

BIOLOGICAL 361

Chapter 361: The Dark Flora Rises

Erik's mind raced as he assessed the situation and analyzed the Shadowthorn Dahlia's vulnerabilities. He observed how the creature controlled the surrounding plants, using its tendrils as both a means of attack and defense.

As Erik studied the Shadowthorn Dahlia, he could not help but notice a peculiar anomaly. The vibrant life force, the mana that was typically abundant in regions with high plant life, appeared to be diminishing, sucked away as if by some invisible force.

The forest, usually teeming with life and pulsating with the natural dance of energetic mana, bore an unnerving silence. The vital energy that infused the environment with its unique aura was slowly being drawn away, pulled into the insatiable void created by the menacing thaid.

Erik felt this phenomenon with a heightened sense of clarity that few could comprehend. The draining away of this essential life energy was leaving behind a disconcerting emptiness, a void that felt eerily akin to a silenced symphony.

He could almost visualize the mana, a luminescent river of energy, flowing away from the lush greenery and being absorbed into the menacing form of the Shadowthorn Dahlia. The ambiance was heavy, the atmosphere unnaturally still, as if all life had decided to hold its breath.

The ambient mana was strikingly low, highlighting the immense power the Shadowthorn Dahlia was wielding and the threat it posed not just to him but to the very essence of the forest.

He realized that to defeat the thaid, he would need to disrupt its control over the plants and find a way to exploit its weaknesses or, alternatively, sever the bud from the ground.

With a surge of determination, Erik made a decision: to target the central flower, the Shadowthorn Dahlia itself, the source of the tendrils' power. If he could sever the creature's connection to the roots and weaken its control over the surrounding vegetation, he should be able to kill the creature.

Carefully timing his movements, Erik dodged and weaved through the onslaught of tendrils, constantly evading their deadly reach. He focused on getting closer to the flower, analyzing the patterns of the thaid's attacks, and waiting for the right moment to strike.

As a wave of vines surged toward him, the young man sprang into action. He lunged forward, his blade gleaming in the dim light of the decaying forest. With a precise and calculated strike, he aimed for the heart of the Shadowthorn Dahlia, attempting to sever the connection between the thaid's body and the roots slithering through the earth.

The blade sliced through the air, cutting through several tendrils in its path. However, the thaid was not defenseless. The remaining tendrils reacted swiftly, attempting to ensnare Erik and halt his progress. But he was prepared for their retaliation.

Erik stood ready and focused, his grip tightening around the hilt of his trusty Flyssa. The air crackled with anticipation as the tendrils of the Shadowthorn Dahlia surged forth from the ground, reaching out hungrily to ensnare their target. But Erik was ready; his senses were heightened, and his reflexes were honed to a razor's edge.

As the first tendril lunged toward him, Erik swiftly sidestepped, his body twisting with grace. The tendril swished through the air, missing its mark by mere inches. With a swift, fluid motion, Erik swung his blade, slicing through the tendril with a satisfying sound. Dark energy crackled as the severed tendril writhed and withered.

But the Shadowthorn Dahlia was relentless in its attempt to absorb Erik's energy to sustain itself. Before Erik could fully recover from his previous strike, another tendril lashed out, aiming for his legs. In a blur of motion, Erik leaped into the air, defying gravity for a brief moment. The tendril whipped beneath him, narrowly missing the intended target.

Taking advantage of his aerial position, the awakener brought his blade down in a swift arc, severing more of the tendril as he landed with cat-like grace.

The thaid, undeterred, sent forth a barrage of tendrils, each one seemingly more eager to claim its prey than the last. Erik's instincts kicked into overdrive as he performed a series of acrobatic maneuvers. He backflipped, somersaulted, and ducked with lightning speed, avoiding the relentless assault.

With each evasive maneuver, the young man retaliated, striking out with his Flyssa. His blade moved like a blur and sliced through the tendrils with calculated precision, severing them one by one. The air was filled with the scent of decay, and the sounds of his blade meeting its mark were music to his ears.

Erik felt alive, his heart pounding in his chest as he fought for his life against the creature. Sweat dripped down his face, but he didn't let it distract him from the task at hand. He knew he couldn't let

his guard down for even a second, not against an opponent like this. The battle raged on, and each side was determined to emerge victorious.

The tendrils whipped and writhed, their movements growing more erratic as Erik continued to dismantle the thaid's defenses. But just as he thought he had gained the upper hand, a massive, thorny, dark vine shot forth from the ground, its speed and force catching him off guard.

Erik's instincts kicked in just in time. He twisted his body mid-air, contorting himself to avoid the deadly strike. The tendril grazed his arm, leaving a shallow gash in its wake, and went past the canopy, creating a massive hole in the sky.

The sun's rays cascaded down like water and illuminated the forest, showing the earth's true colors. Ignoring the searing pain, Erik retaliated, slashing at the tendril with all his might. His blade bit into the dark flesh, severing it from the main body of the creature.

Ignoring the searing pain, Erik retaliated, slashing at the tendril with all his might. His blade bit into the dark plant's flesh, severing it from the main body of the creature.

The ground beneath Erik trembled, and something erupted from within it in a flurry of movement as the Shadowthorn Dahlia, in its primal rage, unleashed its final assault. Tendrils shot forth from all directions, converging on Erik in deadly cooperation. The young man's heart pounded in his chest as he danced with death, narrowly avoiding each strike.

Using his agility and quick thinking, Erik somersaulted through the air, narrowly avoiding the grasping tendrils. He landed behind the central figure of the Shadowthorn Dahlia as most of the surrounding vines were in his last position as they tried to attack the young man, his blade poised for another strike.

With a swift motion, he brought his weapon down, aiming to sever the creature's connection to the roots once and for all.

The blade made contact, and for a moment, there was a surge of mana as the connection between the plant and the tendrils was disrupted. The Shadowthorn Dahlia writhed and convulsed, its control over the surrounding vegetation faltering.

As Erik's blade made the final, decisive cut into the heart of the Shadowthorn Dahlia, an immediate and profound change swept through the forest. The once lively tendrils, which had pulsed with an unnerving life of their own, suddenly grew limp and started to wither.

The unnatural energy that had radiated from them, painting the forest floor in an otherworldly aura, started to fade as if someone were dimming a light switch.

The plant's once menacing tendrils shriveled and lost the dark color that characterized them, turning brown almost instantly. The vines, which had writhed and twisted with such violent energy, now hung lifeless, shriveling back and receding into the undergrowth from which they had sprung.

They started decomposing almost immediately, their once strong and threatening forms turning brittle, crumbling, and turning into dust at the slightest touch.

The forest echoed with an eerie silence, and the terrifying dance of the Shadowthorn Dahlia's tendrils came to an abrupt end. What remained of the creature was a desolate spectacle of decay, a grim testament to Erik's victory. The once formidable tendrils were now nothing more than shriveled, decaying remains strewn across the forest floor.

In the sudden stillness, Erik could hear the sounds of the forest returning, the chattering of birds, and the rustling of leaves in the breeze. The tendrils' lifeless forms crumbled and started to dissolve into the forest floor, returning to the earth from which they had sprung. The forest, once under the plant's oppressive control, was free, and it was Erik's victory that made it so.

The Shadowthorn Dahlia's main body convulsed one last time before losing its energy and its power extinguished. The forest, once suffocating and ominous, seemed to breathe a sigh of relief as the malevolent presence lifted and the sunlight started penetrating the holes the plant left as it died.

[SHADOWTHORN DAHLIA 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. 1074 EXPERIENCE POINTS AWARDED TO THE HOST.]

Erik stood amidst the decaying forest, panting and covered in sweat but victorious. He had managed to overcome the formidable creature. Now it was time for him to take the creature's brain crystal power, as it would help him in the future.

Chapter 362: More Power

Now that the fight was finally over, Erik approached the defeated Shadowthorn Dahlia with extreme caution. The once-powerful creature now lay withered and defeated, its once-beautiful appearance marred by the signs of its defeat. However, even in that condition, its presence still possessed an allure that could not be denied.

"By the Ancients, that was haaaaaaaaaaaaard," he murmured, his eyes tracing the intricate patterns of the withered plant. "To think that such beauty could house such power."

Even in its dying state, he could not help but be impressed by the remnants of the once majestic plant-like thaid. The twisted tendrils and wilting petals still exuded an eerie allure that enthralled him and held his attention.

When he looked down at the severed tendrils that were scattered across the ground, he couldn't help but think back to how intense the fight had been. The tendrils had struck with lightning speed, putting his reflexes and agility to the test.

"If only I could do the same thing..." Erik muttered, his tone filled with a mix of respect and frustration. "Damn... if I got hit just once, I would have been dead meat... Dodging them was no easy feat."

He felt the remnants of adrenaline coursing through his veins as he ran a hand through his dripping-wet hair and felt the urge to laugh. The image of the tendrils lashing out at him and reaching for him with the intention of killing him was still very fresh in his mind.

As Erik got closer to the plant, he noticed a strange liquid dripping out of it and staining the foliage below it.

The liquid glowed with a glow that seemed to come from another world, creating an eerie light in the area around it and dripping a small gem into the creature's body so that it was embedded there.

He didn't know where it came from or what its properties were, so he couldn't help but be fascinated by this strange substance.

"System, what is that?" The young man asked the biological supercomputer.

[ANSWER: THAT IS THE CREATURE'S SAP. IT IS THE EQUIVALENT TO ITS BLOOD, SO YOU MUST DRINK IT IN ORDER TO GET THE CREATURE'S DNA.]

"Is it safe?" the young man asked again.

[ANSWER: YES.]

Erik knelt cautiously beside the shattered thaid, his eyes sweeping over the wilted petals that were holding the crimson gem in their embrace. In the midst of the barren landscape of the dying forest, the precious stone shone brightly, almost like a drop of blood. It gave off the appearance of pulsating with a dim, ethereal light, which drew his attention.

Erik reached out with some trepidation and natural curiosity and removed the gem from its mooring.

"And I guess that would be the equivalent of the brain crystal power, right?"

[ANSWER: INDEED.]

"I guess I should just swallow them both to get the thaid's brain crystal power," the young man said out loud again.

He felt a surge of energy course through his body as his fingertips brushed against the smooth surface of the gem. It was almost as if it recognized his touch.

It was different from when he got brain crystals from animal-like thaid. Still, he speculated that this was because the one he held belonged to a plant-like monster instead of an animal-like one and that there was a sort of resonance between the brain crystal and his birth power. Of course, it was all assumptions.

Though, the young man could detect a faint hum resonating within his very being as if the gem contained latent power waiting to be released and utilized.

