

BIOLOGICAL 231

Chapter 231: Planning revenge

"Achim, I need your help with something..." Nathaniel said.

"Nathaniel?" Achim was pissed off by the fact that the young man called him this late, but he couldn't tell him so since it was clear that he had to keep up appearances for his future's sake.

"What is the problem? What happened? " The last sentence came out a little louder than intended as he felt angry again at how Nathaniel treated him like a servant. However, Nathaniel didn't notice his tone.

"I need your help to deal with someone..." Nathaniel said.

"Deal with someone? What do you mean?" Achim asked.

"I need to get rid of him."

There was a short moment of silence. It was clear Nathaniel wanted to kill someone, but he was stunned at how this kid could be so bold as to want to do something like that. He was a monster, even by Achim's standards, and he was a criminal. The young man then broke the silence, knowing he had to comply with Nathaniel's request, and eventually asked, "...and who are we speaking about here?"

"The guy that I talked to you about the other day," Nathaniel exclaimed angrily, recalling his defeat at Erik's hands.

"Ok, but why? What did happen?" Achim asked again.

"That's none of your business! Will you help me or not?!" Nathaniel asked with an almost threatening voice.

Achim hesitated for a moment, then nodded his head in agreement. He knew Nathaniel could be difficult to work with, but he also needed to deepen his relationship with him for his own sake. He

sighed. "I can help you, but not directly. You should be aware that all the people older than fifteen years old are going to join the city's defenses.

The others and I cannot refuse this order since it would lead to investigations on us with the possibility of messing up our entire organization."

"Fuck! So you can't come with me?" Nathaniel asked.

"No. But I can find some people willing to aid you under the right compensation..." Achim added.

"How much money will they need?"

"...It depends on what kind of job you give them, but they generally take on anything. There shouldn't be problems about this."

Nathaniel thought briefly before responding, "Alright, let's say one thousand new dollars per person... Is there anyone available for tomorrow?"

"There are at least five that come to mind. I will contact them as soon as we close the call and give you a response later. However, I must ask: are you sure you really want to do this? There might be consequences afterward."

"Yes," Nathaniel said. His rage was too high for him to let this matter go now. Erik humiliated him, which was probably the cause of his fracture with Natasha and Karl, and was the reason why he got kicked out of the Red Palace.

He was in a denial state, as he couldn't see how leading a stampede of thaid's toward Erik and trying to kill him during the fight was the real reason why everything happened to him. He was so full of himself and firmly believed he was superior to everyone that he failed to recognize his own faults.

In any case, killing Erik meant taking back control over his life in a weird and distorted way; Nathaniel didn't care anymore.

"All right, let me make a phone call; I will let you know later..." Achim said after another sigh.

After hanging up the phone, Nathaniel sat down and stared into space while thinking about the moment he would kill Erik. As long as he succeeded, nothing wrong could happen to him.

It was incredible how someone he deemed an ant only three months prior was able to flip his life so much.

[The day of the attack]

The following day, Nathaniel met these five people in an alley in the western district. They were all armed with daggers and knives, which made sense considering what they were going to do. However, they weren't using other kinds of weapons because, despite living in a world and a country where power reigns supreme, people couldn't walk around with weapons openly.

However, they all had their brain crystal powers, and some of them could summon weapons.

The Red Palace students could because there was an agreement between the government and the institution, especially considering that these people would represent the country's future leaders and were usually important people.

The five underage kids looked at the young man with uncaring eyes as if they wanted to do their job and go home. They didn't care why Nathaniel was doing all this, nor who their target was; they only wanted the money.

That was understandable given their situation, being poor and having no prospects. Nathaniel had been made aware that most of those kids came from broken families or lived alone, without parents or siblings, and thus had to work hard to survive. For them, getting paid ten times more than usual was quite tempting.

Nathaniel approached them with arrogance; he felt superior to them in many ways and thought it was natural for these guys to work for him. However, he saw a determined look on their faces and knew these kids weren't new to murder. One of them, Luke, looked at Nathaniel with focus, ready to attack at the slightest sign of danger.

It was true that he was going to work with him, but the man didn't look very sane from his point of view. He was right, as Nathaniel was crazy.

"So, what's the plan?" Luke asked. Nathaniel took a deep breath and explained the plan's details, hoping to convince them that he was trustworthy and that they could carry out the mission successfully. As he spoke, he noticed Luke's expression soften slightly, indicating that perhaps he was starting to gain his trust or that he trusted his plan.

"And then, we're going to have a nice chat with our target, and, well, you know what happens then..." Nathaniel replied.

"Who is the guy?" another guy asked.

"That's none of your business..." Luke was a little pissed off by the fact that Nathaniel didn't want to reveal who the target was, but this wasn't the first time this had happened to him, so he thought it was a normal occurrence. The only thing he needed to do was to follow the orders, carry out the mission and go home. However, they needed to at least know what he was capable of.

"Can you tell us at least what his brain crystal power is?" Luke asked again.

"He can sharpen things..." Nathaniel said, trying not to reveal too much information. He didn't want them to back away once they learned they had to kill the nation's only awakener and potentially be the target of a countrywide manhunt.

"Very dangerous, but not that powerful. This is viable..." Luke said.

However, he then turned to look at Nathaniel again. "Are you sure you want to do this?" one of them asked, looking at Nathaniel with curiosity.

"Of course!" Nathaniel answered immediately. "Don't ask these pointless questions!"

"Relax, I was just asking."

Nathaniel then pulled out the bag of cash he had prepared earlier and gave each of them five hundred new dollars, making sure to keep the rest for later. The kids counted the money in their hands; this was the highest amount of money they had ever received.

They looked at Nathaniel with grateful eyes and thanked him for his generosity, but the truth was that to do these kinds of jobs, assassins and goons usually asked for much more. They were naive, inexperienced, and very desperate to accept such a high-risk mission for this little amount of money.

"I will give you the rest later."

It was at that moment that a siren started ringing throughout the city. The thaids' attack had just started.

"Let's get this over with," Luke said. "The situation will worsen soon," he said, with uneasiness evident in his eyes.

The truth was that thanks to his father's contacts, Nathaniel already knew that the city was bound to be attacked today, as the militaries expected. This was the best chance to attack Erik since the city would be deserted.

The kids then left the alley and headed to the Red Palace. As Nathaniel predicted, there wasn't anyone around, as all the adults were preparing for the upcoming battle, and the other kids hid inside the shelters.

The Red Palace was the likely place where Erik was going to be. Since during the attacks on the city, the shelters were going to be open for anyone aside from their affiliation; the kids knew they could infiltrate the Red Palace's shelter and swiftly kill Erik. That was the plan Nathaniel came up with.

Ten minutes passed as they headed there, and then a loud noise shook the air. It was at that moment that the Yevyagits breached the eastern gate. The sound was so great that it could be heard from the other side of the city, where Nathaniel and the others were.

"What was that noise?" Someone asked.

"I don't know, but it doesn't look like something good." Another person replied. They both looked at each other, trying to figure out where the noise came from and what it could be, but they soon stopped, as they couldn't lose their concentration.

"Let's go faster; I don't want any unexpected situations to arise," Luke said. Nathaniel nodded, and with that, they started running at full speed toward the Red Palace. As they ran, Nathaniel could feel his adrenaline pumping, knowing that he was going to have his vengeance soon.

Chapter 232: Searching for the Target

As Nathaniel and the other five ran through the empty streets, they observed the place's desolation. No one was in sight; the cars had been left parked on the side of the street. The doors were all closed, but it could still be seen that there was life somewhere in the city due to the cameras scanning the surroundings regularly.

Aside from this, the only signs that anyone lived there were a few scattered trash cans lying around and some abandoned bikes along one wall near an alleyway.

Along the way, the six young men saw a few police officers patrolling around from time to time, but they clearly stayed away from them because of what they were going to do. However, they used masks to conceal their faces and hoods to hide their bodies.

"What do you think?" one of them asked another guy walking next to him.

The other guy shrugged and replied, "I don't know, man. Something feels kind of wrong, but we've got to do what we've got to do." He looked over his shoulder towards the streets behind them.

"There should have been more police officers in my experience; the lack of their presence means that something big happened at the eastern gate," another kid said.

"What are you thinking about?" Luke asked.

"It's possible that there was a security breach at the eastern gate," the other kid said.

"They are surely not so incompetent as to allow the thaids to make a breach in the eastern wall, right?" another said.

Luke furrowed his brows and considered the possibilities, wondering if what he said was true. Then, he said, "I won't be so sure about it," Luke replied. He had witnessed police and military inadequacy numerous times. One was when his parents were killed by some thugs when he was a little kid; then, when her sister got kidnapped by others to sell her organs on the black market.

He recalled those memories with sadness, anger, frustration, fear, and hope. His emotions were all mixed up together, but he couldn't help feeling angry at the people who did such things. Not that he was that different from them; he, too, was a thug now.

"Stop chatting and focus on the mission, or I won't pay you," Nathaniel said, a look of sheer concentration on his face.

ROAR

"Did you hear that?" Luke asked.

"Yeah, it seemed close..."

Luke turned around quickly, seeing nothing out of the ordinary except for a couple of garbage cans. He took off running again. They kept hearing noises coming from behind them. It sounded like a roar followed by grunts and shouts.

"Thaids!" Luke said.

