

BIOLOGICAL 411

Chapter 411: Marching

The group gathered in the center of their village very early in the morning, just as the first rays of sunlight were breaking through the gloom to illuminate the world.

There were ten villagers, and each one was carrying the hope of their community on their shoulders. Samuel, a skilled and experienced fighter, took his place at the head of the group, serving as a symbol of the group's strength and determination.

Ethan and Erik, who wanted to help in this mission, were there with him.

The newest member of their group, Erik, brought with him a level of familiarity with the underground city that none of the others possessed, while Ethan had extensive familiarity with the natural environment that surrounded the ancient city since he used to go around those parts to play with his friends when he was little, despite his parents' protests.

They set out on their journey to reach the entrance to the underground city as their final destination.

The terrain they traversed represented the life they had been accustomed to, which consisted of living in a verdant wilderness that was equally as beautiful as it was harsh.

An ethereal glow illuminated their path as they walked because the light from the rising sun had penetrated the wintery trees. Despite the overwhelming calm, there was an underlying sense of unease in the air. They were all aware of the seriousness of the task and the hushed sense of urgency that hung in the air like a dense mist.

Samuel approached Erik; the usually gentle features on his face were replaced by ones displaying sadness, and his eyes were filled with remorse. "Erik," he began, his voice solemn, "I... we... owe you an apology."

Erik glanced upward, surprised by Samuel's out-of-character display of vulnerability. "What for?" he asked, an air of confusion.

Samuel sighed, his gaze briefly flitting away before returning to meet Erik's. "Today's your birthday," he said, the words hanging heavily between them. "Amos and I... we shouldn't have asked you to do such a task today. We are well aware of that. It's not fair to you."

Erik's brow furrowed slightly, the revelation of his birthday catching him off guard. A moment of silence ensued as he processed Samuel's words. Then, with a chuckle, he offered a small, dismissive hand wave.

"It's okay, Samuel," he said, the corners of his mouth tugging into a gentle smile. His gaze was steady, reflecting a maturity far beyond his years. "We're doing this for everyone in the village, right? That's more important than a stupid birthday. Besides, I've never been one for celebrations anyway."

The tension in the room was dispelled as soon as Erik's words were heard because they were delivered with complete sincerity. Samuel showed his gratitude by nodding his head and smiling broadly as he did so.

"Still," he said, clapping a firm hand on Erik's shoulder, "We'll make it up to you, kid. You have my word."

As the sun continued to rise in the morning, casting a warm glow on the two people, there was a palpable sense of harmony and comprehension between them.

Looking thoughtful, Erik turned his gaze to the path ahead, his eyes tracing the familiar route to the underground city. "Samuel," he started, a note of curiosity in his voice, "What do you guys actually know about the underground city?"

Samuel followed Erik's gaze with his own, and his eyes narrowed slightly as he pondered the question. "Not much, I'm afraid," he admitted, his face displaying a certain amount of pessimism.

"Most of what we know are just fragments of stories passed down from our ancestors."

Samuel halted for a second, his gaze becoming increasingly distant as if he were looking back in time.

There was a moment of silence as Samuel paused, his gaze distant as if looking back in time. "But we do know that our ancestors came from there," he said, his voice tinged with a mix of reverence. "That's why the underground city holds such significance for us. It's not just a potential shelter or a hiding place. It's a link to our past, a piece of our history."

Erik nodded, his expression thoughtful. He could accept the importance of such a connection but wasn't able to understand it since his place of birth was such a shithole, and he wanted nothing to do with it. After all, everyone wanted to know where they came from to understand their roots.

This mission wasn't just about survival but also about reclaiming a part of their heritage, their ancestral home. Understanding that, Erik felt an even deeper resolve to help the villagers succeed.

"By any chance, do you have any idea why the city was abandoned?" Erik inquired as he cast a curious look in Samuel's direction, his curiosity piqued. The question lingered in the atmosphere between them, creating an atmosphere of mystique and conjecture.

Samuel showed regret in the way he shook his head and expressed himself. "No, we don't," he admitted. "Our ancestors didn't leave any records of what caused them to leave. All we have are theories."

Erik nodded, indicating that he understood the aggravation caused by dealing with the unknown. After a brief silence, he broke the hush and shared his theory with the group.

"I believe it could have been due to the humanoid Thaid that inhabits the cave," he stated, looking at Samuel steadily.