When Erik looked at the gem more closely, he was amazed by its intricate design. The color appeared to shimmer and change, casting fleeting reflections of the environment around it. It was a sight that held everyone's attention.

After taking a few deep breaths, Erik made the decision to consume the gem and the liquid, putting his trust in the fact that the biological supercomputer had informed him that doing so was risk-free.

[SHADOWTHORN DAHLIA'S DNA ACQUIRED. STARTING THE ANALYSIS.]

[ANALYSIS COMPLETE.]

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

[7190 DNA POINTS DETECTED. COMMENCING EXTRACTION?.]

"Not now," the young man said.

[SHADOWTHORN DAHLIA'S BRAIN CRYSTAL ACQUIRED. STARTING THE ANALYSIS.]

[ANALYSIS COMPLETE.]

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

[7190 DNA POINTS DETECTED. EXTRACTION IS NOT ADVISED; THE HOST HAS INCOMPATIBLE DNA.]

[EXTRACTION ABORTED]

After that, there was no longer any reason for Erik to continue staying there, so he decided to look for somewhere to stop, rest, and eat before continuing his journey.

"System, is there a way for me to absorb the brain crystals I got without losing consciousness and easing the pain?"

[ANSWER: IT IS POSSIBLE TO SPEED THINGS UP BY INCREASING THE ENERGY CONSUMPTION. YOU NEED TO USE MORE DNA POINTS.]

"Really? Why didn't you tell me this sooner?" Erik asked.

[ANSWER: IT WOULD HAVE BEEN INEFFICIENT TO USE MORE DNA POINTS FOR SOMETHING YOU COULD HAVE ENDURED. BESIDES, YOU WERE RELATIVELY SAFE AT HOME, AND THERE WAS NO NEED TO SPEED THE PROCESS UP.]

Erik talked to the biological supercomputer the whole time he was moving. The young man decided to make use of the features offered by this system in order to obtain the five brain crystals he had previously acquired. He still needed to absorb Hais's brain crystal power, and he was counting down the seconds until he could do so because it would be of great use to him.

As Erik emerged from the depths of the hearth of the deteriorating forest, he discovered that he was standing in the Shadowthorn Dahlia's territory. Still, he was starting to leave it since the twisted trees gave way to a more open expanse of land. The oppressive presence that had been present in the depths that he had just traversed seemed to decrease, resulting in a lighter feeling in the air.

He paused momentarily to collect his thoughts and take in the surroundings before him.

As he made his way to escape from the forest's grasp, it appeared as though the vegetation had started breathing again. Everything the sunlight touched was illuminated with a warm glow as it passed through the canopy in the sky. Once eerie shadows now moved with a sense of freedom, harmonizing their movements with the gentle sway of the remaining healthy foliage.

Following his encounter with the Shadowthorn Dahlia, Erik's eyes swept the area around him as he proceeded to leave the area, taking in the aftermath of the plant devouring thaid's and animals alike. The skeletal remains of various animals the thaid's embrace had killed were visible on the forest floor.

Their lifeless forms served as a jarring reminder of the perils that lay in wait at the forest's decaying core.

Despite the devastation, however, there were beginning to be indications of change and rebirth. The tendrils that had once entangled and constrained lay withered and lifeless, their twisted forms reduced to mere relics of the thaid's former power.

As he moved through the forest, they disintegrated beneath his steps, leaving behind a trail of deterioration in his wake. He continued walking, his stride becoming lighter and his heart filling up with a fresh appreciation for the delicate balance between life and death.

The forest had examined him and given him problems to solve, and as a result, he had emerged from the experience more capable. Erik's instincts led him to a small clearing within the forest, a relatively open space where the canopy above-allowed sunlight to filter through.

It appeared to be an appropriate location for him to take a moment to catch his breath and find some temporary relief from the threats that continued to lurk in the darkness all around him.

Erik thoroughly searched the area with a watchful eye, looking for any indications of imminent danger. He surveyed the tall trees that encircled him, content in the knowledge that he was protected for the time being.

The fake awakener concentrated his mana and channeled it into the vegetation that was all around him, drawing upon the essence of the birth brain crystal power he was born with. He flung his arms outward with his palms facing the ground and invoked the power to manipulate plant growth. Immediately, vegetation began to sprout beneath and around him with a flourish of vibrant greenery.

The plants grew taller and denser, creating a barrier that shielded him from prying eyes and potential threats in a matter of moments. The thick vines that climbed the nearby trees, intertwining and weaving themselves together to form a natural cocoon around him, concealed Erik's whereabouts.

Under his feet lush ferns and other vegetation began to grow under his feet, transforming the ground into a plush and reassuring bed.

As the young man made his way up one of the towering trees, he located a sturdy branch on which he could perch in order to survey his surroundings. From this elevated vantage point, he was able to see the full extent of his creation, which was a hidden sanctuary hidden among the chaos of the forest.

The young man made his home in the safe haven he had recently discovered, which was a patchwork of colorful leaves and blossoming flowers. In the midst of the mayhem, the soft rustling of the leaves performed like a lullaby, evoking feelings of peace and serenity within the listener.

Erik was finally able to take some time to rest and recuperate, thanks to his ability to remain unseen and protected by his power. He rested his tired eyes and allowed the natural energy of the plants to permeate his body in order to revive his spirit.

"System, can you tell me how many DNA points I need to get the five brain crystal powers without losing consciousness and feeling pain?" Erik asked.

[ANSWER: YOU NEED 400 MORE DNA POINTS NOT TO FEEL PAIN AND NOT LOSE CONSCIOUSNESS; HOWEVER, YOU WILL NEED TO WAIT FOR AN AVERAGE OF 6 HOURS PER POWER TO GET ALL OF THEM, MEANING YOU WILL NEED TO WAIT 30 HOURS TO GET THEM ALL. DO YOU WANT TO START THE PROCEDURE?]

"Yes, start the procedure now."

[UNDERSTOOD. 4600 DNA POINTS USED. 30 HOURS UNTIL THE PROCEDURE ENDS.]

"Good... With this becoming possible, I will still be able to get the brain crystal powers despite being in this shithole," Erik said to himself.

"I don't know if it will allow me to do what I had in mind, but Hais's power will be useful. Besides, if I manage to control plants while even growing them, I will get a power similar to Martha's, but at least I will be able to control all kinds of plants, not only the thorny vines."

Chapter 363: Gains

From the day Erik had sought refuge in that verdant sanctuary in the middle of the forest, a week had passed. Time seemed to both stand still and rush forward in a paradoxical dance, and he was able to restore his mental and physical strength thanks to the tranquility and isolation of the setting and the rest he was able to get.

Things have been going in a different direction since he obtained those powers five days before. It was a huge shock to learn that Hais' brain crystal power could passively raise intelligence levels.

That was a boon he didn't consider, but that explained how Hais was able to understand so accurately what happened when he killed Logan and the others without having seen anything in the first person.

However, Erik quickly discovered that a passive increase in intelligence wasn't the only thing that brain crystal power did. In fact, he could also create a sort of mana brain that gave him a sort of parallel will, hence the way the system named it as such.

The good thing was that the "parallel will" could be used to do two crucial things: the first was to use his other brain crystal powers, and the second was that it could continue developing neural links with the method that the system devised while he did whatever he wanted.

This meant that he could train 24/7 with a technique that already sped his training a lot, and that also gave him the possibility to train two powers at the same time.

Moreover, he could also actively join the mana brain during training, doubling the speed at which he was making neural links, which was at least five times faster already. Another usage was available when fighting.

Erik could fight better thanks to that power because he could give the will the task of focusing on defense while his primary brain concentrated on offense. For example, he could instruct it to metalize some body parts only when he was going to get attacked.

However, despite these many things, he was unfortunately unable to use it while he slept, so he could not keep himself protected in any way while he was resting.

Using more than one brain crystal power at the same time as possible, Erik did it many times in the past, as it was like controlling one appendage, of which he had multiple, but he still needed to do it "manually." On the other hand, the fact that he could exercise even while moving was already a very impressive gain.

The power of the Shadowthorn Dahlia was the second significant thing he obtained from the Thaidis in past encounters. The plant-like thaid was able to manipulate the vegetation in the surroundings, but the plants had to be there already for him to do so, but the power didn't exactly work the way Erik had wanted it to.

One day, he attempted to use the Shadowthorn Dahlia's brain crystal power to make a tree grow and give it a specific shape, but he was unable to do either of those things. The plant was under his control, and he could make it grow at a faster rate by using both his powers at the same time, but his control was not absolute.

However, this issue was resolved when Erik merged the two powers, his birth brain crystal power and the Shadowthorn Dahlia's one, and as a result, he was able to create something more. A power that allowed him to get past his previous ones' limitations, which he promptly used to make temporary hideouts for himself that he could use when thaid's were pursuing him, or simply to rest or get shelter.

The power had both the abilities of the two powers he used to merge but wasn't stronger than both of them. It was like Erik was simply doing with a remote what he should have done with two.

Despite this new advantage, he was using more from the utilitarian side; the problem was that the monsters often found him even if he made incredible hideouts; in fact, there were times when he was put in grave danger because the thaid's were able to destroy his defenses as soon as they detected his smell. The trees were sturdy but not so resistant that they could not be damaged in any way.

His third acquisition was the Whisperwind Hare's brain crystal power, which gave him the ability to blend in with the environment by altering the color of his skin and hair and partially imitating the materials around him. This ability allowed him to escape detection most of the time.

It was helpful, but only from a visual perspective; there was nothing he could do about the odor naturally produced by his body.

Simone's and the Xeridon Anteris' brain crystals were the other two that he managed to acquire after all. The first one was good to have, but the second one was an incredible gain because it doubled and allowed him to increase his strength based on the amount of mana he used. He didn't really like Simone's one, but if he ended up needing more reach, he could use it. He absorbed it just in case.

Presently, Erik was training in one of the makeshift tree houses he had constructed. He was doing that manually, but he was also using Hais's brain crystal power to get things done faster.

However, it was not as easy as it seemed because he was required to use the technique while also utilizing the power of the brain crystal. Erik had found the most comfortable position for him and continued with the training session.

He took a long, slow breath before pushing the new technique to the limit. Almost immediately, he felt a surge of mana course through his body as he caused it to swirl and move per the computer's instructions.

He now felt a sense of clarity and focus rather than the strain he had previously experienced while doing so, which was a significant improvement. During the time that he was channeling mana through the brain and the crystal, he was able to sense that the connection was being formed without any effort.

His thoughts flowed with pinpoint accuracy, each strand of mana weaving together to form a sturdy connection in a way that seemed almost effortless. It seemed as though an unseen force was directing the threads of energy, and they effortlessly aligned with his intentions as a result.

