt other thaids. However, sometimes they will try to hunt dangerous creatures when they are starving.

-Power Level: 104.

-Approximate Strength: 53.

-Approximate Intelligence: 3.

-Approximate dexterity: 35.

-Approximate Energy: 250.

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<The beast is at my same power level but slightly stronger,> Erik thought. That was why it was hard to fight against it. Erik took a deep breath and analyzed the situation, looking for any weakness he could exploit. He noticed that the beast had a tendency to favor its left side during attacks, so Erik decided to focus his defense on that side and wait for an opportunity to strike.

With this plan in mind, he readied himself for the next attack.

The Ferele lunged again, but at that point, Erik had already conjured a poisonous mana dart, and when the creature attacked him, he launched the dart and hit it right in the chest. This second poison started spreading throughout the beast's body, but this time, Erik made a poison that significantly debilitated the thaid and took effect quickly.

He then jumped backward while the beast was still in the air. It then landed and tried to bite Erik, who luckily avoided the move.

Erik then feinted left and swung his sword at the Thaid's neck from the right. The creature tried to dodge, but his blade caught the beast on its back, slicing through its thick hide. A nasty wound appeared on the creature's skin. The Thaid roared in pain and turned towards him, trying to attack him again.

Erik didn't allow the beast to come closer; however, the fact that the thaid was far from him wasn't reassuring at all due to the beast's brain crystal power.

The fight continued, with the Ferele relentlessly attacking Erik and the latter avoiding them. The awakener knew that it was only a matter of time before the astral wolf's poisonous bite took effect and killed the beast. In the meantime, its movements became more sluggish as the fight progressed due to the dart's poison.

All of this significantly increased Erik's fighting chances, but the poison couldn't do much due to how high the creature's mana reserves were.

In all that situation, Erik was starting to get tired too. He could feel his arms and legs beginning to ache due to the exertion. Due to how many times he had to stop the creature from biting his throat. He needed to end this fight soon, or he would risk dying.