"They really came in!" Another shouted.

"Stay silent, you idiots!" Nathaniel said.

"We need to find cover!" Luke then added, pointing at the nearby building.

"It is useless!" Nathaniel said.

"What do you know about thaids?!" another said, not knowing that Nathaniel had trained at the Red Palace until the previous day.

"I fought a lot of them during the past week. They will be able to find us wherever we hide. No, I bet they already caught our scents and are actually coming for us!" Nathaniel said.

"You fought thaids?" Luke asked.

"Yes, it was part of our training at the Red Palace..."

The other five kids looked at Nathaniel with awe in their eyes. None of them knew that their employer went to the Red Palace.

"Are you saying that you train there? Why do you need our help then?" another asked.

"Because the target goes there too, and I need help to get rid of him. He is not a simple guy..." Of course, admitting this was as painful as being kicked out of the institution. It was a stain he would never be able to wash off, a humiliation he would feel for years, even if he managed to kill Erik.

"Anyway, let's move! We don't have much time left," Nathaniel said.

After a couple of minutes of running, the thaids finally came into view. It was a small group of ten beasts that were chasing Nathaniel and his group.

"They found us!" Luke said.

"What do we do?" Another asked.

"We must fight them..." Nathaniel said with a cold look.

"Are you crazy?"

"Just shut up and do as I said."

At that moment, the young man turned around and started channeling mana into his arms. The others looked on in horror as the young man faced the beasts, but they understood once they were close enough. Nathaniel unleashed a force attack, blasting all ten thaids in the air and exploding the heads of two of them.

"What the hell?!" Luke shouted. The five kids were left astonished at how strong Nathaniel was while the thaids' corpses lay scattered on the ground.

"Come, give me a hand; I need to conserve my strength..." Nathaniel said. He was calmer than usual. The five kids reluctantly took their weapons and charged at the beasts while they tried to stand up again.

The humans quickly dashed toward them and plunged their knives into their eye sockets, killing them instantly. Only three beasts remained, but Nathaniel killed them easily and quickly.

"Come on, let's get going before another group finds us," Nathaniel said.

"All right," Luke said. He started believing he had just put himself in massive trouble for some reason. After a short while, the group finally managed to arrive at the Red Palace.

"Ok, we must run to the tall yellow building and head to the shelter. Given the situation," Nathaniel said, they should be open to all.

"Are you sure about that? I don't want to find myself in front of the defenses the Red Palace students usually boast about," Luke added.

"Yeah, don't worry..."

But before they could do anything, a horrifying beast and a swarm of monsters arrived before the Red Palace; it was the Blirldoth.

"What the fuck is that?" one of the kids asked.

"I don't know, but it's nothing we can take on." These words came out of Nathaniel's mouth. It was hard for him to pronounce them, but he had to be realistic this time. The beast was enormous, and the mana around it was too thick even for him to use all his power to put a dent in its skin.

However, Nathaniel quickly observed the wounds on its body, meaning that someone actually managed to fight this creature. At that point, Nathaniel didn't know if they were dead or alive.

"We need to wait here; let's see what happens. Maybe we will be lucky..."

The other kids observed Nathaniel with faces full of fear. They couldn't understand how he could be so calm in this situation, where a monster of that caliber and a group of thaids so huge were in front of them.

So they waited, and soon they saw how the Blirdoth destroyed the Red Palace's defenses and how it started spreading its gas all around the Yellow Palace. Nathaniel knew that the most likely place where Erik would be was that building since this was the time when the students trained with their weapon masters.

After five minutes of the beast releasing the gas and sniffing the surroundings, it went behind the building, but from the other side, a group of students came out of a door, barely breathing and with some wounds on their bodies.

"Bingo..." Nathaniel said. Despite being a crazy psycho, he was smart, and it wasn't hard for him to predict what would have potentially happened when the Blirdoth approached the Yellow Palace.

Then, two things happened. The thaids that were following the Blirdoth went toward the students, and at the same time, Erik came out of the room.

"You see that guy there?" Nathaniel said, pointing at Erik.

The five kids couldn't see him clearly, but they understood who he was talking about.

"Yes," they replied.

"That's our target," Nathaniel said.

Then the Eganeus attacked, and they saw the whole scene ensue. The kids observed Erik fighting and immediately understood why Nathaniel needed their help. He was strong—stronger than any other kid they had ever seen and probably stronger than their employer.

At that moment, the other students started running away, and the Blirdoth approached the door. Then Erik started to run, and the beasts all chased them.

"If we are lucky, they will end up eaten alive..." Luke said.

"No. Look there..." Nathaniel said. Principal Van Dyke was dashing in the students' direction.

"Who is that guy?" one of the kids asked.

"That's the Red Palace principal," Nathaniel said with apparent anger in his tone. That was the motherfucker that got him kicked out of Frant's greatest and most prestigious organization.

It was then that the battle between the students, the principal, and the Blirldoth ensued, and soon, the remaining people ran away, including Erik. The kids were shocked and terrified as they witnessed the chaos that erupted before their eyes. They had never seen anything like it.

"Let's go; this is the right moment!" Nathaniel said. They then started chasing the young man through the empty streets.

Chapter 233: Another Kill

Rebecca was currently inside one of the shelters provided to the Band of Giants. She was looking at the city through the drones' cameras but was not having a pleasant time.

The number of people she saw dying was astronomical; the worst thing was that at least 95% of them were kids her age.

She saw it all, from Allan's father killing the thaids outside the shelter to Aaron and his father running away and the subsequent massacre of the people fleeing from the shelter when the thaids arrived.

However, she was now observing the Blirldoth, who had just arrived before the Yellow Palace. Initially, she assumed nothing would happen here, but after seeing how confident the beast was and seeing the kids coming out of the building, she started fearing for their lives.

It was weird caring for people she didn't even know and who, besides, belonged to a foreign nation. However, her human side and compassion surged through her, which was why she felt that way. It wasn't about patriotism or anything like that; it had more to do with what she thought was right.

She knew she was going to be part of a mercenary organization sooner or later, but she wanted to do it because she really wanted to wipe out all thaids from the face of the planet. She sincerely believed humanity had to band together and kill all the monsters.

"Are you alright?" Rebecca heard someone behind her say. Turning around, she found herself face-to-face with another member of the band of giants: Mika. "You seem very upset."

"Yes," said Rebecca. "It's just that looking at all this isn't simple..." the woman added.

Mika smiled gently. "I know, but these are your mother's orders. Better do as she says," the woman replied.

Rebecca sighed and then turned to look at the drone. She observed the Eganesus attacking the students, and then she noticed Erik. He saw him juggle amidst the thaids and kill them with precision and brutality, leaving a deep impression on her. Mika was with her.

"Who is that guy?" Rebecca asked.

"Him?" she said while pointing at the screen. "I don't know," she said, "but I can do a quick search..." She then sent Erik's face image to a nearby computer, and after a facial scan, the device came out with a result.

"Erik Romano: Frant's only awakener... Whoa, this guy is a big shot!" Mika said.

"An awakener? I didn't know Frant had one... How many are there in the world?" Rebecca asked.

Mika already knew the answer and replied, "Less than 10 in the whole world, of course, without considering the ones who have already died... They are very rare..."

"He looks strong..." Rebecca replied, observing how Erik killed the beasts in front of the Yellow Palace.

"Well, that's a given, considering he is an awakener, but unfortunately, I do not think that he will be that much in the future," Mika said.

"Why?"

"Because, apparently, his awakened power is not that strong, and besides, his brain crystal didn't improve that much... However, our spies observed how his body reacted weirdly to his awakening; he is much stronger than he should be. To be honest, it is bizarre; some people in Etrium even want to get their hands on him to study his body."

"That's awful," Rebecca said.

"Yeah, but it could be important. If they somehow manage to understand how his body was able to increase so much in terms of strength, they could use it on our soldiers." At that moment, they turned to look at the screen again. Erik was now running away from the Blirboth.

She saw how it started tearing the flesh of the students who did not pass the man's barrier on time, and she also saw the beast almost dying due to Principal Van Dyke's attack.

"They are screwed..." Mika said. "That beast is insanely powerful," she added.

However, it was at that moment that Principal Van Dyke arrived, and he started battling against the beast. They observed him fight against the Blirboth for several minutes.

However, it was clear that nothing worked. From her point of view, the young man she was so interested in was doomed. However, there was something inside of her that told her otherwise. Despite not knowing him, she hoped he and the others would survive when she saw Principal Van Dyke join the fight.

"This guy is not half bad, but he is nothing compared to the boss..." Mika said. Rebecca observed him with attention but kept glancing at Erik occasionally.

Then, after a desperate fight, the students, Erik included, ran away and started heading toward the streets. Things seemed to have gone better once the students started running away from the beast, and now she was looking at Erik going toward the empty streets; he, apparently, didn't notice the drones hovering around.

"It looks like the awakener managed to flee from the beast, uh? Lucky guy..."

"Where is he going? Doesn't he know there are thaids everywhere?" Rebecca said.

"He should, but maybe he is confident in his ability enough to try to face them..."

The young girl quickly sent one of her drones to scout ahead and saw a small number of thaids heading toward Erik's position. It was another bunch of Eganesus, the ones that the young man had already killed in front of the Yellow Palace.

After a short while, while they observed Erik run, the connection to that drone suddenly came off.