The first neural link formed without any difficulty; he had been working on it for the past three days and kept creating a link between the crystal and his mind.

The first neural link formed easily; he had been working on it since three days ago and kept creating a pathway between his mind and the crystal. The connection felt stronger and more stable than ever before, empowering Erik with a heightened sense of control over his ability, the poisonous mana dart conjuring brain crystal power.

With a newfound ease, he effortlessly extended his consciousness into the crystal through that power's neural links, tapping, from it, into his mana reserves.

"Good, using the technique already simplified things, but I'm basically doubling the creation speed with Hais's power! This is great!" Erik said it out loud, happy for his success.

Encouraged by the success of the first link, Erik eagerly focused his attention on the second, which was the power of bone manipulation. The procedure carried on developing with a startling lack of difficulty. It appeared that the enhanced technique and Hais's brain crystal power worked well together. As a result, he was able to establish links with an innate sense of familiarity.

Erik felt an overwhelming surge of exhilaration course through his veins as the second neural link began to take shape.

He was astounded by the newly discovered efficiency of his training as well as the synergies between his newly acquired power and the technique the biological supercomputer came up with. It was as if he had uncovered a secret language—a universal code that linked him to the vast wellspring of mana that existed all around him.

With these two new neural links established, Erik felt a profound sense of empowerment.

The neural links shimmered with mana, bringing it from the brain crystal to the brain and then to the rest of the body, thanks to the neural links. He could now use the power in an easier way, channeling mana with much more precision and finesse than before.

The days of struggling and straining to form neural links were a thing of the past now. The process had been transformed into a harmonious dance as a result of the improved technique.

Erik had a profound sense of gratitude for the fact that he was the only person to benefit from this game-changing innovation, as it demonstrated the incredible advancements brought about by the biological supercomputer.

Erik couldn't help but feel a renewed sense of purpose and determination as the training session came to a close. Or better, as he actively trained, while the parallel will brain crystal did what it had to. Though, the young man had to keep the mana consumption in check.

The young man rose from his seated position within his wooden shelter with a sigh of relief. He heard the reassuring creak of his muscles as he stretched his limbs and felt the comforting pull of his muscles. He was mentally and physically exhausted after hours of focused training, but the satisfaction of his accomplishments drove him forward and kept him going.

As soon as he stepped outside, a soft breeze caressed his face and carried with it the calming aromas of nature. The sunlight was able to penetrate the tree canopy above, which resulted in the forest floor being covered in dappled patterns of light and shadow. It was a sight that was guaranteed to make him feel better in every circumstance.

Erik took a few minutes to relax and enjoy the peaceful atmosphere, allowing the calm to seep into his worn-out bones as he did so. A lightness of being that filled him with renewed vigor had taken its place in place of the burden of his earlier struggles after they were lifted.

"I'm tired," Erik said to himself. "I should probably prepare something to eat."

While he was setting up his cooking tools, Erik reached up to the tree he had grown the day before as he set his camp and carefully plucked several ripe fruits from it with his practiced hand. The vibrant colors of the juicy fruits made for a beautiful contrast against the deep green of the vegetation. He couldn't help but be impressed by how quickly and well his new power worked.

The sweet aroma of the freshly picked fruits wafted through the air, tantalizing his senses. It was a small reward for his efforts, a tangible reminder of the power he now held.

Grateful for the nourishment the tree had provided, Erik savored the taste of the succulent fruits, a testament to the utility of his new brain crystal power. He manipulated the plant to grow sweeter and bigger fruits so they were particularly tasty.

When the young man sank his teeth into the ripe fruit, a flavor wave rushed through his mouth like a waterfall. The sweetness twirled around on his tongue, mingling with a trace of sourness that caused his taste buds to tingle with sheer ecstasy. Juice dripped down his chin as he devoured the succulent flesh and savored each mouthwatering bite. He was clearly enjoying himself.

After several hours of intense concentration and meditation, the fruit was invigorating and reviving for him. When he took his last bite, he felt a wave of contentment wash over him as if his body and spirit had been nourished. It was impossible for him not to smile when he thought about all of the wonderful things Mother Nature had given him.

Erik was a little bit tired, but there was still something he had to do. The young man, in fact, set out to investigate the area surrounding his hideout with a spring in his step. A habit he picked up in recent days, as he got attacked by a large group of thais. As he went deeper into the woods, he observed the vibrant hues of the flowers and the soft rustle of leaves under his feet.

However, he also noticed how winter was coming.

Chapter 364: Territorial battle

Erik emerged from his makeshift refuge and stretched his aching muscles. When he entered the woods, he was greeted by the enchanting sound of rustling leaves and the heady fragrance of blossoming flowers.

The light from the sun penetrated the forest's canopy, creating dappled shadows on the ground below. He was astounded by the myriad shades of emerald green around him, each bearing witness to the vigor of nature.

As the young man moved deeper into the forest, his senses became more acute, and his ears became more sensitive to his surroundings. Apparently, the area around his camp was clear, but he wanted to refill his water before going to sleep so that the following day he could avoid wasting time.

By looking at the signs around him, it appeared as though the forest was directing him, and it brought him to a small clearing where a stream with a soft babbling sound wound its way through the undergrowth.

However, his peaceful moment was shattered by the clash of titanic forces. His eyes widened as he witnessed a fierce battle unfolding before him. Two monstrous creatures engaged in a deadly struggle, their roars reverberating through the forest.

On one side stood the Shadowclaw, its sleek, black form blending seamlessly with the shadows. The creature moved with grace and precision, evading its opponent's attacks with swift maneuvers. Its glowing green eyes shimmered with focused determination as he battled its opponent.

Across the Shadowclaw, a formidable adversary was engaged in combat, the Ursolith.

The hulking figure of the thaid radiated an air of unbridled power as it towered over its surroundings. Its body was covered in fur, which had a variety of earthy tones and served as camouflage against the background of the forest. Its humongous, muscular limbs propelled it forward, while its sharp claws and powerful jaws hinted at the destruction to come.

Both of the beasts went at each other with great ferocity, lashing out with vicious swipes and biting at their opponents' exposed flesh.

Shadows danced around them as the Shadowclaw utilized its stealth abilities to gain the upper hand, hiding in the surrounding foliage and exploiting momentary weaknesses in the opponent's defenses.

The Ursolith responded with ear-splitting roars and an overwhelming display of brute force, all propelled by its incredible strength.

"Seriously? Of all the monsters, I had to end up finding these two?" Erik said to himself.

He kept a solemn expression as he observed the two creatures squaring off in front of the water source. In his mind, this was a territorial battle that needed to be won to protect the area's water source or prey. For a brief moment, a fleeting thought crossed Erik's mind: whether or not it would be wise to step in and eliminate at least one of the two thaid.

However, the young man quickly realized that interfering in a fight of this scale was extremely risky, particularly one that involved formidable foes such as the Shadowclaw and the Ursolith. Each was displaying their unique strengths and abilities and locked in a primal struggle for dominance.

Erik was compelled to stay and observe the two creatures' strategies and movements due to his insatiable curiosity. He didn't want to be unprepared in the event that he was forced to engage in combat with the two monsters.

The conflict continued, with the forest serving as a witness to the contest of wills and abilities that was taking place between them. Erik chose to stay on the outskirts of the fight because he was mesmerized by the conflict's spectacle and ferocity.

Deep down, he sensed that these creatures were just within his capabilities, meaning he had to be careful if he was attacked, but that there were chances he could win.

<Maybe with the Xeridon Anteris and Nathaniel's powers? I think I can handle pretty straightforwardly the Shadowclaw, but the Ursolith is another matter.>

Erik momentarily forgot his need for water as the battle raged on, and he silently cheered for the Shadowclaw, appreciating its stealthy approach and resourcefulness. As it deftly navigated around its opponent and exploited the Ursolith's vulnerabilities with calculated precision, he couldn't help but admire the elegant and lethal predator that it was.

The awakener could observe the unfolding spectacle without drawing attention to himself because the creatures engaged in combat did not notice his presence and were focused on their fight, besides he was using the Whisperwind Hare's brain crystal power, so it was harder to be spotted by a beast.

He was curious about the outcome, knowing that whoever came out on top would become the most powerful force in this section of the forest and would be able to lay claim to its territory with complete and utter authority.

As they engaged in a ferocious and unrelenting battle against one another, the Shadowclaw and the Ursolith were driven by their primal instincts. They launched a barrage of attacks on one another. Each move they made as they worked to strike their opponent with a devastating blow was characterized by deadly accuracy and raw power.

The Ursolith charged forward, its enormous jaws gaping to get a grip on the Shadowclaw's neck and squeeze it. The Shadowclaw, perceiving the threat, evaded the attack with lightning speed, its lithe body contorting with unnatural flexibility.

The thaid, seeing an opening, immediately struck back at the Ursolith with a lightning-fast swipe of its razor-sharp claws, intending to rip into the flank of its opponent.

On the other hand, the Ursolith reacted with a surprising degree of agility, quickly pivoting on its hind legs to avoid being cut by the deadly weapons.

Unfazed, the Ursolith retaliated with a ferocious swipe of its massive paw, claws extending in a lethal arc as it delivered the blow. The Shadowclaw made a backward leap just in time to avoid the vicious blow by a hair's breadth.

As it gracefully landed, it retaliated by closing its jaws in an attempt to sink its teeth into the exposed shoulder of the opposing beast. However, the Ursolith's thick hide proved impenetrable even for the Shadowclaw's maws, and it quickly twisted away from the attack, its snarl reverberating throughout the clearing.

In an effort to press its advantage, the Ursolith lunged forward with the intention of stomping on the Shadowclaw with all of its considerable weight.

The other beast, on the other hand, was prepared for the attack and avoided the crushing blow by performing a dexterous somersault before regaining its feet in a single fluid motion. The Shadowclaw sped up to the Ursolith's foreleg, bared its fangs, and attempted to deliver a bite with its lightning-fast speed that would disable the opponent's mobility.

However, the Ursolith's reflexes were just as quick as the Shadowclaw's, and it quickly retracted its limb in order to avoid the fatal blow.

The Shadowclaw had had enough, so it began to circle behind the Ursolith. Thanks to its stealth abilities, it could partially blend into the surroundings, preventing the beast from seeing it in its entirety. It basically vanished into thin air from the Ursolith's point of view and proceeded to encircle the beast.

The Shadowclaw emerged from the shadows once more and immediately began a lightning-fast attack, which allowed it to capitalize on the element of surprise. Its claws tore deep gashes into the

Ursolith's exposed flank as they dragged themselves across the surface. The Ursolith roared in pain and rage as the opponent's attacks finally had an effect on it.