Samuel turned to look at him, his interest piqued. "That Thaid?" he asked, seeking clarification.

"Yes," Erik continued, his tone confident. "Considering the destructive power of that creature, it's likely that the people back then just didn't have the means to face it. It must have seemed an impossible challenge, too strong to overcome. The risk of staying must have outweighed the benefits, leading them to abandon the city."

After finishing, Erik turned and fixed his gaze firmly on the road before them. Even though they were dealing with something unknown, he believed that knowledge of the past could be the key to overcoming the challenges they were facing now.

"Why didn't you and Amos deal with the creature earlier?" " After turning to face Samuel, Erik questioned him. Clearly, he was asking out of genuine curiosity and not in an accusatory tone. His face was pockmarked with alternating areas of light and shadow caused by the sunlight penetrating the forest's wintry canopy, and his eyes were fixed on Samuel.

Samuel looked back at him, a hint of a wry smile on his lips. "There was no need before," he explained, his gaze steady. "We didn't plan on returning to the underground city. We were content with our life here in the village."

His gaze traveled all around them, taking in the landscape and the way the trees were growing taller and taller, their thick trunks providing a sense of stability.

"We've always lived off the land, hunting and farming. The city was a remnant of the past, a place our ancestors left behind. We didn't have a reason to disturb the creatures that took residence there."

Chapter 412: Reaching the door

"But now, circumstances have changed," Samuel continued, his tone grave. "With Frant imposing on our land and our lives in danger, we have no choice but to return to the city, our ancestral home. And that means facing whatever dangers lurk there."

As Samuel concluded his explanation, the two men continued their journey, feeling the weight of the importance of their mission pressing down on their shoulders. However, they did so purposefully, guided by their collective determination to safeguard their home and those who lived there.

As they moved forward, they confronted the difficulties the wilderness presented. They faced obstacles in the form of steep inclines, treacherous pitfalls, and rushing rivers. Despite this, the group worked together toward a common goal and assisted one another in overcoming the obstacles.

There was always a hand to catch, someone who stumbled, and there was always a voice to offer direction when the path ahead was unclear.

The journey would not have been possible without Ethan's in-depth familiarity with the area. He would frequently scout ahead of them to make sure there were no obstacles in their way, while Samuel's self-controlled demeanor kept the other group members on track and motivated.

Erik had an important role, even though he hadn't arrived in the village until recently. His one-of-a-kind understanding of the city that lay beyond their destination was extremely helpful; his task was to guide the group in the sprawling underground city as they tackled their mammoth endeavor.

The sunlight that reached the forest floor from above was diffused by the wintery clouds and the remnants of the overhanging vegetation, creating dynamic shadows and light patterns on the ground below.

The sound of chirping birds, rustling leaves, and the occasional crackling sound of a twig breaking under the weight of creatures could not be seen, filling the air like a symphonic performance of nature.

The ten-person team communicated effectively through silence as they moved through the wilderness, a testament to their shared knowledge and experience.

The group moved stealthily and gracefully, their gazes swiftly sweeping the area around them, always looking for potential dangers.

They had a long journey ahead of them, during which they had to navigate through dense undergrowth and ford-bubbling streams. They stopped only when it was indispensable so that they could save their energy for future challenges. They were going to need all of their strength for what was going to happen next.

After what seemed like an eternity, the thicket finally started to thin out and make way for a clearing. There, against a natural stone wall, stood a door made of metal; it was the ominous watcher and keeper of the ancient underground city, the ancestral home for Liberty Watch Village.

The weather had taken its toll on the door, but it remained sturdy. The group came to a halt; their attention was immediately drawn to the towering structure in the distance. It was here that they would legitimately start their journey. This was also the place where Erik, at the time a mysterious figure of unknown origin but now the village savior, suddenly appeared.

Now they would follow him into that darkness he came from, back into their past, to ensure their future and families would be safe.

They looked at the door as one; their objective was crystal clear: free the city from monsters. The group was confronted with the still door was ready to be opened.

Ethan broke the silence with a sense of purpose and said, "We're finally here."

As he leaned against a tree to survey the enormous entrance, Erik focused on Samuel before returning his attention to the door. "Samuel, can you open the door? It would be easier for you." His voice echoed the respect he held for the man.

Samuel nodded at Erik's request. Even though the door was enormous and undeniably heavy, he was well-equipped with monstrous strength and well-toned muscles capable of handling the challenge.