"What the...? Philip, what happened?" Mika asked the guy—the one responsible for keeping the drones up.

"I don't know; it is not my fault..." the man replied.

"Bring those damn drones up again!"

"I'm trying!" Philip replied. However, there was nothing he could do about it.

[Present time]

Erik was still engaged in the fight against the Ferele. The beast didn't want to go down; however, it was clear that the poison had debilitated it, and the thaid was now having problems fighting. Erik was surprised by the fact that the beast wasn't backing away; it was like there was nothing in its mind regarding self-preservation, and the only thing that mattered was to kill.

Despite this, Erik was not afraid. He was a warrior, someone who fought against thaids countless times, and it was clear that, in a moment like this, where his life depended on his focus, he couldn't let emotions get the best of him.

The beast was in front of him, panting desperately while locking its eyes on Erik. The creature, despite being weakened, still had a lot of mana in its reserves and kept shooting fire blasts at the

young man. However, the fire on its tail was waning, which meant the beast was slowly losing vigor and dying.

The beast shot again at the young man. Erik sidestepped and dodged the attack with ease. However, he then shot forward like a bullet and swung his sword at the creature, making a nasty gash on its front leg. It screamed as blood spurted from the wound.

But instead of stopping or retreating, the Ferele continued attacking relentlessly, sending firebolts after firebolts at Erik in a vain attempt to kill him. The young man avoided the attacks several times, and every time he counterattacked. His blade cut deeply through the monster's skin, causing more pain and slowly making the beast bleed.

The Ferele knew it had to do something to change the tide of the battle, so it charged, its jaws snapping. Erik waited until the last possible moment, then moved aside. He felt the rush of air as Ferele passed by, and then he was behind the monster.

Erik swung his flyssa with all his might. The blade sliced through the Ferele's tough hide, and blood sprayed in a fine mist. The thaid howled in pain again and turned to face Erik.

Erik knew that he couldn't let the Ferele get close to him since it was still dangerous despite being severely weakened. While turning to look at Erik, the beast swung its paw again and almost wounded him; however, the young man's reflexes allowed him to jump back, and he skillfully avoided the move.

He had to keep the monster at a distance, but his flyssa was too short compared to the thaid's attack range, so it wasn't that easy.

The young man circled around the beast, keeping his eyes on the creature's movements. The thaid did the same, and once it was ready, it charged again, and Erik dodged to the side. He struck with his flyssa, but this time Ferele was ready.

The monster twisted, and Erik's blade glanced off its claws. Erik stumbled, and Ferele seized the opportunity to strike again. The thaid's claws raked across Erik's chest, but they could do nothing since the young man used his powers to protect himself by creating a partial mana exoskeleton that he further reinforced by turning into metal.

Erik gritted his teeth and swung his flyssa in a wide arc. The blade found its mark, slicing into the Ferele's side. The beast roared in fury and pain again and attempted to strike Erik again, but he

conjured up the Astral wolf again, and the Ferele was forced to jump away to avoid the bite of the giant wolf's head.

However, the beast spun around, its tail lashing out. Erik managed to roll to the side, but the tail caught him with a glancing blow, leaving a deep mark on his back. Though, he managed to stand up again, and a staring contest ensued.

The thaid was still coming, its eyes fixed on Erik with a deadly intensity. The awakener knew that he had to end the fight quickly before Ferele landed another blow. He was currently feeling a lot of pain, but luckily, he managed to stop the most dangerous attacks.

It was at that moment that, from the Ferele's mouth, bile started coming out. That was the right moment to strike; the poison almost killed it. Erik charged forward; his flyssa held high.

The feline-like thaid lunged, its jaws gaping. Erik leaped aside and swung his weapon with all his strength. The blade connected with Ferele's neck, slicing through its thick hide and severing its spine.

The beast's body crashed to the ground, twitching and writhing like a chicken for a couple of seconds, and Erik stood over it, his chest heaving with exertion.

He had done it: he had killed the monster. Erik took a moment to catch his breath; then, a sudden notification appeared in front of his eyes.

[HOSTILE FERELE 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. 977 EXPERIENCE POINTS AWARDED TO THE HOST. EXCESS MANA STORED SUCCESSFULLY.]

Chapter 234: Searching for their prey

Nathaniel, Luke, and the others were running through the deserted city's streets. The sun was high in the sky, and the six frequently heard thaids screeching and screaming from afar, forcing them to battle another couple of groups along the way.

Nathaniel was frustrated because Erik was so close, but he couldn't get to him because of the nearby monsters slowing them down. He was growing impatient.

The once-bustling city had become desolate; the buildings remained standing, but the people had vanished. They were fighting for their country outside the barrier, battling monster after monster and losing men and women left and right as they fought for survival against these creatures who wanted nothing more than to kill them all.

The group just ended up killing another group of thaids, and they could feel the eerie silence weighing down on them for a short time. However, not even thirty seconds later, they began to hear the sound of the monsters lurking around again, and they knew they had to be cautious.

"This is getting out of hand," said Luke, who stopped walking momentarily and turned towards Nathaniel. He was referring to the number of monsters that got inside the city. It wasn't normal, and he wondered what the adults and militaries were doing while these beasts wreaked havoc inside the city.

Suddenly, they heard loud screeches coming from behind them. Nathaniel turned around and saw six thaids charging towards the group. The monsters were about the size of a bear and had scaly, gray skin that looked tough. They were also armed with sharp claws and teeth, making them even more dangerous. However, judging from their mana levels, they were strong enough to kill them.

"Get ready for battle, guys!" Nathaniel yelled as he drew his trident. He couldn't waste more mana since he still had to battle Erik. The rest of the team followed Nathaniel's lead, unsheathing their weapons and preparing for the fight. They knew defeating their opponents would not be easy, but they were determined to protect themselves and emerge victorious.

The five kids all had knives and daggers as their intended weapons. They brought these as they were hard to spot by other people and because they didn't expect the monsters to rush inside the city.

The thaids were getting closer, and the group could see their glowing red eyes and razor-sharp teeth.

"Luke, take out the one on the left!" Nathaniel yelled. "I'll go for the middle one. The others must go for the remaining ones!"

Luke and the others nodded and ran forward. As soon as he reached the closest thaid, he avoided a bite attempt and stabbed it in the neck. However, the beast was big, and the knife was too short to kill the creature immediately.

However, the damage it caused was significant. Luke pulled the blade from its neck and avoided another attack by ducking as low as possible. He then jumped back and threw the dagger into the beast's right eye, killing it.

The others charged at the remaining thaids, weapons drawn. The monsters were fierce, but the group fought with all their might. The sound of the battle echoed through the city's streets as they battled. Luke's heart raced with adrenaline as he fought determinedly to get the money and buy some excellent food.

One of the other kids slashed a thaid's throat and then helped one of his comrades, who was having a few problems battling his thaid. The two were currently wrestling, with the beast going on top of the young man and trying to rip his throat off.

As they struggled, the kid that got free managed to stab the monster in the head, but it wasn't easy to pierce that thick skull, and he had to try several times before he managed to kill the monster and save his accomplice.

Another one of the boys killed his thaid by chopping off its back leg. Unable to chase the kid or move, it bled to death a couple of minutes later. While this happened, another one of them stabbed a thaid straight in the stomach and created a gaping wound up to the neck. The creature died whimpering and clutching its belly, unable to continue attacking anymore.

Nathaniel threw his trident with precision, piercing deep into the thaids' tough skull. It only took him a minute to slaughter the beast, and then he stopped to rest. He couldn't waste energy, as the mission's success depended on him.

After two more minutes of intense fighting, the last thaids fell to the ground, defeated. Panting, Luke, and the others looked at each other, relieved and triumphant.

"We did it!" Luke exclaimed.

Nathaniel grinned, feeling the adrenaline pumping through his veins. He loved this feeling—the one he could only get by killing. As he ran, his mind couldn't help but wander to the inevitable moment when he would face Erik and fantasized about how killing him would be, as he was a human.

He tried to push the thought aside and focus on the present, but the anticipation of what was to come lingered in his mind.

"Alright, let's keep moving," Nathaniel ordered. "We don't know how many more of these things are out here," he added. He knew they had to move quickly, as the clock was ticking, and they still had a long way to go before reaching their target. With that, they continued their run through the deserted city, ready for whatever else lay ahead. The young men kept looking around for any sign of danger.

There weren't many monsters around here, and none of those that were present seemed to have noticed the group.

They kept walking until they found an open space where there was no cover or concealment whatsoever. If they got attacked here, they were bound to suffer, as they could be ambushed by any beast and couldn't hide.

"We need to go left here," Nathaniel told them, pointing at the corner they needed to go to.

"Are you sure he went this way?" Luke asked.

"He shouldn't have come here but on the adjacent street. We will be able to reach the place by going to the left at this intersection," Nathaniel said. The six fifteen-year-old young men quickly ran through the street until they reached an intersection and went where Erik passed through.

The location appeared to be normal, but the kids quickly noticed a large number of bloody prints along the street; clearly, a group of thaids had visited the area.

"Maybe he got killed by the thaids. There should have been more than fifteen, judging by the number of prints," Luke remarked.

"Yeah, these thaids also just killed someone. That guy is probably dead by now," Another one said.