Erik's heart was pounding with anxiety as he carefully withdrew from the scene of the bloody battle between the Shadowclaw and the Ursolith. He was well aware that he needed to exercise extreme caution to avoid drawing the attention of the two beasts, particularly when he was attempting to draw water from the nearby stream.

Erik crept toward the stream while the sun was still setting and while keeping a watchful eye on the clearing where the intense duel was taking place. He moved with slow, deliberate steps and ensured that each footfall was silent and barely audible.

His senses remained on high alert; his ears were tuned to the slightest rustling in the underbrush, and his eyes scanned the surroundings for any sign of movement. He was convinced that the sound of something moving would give him away.

When Erik finally made it to the stream, he got down on his knees and started filling his bottles, despite the cool water running over his hands. He worked quickly while maintaining a low profile, being aware of the risks that could be present in the area.

While filling each container, he couldn't help but sneak glances toward the battle-scarred clearing, where the Ursolith and the Shadowclaw were continuing their intense struggle.

Even though he was enamored with the powerful beasts, Erik was aware that their presence threatened his safety. He intended to use this location as a staging ground for his personal training and exploration while remaining here for a week; at least, that was his current goal.

On the other hand, with the territorial nature of the creatures, he realized that their constant presence could hinder his progress.

Erik considered his choices. If he wanted to ensure his safety and establish his presence in the region, he knew that getting rid of the creatures was an essential step that needed to be taken first.

Aside from that, the possibility of acquiring the one-of-a-kind Brain Crystal Power that the Shadowclaw possessed piqued his interest, mainly when considered in conjunction with the Whisperwind Hare's ability to hide. If he were to merge them, he might end up with something of use to him, as he was too big to make good use of the Whisperwind Hare's brain crystal power alone.

The existence of the creatures posed a threat to him, but engaging them in combat would undoubtedly be a dangerous endeavor to undertake. Erik knew he required a comprehensive strategy to outmaneuver and triumph over formidable opponents.

After putting some thought into it, Erik developed a strategy. He would gain an advantage by utilizing his knowledge of the terrain, employing his agility, and making use of his resourcefulness. If necessary, he would also set up some traps.

However, because he lacked sufficient experience in the creation of traps and the fact that he had to essentially start from scratch when it came to learning how to make them, he was required to test them before employing them in combat.

On the other hand, his objective was to sneak up on the beasts when they were least expecting it and target their weak points with precise and well-calculated strikes.

He was also aware of the significance of having patience and knowing when to act. He needed to bide his time and wait for the right opportunity, which would present itself when the monsters were sufficiently weakened and preoccupied with fighting among themselves. After that, and only then, would he make his move to eliminate them promptly and decisively.

After ensuring his bottles were full, Erik quickly and stealthily retreated from the stream and hid in the surrounding vegetation. As the creatures continued to battle one another, he analyzed their behaviors and made mental notes of any potential weaknesses he noticed. He then created a map of the creatures' fighting habits.

As he vanished into the thickets of the forest, a steely resolve began to take root within his heart. It was time for him to demonstrate his mettle and stake his claim in this untamed wilderness.

Chapter 365: The resting beast

When Erik got back to his camp, he set the filled water bottles down with great care and organized the rest of his gear so that it was in the appropriate places. Because of his meticulous nature and the significance of maintaining order in his nomadic way of life, he made sure that everything was arranged in a tidy fashion.

The campsite exuded a sense of tranquility, nestled within the embrace of towering trees and dappled sunlight. The crackling fire pit, now extinguished, served as a reminder of the warmth and comfort it had provided during the nights spent under the starry sky.

The hunt that was still to come into focus for Erik's thoughts. He was well aware of the significance of timing, and he realized that the best opportunity to act had arisen on this particular day. Due to the conflict between the two creatures, one of them has likely sustained an injury, and he planned to take advantage of this vulnerability.

He took great care in preparing his gear, ensuring that his blades were razor-sharp and that the camp's defenses, or better, the natural concealing plants Erik grew, and that were mostly designed to keep the thaids from discovering his food stash were in place before he set out.

While he was getting ready, Erik reflected on the possible states in which the two creatures could be found. Were both of them hurt to the same extent? Or had one emerged as the victor while the other tended to its wounds after the conflict?

Before he could begin to devise a strategy that was suited to the circumstances, he needed to conduct an assessment of the situation.

<Quest: Territory Conquest.>

-Description: Kill the Shadowclaw and the Ursolith and claim their territories.

-Rewards for completion: 3000 experience points and 700 DNA points, plus 5 points in strength and 5 in dexterity for completing the quest.

After breaking camp, Erik traveled back to the site of the earlier conflict to investigate what had transpired.

It came as a surprise to him that the location was now devoid of the enormous beasts that had been fighting there just a few moments earlier. The shattered remains of their altercation, which were strewn about the area, provided evidence of the fierce struggle that had taken place there earlier. The lingering smell of blood made the atmosphere feel oppressive and heavy.

The ground was marked with the imprints of their mighty paws, and remnants of the vicious struggle that had taken place can still be found scattered across the clearing in the form of tufts of fur and patches of torn flesh.

He cast a wary glance over the prints that the Shadowclaw had left behind, and his voice took on an air of caution. "Those claws can tear through flesh and bone easily. I'll need to be careful when battling against it."

The young man didn't know if he could fight against it now, despite knowing that the Shadowclaw was the weaker one between the two beasts, and he needed a more thorough approach to killing the Ursolith.

Erik's sharp eyes combed the area around them, looking for any hints or indications that might point to the location of the creatures. The once vibrant foliage now seemed subdued and hushed, as if the forest itself held its breath in the aftermath of the intense battle.

As he moved deeper into the clearing, his gaze fell upon a tree trunk that had been broken in half. The splintered wood served as a testament to the sheer force unleashed by the fighting creatures. A few scattered blood prints could be found close by, marking the spot where it is believed that the Ursolith had delivered a powerful swipe, causing the Shadowclaw to be caught off guard.

Clearly, the region in question was contested territory, and he needed to eliminate the remaining danger posed by the beasts. Because he intended to remain in the area for a week, he needed a safe and quiet setting that was devoid of the threat posed by the Shadowclaw and the Ursolith. He didn't want to risk being attacked while sleeping or training.

Erik looked over the evidence left behind, including blood stains, broken branches, and ripped-up earth. He examined the patterns, looking for clues as to the health conditions and behavior of the creatures. His understanding of thuids served as a compass, directing and assisting him in piecing together the puzzle.

As he thought about what was happening, a drop of sweat rolled down the side of his temple. "The Ursolith appears to have sustained only minor damage, judging by the amount of blood on his prints. It had to have been the one getting the upper hand during the fight."

Erik's sharp eyes swept the ground, following the bloody footprints left behind by the creatures fighting each other. The telltale signs painted a picture of the recent conflict, and it didn't take him long to figure out that the Shadowclaw had sustained the most severe wounds in the fight.

The young man spoke to himself in a low, hushed whisper that was difficult to make out over the rustling of the leaves. "Judging by the deep blood prints on the ground, it looks like the Shadowclaw took the lion's share of the damage during the fight."

The young man made up his mind to track down the beast and steal the brain crystal for himself, so he set out on his journey with a renewed sense of purpose. He was aware of the dangers and difficulties that lay ahead, but this did not dampen his resolve. Now was the right time; the Shadowclaw was severely injured; he had all his mana available and was in excellent condition.

He was driven by the conviction that acquiring this power would enable him to overcome his constraints and bring him one step closer to his ultimate goal of achieving freedom and mastery.

Erik continued his journey deeper into the wooded area as he followed the trail of blood that the feline-like thaid had left behind. His senses were heightened, and he became acutely aware of any sound or movement that might indicate the presence of the injured creature. His footfalls were light and calculated, and every step he took was deliberate.

As the awakener moved slowly toward the trail, the atmosphere was thick with tension. It appeared as though the forest was holding its breath in anticipation of the upcoming confrontation. The branches in the canopy above him rustled, creating ever-changing shadows that danced across his path.

He moved stealthily through the thicket, jumping over fallen logs and dodging through the underbrush like a hunter. His veins were filled with adrenaline, which mixed with a mixture of excitement and trepidation. He was very nervous. He was aware that an injured beast's behavior was unpredictable and could be even more lethal than average.

As he proceeded, the signs of the Shadowclaw's condition became increasingly evident. The path it left behind, marked by uprooted vegetation and shattered earth, showed uneven walk, a lot of blood loss, and even some broken claws.

After a while of following the trails, he arrived at the location where the creature was resting, and his senses had become honed so that he could detect even the most minute of hints.

In the distance, he could make out the injured beast with its massive frame hunched over as it sat on a sturdy tree branch. It was clear that the fight had taken its toll on the beast's body, as evidenced by the heavy, labored breathing it was exhibiting.

The recent conflict that the Shadowclaw had with the Ursolith was evidenced by the fact that its fur was matted and stained with patches of dried blood. Its eyes, piercing and fierce during the confrontation, now revealed signs of exhaustion and pain. The tongue of the creature shot out, and it began methodically licking its wounds as if it were trying to soothe the aching flesh.

Erik's sharp eyes were able to discern the full scope of the creature's wounds. Deep gashes were all over its muscular shoulders, and blood was still dripping down them. It appeared that one of its hind legs was bearing the weight unevenly, which was a sign that a sprain or fracture might be present.

The wounds had not yet healed, and their rawness served as a jarring reminder of the intense battle that had just taken place.

This didn't go unnoticed by the young hunter, who understood the significance of the Shadowclaw's vulnerability. It had reached its lowest point and was concentrating on recovering and regaining its strength at this time. As the young man anticipated, that was the best time to launch his attack.

As he studied the creature before making the first attack, he couldn't help but be impressed by its toughness and dogged determination to live. He also felt a twinge of empathy as he understood the reasons that drove the Shadowclaw to fight so fiercely, to defend its territory and maintain its dominance over the water source. A place rich with prey he could attain from.

The awakener mentally prepared himself for the upcoming conflict as he kept a safe distance from the injured predator and watched it from afar.

He knew that he had the advantage now, but he was also aware that the Shadowclaw would not go down without a nasty fight.

Erik positioned himself at a stealthy vantage point and waited for the sun to further go down. He kept his senses sharp, attuned to the slightest movement or sound. Time seemed to stretch as he maintained his vigil, the anticipation building with each passing moment.

"I could try to immobilize it with the Plant Master's power, but with the amount of mana I have and the even fewer neural links, I doubt I could do something. The best thing to do would be to get the creature down or use the poisonous mana darts," he thought aloud.

"Yeah, that would be better..."

