

BIOLOGICAL 37

Chapter 37: The Bush Hedgehog

As Erik embarked on the train, he sat beside the window, eager to observe the passing scenery.

It felt like glimpsing the unfolding chapters of his own life—a curious and contemplative experience.

The stark contrast between the lush farmlands and the bustling cityscape never failed to amaze him, visible with absolute clarity even at a distance.

From the train station in the northern district, Erik continued his journey towards Mister Fox's farm, walking alongside vast expanses of golden wheat fields that seemed to stretch endlessly toward the horizon.

People toiled diligently in the fields but were too immersed in their work to notice him passing by.

As he traversed the dusty, unpaved road, Erik's mind wandered through various thoughts—how his life had transformed, the upcoming prospect of attending military school, something he didn't want to but still had no power to change, the summer break's labor before enrollment, and other uncertainties that lay ahead.

Amidst it all, he held firm confidence that the system would pave the way for a brighter future.

Approaching the end of the dirt path, Erik heard a peculiar noise from his right. He paused, attentive to the surroundings yet unable to discern the source of the sound.

"Is anybody here?" The young man shouted, but there was no reply.

"Hello?"

[WARNING. HOSTILE DETECTED.]

Suddenly, a thaid came out of the field.

"Fuck!" Erik shouted once he saw the creature; he knew what it was since they had talked about it in school. It was a thaid named bush hedgehog.

<Emergency quest: Survival>

-Rewards for completion: 150 experience points for killing the creature; 80 experience points for escaping the creature. 60 DNA points in either case.

"NOT AGAIN!" Erik shouted as the beast approached him, and his heart started pounding inside his chest like a sledgehammer.

"Analysis," the young man said, and then the usual window appeared before his eyes.

- Species: Bush hedgehog.

- Brain crystal power: Venomous Mana spikes.

-Dimension: Approximately 70 centimeters long and 80 centimeters tall.

-Description: The beast has a feline face and the body of a hedgehog. The host is advised not to be hit by the creature's spikes.

-Power Level: 19

Approximate Strength: 9

Approximate Intelligence: 1

Approximate Dexterity: 8

Approximate Energy: 16

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As Erik carefully analyzed the beast's status, he noticed the beast didn't possess significantly greater physical strength than him.

Moreover, its intelligence seemed low, which he suspected was common among thaids.

However, the creature's energy levels were more than double his own, suggesting that its brain crystal power surpassed his.

According to his knowledge, which the system confirmed, the creature wielded venomous mana spikes—a lethal threat that it would undoubtedly attempt to use against him. Now faced with this daunting challenge, Erik had to devise a solution to swiftly escape the creature's clutches.

Unfortunately, he lacked the seeds to launch a counterattack as he did last time, and he couldn't replicate his previous feat of fending it off with trees.

However, he did have one power at his disposal—the sharpening one. The problem was that he didn't have any weapon to use on and confront the beast, nor could he risk using his own body to engage it since he would end up injured, especially since he couldn't fight yet.

With urgency, Erik took off, sprinting as fast as his legs could. Yet, his attempts to flee were hampered by the creature's similar strength, making it a formidable contender in the race for survival.

< Fuck... Fuck... Fuck... Fuck... Fuck... Fuck...> The young man thought about what to do. He had no experience fighting, and he was only lucky when he killed the other thaid. The only thing he could do at this point was to ask for help, hoping that the people nearby would come to help him.

"HELP ME!"

"HELP!" he shouted. Unfortunately, there was no one in sight.

In imminent danger, Erik's mind raced, desperately seeking a solution as the relentless beast closed in on him. As he entered the wheat field, a daring idea sparked in his mind—a daring and desperate gamble for survival.

"It's do or die..."

Summoning every ounce of his mana, Erik channeled the energy from his brain crystal, through his brain, and into his heart, before finally directing it to his hands.

He infused all his available mana into a single wheat stalk with a sense of urgency, leaving him feeling drained and almost devoid of energy.

His heart pounding, Erik observed as the mana enveloped the stalk, and with sheer willpower, he commanded it to become razor-sharp. As the mana thinned, he abruptly turned to face the oncoming beast, which was charging toward him with unwavering speed.

With adrenaline surging through his veins, Erik and the creature closed the distance between them until they were dangerously close.

Seizing the right moment, Erik's arm swung the sharpened wheat stalk at the beast's neckline. The plant, approximately one meter and twenty centimeters long, protected him from the creature's deadly spikes.

As the stalk connected with the creature, the sharpness of the plant proved effective, slicing through the spikes that adorned its body and inflicting a severe wound at the base of its neck.

However, the stalk's lack of rigidity prevented it from penetrating further and severing the head from the neck.

Erik's mana wasn't sufficient to achieve a lethal blow despite his effort. Had he wielded a proper weapon, the outcome might have been different, but for now, he had managed to wound the creature and gain a momentary advantage in this challenging encounter.

"ARHGHHAHG," the beast shrieked in agony and immediately jumped back, almost hitting Erik with its spike.

With its fur bristling and spiky points aimed forward, the beast began channeling mana into the spikes, causing them to emit a faint bluish glow.

Despite losing a copious amount of blood from its grievous wound, the creature persisted in its attempt to attack Erik.

Charging at him with determination, it met the young man's defense—a swift and skilled swinging of the makeshift weapon, the sharpened wheat stalk.

Erik, lacking formal fighting knowledge, could only rely on instinct and determination to fend off the thaid's relentless advances.

He kept the creature at bay with each swing, knowing its stamina would eventually wane due to its injuries.

As the thaid's spikes turned backward, pointing at Erik, it suddenly changed direction and fled towards the wheat field from where it had emerged.

In that pivotal moment, Erik faced a critical decision. He could choose to continue fending off the thaid and successfully escape, earning a reward of eighty experience points and sixty DNA points for completing the quest.

However, driven by a newfound resolve and tired of his former weaknesses and mistreatment, Erik made a bold choice—he decided to chase after the creature to kill it.

Deep inside, he yearned to shed the label of "plant hugger" and prove himself capable of protecting himself and others.

Killing the thaid would not only complete the quest but also grant him additional experience points and the potential to absorb the creature's brain crystal power, thus gaining other neural links.

Such a feat would offer him new means to thrive in the military, enhancing his chances of survival and success.

So, he did something that he deemed impossible for him two weeks prior: he started chasing the creature, intending to kill it. Then, Erik started running, following the beast across the wheat field stretching before him.

The field stretched before him, witnessing his courageous stride toward newfound strength and self-discovery.