"I doubt it," Nathaniel said. He then looked at his surroundings and said, "Let's not jump to conclusions until we have more information. We should continue tracking the prints and see where they lead us," Nathaniel suggested.

"What? Why?" Luke asked.

"Because I know that guy, and it is improbable he got killed by a bunch of beasts. Furthermore, if my memory serves me correctly, these should have been Eganesus, the same beasts that attacked him in front of the Yellow Palace. If he killed them there, I doubt he would have been killed by them here..." Nathaniel replied.

"Yeah, but they were much less than now. Besides, he is alone at this moment. Are you seriously saying that he was able to survive those beasts? I doubt it," another kid said.

"You know nothing. I would have been able to kill those beasts if I had fought them. If I could do it, I doubt he wouldn't." The kids looked at him skeptically.

"Whatever," Luke said, shrugging his shoulders.

After going past the street and turning right on the next corner, they saw them. The Eganesus' bodies were on the ground with various wounds on their bodies. However, the slices produced by Erik's Flyssa were evident. The beasts had their heads severed, some missing limbs, and all were lying motionless. The stench of blood and death filled the air, making breathing hard.

Looking at the scene before them, Luke and the others stopped in fear. They all knew who was responsible for such carnage: their target. But This scene also proved that he was a tough cookie to swallow, and they didn't know how they would be able to kill him. They exchanged worried glances, wondering if they had done the right thing by accepting this mission.

Everything rested on Nathaniel's shoulders; he implied that he and their target were at the same level, and if that was true, their number advantage would have secured their victory in the end.

Nathaniel felt the wind blowing against his face and smiled. Everything was going well until now. Besides, Erik had just battled a group of monsters, so it was likely he was exhausted by now, and that all played in his favor. Nathaniel took a deep breath and prepared himself for the final showdown. Judging by what he was seeing, Erik was tired but still lethal.

Chapter 235: We meet at last

<977 experience points for a single beast is a huge boon," Erik thought.

He was still far from leveling up again, but he had already gained two levels since the attack began, and not even half an hour had passed since the Blirboth came to the Yellow Palace.

If only Erik could find a place to hide and that the thaids couldn't find or breach, he could finally relax a little, but unfortunately, the situation was that there was no such place around.

The only thing he could do was go to the closest shelter, but even that meant he had to pass multiple thaids, increasing the danger he was exposed to a lot. However, he couldn't stay out there in the open much longer. The shelter was his best shot at surviving.

Erik then observed the Ferele's body and breathed a sigh of relief when he looked at it, knowing that he had killed it. However, the problem was that the battle had left him with low mana reserves, and he didn't know if he could survive without them.

He needed to rest a little before starting his march again, but regardless of the situation, he was going to risk being attacked again. He then walked away from the corpse of the Ferele. His flyssa was still slick with the thaid's blood, but he wiped it clean on his sleeve and sheathed it.

Erik wanted to absorb this beast's power, but he heard the sound of thaids approaching the scene; the best thing to do, despite being a shame, was to get away from the place since the beast's dead body was already attracting more thaids. Without wasting more time, he left the place.

His eyes scanned the buildings and alleys ahead for any sign of danger, and he paid attention to any sound nearby so that he wouldn't be surprised in case something happened. He had learned the hard way that Thaids rarely traveled alone, and he was on high alert for any other creatures that might be lurking nearby.

The problem was that the growls and screeches of monsters reverberated throughout the whole city, and there wasn't a second where he didn't hear a creature making noise. Luckily, the buildings were too tall for the creatures to climb them, and even if they did, they would die in the fall.

<At least I don't have to also look at the sky,> the young man thought.

The awakener reached the end of the street. He was going to turn a corner when he heard a low growl; he tensed, readying his flyssa for another fight. He tried to be as stealthy as possible and not alert the thaids that were evidently behind the corner. However, the system didn't give him the usual message he got when a hostile creature appeared, meaning that the beasts hadn't heard him yet.

<What the fuck do I do? Charge in or change path?>

In the end, Erik decided to avoid the fight and keep his mana reserves, so he returned to the beginning of the street and took another road. To be honest, this happened a couple of times, with Erik having to change directions every time to avoid fighting.

This tactic worked well enough because, after a while, Erik noticed that the sounds made by the monsters diminished until eventually sounding so distant that he believed he finally got away safely as if whatever creature was out there was gone; he could relax for the time being.

"That's one less thing to worry about." He said to himself, breathing deeply. After walking through several streets filled with nothing but silence and emptiness, but for the thaids distant sounds, he arrived at a nearby park where all the workers probably ate between breaks since there were several food stalls along the way that were left deserted but full of food.

However, he wasn't the only one who got here since many thaids were scavenging the stalls and eating the food like the ravenous beasts they were. He decided to keep a safe distance from them; he observed them from afar, trying to devise a plan to avoid getting spotted.

He noticed the thaids were not paying attention to their surroundings and were too focused on the food. He thought about sneaking past them while they were distracted, but he wasn't sure if he could make it without being noticed. After a short while, he found out there was no chance for him to get past them and that he could only take a long route to reach the shelter.

<Fuck... this will make me lo->

[WARNING: MULTIPLE HOSTILES DETECTED.]

"Oh my god!"

A moment later, a growl came back from behind the young man. He quickly turned to see what the menace was, and soon he saw a group of Thaids emerge from an alleyway, snarling and snapping

their teeth. The young man's heart raced as he realized he was surrounded by monsters famous for being very vocal.

They were Ma-cofs, nothing Erik couldn't kill, but the fight would almost certainly attract more thaids, and if the monster in the park saw him, that would be a problem. Erik quickly reached for his weapon, ready to defend himself against the hostile monsters.

There were thousands of thaids there at the moment, and they were stronger than average. He would have killed them relatively easily if he had seeds with him. Unfortunately, he did not intend to leave the Red Palace and did not bring them with him.

"Serves you right, you stupid idiot!" Erik said to himself. He hadn't forgotten about the seeds, but he thought it was unlikely that something like this would have happened to him. He was at the Red Palace with Master Nieminen and hundreds of teachers and workers protecting him and the other students.

There would have been no need to bring the seeds with him; everything happened because of the military's inadequacy in protecting the city.

Erik counted the monsters quickly. There were four of them, and they looked hungry. He tightened his grip on his flyssa and prepared for battle.

The Thaids charged at him, their eyes glowing with a fierce hunger. Erik dodged their initial attack, his flyssa flashing as he struck out at them. One of the Thaids went down with a yelp, but the others kept coming.

Erik spun around, using the momentum to deliver a decisive blow to another Thaid's head. It went down with a satisfying thud, but the remaining two were still advancing. Erik gritted his teeth and readied himself for their next move, his heart pounding with adrenaline. He knew he had to be quick and precise if he wanted to come out of this unscathed.

Erik backed up, trying to keep the Thaids at bay. Up until now, he managed to kill the thaids in relative silence, but the remaining two could still make noise and attract the other thaids. He had to try and kill them as fast as possible without using mana and being as silent as possible.

He feinted to the left, then darted to the right, ducking under a bolt from one of the Ma-Cofs. He swung his flyssa in a wide arc, catching the creature across the back. It winced in pain, but its partner was already approaching Erik from the side.

Erik leaped over the Thaid's outstretched claws, twisting in midair to land a blow on its head. Dazed, the creature staggered back, and Erik took advantage of the opening to strike it down with a final, brutal blow.

He turned back to face the last remaining Thaid, panting and sweating from the exertion. It growled at him, saliva dripping from its fangs.

Erik circled it warily, looking for an opening. The Thaid charged at him, but Erik was ready for it. He sidestepped, driving his flyssa into its flank. The Thaid howled in pain.

"FUCK!"

At that moment, a notification appeared in his head.

[MULTIPLE HOSTILE MA-COFS 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. 880 EXPERIENCE POINTS AWARDED TO THE HOST.]

[WARNING: MULTIPLE HOSTILES DETECTED.]

However, when the Ma-Cof howled, all the other thaids turned their heads and found out about the young man. They charged at him at unprecedented speed with snarls and growls, and Erik started running away from the monsters.

He dashed down the street, turned right, and then turned left after 20 meters. Going inside an alleyway, he stopped and hid inside a trash can, and the smell masked his scent. The thaids went past the alley without noticing him.

Erik stood there momentarily, catching his breath and looking around to ensure no more Thaid's were lurking nearby. The city was silent and empty as if nothing had happened.

He briefly took his mask off and wiped the sweat from his forehead. He put it on again and sheathed his sword. He had survived another encounter, but he knew there would be more Thaid's out there waiting for him.

"Let's get out of here..." As soon as he stepped out of the trash can, he heard the voice of someone he didn't want to meet ever again. Erik turned to look at the young man and saw that it was Nathaniel, followed by five other people.

"I FOUND YOU!"

Chapter 236: Showdown (1)

As Erik heard what Nathaniel said, his anger soared. However, he had to expect some retaliation from the young man, given how crazy he was. In a weird and distorted way, Erik understood why he was doing this.

"Long time no see, uh?" Nathaniel said, sneering.

"Nathaniel, I didn't think you would come all the way down here to meet me. To what do I owe the pleasure?" Erik replied.

"You know damn well why I came here..." Nathaniel replied.

"I see... And you did even bring some friends along... What, you weren't confident enough to defeat me? Is that all you amount to?" The awakener asked. Nathaniel's rage surged upon hearing those words.