After saying that, he concentrated and brought his mana into the center of his being before closing his eyes. Each time he took a breath, he called upon the power that coursed through his neural link, which connected his brain to the brain crystal.

As he channeled the mana, a subtle shift occurred within him. He could feel the energy surging through his veins, coursing with otherworldly power. The mana began to gather and condense, swirling within the palm of his hand, forming an orb of mana.

The orb shrank, and the mana quantity increased, slowly forming a dart. Erik could feel the weight of the mana, a tangible presence in his hand, ready to be unleashed.

His eyes opened, revealing a resolute gaze that was a reflection of the mana orb that was condensing in the palm of his hand.

As the mana continued to move through his body, it became more vibrant and shimmered, like it was dancing with invisible threads of energy. It was almost as if the very essence of the forest acknowledged the coming together of forces and responded to his presence when he was there.

Erik's hand trembled slightly with the raw power he now possessed. He marveled at the swirling currents of mana within his grasp, much higher than in the past, feeling a surge of confidence and determination course through his veins.

After drawing in a long breath, he concentrated his thoughts on the upcoming fight. The mana orb pulsed with an intensity that matched his resolve, and it was ready to be used as a powerful weapon against the injured creature that stood before him.

As the mana dart coalesced in Erik's hand, crackling with raw energy, he unleashed it with a swift and precise motion. The projectile soared through the air, guided by his intent, and found its mark with unerring accuracy.

The dart struck the wounded side of the resting Shadowclaw, its impact resounding through the stillness of the forest. A surge of mana erupted upon contact, seeping into its injured flesh.

The mana infused into the dart spread like a pulsating wave, sending its ethereal essence throughout the Shadowclaw's body. It penetrated the injured tissues and immediately began significantly reducing the strength of the thaid.

The injured beast roused itself from its slumber, and its eyes widened in surprise and agony as mana began to surge through its veins.

The weakening of the injured creature caused its already sluggish movements to become even more sluggish as its strength diminished. It twisted its head to look for the source of the pain, and its gaze eventually settled on Erik's. After descending the tree, the beast approached the awakener by walking toward them while baring its fangs.

Chapter 366: Lurking Shadow

The Shadowclaw made a sudden movement and lunged at Erik, slashing its claws through the air and opening its jaws wide in preparation for the attack. The young man channeled mana and used the Xeridon Anteris's brain crystal power to enhance its strength to at least match the creature's.

The awakener discovered through the biological supercomputer's analysis power that the beast had at least 80 strength points, whereas he naturally had somewhere around 50 strength points.

Doubling his strength through the Xeridon Anteris's brain crystal power required a lot of mana, which he also had to use to make a dart strong enough to weaken the Shadowclaw. But at least this way, Erik could fight against the beast without problems.

The awakener deftly sidestepped the aerial assault, narrowly avoiding getting bit by the creature's razor-sharp teeth. Erik retaliated with lightning-fast reflexes, driving his Flyssa forward in a powerful thrust aimed at the beast's exposed flank.

The blade pierced the Shadowclaw's skin, releasing a torrent of inky blood as it tore through the creature's defenses.

The wound-bearing creature lunged once more, this time with its claws extended in a menacing swipe. Erik deftly twisted his body to duck beneath the lethal arc, and then he quickly retaliated with a series of slashes.

With each pass of his blade, he carved gashes into the Shadowclaw's hide, causing the creature to recoil in pain and rage.

Erik's face was brought perilously close to being bitten by the injured beast as it made another attempt to attack him after spotting an opening in his defenses.

With an acrobatic leap, he flipped backward, narrowly escaping the gnashing teeth. After landing, Erik executed a heel spin and delivered a pinpoint upward strike with his Flyssa.

The blade sliced through the air and carved another wound along the chest of the Shadowclaw, which made it stagger backward.

The Shadowclaw quickly realized that its strategy needed to be changed after it realized how dangerous Erik's attacks were. With a keen instinct, it swiftly disengaged from the battle, retreating into the dense foliage in the surroundings.

While watching Erik, the Shadowclaw utilized its ability to partially turn transparent, allowing it to blend in perfectly with its environment and become one with the lush vegetation of the forest. Its form became indistinguishable from the foliage, which made it virtually invisible to the eye of a person who had not been trained to look for it.

The sudden disappearance of his opponent momentarily caught Erik off guard, who then carefully examined the surroundings. He was aware that the beast had it in its mind to attack him as soon as he let his guard down, so he paid attention to what was happening around him.

His eyes traveled quickly across the thick undergrowth, searching for any indication of movement or disturbance. He was aware that Shadowclaw's brain crystal power gave it the advantage of camouflage, making it a formidable opponent to track and engage, and that was precisely why he decided to hunt this creature.

Erik activated his brain crystal powers by maintaining a steady breath and a focused determination. He then created a mana exoskeleton and metalized his most vulnerable areas, such as the jugular, his neck, and the areas surrounding the heart.

Moving cautiously through the foliage, the young man maintained a vigilant stance, his eyes darting from one shadowy recess to another. He listened intently, attuned to the rustling of leaves and the soft whispers of the wind. Every fiber of his being was searching for the presence of the invisible Shadowclaw.

The minutes ticked by, and each passing moment added to the mounting tension that was already present in the air; however, there was still no sign of the thaid. As the awakener made his way through the tangled maze of vegetation, he maintained a keen gaze and honed his senses to a high level. He knew that patience and persistence were crucial in this game of hide and seek.

Then, all of a sudden, his attention was drawn to a slight movement. A leaf swayed ever-so-slightly, and there was a barely perceptible rustle in the otherwise tranquil foliage. Erik's instincts kicked into high gear as he recognized the telltale sign of the Shadowclaw's presence. With a quick motion, he raised the blade that he had been carrying and prepared to face his foe.

As the Shadowclaw sprang forth from a nearby tree branch, a menacing growl escaped its throat.

Erik was quick to react; his instinct was to drop to the ground and roll deftly to avoid the vicious attack. As the young man's body deftly sidestepped the potentially lethal attack, the beast's claws slashed through the air, narrowly missing their target.

Nevertheless, while he avoided the attack, a fleeting opportunity for vulnerability appeared in his defense. Erik's arm was grazed by the Shadowclaw's powerful lunge, resulting in a superficial but painful wound.

The young man scrambled to his feet, adrenaline pumping through his veins as he assessed the situation. The creature was still snarling; its eyes were fixed on him with a hunger that made his blood run cold.

Erik fought through the pain with gritted teeth, refusing to allow it to distract him or deter him from his goal of achieving success.

Erik swiftly regained his footing as the Shadowclaw gracefully landed on the ground, its eyes gleaming with rage and hunger. At the same time, even though his injured arm was dripping blood, Erik managed to keep a firm hold on the Flyssa.

The awakener used his dexterity and quickness to engage in a lethal dance of evasion and counterattacks. He was able to stay one step ahead of the relentless predator, dodging its ferocious strikes and striking back with precision.

With each passing moment, Erik's confidence grew as he began to anticipate the thaid's movements and exploit its weaknesses. However, he knew that one wrong move could mean certain death, so he remained focused and alert. He deftly deflected the Shadowclaw's lunging bites, parried its slashing claws, and then struck back with strikes of his own that were well calculated.

Their movements were a blur of precision and agility as they engaged in the dance of battle unfolding against the verdant backdrop of the forest.

Erik was able to maintain his ground thanks to his dogged determination and well-honed fighting skills, despite the Shadowclaw's evasive nature and overwhelming power.

He took advantage of every opening by striking with speed and precision, inflicting wounds upon the creature's sinewy frame. However, the Shadowclaw was not easily defeated and retaliated with ferocity, its razor-sharp claws tearing through the air. Erik knew he had to end the battle quickly before he became too fatigued to continue.

Their conflict became more intense, displaying a flurry of feral grace and primal aggression. With each blow, he aimed to incapacitate his adversary and put an end to the relentless assault by the Shadowclaw.

Erik deftly dodged and weaved through the attacks, his instincts directing every step he took. He had no choice but to rely on his dexterity and lightning-fast reflexes in order to survive the onslaught of attacks that came from the creature.

A swipe came with lightning speed, aimed at Erik's torso. He instinctively twisted his body, narrowly avoiding the deadly claws that grazed his side. A surge of adrenaline coursed through his veins, heightening his senses and sharpening his focus. He knew he had to remain alert and nimble if he wanted to survive this ferocious encounter, kill the beast, and get its brain crystal.

As the fight continued, Erik could feel his muscles starting to tire and his breaths becoming labored, but he assumed the Shadowclaw was in a similar situation. The beast, however, seemed to sense the young man's weakness and took advantage, launching a series of relentless attacks that pushed Erik to his limits.

Erik struck back with a deft thrust of his blade, aiming for the Shadowclaw's flank in his retaliation. However, the creature was just as nimble, and it sidestepped the assault with a deft hop in the opposite direction.

The Shadowclaw lunged forward, claws slashing through the air. Erik's eyes widened with a mix of fear and determination as he pivoted on his heel, narrowly evading the beast's assault. The gust of wind created by the creature's claws brushed against his face, a chilling reminder of how close he had come to being struck.

After each narrow escape, Erik's heart beat faster and harder in his chest. Despite the wounds the beast sustained and the effects of Erik's mana dart, the thaid was still full of vigor. The young man was well aware that even one slip-up could put his life in jeopardy.

As the battle dragged on, the stress of the conflict left visible scars on Erik's body. He took the occasional hit, which resulted in stinging wounds and blood trickling down his arms and legs.

"Damn it! Stay focused, Erik!" he barked between clenched teeth. Each deft maneuver and narrow escape fueled his determination to emerge victorious from the conflict.

The occasional cuss word that escaped his mouth during moments of annoyance and near-misses showed that the stress of the situation had taken its toll on his feelings.

However, during this whole ordeal, as the two fought, Erik noticed that the wounds and the mana darts were finally having an effect on the beast, as he started to notice exhaustion in the Shadowclaw's movements since its once ferocious strikes had become more sluggish. This was his chance to succeed.

The relentless conflict the Shadowclaw's body had been through was clear to see on its surface. Its fur was riddled with deep cuts, exposing a layer of raw and bleeding flesh beneath. A series of lengthy, precise cuts were visible on the beast's flank, where Erik's Flyssa had left its mark. But the Ursolith it had previously fought also injured the beast.

Its shoulder had a particularly deep wound, and the flesh was torn and ragged. The injury hampered the Shadowclaw's movements. The confrontation also left visible scars on the creature's face. Its snout was marred by numerous deep scratches, and crimson streaks stood out against its dark fur.

One eye seemed clouded, the result of a previous strike that had grazed dangerously close. Blood-soaked fur clung to its jaw, evidence of the Shadowclaw's previous fight against the Ursolith.