His muscles had been toughened by years of training, farming, and fighting Thaid, and if there was one thing he knew for sure, he could count on his strength when it mattered the most.

As Samuel approached the metal door, the atmosphere had an unmistakable sense of gravity. He made sure that both of his feet were firmly planted on the ground, rolled his shoulders back, and then took a deep breath before reaching for the smooth, hard surface of the door.

Samuel took a firm stance in front of the door, his presence dominating the space as he reached for the enormous wheel handle.

The rust and moss on it were a physical manifestation of the passage of time. After taking a few deep breaths, he began to use all of his strength to turn the handle, and he could feel his muscles tense up due to the effort. As the handle started to resist the force he was applying, his grip became tighter, and the veins in his arms became more visible.

After some effort, Samuel's massive strength caused the wheel to start turning, and each rotation required the strength of an ox to complete. This resulted in a low, grating noise reverberating throughout the still forest. He set his jaw straight, his mind becoming increasingly concentrated.

The door's weight was nothing compared to the weight of the task they were about to undertake, so there was no need to worry about that.

As the metal groans of the turning wheel echoed eerily all around them, sweat dripped down the older man's brow, and he breathed in short, choppy gasps. After what seemed like ages, the door finally started to yield to his strength and open.

The wheel started to turn, and the mechanism unlocked with a loud clang reverberating throughout the tunnel behind.

Samuel gave the wheel one last mighty heave and then pushed against the enormous door as he finished turning it. Before finally giving way, it protested its opening by creaking and groaning as it opened.

The massive door swung open, revealing the vast tunnel beyond it. This was the entrance to their history and possibly their future as well.

When the massive door was finally able to be opened all the way, the air from the tunnel in front of them began to billow out, bringing with it the smell of old, untouched earth and a lingering sense of mystery.

Erik peered into the pitch-black tunnel, which seemed to be beckoning them forward in a threatening manner. His heart was pounding in his chest, and he could feel a faint echo of his past fear resonating in his mind. The Humanoid Thaid lived here.

He recalled his most recent excursion into the vast underground city and his spine-chilling confrontation with the humanoid thaid and the Acidspitter Arthropods. The memories sent a shiver down his spine.

Chapter 413: Entering the city (1)

However, as he turned his head to the side to look at Samuel, he experienced a brief comfort. With his robust build and determined demeanor, Samuel seemed to give off an aura of strength and certainty that was infectious to those around him.

Erik's heart was slightly agitated, but the older man's assurance seemed to dispel those feelings and replace them with a glimmer of hope and a steely resolve.

Erik was well aware that they were in a very precarious situation and that the difficulties they were about to encounter would be enormous.

However, he felt a surge of courage when Samuel was by his side, and the determination of their mission gave him fuel to keep going. It was a nightmare that he would have to face, not by himself this time but with friends by his side.

They had a goal to work toward and a place to recover, and he was prepared to fight for them both.

"Here we are," Erik murmured, his voice echoing slightly in the tunnel's opening. The dark abyss in front of them felt less menacing now. "It certainly feels different this time," he said.

A faint smile tugged at the old man's lips, "We're going to be fine." He sensed the young man's anxiousness.

One by one, the group of ten men stepped into the gaping mouth of the tunnel. The shadows swallowed them; their faces turned grim under the torchlight. The tunnel, broad and extending into the bowels of the earth, enveloped them, wrapping them in its subterranean chill. A musty scent hung in the air, a testament to years of undisturbed silence.

Their pounding feet reverberated throughout the vast passageway, creating a rhythmic drumming quickly obliterated by the deafening lack of sound. The echo ricocheted off the uneven walls, creating a peculiar cacophony that was the product of all their motions working together.

The sounds were crisp and distinct, the only audible noise in the vast stillness demonstrating how far they had traveled into the unknown.

The shadows cast by their torches against the rocky walls of the tunnel were eerie to look at as the light from their torches flickered.

The light was dancing in such a way that it gave the impression that the sharp edges of the rocks were swaying and moving.

This optical illusion brought the otherwise still tunnel an unsettling and lively quality. It seemed as if the rock was keeping an eye on them, with the shadows deep within the stone appearing vigilant and on guard.