"If I were you, I wouldn't be so bold... And besides, what's up with that ridiculous mask? Are you cosplaying? I didn't think you had such stupid hobbies..."

"Yeah, Yeah. But aren't you wearing a mask too?" Erik asked. Nathaniel completely forgot about it, but he also had one on his face. With hatred, he looked at the man who ruined his life, Erik, and then said, "Whatever, I don't even know why I am bothering talking to a dead man."

"That's what you came for, right? To kill me?" Erik asked.

Erik's heart pounded in his chest. He knew Nathaniel was in trouble but didn't know how the others were, so he had to study the situation slightly.

He quickly scanned them with his analysis and found out that they were slightly better than average kids their age; from their posture, he could infer they weren't trained in any martial arts, but from their looks, it was clear they had killed someone before.

"Indeed, I came for this..."

"Hahahaha, you disgust me, you little piece of shit..." Erik tried to back away, but one of the goons stepped forward and attacked him.

The awakener unsheathed his sword and swung it at the young man, who stopped just in time to avoid the move. He stopped just a couple of centimeters before the weapon slashed his throat. His face paled; the man before them was much stronger than they initially assumed. The others then dashed toward him, including Nathaniel, who was already channeling mana.

Erik's mind raced. He had to find a way out of this. Fighting Nathaniel wasn't simple, but the battle would be much more complicated with five more people. He took a deep breath and focused on his mana. He channeled it through his neural links and sharpened his sword. He needed to keep his mana reserves as high as possible, or he would end up dead.

The first goon lunged at him, but Erik sidestepped and kicked him in the stomach. Erik's opponent stumbled back, clutching his gut.

The second one tried to cut his throat with a very wide movement, showing the awakener that he was indeed correct and that these people couldn't even hold a stick; however, the blade suddenly elongated as if it were a growing tree branch.

That was likely the individual's brain crystal power; Erik had trained himself to avoid the signals of brain crystal power usage, so he wasn't troubled by it; nothing could surprise him anymore. Erik blocked the blow and swung his sword at his opponent's face, but Luke intervened and stopped the attack, losing the knife but saving his comrade.

The blade made a shallow cut on Luke's hand, and blood came from it. Then Nathaniel punched Erik. The attack released a strong shock wave that the awakener barely dodged.

"Circle him!" Nathaniel said while attacking the young man. However, Erik didn't have to restrain himself here and could use his whole strength to avoid the attacks. His opponent noticed this and was suddenly enraged.

"Did you hide your strength all this time?" Nathaniel asked.

"I did," Erik said while smiling at his attacker. Something that made him angrier.

The other goons hesitated momentarily, seeing the blows exchanged between Erik and Nathaniel. However, fearing their employer wouldn't pay them, they all ran toward them and tried to circle Erik. Erik's prowess didn't intimidate Nathaniel; he charged at him in a fighting stance and swung his arm with amazing speed and power.

Erik dodged the attack and grabbed Nathaniel's wrist. He lifted him in the air and threw him to the ground.

"Huack!" Nathaniel released a short but loud sound due to the pain.

<Fuck,> Erik thought. That would for sure attract the thaids. However, he thought about it for a second. <Maybe I can take advantage of this...>

At that moment, a plan was formulated inside Erik, but he wasn't sure they had heard Nathaniel. He decided to set up a trap, taking advantage of the fact that his pursuers didn't know there were monsters nearby. He knew it was risky, but it was his best shot to get rid of his pursuers.

Nathaniel was on the floor, dazed. Erik tried to kill his opponent by thrusting his blade, but Luke and the other goons intervened. A blade elongated and went toward Erik's throat; another guy summoned a javelin and threw it at Erik. The awakener avoided the attacks but missed his chance to kill Nathaniel. He then took the opportunity to run; he needed to reach the thaids.

He sprinted down the alley, his heart pounding.

"CHASE HIM!" Nathaniel shouted to his men as he watched the awakener run away.

If Nathaniel's previous shout didn't alert the thaids, now this did. This made it so that the monsters started heading toward Erik and the others; their screeches and growls could be heard from their positions. Behind him, the awakener heard the sound of footsteps. He glanced over his shoulder and saw that Nathaniel, Luke, and the other goons were chasing him.

Erik's heart raced as he picked up his pace and pushed himself harder; however, he was significantly faster than his pursuers, so he had to slow down a bit once he realized not even Nathaniel could keep up with him. He could see the end of the alley up ahead, and he knew he had to make it there if he wanted to have a shot at survival.

His heart got colder, and he started to feel a strong urge to kill that almost made him give in to his most basic instincts. He knew he needed to keep his emotions in check if he wanted to escape this situation unscathed.

Just as he reached the end of the alley, he felt something slam into his back. Nathaniel just supercharged his mana in such a way as to increase his attack range significantly and hit Erik while he was giving him his back. The awakener stumbled and fell, skidding on the pavement.

"WE GOT YOU!" Nathaniel said. Erik gritted his teeth; his heart pounded in his chest as Nathaniel, Luke, and the other goons closed in on him. Erik observed his surroundings, hoping to spot some thaids, but the city was deserted, the streets empty, as the people were either outside the city to fight the monsters or hiding inside a shelter.

Erik had hoped to find some thaids at the end of the alley; he knew they were coming toward them but didn't know if they could make it in time.

Nathaniel sneered at him. "You should have let me kill you before all this pointless situation began, Erik; I would have been merciful. Now you're going to pay for having tried to resist."

The goons circled him, their eyes cold and calculating. Erik took a deep breath, tightened his grip on his weapon, and prepared for the impending fight. It was true that he didn't find the thaids, but he still had several powers at his disposal. The young man channeled mana.

Nathaniel lunged forward with his trident. Erik smiled something that Nathaniel saw right away. At that moment, six long and spiky bones came out of Erik's body and were hurled toward the six kids' throats. Five of them managed to avoid the attack, but one of the goons got his neck pierced.

[HOSTILE HUMAN 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. 318 EXPERIENCE POINTS AWARDED TO THE HOST.]

"What the fuck?!" Luke shouted. Nathaniel was surprised; what he just saw was unprecedented. Bones came out of Erik's body as if he were using another brain crystal power.

"What did you do?" Nathaniel asked.

"Are you surprised? Did you forget that I'm an awakener?" Erik asked.

"An awakener? What story is this?" Luke asked. "You talked about no awakener, Nathaniel!" he shouted.

"SHUT UP!" Erik's enemy shouted. "It doesn't matter if you have other powers, three or four. I will still kill you!" He then lunged at Erik again after he stood up and went into a fighting position. During this minor altercation, Nathaniel went deeper into madness, and now, the revelation that Erik had other powers made jealousy surge into him, which obfuscated his thinking.

He had to kill the awakener. However, at that moment, a group of thaids came out of the adjacent street and ran toward them.

"FUCK!" Luke shouted. He and the others gripped their weapons and charged their neural links.

Erik waited for the monsters to come. That was the best opportunity he got.

At that point, Erik started running at full speed away from the thaids, and Nathaniel followed suit.

"NATHANIEL!" Luke shouted. "YOU, MOTHER FUCKER, COME BACK HERE AND HELP US!"

But the young man was too enraged toward the awakener; he wanted to kill Erik even more now that he learned he had a third power.

He was curious to know how the hell he was able to achieve that and thought that was probably due to his awakening. However, the jealousy consumed him, and he went away, unaware that, without the others, he was unlikely to stand a chance against Erik at this point. In the meantime, the thaids attacked the four remaining kids.

Chapter 237: Will they survive?

The four remaining kids had to battle the monsters as Erik and Nathaniel ran. They lost too much time, thinking Nathaniel would have remained with them to fight the monsters, but they didn't and were now trapped inside the alley with the monsters already on them. The four young men stood their ground, their weapons at the ready.

The thaids were getting closer, and Luke could feel the fear creeping up on him once again. But they couldn't back down now. Their survival was on the line. Luke looked at Jack, Adam, and Alex, the other three that came with him to kill who they learned was Frant's awakener; he saw the determination in their eyes, but with it, it was clear there was also fear.

Luke took a deep breath and reminded them of the stakes at hand, emphasizing that failure was not an option as that would lead to their deaths.

<WE CAN MAKE IT THROUGH THIS, GUYS!> He then reassured them that they were a team and had each other's backs, urging them to stay focused and trust in their abilities.

The monsters were getting closer and closer, their eyes glowing in the midday sun. Luke took his dagger, channeled mana through his neural links, and shouted a battle cry, and the other three young men followed suit, each readying their brain crystal powers. Jack made his dagger longer through his brain crystal power, growing as long as a sword.

Adam summoned his javelins and started throwing them at the monsters, and Alex partially transformed into a human-rhino hybrid.

Luke had a power that allowed him to have short bursts of speed, so he wasn't using it now. Jack swung his weapon and hit a thaid, killing it on the spot; Adam started throwing javelins, killing three or four of them, while Alex charged at the beast and behaved like the group's tank. They tried to take down as many monsters as possible. But the thaids were too numerous.

Finally, the monsters arrived, and a scuffle ensued.

The group fought valiantly, but the thaids' strength and numbers were too high. They were quickly surrounded and had to fight for their lives. The thaids continued to pour into the alleyway, their razor-sharp teeth and claws dripping with the blood of the people they had previously killed.