However, despite its many wounds, the animal's innate drive to survive continued to burn with all its might. Muscles rippled beneath its battered form as it fought through pain and exhaustion to unleash its deadly attacks.

Erik studied the wounds from afar. He knew that despite the creature's injuries, it still possessed formidable strength. The battle was far from over, and he remained acutely aware of the unpredictable nature of wounded prey.

Chapter 367: Invisible to the naked eye

As the Shadowclaw vanished into thin air, a shroud of uncertainty descended upon the world surrounding Erik. A lurking predator, invisible to the naked eye, haunted the forest's depths, its presence lingering in the air. With muscles taut and senses honed, the young hunter remained alert, attuned to the slightest disturbance in the surrounding area.

Erik maintained his composure despite his racing heart, which he managed to control. Realizing the Shadowclaw's ability to vanish from sight, he understood that depending solely on his eyesight would prove detrimental. He refrained from any movement and focused his senses on the slightest signals, intently listening for the rustling of leaves and shifts in the air.

"Keep your focus, Erik. Utilize your intuition. You can succeed," he said to himself.

However, at that moment, the young man's back suddenly ached. The beast had launched a surprise attack, leaving behind a vicious wound crossing Erik's back from one end to another. Erik's body reacted on its own, pulling back just in time to prevent any additional harm.

He clenched his teeth, fighting the overwhelming desire to let out a piercing scream. He slowly pivoted on his heel, only to witness the creature disappear into thin air right before his very eyes once again.

"You want to play games, huh?" Erik said despite his back aching.

The awakener remained motionless, his awareness heightened, as he meticulously surveyed his surroundings. He scanned the surrounding trees with a watchful gaze; his ears perked up, alert to any possible disturbance. Each rustle of leaves and faint whisper of movement held the potential to reveal the invisible adversary lurking in the shadows.

He scoured the environment for any anomalies that might indicate the thaid's presence, hoping to uncover subtle clues that might reveal the beast's position.

Once again, the beast emerged from the shadows. With deceptive grace, it launched a surprise assault, its movements swift and lethal. Yet Erik quickly reacted this time, his reflexes as sharp as lightning. Anticipating the trajectory of the strike, he raised his weapon just in time to intercept the blow.

The resounding clash of metal against bones reverberated through the air as the young man deftly parried and deflected the attack, leaving him unscathed. The impact's force rippled through his arm, yet he stood his ground, unwavering in his stance. A wave of contentment washed over him as he triumphantly thwarted the unseen monster's attack.

However, his elation was fleeting as the creature vanished once more, leaving him momentarily bewildered.

The forest was engulfed in an eerie silence, with only the sound of his rapid breaths breaking the stillness. He was acutely aware that being caught off guard again was not an option. His mind raced, desperately seeking any clue or sign that would betray the creature's presence.

"C'mon, you stupid beast... get out!"

With a sudden burst of movement, the Shadowclaw appeared before him, its sharp claws ready to attack. Erik's instincts overtook him as his body twisted and turned frantically to avoid the impending strike. He managed to evade the full impact of the blow narrowly, but not without feeling the sharpness of claws grazing his flesh. The sensation left a stinging reminder of his vulnerability.

In a fleeting moment, Erik grasped the chance that presented itself. With a deft and precise movement, he swiftly brought his weapon down upon the fleeting Shadowclaw, slicing through its tough skin and drawing crimson blood. A piercing howl of agony and rage escaped the creature as Erik's strike shattered its veil of invisibility.

Retreating, the injured creature relinquished its upper hand, and Erik took his chance.

Without wasting a moment, the young man sprang into action. With adrenaline coursing through his veins and an unwavering determination, he pushed forward, unleashing a barrage of unrelenting swings. His blade repeatedly found its mark, carving deep wounds into the Shadowclaw's unstable form. The creature tried to escape but in vain.

The conflict persisted, a mesmerizing display of opposing forces engaged in a delicate choreography. As time elapsed, Erik became accustomed to the creature's attack patterns and became able to at least partially decipher its movements.

In an instant, the Shadowclaw's desperation reached its peak, and with a surge of energy, the beast launched itself forward with a vicious and ferocious attack. The creature's jaws snapped shut with lightning speed, aiming to sink its razor-sharp teeth into Erik's flesh.

Erik lifted his arm to confront the impending attack. He channeled mana through his neural links; his metalization and mana exoskeleton brain crystal powers reinforced his limbs, increasing his defenses.

The awakener's reinforced limb met the Shadowclaw's powerful bite with a sickening thud. The impact reverberated through his arm, and a surge of pain coursed through his body despite using his powers, but the defensive reinforcement held strong.

Erik gritted his teeth and refused to yield. With a determined spirit, he wielded his Flyssa with precision, using his other arm to strike back and wound the creature more.

The beast roared in pain and left Erik's arm. Only for it to start running away, the beast got too many wounds already from the previous fight, and the ones Erik made were too nasty.

Erik darted forward in pursuit of the beast. The young man pressed on and followed the trail of blood left behind by the creature through the thick and tangled undergrowth, his heart racing with anticipation.

Each step brought him closer to his prey, the creature's gasps for air growing louder and more desperate.

The once formidable beast, now on its last legs, struggled to find refuge amidst the trees, its body weakened and ravaged by the combined effects of Erik's relentless attacks and the poison from the mana dart.

The awakener's heart raced with a blend of excitement and resolve as he approached the injured creature. He knew that this moment was his—the climax of their conflict.

With each labored breath, the Shadowclaw's strength waned, its movements slowing as it fought against the encroaching darkness. Its once-piercing gaze, filled with primal ferocity, now held a glimmer of desperation.

As Erik approached, he saw the creature's body trembling, its life force flickering like a dying flame. He felt a surge of mixed emotions—gratitude for his own survival, awe at the creature's resilience, and a tinge of sadness for the imminent end of the beast.

The young man stood before the Shadowclaw, observing the creature's gasps while his eyes witnessed the internal struggle it was going through. With a deft and graceful movement, he lifted his Flyssa, its sharp edge reflecting the scattered rays of sunlight that penetrated the dense foliage overhead.

The gravity of his purpose weighed heavily upon the young man as he felt a solemn obligation to end the creature's agony swiftly.

With a calculated burst of energy, Erik deftly lowered his blade, honing in on the Shadowclaw's skull. The metal encountered a brief moment of resistance before finally breaking through the creature's defenses.

The Shadowclaw emitted a shuddering gasp as the blade found its mark, deeply piercing its skull. Erik maintained his stance, his weapon firmly lodged in the creature's brain, as if time had ceased to exist.

The surrounding forest grew still as though the very essence of nature paused in anticipation of the ultimate blow. Erik's fingers coiled around the hilt of his weapon, his gaze unflinching as he met the fading stare of the Shadowclaw.

[SHADOWCLAW 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. 1057 EXPERIENCE POINTS AWARDED TO THE HOST.]

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

With caution, Erik approached the lifeless body of the fallen Shadowclaw. Its once fierce and intimidating presence now absent.

"Damn, that was one hell of a fight," Erik muttered to himself, his voice tinged with exhaustion. Knowing he had bested such a formidable opponent, he couldn't deny the satisfaction that coursed through his veins.

Erik paused to regulate his breathing before directing his concentration toward the Shadowclaw's blood. Cupping his hands, he drank the vital fluid until two notifications interrupted him.

[SHADOWCLAW'S DNA ACQUIRED. STARTING THE ANALYSIS.]

[ANALYSIS COMPLETE.]

[100 DNA POINTS ARE REQUIRED TO EXTRACT THE DNA. 500 TO GET IT WITHOUT INCURRING PAIN AND LOSS OF CONSCIOUSNESS.]

[2330 DNA POINTS DETECTED. COMMENCING EXTRACTION?]

"Not yet," Erik said. He limited himself to drinking the blood required to power up the Animal shape-shifting power.

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

[PROCEDURE COMPLETE.]

But his eyes were not solely fixated on the blood. Erik's gaze shifted to the creature's head, its skull holding the prized brain crystal. He took his blade with steady hands and deftly sliced open the skull, revealing the gleaming jewel within. Carefully, he extracted the brain crystal.

Without hesitation, Erik swallowed the brain crystal whole, allowing the system to work its magic.

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

[ANALYSIS COMPLETE.]

[100 DNA POINTS ARE REQUIRED TO EXTRACT THE POWER. 500 TO GET IT WITHOUT INCURRING PAIN AND LOSS OF CONSCIOUSNESS.]

[2330 DNA POINTS DETECTED. EXTRACTION IS NOT ADVISED; THE HOST HAS INCOMPATIBLE DNA.]

[EXTRACTION ABORTED]

Erik stood up, his being filled with a sense of accomplishment as he surveyed his spoils. With a heavy heart, he cast his gaze upon the defeated Shadowclaw, a formidable foe who had tested his mettle to the utmost.

"That has been a good harvest. I just need to merge this power with the Whisperwind Hare's and see what comes out of it."

Chapter 368: Searching for the monster

Three days had passed since Erik's triumph over the Shadowclaw. In the aftermath, he wasted no time in absorbing the creature's brain crystal power and merging it with the Whisperwind Hare's brain crystal power, birthing one the system called Chameleon Veil.

It was a mix of both powers, essentially giving Erik more possibilities to hide compared to what the two creatures could do individually.

The fusion of these stolen powers brought forth new possibilities for the young man, but there was no way he could use them while sleeping, so he still had problems with nocturnal thuids.

Aside from that, the young man spent these days training. With the new technique the system developed and Hais's brain crystal power, making neural links became much easier, at least until the number of neural links was low. He would probably gain one or two a month once he reached the MI or higher levels, but at least for now, he could improve faster.

He improved Hais's and Nathaniel's powers, gaining a link for each power, and it was those powers he planned to improve since he wanted to use Nathaniel's power as his main one in Etrium.

But that wasn't the only thing Erik did. The young man turned his attention to the Ursolith, which, unlike its wounded counterpart, the Shadowclaw, presented a far greater challenge. Recognizing the need for strategic advantage, Erik planned his approach, determined to overcome the beast's resilience.

In the depths of the forest, around its territory, Erik set a carefully crafted trap designed to exploit the Ursolith's weaknesses. But it had not been easy since the young man didn't really know how to craft it and had to stop at simple traps like pitfalls cleverly disguised beneath layers of foliage, strategically positioning them in areas where the creature was likely to pass.

Knowing that brute force alone would not guarantee victory, the awakener relied on his cunning and knowledge of the Ursolith's behavior.