Their actions were deliberate and methodical as they made their way more deeply into the tunnel system below the surface. Each man had a keen awareness of the others, and their shared purpose served to bind them together despite the precarious nature of the situation. They proceeded deeper into the darkness with their eyes fixed forward and their torches held high.

The thin ray of light cast by their torches appeared to flicker and then disappear into the gaping gloom of the passageway. The air was thick with wariness, and the shadows grew darker and curled around the periphery of their field of vision as they did so.

"We need to be quiet," Erik reminded them, his voice a mere whisper in the chilly, damp air. "The Acidspitter Arthropods are sensitive to sound. If we disturb them, they will rush to the cave entrance, and we want to avoid that at all costs."

The only thing that broke the silence was the occasional drop of water that fell from the jagged rock ceiling high above. Heads nodded in agreement. The group moved forward, but their footsteps were muffled unnaturally as they cautiously made their way through the dimly lit tunnel.

Erik, who was in charge of leading the way inside, proceeded with extreme caution while his ears strained to pick up any sounds that might indicate the presence of Acidspitter Arthropods. The others did the same thing, and their facial expressions remained grim and intent as they vigilantly watched their footing and attempted to take the lightest possible steps.

As they progressed further into the tunnel, the world beyond appeared to recede further and further into the distance, and an eerie silence began to envelop them like a shroud. The sound of their steps reverberated all around them, creating an eerie melody that accompanied them on their journey into the unknown.

They felt as though anxiety was adhering to them like a second skin, and the air seemed to pulsate with palpable tension.

However, they persisted despite the difficulty of the task at hand, which drove them further into the heart of the underground city.

They were determined to get where they were going, and each step they took reflected their shared resolve, despite the possibility of being ambushed by thaids.

After what seemed like an endless trek of half an hour, their destination, the entrance to the underground city, finally materialized in front of them. The dreary and rocky walls of the tunnel were replaced with a dazzling display of light over time.

The Aclaitrium ore began to emerge from the walls and softly glow, casting an ethereal light that danced on the rock's surface and bathed the tunnel in an otherworldly luminescence.

As the spectral light became brighter, the silhouette of a door emerged from the darkness. It was a gate made of metal that held the promise of allowing passage into the mysteries of the past. The group stopped before it, their torches becoming unnecessary due to the brilliant radiance emanating from the ore. A solemn silence descended on the atmosphere.

The scars on the metal door drew Erik's attention, and he stared at them. Discernible were the cuts, which were deep and jagged, serving as an unsettling reminder of the beast that had forced him into this very tunnel precisely one month prior.

The memory of the terrifying experience resurfaced, and he felt a shiver run down his spine. As he acknowledged the reality of what lay beyond the door—the ancient city and the horrors that awaited them all—he felt a violent pounding in his chest, and his heart beat loudly in his chest.

Erik pointed out the scars on the door to Samuel and Ethan, his voice barely above a whisper. "Those... those were made by the humanoid thaid," he said. His eyes traced the gashes, each a grim reminder of his encounter with the monster lurking within the depths of the underground city.

Samuel studied the scars etched into the door's surface, the metallic grooves looking hauntingly out of place on the otherwise smooth expanse of the door. "By the heavens," he muttered, an edge of disbelief creeping into his voice. "This thing must be massive."

His eyes roved over the ragged cuts in the metal, each a tangible testament to the creature's strength and ferocity. The damage seemed impossible, yet here it was, a brutal artwork of destruction wrought by a creature that was equally, if not more, terrifying.

"Look at these," Samuel said, his fingers tracing the jagged edges of the deepest gash. "This is no ordinary Thaid we're dealing with."

Chapter 414: Entering the city (2)

When Erik turned his attention to the opening in the door, he discovered something that had changed since the last time he was in this location.

When he thought he had barely escaped a month ago, the aperture was noticeably larger than he had recalled.

He looked over the wrecked entrance, scrutinizing it as his gaze moved from the ripped metal to the towering dimensions of the door.

A chilling realization dawned upon him - despite being larger, the opening was still too small for the behemoth of a thaid to pass through.

A cold shudder ran down Erik's spine as the gravity of his earlier predicament sank in. He had escaped death by a hair's breadth, the size of the opening in the door being his unexpected salvation.

He had been chased, cornered, and yet, by some stroke of luck, he had managed to survive the encounter.

A sudden wave of gratitude washed over him as he realized how lucky he was to be alive. Despite the imminent dangers ahead, he was still breathing and standing.