The four young men fought valiantly for a couple of minutes more, but it was clear that they were quickly becoming overwhelmed. Luke used his speed to dart in and out of the group, trying to take down as many monsters as possible. Jack's blade flashed, slicing through the air and striking multiple targets simultaneously.

Adam's javelins were running out, but he kept throwing with deadly accuracy, taking down one thaid after another. Alex was holding his own, but even his increased strength wasn't enough to keep the monsters at bay forever.

The monsters were beginning to break through their defensive line, and Luke knew they needed to act fast. "Everyone, fall back!" he yelled, his voice hoarse from shouting. They quickly killed the monsters blocking their way from behind and retreated a few steps, then turned and ran deeper into the alleyway.

The thaids followed, snarling and snapping at their heels. As they ran, Luke caught sight of a door at the end of the alley. "We need to get inside!" he shouted to the others. They didn't have time to question him but trusted his instincts.

Together, they sprinted towards the door, and Alex used his immense strength to bust it open. There was a flight of stairs on their right, so the young men ran up and got a better vantage point to fight the monsters. The monsters were closing in on them, and they needed to act fast.

Luke quickly assessed the situation and instructed the others on how to defend themselves using the weapons they had brought along.

Alex used his size and strength to swat at the thaids with his mighty fists while Jack and Adam continued to strike with their weapons. Luke darted in and out again, taking down any thaid that got too close and avoiding the attacks.

However, they weren't that strong. Sure, they were better than the average kid their age, but they were not warriors; they hadn't been trained like the young men and women at the Red Palace and didn't know any fancy martial arts. Despite their lack of formal training, the group held their own against the thaids, relying on their quick reflexes and teamwork to fend off the creatures.

However, as the battle wore on, they began to tire.

Their strategy seemed to be working for some time. The thaids struggled to climb up the stairs, and the four young men were holding their own. But just when they thought they might be able to make it out alive, something unexpected happened. One of the thaids lunged forward, reaching past Alex and knocking Jack's enlarged dagger out of his hand.

Jack stumbled backward, trying to avoid the monster's razor-sharp claws. But it was too late. The thaid's claws ripped into Jack's chest, tearing through flesh and bone.

The other three young men cried out in horror, not because of the young man, as they didn't know him, but because they were now three and were going to fight against the monsters, with which they already had difficulties dealing, as they kept rushing inside the building. Luke immediately understood that his decision was a bad one, as they were now trapped.

Besides, there wasn't even room enough for him to use his power, as he could hardly move now due to the small space in which they were fighting, and his power became rapidly useless as more monsters flooded the place.

However, they needed to keep fighting. With renewed determination, they continued to battle the monsters, striking with everything they had. But they knew their chances of survival had just taken a devastating blow with their comrade's death.

As the battle wore on, the three remaining young men's energy levels reached dangerously low levels. Their weapons felt heavy in their hands, and their bodies ached from the constant fighting. The thaids seemed to sense their weakness and pressed their attack with renewed ferocity.

Luke's heart sank as he realized that he was going to die, as there was nothing else they could do, and his idea to seek shelter inside the building led to their deaths.

Alex was the first to fall. A thaid managed to get past his defenses and sink its teeth into his neck. He fell to the ground, lifeless. Luke and Adam fought on, but without their meat shields and with the fear fueling their bodies, they quickly succumbed to desperation, and that was problematic.

"FUCK! KEEP FIGHTING!" Luke shouted. Adam struggled to get up, his vision blurry and his head pounding; he knew they had to keep fighting.

However, even he was soon overwhelmed by the sheer number of monsters attacking him. He tried to use his power, but there was not enough room to move. He burst forth, but once he appeared again, a thaid bit his neck and ripped his throat off; he fell to the ground, his body torn apart by claws and teeth soon after. Alex was the last one standing.

He roared angrily, summoning all his mana to make as many javelins as possible and take down as many thaids as possible. The young man took a deep breath, knowing he was the only one left to fight. He closed his eyes briefly, then threw all his javelins towards the horde of monsters.

But in the end, it was not enough. He, like everyone else, fell to the ground, his body devoid of mana and riddled with wounds. The monsters roared in triumph. The bodies of the four young men lay scattered around them, a grim testament to their bravery and determination.

But in the end, they had been no match for the horrors of the world they found themselves in. The thaids moved on, their thirst for blood and violence driving them forward. But before going away, they started eating the bodies.

The group had underestimated the danger of venturing into the city amidst a thaid attack and paid the ultimate price. It was a tragic reminder of the harsh reality of survival in a world where even the slightest misstep could lead to death.

They ripped the young men's clothes off, shredding them to pieces. They started eating their flesh, ripping it off piece by piece and devouring it like a wild dog would eat its prey. After they tore open the flesh, they also started eating their innards.

The blood from their bodies was flowing out of them in streams that were splashing on the ground below, and as they munched on their stomachs and intestines, the contents leaked out and stained the ground below.

Then they went for the bones. The sound of these bones cracking echoed through the empty building as the group devoured their prey. Luckily, it was a gruesome scene that no one managed to see. Soon nothing remained of them but blood stains, feces, and piss that stained the ground where they had valiantly fought.

Chapter 238: Showdown(2)

SWOOSH.

"I WILL GET YOU!" Nathaniel shouted.

He was behind Erik, consuming mana to hit him in the back. The flyssa wielder avoided his enemy's attack countless times. Nathaniel punched again, and a huge shock wave was hurled toward the awakener. The young man sensed the huge amount of the ethereal substance traveling toward him and jumped to the side just in time, narrowly avoiding the blast.

Erik knew he couldn't keep dodging Nathaniel's attacks forever. He needed to end this fight quickly before he ran out of energy and ended up dead.

He kept running, avoiding move after move. He went through the empty streets to distance himself from the thaids and isolate Nathaniel from his goons. Apparently, his tactic worked since the four remaining guys were left behind.

He didn't know what had happened to them, but they were probably dead since they weren't that strong. Once the young man got enough distance from the monsters, he suddenly turned around and confronted his opponent. His heart was pounding in his chest as he prepared to face Nathaniel. He knew his survival was at stake in this fight, and he was determined not to succumb.

As he turned, he unsheathed his sword, which glinted in the sunlight. Nathaniel stood at the other end of the street, his arms in fighting position and mana circling around them. The air crackled with tension as the two men squared off, neither attempting to make the first move.

Then Nathaniel shouted, "DIE!" He vomited all his rage and frustration into that shout. His hand moved lightning-fast to impale Erik with his trident, and then suddenly, he lunged forward, his weapon flashing through the air. Erik sidestepped, narrowly avoiding the powerful attack.

He countered with a quick swipe of his flyssa, but Nathaniel blocked it easily with his force shield. The two men circled each other warily, neither willing to commit too much in case they were wrong about their opponent's intentions.

The two men battled back and forth for what felt like hours, neither gaining the upper hand. Nathaniel punched at Erik countless times while the latter tried to cut him down with his sword. Nathaniel was strong—stronger than all the guys he battled until now.

Every time they clashed, Nathaniel's blows were dodged or blocked, and every single one of them was met with an equally powerful counterattack from Erik. It wasn't a contest as much as it was a stalemate. They both fought well enough that there would be no winner in this battle unless someone gave way first or one managed to land a hit. That was all that was needed to win the fight.

Nathaniel suddenly found himself with his back against a wall as he lost focus on Erik for just a moment since he was briefly distracted by some movement behind him. A sudden burst of pain erupted across his shoulder, where Erik had struck him before he could even turn around.

He hadn't been able to block the attack with his shield. Nathaniel's problem was that he couldn't get close to Erik due to his other power, the bone-related one, and he had to spend a lot of mana to increase his attack range.

However, Erik was beginning to tire, his arms feeling heavy and sluggish, as he didn't have enough time to rest after his previous fight. But he refused to give up, knowing Nathaniel was counting on him to falter.

The fight quickly resumed, and despite the injury, Nathaniel unleashed a flurry of attacks on his opponent. A too-wide movement was all that Erik needed; as he saw his chance, he struck, his flyssa slicing through the air. But Nathaniel was quick, dodging the blow and returning with a fierce counterattack, hitting Erik in the chest.

However, the young man used his metallization and exoskeleton power to dissipate the damage.

Nathaniel observed his skin becoming metal and was surprised again.

"WHAT THE...?! ANOTHER ONE?!" He shouted. Nathaniel had already seen Erik's multiple powers before, but this was something entirely new and unexpected. He wondered what other changes the young man's body could undergo. However, the curiosity about how this guy could have so many powers was strong.

He had never seen anyone with so many of them, and he knew he had to be careful, since he could have even more.

"What, do you have a problem with it?" Erik sarcastically asked.

"You damn monster!" his enemy shouted again. The tension between the two men was palpable as they glared at each other, fists clenched and weapons at hand.

The fight continued, with the two men locked in a deadly dance. They seemed evenly matched, each one anticipating the other's moves. But as the minutes ticked by, Erik's strain increased, and his mana depleted.

Nathaniel seemed to sense his weakness, and he pressed his advantage. Erik fought back as hard as he could but knew he was in trouble. His flyssa felt heavy and unwieldy in his hand, and he struggled to keep up with Nathaniel's lightning-fast punches.