He studied the creature's patterns and tendencies, identifying its preferred hunting grounds and resting places. Armed with this information, he strategically placed bait in enticing locations, luring the Ursolith into the range of his trap.

Days turned into nights as Erik meticulously fine-tuned his preparations. The quiet solitude of the forest provided the backdrop to his calculated movements, each one a step closer to his ultimate goal.

The young man felt a sense of gratification as he surveyed the trap he made. He paused to observe his work, appreciating the meticulous craftsmanship that had gone into it.

Erik remarked with a trace of pride, "This trap will give me the necessary advantage. The Ursolith won't know what hit it."

His attention was drawn to the trap he had meticulously excavated. He knelt to inspect it closely. A harsh fate awaited any creature that plummeted into the depths concealed by a deceiving layer of vegetation.

Erik mused, his voice tinged with a blend of resolve and caution, "The sharp stakes at the bottom will ensure that the Ursolith will regret chasing me."

He examined the concealed spikes' stability to ensure they were securely in place. Erik was brimming with anticipation at the thought of the Ursolith being ambushed, falling into the trap, and crashing into the jagged spikes.

"I just hope they will wound it enough for me to be able to kill it in the end," he said with a faint smile.

As Erik reviewed the trap, his self-assurance grew as he imagined the moment when his strategies would come into action. The awakener resolved to be patient after one last look at the pitfall, knowing that the perfect opportunity would present itself soon.

The stage was set, and the game of predator and prey was about to commence. Erik steadied his resolve with a deep breath, ready to face the Ursolith.

"Well, better get going then."

Leaving behind the carefully prepared trap on the outskirts of the Ursolith's territory, Erik ventured deeper into the heart of the beast's domain. He pushed through the dense foliage; the surroundings transformed into a mysterious realm of towering trees, their branches interwoven like a natural tapestry. Shafts of sunlight filtered through the canopy, casting dappled patterns on the forest floor.

Erik's senses heightened, attuned to the subtle signs of the Ursolith's presence. His eyes caught glimpses of claw marks etched into the bark of trees, testaments to the creature's territorial dominance. The deep grooves and shredded wood bore witness to the thaid's strength; he had to be careful when battling it.

Moving forward with deliberate steps, Erik noticed the occasional scent of musk and earth lingering in the air, hinting at the Ursolith's recent passage. He followed the trail; his senses were keenly attuned to any environmental disturbance or change.

Occasionally, he spotted massive footprints imprinted in the soft soil. Each footprint left an indelible mark, a reminder that he was entering the realm of a true predator.

The scenery around him quickly shifted, becoming more rugged and foreboding. Jagged rock formations rose like ancient sentinels, their rough surfaces etched with the passage of time.

As he delved deeper into the Ursolith's territory, Erik didn't only see vegetation. The place was full of thaid's and small animals.

Among the rocky terrain, he stumbled upon a peculiar creature scuttling across the ground—the Pebblecrawler.

They were small armored insect-like thaid's adorned by an exoskeleton. It had a pair of antennae that helped it perceive things. The creatures dwelled within rocky terrains and preferred the shelter of crevices and rocky outcrops.

They were highly agile and adept climbers, using their sharp, hooked claws to grip even the most uneven surfaces.

These creatures were scavengers by nature, constantly on the lookout for small insects and plant matter that they could consume.

When threatened or sensing danger, the thaid would swiftly retreat into the safety of their rocky hideouts or burrow into the ground, disappearing from sight within seconds.

Eager to observe the Pebblecrawler up close, Erik cautiously approached. However, as he drew near, the creature sensed his presence and swiftly burrowed into the ground, disappearing from sight.

"Too bad, its brain crystal power would have been useful," Erik said as the creature retreated into the earth without leaving Erik the chance to kill it.

Continuing his journey, Erik's eyes caught sight of a delicate flutter of wings—a Zephyrwing gracefully dancing in the air.

"That would be a great power to have," Erik said. He was referring to this thaid's brain crystal power, which allowed it to control the winds. It was a power similar to Becker's and one of the rare ones related to elemental control.

Intrigued by its airborne abilities, he gazed upward, longing to reach and touch the elusive creature. But the Zephyrwing soared high above his grasp, using the air currents to maneuver through the sky effortlessly.

"Fuck... I'm really unlucky."

Erik marveled at the Zephyrwing's mastery of flight and control over the elements. He acknowledged the limitations of his terrestrial existence, knowing that capturing the essence of such a creature would require a different approach.

With a tinge of disappointment, he reluctantly redirected his focus back to his primary objective—the hunt for the Ursolith.

Erik cautiously went through the dense foliage until he arrived in a small clearing nestled among the towering trees. The sight that greeted him was a mesmerizing display of nature's craftsmanship. The clearing was adorned with an array of massive stones, their imposing presence giving an almost otherworldly feel to the space.

The stones stood tall and proud, some smooth and weathered by time, while others bore jagged edges that glinted in the dappled sunlight. They formed a natural boundary, enclosing the clearing with an air of mystery and intrigue.

As he ventured further into the clearing, Erik noticed how the stones created a protective barrier around a small central space. It was as if nature herself had crafted a sanctuary amidst the wildness of the surrounding forest.

He approached one of the larger stones, its rough surface catching his attention. Running his fingers along the jagged edges, he felt a tingling sensation, as if the stone whispered tales of battles fought and ancient rituals performed. The mana within the clearing was palpable, and Erik knew he stood in a place full of mana.

The awakener cautiously approached the Ursolith's resting place, a small cave nestled amidst the protective stones, radiating an aura of primal power.

The clearing surrounding the Ursolith's cave was filled with signs of its presence. Massive claw marks etched onto nearby trees revealed the strength and ferocity of the creature. As it moved through its territory, broken branches, and trampled foliage spoke of the Ursolith's immense size and weight.

Erik's gaze shifted to the cave's entrance, its dark depths beckoning him with an unsettling allure. His mind raced with strategies and calculations, assessing the potential risks and the best approach to confronting the formidable creature that called this cave home.

As he prepared himself mentally and physically, Erik knew that this would be a battle unlike any he had faced before. The Ursolith possessed size, strength, and a brain crystal power that could disrupt his mental state, imbuing fear into his mind.

Taking a deep breath, Erik stepped forward, his body poised for action. He understood the risks, but he also knew that the opportunity for growth lay within this dangerous encounter. The clearing grew quiet, as if nature held its breath, waiting to witness the clash of wills between man and beast.

Chapter 369: The bestial roar

As Erik got closer to the cave, he began to move with more caution. As he approached the ominous darkness, he noticed that the air became denser and was tinged with a scent that felt more primal. Since he had been keeping an eye on the beast in recent days and was familiar with its routine, he was aware that it was currently resting in this location.

The cave's walls were uneven and rough, and there were ancient markings all over them from the passage of time.

Erik advanced further into the cavern while maintaining a firm hold on his weapon and a heightened awareness of his surroundings. His torch cast a dim glow that provided soft illumination, making the rocky landscape before him visible. He located an appropriate place and then methodically laid out pieces of the Shadowclaw's meat in the shape of a trail that led back toward the cave entrance.

After taking a few steps back, Erik observed his handiwork with a smirk of satisfaction gracing his features. The intoxicating aroma of the freshly prepared meat permeated the air, extending an invitation to the Ursolith that could not be refused. He withdrew to a safe distance and located a concealed vantage point from which he could monitor any movement in the area.

In a state of tense anticipation, the minutes ticked by until a low rumble echoed throughout the cave. As the massive form of the Ursolith emerged from the darkness, the ground trembled beneath Erik's feet as he stood there. The beast's formidable muscles rippled beneath the thick hide it wore, and its eyes shone with the gleam of a predator.

The Ursolith gave the air a whiff while keeping its attention fixed on the tantalizing scent of meat. It methodically approached the bait, its movements bearing witness to the raw power and instinctual capabilities it possessed.

While the thaid began to gorge itself on the meat, Erik silently readied himself for the impending fight, maintaining a laser-like concentration and an ironclad resolve throughout the process. The first thing he had to do, however, was to use the analysis power the biological supercomputer provided to understand what he was dealing with.

-Name: Ursolith

-Brain Crystal Power: Bestial Roar

-Physical Characteristics: The Ursolith is a formidable bear-like thaid with a robust build, standing tall at around three meters. Its fur is thick and coarse, ranging in color from shades of brown to auburn, providing excellent camouflage in forested environments. Ursolith has a broad head adorned with large, sharp fangs and piercing yellow.

Its muscular limbs end with formidable claws, ideal for climbing trees and digging.

-Ecology: Ursolith dwells in dense forests and mountainous regions, favoring areas abundant in vegetation and prey. It relies on its innate physical strength to hunt. The Ursolith's brain crystal power, Bestial Roar, emits powerful and terrifying vocalizations that can disorient and intimidate other creatures.

Its roars can carry across vast distances, marking its territory and warning potential intruders of its presence. It is mainly used during battle to make the opponent unable to fight.

-Power Level: 191

-Approximate Strength: 95

-Approximate Intelligence: 3

-Approximate Dexterity: 73

-Approximate Energy: 400

< That's good. I can almost match its strength by using the Xeridon Anteris's power. The problem is that my dexterity is half the beast's, meaning I will also need to resort to Nathaniel's power to face it head-on as I did with the Shadowclaw.>

In truth, the beasts had comparable statistics; however, the Shadowclaw possessed greater dexterity and energy, while its strength lacked by more than 15 points. This indicated that the Ursolith, despite its larger size, was superior to the Shadowclaw in terms of speed and strength.

The fact that the bear-like Thaid engaged its opponents in direct combat as opposed to the Shadowclaw's style, which typically hunted by sneaking up on its prey, proved this. The Shadowclaw needed a higher level of dexterity to capture smaller but faster prey, something that the Ursolith didn't need.

As soon as Erik fully grasped his adversary's abilities, he began to channel mana. The young man planned to use the power granted to him by the Xeridon Anteris, which increased his strength by at least 30 points and brought him up to around 85 points, as well as the power granted to him by Nathaniel.

Simply put, he possessed the power of an MI-ranked individual while maintaining mostly even stats. That was a tremendous accomplishment; however, the problem was that those weren't really his stats, and once he reached Etrium, he had to refrain from using any other powers.

Nathaniel's was safe to use since it basically increased the power behind his attacks and the speed he could exert, but the others could be used only in case of emergency. Maybe he could use Hais's power since it only created a mana brain that aided him in multiple tasks and increased his intelligence passively, but aside from that, he didn't want to take unnecessary risks.

Erik experienced a surge in his strength as the mana was channeled through his neural links; however, this strength depended on Erik's mana reserves, of which he still possessed very little compared to his friends.