In the dim light of the Aclaitrium-illuminated tunnel, Erik turned to Samuel, his eyes reflecting a sense of urgency. "Samuel," he began in a whisper, "We need to open this door as quietly as possible."

Samuel, a seasoned warrior with the physical strength to match his reputation, shifted his focus from Erik to the enormous metal door.

The ominous scratches that covered its surface gave the appearance of a light shimmering effect in the ethereal glow that emanated from the luminescent ore. Before returning his attention to the younger man, his eyes lingered on the scratch marks made by the claws.

"I'll try," Samuel responded, his voice barely audible. The rumble of his response echoed faintly through the corridor, but it was quickly swallowed up by the deafening silence that pervaded the entire area.

The elderly man, despite his bulk, moved with a steady grace as he approached the heavy door with careful steps. His rippling muscles reached out and wrapped themselves around the corroded wheel handle that operated the massive door mechanism.

He began to pull the massive door open. Even with his extraordinary strength, he had trouble opening the door because it was so old and poorly maintained for so long.

He then turned to Erik, and their eyes met for a brief moment as they came to an understanding of the task at hand through a shared gaze. "Quiet as a cat," he promised, his words slicing through the tense air.

Samuel took a long, deep breath before beginning to apply force, which caused the lean muscles in his arms to flex in response to the strain. Samuel realigned his center of gravity and brought his entire body's force to bear as he started to turn the wheel.

The door squeaked softly, producing an eerie sound that reverberated throughout the nearly silent passageway. Everyone kept their eyes peeled and held their breath as the door gradually started to give way, revealing an increasing amount of what lay ahead.

Samuel's careful efforts contributed significantly to the low level of noise that was present. The creaking of the ancient door was barely audible, and the sound of metal on metal was kept to the barest minimum throughout the entire process.

The Villagers held their breath as the quiet sound seemed to echo throughout the confined space where they were standing.

The stakes were high, and they were keenly aware of the consequences of alerting the thaids of their presence.

Samuel drew a breath before pausing and looking back at Erik momentarily. The older man merely nodded, which encouraged the younger man to carry on.

After turning around, Samuel gathered his strength and started turning the wheel methodically and deliberately again. Despite the door's obstinate resistance, it eventually gave way, the small opening becoming more substantial with each excruciatingly slow turn.

They were inching closer and closer to their objective, which was the foreboding underground city that lay beyond the wheel each time it was turned.

Samuel made a concerted effort to remain silent, as evidenced by the furrow on his brow as he focused.

A moment went by, followed by another. At long last, after a muffled exhalation, he inched the door slightly further open.

The subsequent deafening silence indicated that the monsters had ignored their entrance.

Samuel took a step back, letting go of the door as he did so so that the task could be considered finished.

"We're in," he murmured, his voice barely a whisper in the heavy silence. His gaze scanned the group, landing last on Erik. "Now, we venture into the belly of the beast."

"Listen up, everyone," he began, his tone firm and measured, echoing the gravity of their mission. "Fighting in this city is not quite the same as doing so in the woods. Mess up here, destroy something you shouldn't, and the cave collapses. Keep this in mind."

After taking a momentary pause, he looked around at the faces of the men who had gathered around him to ensure they understood the seriousness of what he had just said. After confirming that he had their undivided attention, he continued his speech.

"Rule number one: We stay quiet. Noise could alert the Acidspitter Arthropods to our presence, and we do not want that. I cannot stress this enough. We tread softly and speak in whispers," he instructed, his voice dipping lower as he emphasized the need for silence.

Samuel gave Erik a glance that contained a trace of amusement on his face. Even though he was the more experienced member of this group, the younger man was taking charge.

"Secondly, we stick together. There's safety in numbers. If you get lost or separate from the group, you put everyone at risk. And it's not just the thaids we're worried about. The city itself is an unexplored maze."

"Which brings me to the third point," Erik added, his gaze steady. "If you spot the humanoid thaid, don't panic. Signal the rest of us and keep your distance. The best thing would be to let Samuel deal with it. He's our best chance against that thing. However, if the situation demands it, we must deal with it together."

After he finished speaking, there was an awkward pause that was only broken by the inaudible trickle of water that emanated from some unknown location within the cave.