The young man still had many tricks up his sleeve, but of course, it was clear he couldn't win against Nathaniel in terms of mana, so he kept avoiding using his powers as long as possible.

The young man concentrated on his physical prowess and increased his energy output. His attacks became more focused and precise. Nathaniel seemed surprised by the sudden change and faltered for a moment.

It was all Erik needed to accumulate another wound. With a fierce cry, he launched himself at Nathaniel, his flyssa flashing through the air. Nathaniel tried to block the blow, but he was too slow. The blade caught him on the shoulder, but Nathaniel blocked the move with his force shield just in time but was sent stumbling backward.

The fight wasn't over yet, though. Nathaniel regained his balance, his eyes flashing with rage. He attacked with renewed fury, determined to take Erik down once and for all.

The two men clashed again, their attacks echoing in the silent street. With a sudden burst of insight, Erik saw his chance. He feinted to the left, then spun around. He channeled mana again through his neural links and used Logan's power once again. The amount of mana he imbued into the dart was a lot, and he almost depleted his reserves.

He then threw the dart, which flew through the air and struck Nathaniel in the belly. The blow caught him off guard, and Nathaniel stumbled back, clutching his stomach, as he looked up at his opponent in shock. He was surprised again, as he had never expected his opponent to use such a sneaky tactic and to have another power. Nathaniel quickly regained his shock but was enraged.

"YOU MOTHER FUCKER!" He wasn't surprised anymore by the fact that Erik used another power.

"You are screwed now!" Erik said with a grin.

Nathaniel started feeling this foreign mana spread in his body, trying to ravage his insides; for this reason, Erik's opponent used a lot of his mana to fight against the poison, but it was not easy. The fight continued, but to contrast, the poison, the once member of the Red Palace, started to lose focus on the fight, and his attacks grew sloppy.

He started making mistakes and using his shield more often, severely decreasing the amount of mana he had available. Erik noticed Nathaniel's struggles and quickly realized that the poison was taking a toll on his opponent.

He also took advantage of Nathaniel's lack of focus to launch a series of blows at a fast pace. One of them hit Nathaniel in the chest, making him stumble backward. As he stumbled, he tripped over an uneven stone, falling onto his butt. Nathaniel groaned in pain as he struggled to get back on his feet, realizing that his opponent had gained the upper hand.

However, he was not stupid, and fighting was akin to second nature to him. As soon as he fell, he acrobatically moved and supercharged a kick, increasing the range of his attack by channeling more mana. He unleashed a powerful attack towards Erik's head, but the latter blocked with his arms, which he metalized.

He also reinforced his bones to mitigate the damage and was able to sustain Nathaniel's attack, which was by no means weak.

As Nathaniel landed on the ground, he jumped up, pushing his legs forward to propel himself higher. He kicked the ground and got quickly on his feet. Then he followed up with a punch. Erik avoided the attack again, then countered with a kick of his own. It looked like a blur to anyone but Nathaniel, who was strong enough to see the move and avoid it.

He sidestepped again and delivered a brutal uppercut to Erik's stomach. Erik was still able to protect himself with his other powers, but this time the fist directly connected to his body, increasing the damage. This made it so that he started having some problems breathing. However, he couldn't let this stop him.

Instead, he projected several bones out of his shoulders, and Nathaniel ended up having to avoid them again.

"Again, this shitty power!" Nathaniel said.

"I know, right?" Erik replied calmly. "It's frustrating, isn't it?"

Nathaniel's anger soared. "I swear I will kill you, Erik!"

They exchanged blows, and even if Erik was getting tired from using too much of his mana but could still maintain his superiority in terms of strength. However, at the same time, the poison kept affecting his opponent, and the fact that Nathaniel had to fight it and couldn't fully concentrate on the fight gave a considerable advantage to the awakener.

Chapter 239: Showdown (3)

As the fight continued, sweat poured down Erik's and Nathaniel's faces, and their muscles ached from the strain of their movements. Each punch, kick, and swing was thrown with precision and power, but neither could gain the upper hand for a long time.

Despite having multiple powers, Erik was seriously having problems due to his low mana, especially when compared to Nathaniel's amounts. Besides, Nathaniel's power was much stronger than Erik's ones, and this made it so that his enemies could fight equally against him despite him having almost double their stats.

That, of course, was very prominent in Nathaniel's case, which used his force manipulation to gain speed and power. The fact that Nathaniel was also using an energy shield helped him too.

During the match at the Red Palace, Erik managed to cut his opponent's hands' off; however, that happened for multiple reasons. For example, Nathaniel wasn't fighting like he was now. During most of the fight, back then, he didn't try to kill Erik, and now, despite being angry at his opponent, Nathaniel wasn't blinded by rage. That was what led to the young man's defeat at that time.

During this fight, he had been paying attention to not lose focus and fought as best he could.

The combatants were well-matched, and it seemed that the fight could go on forever. But as they circled each other, a small opening appeared in Erik's defense. Nathaniel saw it and took advantage, throwing a powerful punch that landed squarely on their opponent's jaw. Erik had to transform his skin into metal and strengthen his bones to sustain the attack, which was able to destroy concrete walls.

However, the force of the blow sent Erik reeling backward, and for a moment, it seemed that he was going to fall. But he quickly regained his balance and retaliated with an acrobatic move followed by a flurry of attacks that forced Nathaniel to retreat and use his shield several times.

The fight continued, with both combatants taking and receiving blows. Nathaniel's shield helped protect him from some of Erik's attacks, but it couldn't withstand everything. Erik was able to land a few good hits, but they didn't do much damage to Nathaniel since he was fast enough to move back enough to avoid most of the damage.

Despite the intense pain and exhaustion, Nathaniel kept fighting, as there was only one thing on his mind: kill Erik.

Erik's mana began to deplete even faster as the fight dragged on. He was barely able to use his powers at all, and Nathaniel took advantage of this weakness. He unleashed a devastating attack that sent Erik flying across the street. For a moment, everything went dark as Erik felt the wind knocked out of him because he couldn't efficiently protect himself with his other powers due to the lack of mana.

When he opened his eyes, he realized Nathaniel was standing over him, ready to deliver the finishing blow. Multiple thoughts flashed through Erik's mind. Was he really going to die? Was this all he could achieve with the cheat-like biological supercomputer? Would people miss him?

However, he didn't want to die, and he quickly assessed his situation and decided to try one last thing. He concentrated all of his remaining mana into one final attack and unleashed it with all his might. The astral wolf materialized and bit Nathaniel's right hand, cutting it off. The attack caught him off guard, and he could not defend himself in time.

"AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAH!" Nathaniel shouted, the pain searing through his arm as he stumbled and fell to the ground. He clutched at his injured limb, gritting his teeth in agony as he tried to assess the extent of the damage.

"MOTHER FUCKER! I WILL KILL YOU, I SWEAR! I HATE YOU AND YOUR MOTHERFUCKING POWERS!" he screamed.

While observing his opponent on the ground, the blood revived Erik's bloodlust. A primal need arose in him—the need to kill his opponent. Now was the right time.

With bloodlust affecting his mind, Erik tried to stabilize his breathing and slowly stood up. He gripped his Flyssa again and walked toward Nathaniel, still feeling the pain from the blow. There was a strange glint in his eyes that gave Nathaniel a chill. Usually, Erik was calm and composed; he never saw him in this state.

As Nathaniel observed Erik going closer with a faint, sinister smile and with a bleeding stump, he stood up again. He ripped off his shirt, tied it to his missing arm, and then entered a weird fighting position. Inevitably, the situation took a sudden turn.

The poison debilitated him a lot, and he began to feel weaker and weaker. He stumbled backward, his movements becoming sluggish and uncoordinated. Erik watched with satisfaction as his opponent struggled but knew the fight wasn't over yet.

Nathaniel managed to break some of Erik's ribs with the previous blow, but he wasn't backing down despite this. At the same time, Nathaniel was losing blood, and the poison Erik injected, despite having dissipated, had its effects on the young man, who was greatly debilitated.

The two engaged again, unleashing blow after blow and attack after attack. The battle continued this way for what seemed like hours, while the truth was that it lasted less than ten minutes, with neither combatant able to gain the upper hand for more than a few seconds at a time.

But Nathaniel eventually made a mistake due to his state and inability to concentrate fully. He left himself open for a split second due to the poison, fatigue, and blood loss, and his opponent seized the opportunity.

The awakener tried to chop Nathaniel's head off, but he managed to duck in time and avoid the blow; however, Nathaniel ended up in an awkward position, and Erik took the opportunity again. By spinning on himself, he landed a devastating kick that knocked Nathaniel to the ground, breaking his ribcage into multiple pieces and making him unable to stand.

The young man was having trouble breathing; his chest was in a lot of pain, and he knew he was in a dire situation. He tried to crawl away, but despite every attempt he made, Nathaniel wasn't able to get away from Erik.

The awakener approached him cautiously, his flyssa at the ready. On his face, there was a huge grin; he finally managed to get this prick down. His bloodlust was at an all-time high, and the need to kill the guy was at the same high level.

However, he didn't trust Nathaniel to give up without a fight, so he kept staying at a certain distance for a couple of seconds to assess the situation. But as he drew closer, he saw that his opponent was truly defeated. Nathaniel's eyes were open, his chest rising and falling in shallow breaths.

Erik let out a sigh of relief. The fight was over. He had won.