As the young man lunged forward, his muscles tensed, and he cut through the air with pinpoint accuracy using his blade. In the hopes of delivering a blow that would end the Ursolith's life, he delivered a swift and powerful blow to the thaid's most vulnerable part: its exposed neck. When it

made contact with the thick hide, the blade cut cleanly through it, leaving a gaping wound in its wake.

ROOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOAR

Anguish and rage were mixed in the ear-splitting roar that the Ursolith let out. In a vain effort to fend off its assailant, the massive creature arched its back and slashed its claws through the air. Erik's reflexes kicked in, and he was able to avoid the creature's retaliatory strikes quickly.

The awakener evaluated the situation as the Ursolith thrashed around in agony, blood oozing from the wound on its neck. The injury was severe but not enough to bring down the beast. Erik was well aware that he needed to capitalize on his advantage and strike with accuracy.

As the Ursolith's pain began to lessen, its baser instincts took over, and it fixed its eyes on Erik with a vengeful intensity. Its eyes glowed with a fiery rage, the fury of a wounded predator seeking vengeance. Its fury was visible in its eyes. The features of the beast twisted into a twisted visage of wrath, and its gaping maw exposed rows of razor-sharp teeth stained with blood.

The Ursolith radiated a chilling aura, and its body trembled with the raw power and the natural instinct for violence it possessed. Its murderous glint cut through the shadows of the cavern, reflecting a ruthless and unyielding resolve.

The eyes of the creature appeared to shine with a light that came from another world; it was a fierce and savage light that conveyed the creature's insatiable desire for blood.

The Ursolith shifted its posture, its massive form towering over Erik in its new position. Every tendon and muscle in his body tensed up, getting ready to pounce with lethal accuracy. Its deadly muscles flexed, and its short tail swayed menacingly, indicating it was about to launch an attack.

It seemed as though the beast's entire being radiated a palpable energy, one that was going to be used to kill.

At that very instant, Erik was able to feel the ruthless intent of the Ursolith and its determination to rip him apart and win the battle against him. The young man girded himself, meeting the gaze of the Ursolith with the same unwavering determination that was in the thaid's eyes.

[DANGER: A FEAR STATUS HAS AFFECTED THE HOST. RELEASE OF CALMING SUBSTANCES INTO THE BRAIN IN 3...2...1]

Chapter 370: The pitfall trap

"Fuck! That was close!" Erik just escaped a dangerous situation. If it weren't for the biological supercomputer, he would be in a fear state that would have for sure cost him his life, as that would have made him unable to think logically.

Luckily, he had the system by his side, and it immediately took care of the situation by releasing calming substances.

The young man rushed out of the cave with the Ursolith on his tail. Erik's goal now was to lead the beast to his pitfall trap and kill it there if possible.

The young man's eyes darted across the stones that littered the small clearing, searching for a way to slow down the Ursolith. The imposing rocks held the promise of a temporary barrier he had to take advantage of.

His heart raced as he spotted a series of larger stones positioned within the boundary almost strategically. Without hesitation, Erik veered towards them, his movements fluid and calculated. He skillfully navigated the uneven terrain with each leap and bound, utilizing the uneven surfaces as footholds.

The Ursolith's thunderous footsteps reverberated through the clearing, drawing nearer with every passing moment. Erik's mind raced, his focus honed on the task at hand.

He needed to create a temporary obstacle to impede the beast's pursuit, buying him precious seconds to gain distance.

Erik demonstrated agility and precision by launching himself from one rock to another. His body soared through the air, momentarily defying gravity, before landing with controlled grace.

As the Ursolith closed in, its roars echoing through the forest, Erik's heart pounded in his chest. He pushed himself harder, his movements fueled by a surge of adrenaline.

Each leap brought him closer to his goal as the rocks impeded the beast's progress, forcing it to navigate the treacherous terrain. The Ursolith's massive form stumbled, its momentum disrupted by the intricate dance of stones.

Growls of frustration mingled with the sounds of rocks and earth clashing. Erik seized the moment, utilizing the distraction to put even greater distance between himself and the pursuing monster. The awakener left the clearing and went among the trees.

The Ursolith's heavy footsteps reverberated behind him, drawing closer with every passing second. The air crackled with tension as Erik ran. for his life.

"Now is the time..."

Erik channeled mana into his Plant Master brain crystal power's neural links. Thorny vines erupted from the forest floor in a breathtaking display of nature's fury, snaking toward the monstrous creature with calculated precision.

With every moment, the vines grew in size and ferocity—their twisted forms, adorned with razor-sharp thorns, writhed and coiled, hungry for their prey.

Each vine boasted a sinewy texture, its surface marred by protruding spikes that gleamed with a vicious glint. As they extended towards their target, the vines seemed to writhe with a life of their own. They launched themselves at the Ursolith, seeking to inflict as much damage as possible.

The air crackled with the moment's intensity as the thorny tendrils struck. They wrapped around the Ursolith's massive frame, their thorns piercing its thick hide. The beast roared in agony; its struggles, no matter how strong the beast was, proved futile against the relentless onslaught.

The vines tightened their grip, constricting the Ursolith's limbs and restricting its movements. Each tug and twist inflicted fresh wounds, leaving a trail of lacerations across the monster's body. But that wasn't enough to stop its charge since the vines were not meant to trap it, as Erik didn't have enough mana to use all those powers with reckless abandon.

Blood seeped from the punctured flesh, staining the forest floor in a macabre display of crimson.

The awakener watched with a mix of satisfaction and apprehension as his creation exacted its wrath upon the Ursolith. His calm and collected demeanor transformed into a focused intensity as he directed the vines with precision, ensuring their relentless assault continued unabated while he baited the beast toward the pitfall.

There was a smirk on the young man's face as everything was going as he had planned and hoped. The Ursolith's roars of pain echoed through the forest, a haunting chorus that reverberated in Erik's ears and scared every thaid in the surroundings. Each wound inflicted by the thorny vines weakened the monster further, sapping its strength and resolve.

However, Thaid's were also stupid, and they often couldn't control their hunger or bloodlust, thus preventing them from stopping when the situation was too dangerous even for them.

With each passing moment, the Ursolith's movements grew sluggish. It even stumbled a couple of times, its massive form wobbling as new thorny vines gripped the beast and were consequentially snapped as the creature charged at Erik. The monster's eyes glinted with anger and bloodlust, its primal instincts warring against the pain that coursed through its body.

With the Ursolith's thunderous footsteps echoing behind him, Erik's eyes scanned the dense forest, searching for the marks he had left before, which indicated the way and the distance to the trap. Beads of sweat trickled down his forehead as he pushed his legs to carry him faster, his gaze finally landing on a series of tree trunks adorned with his distinctive marks.

A single arrow etched on the tree bark caught his attention. The symbol, simple yet powerful, pointed him in the right direction.

Erik's gaze flickered between the arrow mark and the remaining distance to the pitfall traps as he dashed through the undergrowth. The surroundings seemed to blur in his peripheral vision, and the earth beneath his feet trembled due to the Ursolith's pursuit.

As the distance to the pitfall narrowed, the forest seemed to hold its breath, as if nature recognized the impending clash between man and beast. Only a hundred meters stood between the young man and the pitfall trap, a treacherous chasm waiting to ensnare the Ursolith.

"Here I am!"

As Erik neared the edge of the pitfall trap, his heart raced with anticipation and anxiety. The forest floor abruptly gave way beneath him, revealing the concealed danger that lay in wait.

He propelled himself forward with a surge of instinctive agility, defying gravity for a fleeting moment.

Time seemed to stand still as Erik's body arced through the air, his muscles straining against the pull of gravity. His eyes locked onto the Ursolith, which thundered behind him, its massive form looming ever closer. It was a race against both time and the beast's relentless pursuit.

In a breathtaking display of athleticism, Erik jumped over the treacherous expanse of the pitfall, his body soaring through the air with the grace of a predator in flight. The world around him seemed to blur, reduced to a singular focus on the Ursolith and the awaiting trap.

The moment of truth arrived soon after with a resounding crash. The Ursolith, unable to anticipate Erik's daring maneuver, careened headlong into the concealed pitfall. The forest trembled under the weight of its impact as the monstrous creature tumbled downward, its roars of frustration and pain reverberating through the air.

Erik landed with a solid thud on the opposite side, his body braced for the impact. He staggered slightly, the adrenaline coursing through his veins masking any discomfort.

As the Ursolith thrashed within the depths of the pitfall trap, Erik watched with grim satisfaction at the beast's visages twisting in pain. The jagged wooden spikes lining the pit floor had found their mark, impaling the monster's massive form in a cruel embrace.

Guttural roars erupted from the Ursolith's throat, a symphony of pain and unbridled rage. Each bellow reverberated through the forest, carrying an otherworldly intensity that sent shivers down Erik's spine. The creature's primal fury fueled its desperate attempts to break free, but the impaling poles held it captive, a grim reminder of its mortally dangerous situation.

Blood seeped from the wounds inflicted by the vicious stakes, staining the monster's hide like a macabre tapestry. Agonized growls mingled with the sounds of splintering wood as the Ursolith's fierce struggles only deepened its torment. Each movement sent shock waves of pain radiating through its massive frame.

Standing at the precipice of the pitfall, Erik felt a mix of trepidation and awe. The sheer power of the Ursolith was on full display, even in its wounded state.

Erik took his chance and commanded the thorny vines to lash at the Ursolith's writhing form. The vines obeyed his command, attacking the monster's limbs and back, constricting its movements. The thaid's agonized cries echoed through the air as the thorns pierced its flesh, drawing forth fresh rivulets of blood.

But despite the vines' relentless assault, Erik could see the beast coming out of the pitfall. Erik tried to prevent the beast from coming out, but the strain of exerting control over the plants took its toll, severely decreasing his mana and making him vulnerable. The once-potent tendrils began to lose their grip, their hold weakening with each passing moment.

The Ursolith, sensing its chance for escape, seized the opportunity.

The monster fought against the remaining vines with a burst of raw strength, tearing through their thorny embrace. Splintered wood and shredded foliage littered the pit as the Ursolith clawed its way toward freedom. Erik's heart sank as he realized his attempts to subdue the beast were not working. However, at least he managed to create more wounds.

Determination surged within him as he made a split-second decision. He had to use his Flyssa to deal with the creature. With a final glance at the wounded creature, Erik turned and sprinted away, knowing the beast would keep chasing him and his footsteps echoing through the forest.

Behind him, the Ursolith's enraged roars filled the air, a haunting chorus reverberating through the forest. The ground trembled beneath it once it got out of the trap and started its pursuit.

Erik had to get away from the trap to avoid falling inside. He needed to reach a place where he would have enough room to move and avoid the beast's attacks.