After that, he continued while giving a gloomy nod and saying, "Lastly, when we see the Acidspitter Arthropods, we retreat. We need to get out of the cave as fast as possible. It won't be an easy fight, and we cannot afford unnecessary risks, especially if the humanoid Thaid is still alive."

After finishing his instructions, Erik paused for a few seconds to look at all his traveling companions.

The weight of their responsibility was evident on their faces, but he could also make out the resolve they had for the task at hand. They were prepared to embark on a hazardous journey, even though it had just started.

Chapter 415: The City

"Remember, we're here to kill the humanoid thaid. The Arthropods can be killed with a more relaxed approach later, but the humanoid thaid must be killed now," he reminded them. "Stay vigilant, stay quiet, and stay together. Let's do this."

With those concluding words, Erik led the group deeper into the bowels of the ancient city, where the menacing silhouette of its vast structures loomed ahead of them, anticipating their arrival.

The group crossed the door's threshold; their bodies cast long and spectral shadows due to the radiant sparkle of the Aclatrium ore. Ahead, the city slowly revealed itself, its skeletal ruins rising from the cavern floor like the bones of some long-extinct beast.

The spooky echoes of a time when humans called this underground city home could still be heard as rusty beams, broken stones, and wooden husks whispered of an era that had long since passed away.

Both nature and time had staked their claims, and in their wake, they had left a monument to the brave fight that humanity had waged against the thaids.

"What in the..." Lucas, one of the villagers, stuttered, his eyes wide as he scanned the skeletal remains of the city. "This place... it's enormous."

The villagers' attention was drawn to a hulking metal structure that stood in the middle of the city; the symbol painted on its rusted facade was difficult to make out. It was a mark Erik recognized from the musty pages of history books that told tales of a world before mana, before superpowers—the symbol of the united earth.

Erik murmured, "This is the symbol of the united earth," as he pointed to a symbol barely visible on the towering metal structure. His tone was respectful of the subject at hand.

The ruins around them loomed large. Despite the ravages of time and the ceaseless decay, these structures held fast, their formidable heights bearing the weight of the underground city's immense ceiling.

As they moved through the desolate streets, windowless cavities in the dilapidated buildings watched him. The architecture, though ancient, bore the unmistakable hand of men. But the building ahead was distinctly familiar. Its plain, utilitarian design echoed the shelters above ground, silent testaments to human tenacity and resourcefulness against unthinkable odds.

As Erik made his way beneath these enduring sentinels, he experienced a peculiar feeling of awe. The city was a chilling reminder of a forgotten past, its isolation echoing with eerie whispers. Yet, there was a certain beauty to it.

The gentle glow of Aclatrium wove a dreamy tapestry through the ruins; its spectral radiance kissed the silent streets and crumbling towers, the desolation humming a sad ballad of solitude and resilience.

As they took in their surroundings, the light from the Aclatrium painted the city in a haunting, ethereal glow, and an eerie silence descended upon them. Samuel was the first to speak up after a prolonged period of silence.

"Our ancestors built this," he whispered, more to himself than the group. "Our ancestors built this," he said softly, more to himself than to the group. "I wonder what really happened during those days..."

"Maybe, after the village relocates here, we will find out," Erik said, looking at Samuel seriously.

"It would be cool... By the way, what do we do now?" Samuel inquired with an air of mild interest in his tone of voice. Samuel questioned whether or not they had a clue as to where to look for the humanoid thaid, even though it was abundantly clear that they needed to hunt the humanoid thaid.

"We should go there..." Erik said while pointing at the huge metallic military building. "The last time it was from there that it came from... I think it was the humanoid thaid that killed everyone here..."

As everyone in the group considered Erik's theory, the words lingered heavily in the air, and a silence descended over the entire gathering. Samuel, who was usually very talkative, appeared speechless for a brief moment.

His attention was riveted on the far-off military installation, and it was evident that his mind was wrangling with the implications.

At long last, he uttered some words, his tone soft but still audible throughout the vast, cavernous space. "Why do you believe the humanoid thaid caused this... catastrophe?"

Erik cast a quick glance in his direction, but his face was obscured and unreadable. "Because of what I found inside that building," he said, pointing to the enormous structure.

"Skeletons, frozen in the middle of a struggle, still clutching their ancient weapons. All dressed in military attire. It was clear they died fighting... something."

He paused, taking a moment to gather his thoughts. "And there were markings on the walls, slashes deep in the metal," he continued. "They looked eerily similar to the ones on the entrance door. The ones the humanoid thaid almost tore through."