The fallen combatant struggled to get back to his feet, but he was too weak; he knew that the fight was over and that he had lost. As he was lying on the ground, gasping for air as his opponent stood over him, he observed Erik towering over him.

"Did you really have to try this shit again?" Erik said while panting.

"Shut up, you mother fucker!" Nathaniel replied. He couldn't believe that he had lost again. The plant hugger won.

"Do you want to keep this attitude on?" Erik asked.

"Shut up! You would have lost if it wasn't for all those stupid powers! If it weren't for your stupid tricks and taunts, I would have won the fight at the Red Palace and wouldn't be in this situation. You ruined my life!"

"Oh, poor boy..." Erik replied. He couldn't wait to plunge his blade into Nathaniel's heart.

He took a moment to catch his breath, and he could feel the adrenaline leaving his body slowly. He was exhausted but knew he couldn't stay there long. The Thaid's were still out there, and he needed to get to safety before they found him in this state.

He looked down at Nathaniel, feeling excited about what was going to happen. The man had been a formidable opponent, but in the end, he managed to win. However, he couldn't afford to let Nathaniel live, not after everything he had done.

"Don't worry; I will take care of your father too..." Erik said.

"You wha-?"

Then Erik decapitated Nathaniel. His head went rolling on the pavement, smearing blood all over the place, and his headless body fell to the ground with a deep thud.

[HOSTILE INDIVIDUAL 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. 4194 EXPERIENCE POINTS AWARDED TO THE HOST.]

[LEVEL UP.]

The level-up immediately restored Erik's energy, and he started feeling better. Erik knew Nathaniel had a ton of energy, but he was still shocked by the amount of experience he got from killing him. Not even the Ferele gave that much. Erik then observed Nathaniel's head for a couple of seconds before smirking. There was no monster nearby.

He dipped his finger into his severed wound and licked it.

[NATHANIEL'S MC CONNEL BLOOD ACQUIRED. STARTING THE ANALYSIS.]

[ANALYSIS COMPLETE.]

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

[2600 DNA POINTS DETECTED. COMMENCING EXTRACTION?.]

"No," Erik replied.

He then crushed the head and grabbed Nathaniel's brain crystal. After having cleaned it, he swallowed it whole.

[NATHANIEL'S MCCONEL BRAIN CRYSTAL ACQUIRED. STARTING THE ANALYSIS.]

[ANALYSIS COMPLETE.]

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

[2600 DNA POINTS DETECTED. EXTRACTION IS NOT ADVISED; THE HOST HAS INCOMPATIBLE DNA.]

[EXTRACTION ABORTED]

Chapter 240: Sorting through the data

Erik's heart was pounding. He not only got rid of a thorn in the side, but he also got Nathaniel's incredibly powerful brain crystal power. Erik felt satisfied as he watched Nathaniel's lifeless body lying on the ground.

"AHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHA. THAT'S WHAT YOU GET FOR BEING AN ASSHOLE!" Erik then spat on Nathaniel's headless body. Erik's actions resulted from Nathaniel's attempts to kill him twice, one of which even involved other people, his friends.

However, things didn't end there. If Nathaniel had asked for help to kill him, then it was likely that he talked about him with the others. For this reason, the awakener decided to check his phone to see if there was something about him on it.

The young man then started searching Nathaniel's body for his phone, but he had to act quickly since he was out in the open with thaids in his surroundings. Erik's eyes searched Nathaniel's

pockets, jacket, and pants. Finally, he found what he was looking for a small black smartphone. He quickly pulled it out and examined it.

It was a newer model, in black coloration, sleek and modern, and Erik knew that it would surely contain information about him. The phone was still on and had a few missed calls and messages.

Without hesitation, Erik connected to the phone through his biological supercomputer. He was able to bypass the phone's security measures and access its contents easily through his cheat-like powers. He could feel the data flowing into his mind, a rush of information that threatened to overwhelm him.

He focused his thoughts and began sorting through the data, searching for everything Nathaniel had said about him.

Erik knew that Nathaniel was crazy and that several more people could be involved in this whole ordeal; he needed to find out if and what he had said to protect himself from any potential harm. As he went through it, Erik noticed there were a couple of messages that mentioned him and that were sent to a guy named Achim.

He also saw that the two called each other four times: twice during the previous day and twice that morning. Erik's heart started racing as he realized that Achim could be a potential threat to him. Thanks to the biological supercomputer, he quickly memorized the phone number. He decided to dig on his own to find out who Achim was and what his connection to Nathaniel was.

Luckily, there weren't any more people, but since the two talked about him briefly through messages, judging by their content, it was clear that this guy was aware of what Nathaniel was going to do. However, he didn't have other information, as the two probably talked through voice. Erik quickly proceeded to erase the entire contents of the phone.

There wasn't anything else valuable on it since it hadn't been long since Erik last connected to the device. Every message, every photo, and every bit of data was wiped clean. He felt satisfied as he watched the phone's screen go blank. But Erik wasn't done yet. He knew that he couldn't just leave the phone lying around for someone else to find.

He had to destroy it. He threw it on the ground and then stomped on it several times, destroying it easily with his strength. The device exploded in a shower of sparks and smoke, its components scattering across the ground. The phone got pulverized.

However, it became evident that wasn't enough; the guys that came with him had been contacted in some way, so Erik had to check on those guys' phones to see if there were any clues leading to him. For this reason, he left Nathaniel's body there and got back to the alley where he had been attacked and where he led the thaids to take care of the other kids.

However, he felt relieved that no one could link him to the prick's death through his phone now that he had destroyed it. He quickly left the area, feeling like a weight had been lifted off his shoulders. Erik made his way back to the alley where he had confronted Nathaniel's goons.

As he approached the entrance, he could see the result of the thaid's attack. Multiple monster bodies were lying around in and outside the alley; the guys had fought against them, but it was unclear what had happened to them.

However, the body of the guy Erik had killed was lying there, half eaten by the thaids. Erik approached the body and searched for the guy's phone. After he found it, he connected to it through his biological supercomputer and quickly found out there were no messages or anything remotely related to him. However, there were two calls from the guy named Achim.

They talked through voices; maybe they met at some point; who knew?

It was evident that Achim was the one who recruited these thugs for Nathaniel. Erik swore he was going to take care of him too. After erasing the phone's content and smashing it, he looked at the alley again. Aside from the thaids' dead bodies, it was deserted, and there was no sign of the four guys who were with Nathaniel before.

Erik's instincts told him that something wasn't right. He cautiously stepped into the alley, scanning his surroundings for any sign of danger.

As he moved deeper into the narrow passage, and avoiding the bodies of several small, grotesque thaids lying in a pool of blood—some mutant rats with twisted and malformed bodies—he noticed that at the end of the alley, there was a door that had previously been closed, but that was now busted open.

It was metallic, with no markings or signs to indicate what lay beyond. In front of it, there were several thaids' bodies, which made it difficult to enter. The young man knew that whatever happened took place here.

<Going inside one of these buildings was a wrong move...> Erik could already infer what happened to the guys, not only because he had assessed their strength before and they were not that strong, but even because fighting in such places was dangerous as they offered no protection whatsoever and only trapped people inside.

Erik's curiosity got the better of him, and after having moved the bodies out of the way, he cautiously made his way toward the door. He hoped that the monsters already took care of the kids, as he didn't want to have anything to do with them too. With a deep breath, he pushed open the door on the side and stepped inside.

Erik was met with a horrific scene as he stepped into the building. Blood, gore, and dead bodies littered the floor. His hunch was correct, as it was clear that a battle went on here, and it was gruesome. He cautiously made his way through the mess, careful not to attract any possible thaid that still lingered around the building. It was then that he spotted something that made his heart rejoice.

There, on the ground, were what Erik deduced were the remnants of the kids that came with Nathaniel. He was sure about this since their clothing remnants were still on the ground, albeit ripped open. Besides them were the guys' phones, who had been clearly killed by the thaids. Aside from that, there was nothing else—no bone, hair, or brain crystal—only the clothes, phones, and blood remnants.

Without hesitation, he connected to the phones through his biological supercomputer. He searched through their contents, looking for evidence linking him to the scene. Again, he found some calls made by this guy named Achim. There was no conversation with Nathaniel, no mention of his name, and no mention of what they were going to do. Nothing.

With a sense of relief, Erik deleted all of the data from the phones.

<At least they were smart enough to try not to implicate themselves like idiots...> Erik thought.

The next second, he destroyed the phones, making sure that all of the data was irretrievable. Erik knew that this was the only way to ensure that no one would be able to trace the data back to him or his associates.

"System, have you turned off any camera or recording device in the surroundings, right?" Erik asked.

[YES. I'VE DEACTIVATED 1478 DEVICES SINCE YOU ASKED ME.]

"Good." That was a very high number of security cameras, and he didn't even go that far from the Red Palace yet. He wondered how it was possible that, with so much security, there could still be so many criminals around.

With this, Erik was sure he couldn't be linked to these deaths. Now, the only thing the young man had to do was find a place to hide safely.

For this reason, he decided to head to the closest shelter, aside from the one at the Red Palace. If he was not wrong, there was a shelter one or two kilometers from here, and that should have been empty since there weren't many kids around this part of the city, as the western district was mainly made up of offices. The young man then left the building and headed toward the place.