Samuel took this in, and his features became more angular. "So, you think that... thing attacked the people living here? But wouldn't they have fought back? They had the technology, weapons."

"They did fight back," Erik replied. "But to no avail. We must remember that the people living here didn't have mana yet, nor did they have brain crystal powers. Their weapons were advanced for their time but against a creature as formidable as the humanoid thaid... Besides, I don't know if you know this, but the weapons we have today only have a limited effect against thaids..."

He let the sentence hang, the implication clear. There was a moment of silence as they each digested this information.

"But then, why hasn't the humanoid thaid come after the village? Why did it stay here?" Lucas questioned, his eyes wide with fear and fascination.

Erik shrugged slightly. "Perhaps it is tied to this place in some way. Or maybe it simply didn't have a reason to leave. The city here provides ample food, thanks to the Acidspitter Arthropods and the other roaming thaids."

The group fell silent again, the weight of their task pressing heavily upon them. Samuel broke the silence once more; his voice filled with determination. "Regardless, we are here to ensure it no longer threatens anyone. We must find it and put an end to it."

"Yeah, and as I said, for that, we need to go there," Erik finished, pointing towards the massive military building looming ahead again. "That's where our hunt begins."

As they made their way through the ruined city, their boots crunching on the crumbling debris underfoot, they couldn't help but wonder at the structures around them. The cityscape was a hauntingly beautiful juxtaposition of decay and splendor, bathed in the gentle, ethereal glow of the Aclatrium ore.

Towering buildings, their architecture a blend of the ancient and the futuristic, lined the once-bustling streets. Some structures were simple, their facades unadorned yet compelling in their starkness.

Chapter 416: The Military Base

Others had intricate designs, and their surfaces were covered with geometric patterns and swirling motifs, but these designs had become worn and faded over time.

The exteriors of many of the buildings had been worn away over time, exposing the buildings' underlying structural bones. There was a stark beauty in the buildings' exposed vulnerability.

Off to one side, a colossal dome of glass and metal stood out, a geometric marvel amidst the surrounding buildings' straight lines and harsh angles. Within it, dark soil stretched out in an expanse, a testament to the technological prowess of its creators.

"That's where they grew their crops, I think..." Samuel mused, gazing up at the structure. His voice echoed eerily in the vast silence, the sound reverberating off the cavernous walls.

Erik glanced at him while maintaining a thoughtful expression in his eyes. "Possibly," he conceded after some thought. "But even if that were to be the case, the machinery in there..." He indicated the wide variety of corroded and weathered machinery visible through the glass. "It's highly unlikely that we'll be able to get it functioning normally again."

Even though the prediction was bleak, there was an undeniable sense of awe in both of their voices. There was a city their ancestors had constructed; people who had no access to mana or superpowers but had created something magnificent and advanced. The sheer magnitude and complexity of the city were testaments to the ingenuity and tenacity of the people who built it.

As they continued their journey, they came across several historical relics along the way. The decaying skeletons of statues dot the otherwise lifeless landscape of a plaza that was once bustling with activity.

Further down the road, what appeared to be the ruins of an old transportation hub stood, with the rusted tracks of an antiquated rail network winding their way through the buildings.

The engineering prowess of the people who lived in the city was still evident despite their homes falling into disrepair. The sight was humbling and filled them with a profound respect for the people who had built this refuge, their sanctuary against primordial thaids.

As they approached the military building, the structures surrounding them started to take on a more uniform appearance. This was a striking contrast to the diverse assortment of buildings they had just traversed.

It was obvious that they were moving into a more militarized section of the city, the stronghold, which was likely the location of the decisive and desperate battle against the thaids that led them to ruin.

The idea imbued the task with an air of solemnity and gravity, fortifying their determination to face the danger concealed deep within the city.

Ethan's voice abruptly broke the solemn silence surrounding them, which resounded throughout the vast underground space as they made their way deeper into the center of the ancient city. His youthful enthusiasm was poorly concealed behind a facade of humor when he said, "It's like some kind of... theme park, eh?" he added. "Bet those old folks sure knew how to party in their fancy metal cave!"

The other men glared at him angrily, their facial expressions becoming resolute due to the abrasive comparison. The young man's callous remark reduced the city, which was a testament to the struggle and perseverance of their ancestors, to a spectacle.

Samuel spun around, his aging eyes blazing with the sudden fire that had suddenly engulfed him. "Watch your tongue, Ethan!" he yelled, his usually calm voice taking on an authoritative tone for the first time.

"This 'theme park,' as you call it, was home to our forefathers. People who fought and died here, trying to build a safe haven from the monsters outside."

He made a broad motion over the foreboding expanses of the city as the ethereal glow of the Aclaitrium cast dancing shadows upon his wrinkled face. "They carved a life out of stone and darkness, created a beacon of hope when there was none. Their blood and sweat are in this place's very walls and run through our veins..."

Samuel then moved closer to Ethan, lowering his voice while maintaining the authoritative tone of his previous statement.

"Every stone, every beam, every shard of glass... They whisper tales of a time we can barely imagine. This city is a monument to our resilience, our ingenuity. It is not a spectacle for us to gawk at. So, remember that, boy, and pay your respects."

Samuel's words echoed in their ears, a stark reminder of the gravity of their mission and the sacred nature of the ground they stood on. Ethan swallowed hard, his face flushed with embarrassment and newfound understanding. For the moment, at least, he remained quiet, his flippant comment swallowed by the weight of their surroundings.

The group of men finally arrived in front of the military building where Erik had previously discovered the map to the cave after spending some time wandering around the city. The awakener and the other individuals were gathered before the entrance to the formidable military structure.

Its colossal form dominated their field of vision, looming menacingly in front of them as it did so. The open doorway allowed a brisk breeze to blow through, carrying the musty odor of deterioration and disuse with it.

Even though the bright light of the Aclaitrium illuminated it, the building appeared shrouded in darkness, and the interior was an opaque abyss.

They both felt a tingling sensation in the nape of their necks and a chill that seemed to settle into their bones. They were staring at a hulking mass of metal, and suddenly, the magnitude of the challenge they were up against became very real to them.

Despite the awe the structure inspired, there was an undercurrent of unease. This was not just an ancient relic of a bygone era; it was potentially the lair of the beast they were hunting, the creature that had driven an entire civilization to abandon their refuge.

Erik whirled around to face the other people, and his face was stern. His voice was barely audible above a whisper when he said, "Stay alert," but it carried an unmistakable sense of urgency.

"Keep your senses sharp, your weapons ready. The creature could be anywhere, waiting for the perfect moment to strike."

His gaze swept over each of them, his eyes locking onto theirs in a silent exchange of understanding. They nodded back at him, their faces a mask of steely resolve. They knew the stakes. They understood the danger.

The air seemed to thicken with anticipation, the quiet before a storm. Then, without another word, they stepped into the hollow interior of the military building, each footfall a testament to their resolve, echoing in the ancient halls of the city that time had forgotten.

Chapter 417: The Lab

Erik and the others came to a stop as soon as they saw the massive military installation in front of them. This enormous structure, built of metal and gnarled with rust, appeared to possess an intimidating history and radiated power. Its wide entrance yawned before them, promising a labyrinth of corridors and rooms deep within its belly.

Samuel approached the massive metal door and stepped up to them. When he touched the oxidized, cold surface with his fingertips, it groaned in response.

When they realized the magnitude of the situation in which they found themselves—on the brink of the legacy of their ancestors and in the lair of a potential beast—they observed a moment of respectful silence together.

As a result of Erik's previous visit, the door to the military base had been blown up, making it so that they could clearly see the opaque darkness within.

The pitch-black interior of the military base completely obscured the weak, ethereal light coming from the Aclaitrium. As Ethan stared in awe at the incredible scene before him, he blew a soft whistle.

When Erik turned around to face the other people in the group, a solemn expression appeared on his face. His words were barely audible above a whisper, but they carried with them a clear indication that he was being cautious. "I think it's time to light up the torches."

And with that, they went inside, where the only light was coming from the dim glow of the torches they were carrying.

After entering, they discovered they were in the middle of a long corridor. On either side, a seemingly endless number of doors led into uncharted rooms.

The air was thick with the musty smell of old age, rust, and conflicts that had been forgotten for a long time. It appeared that each reverberating footstep roused the fortress from its centuries-long slumber.

Long passageways, resembling the veins of a beast, extended outward from their location, and inside each one were mysteries from the distant past.

Despite the unsettling vibe that permeated the military base, there was an irresistible urge to investigate its inner workings.

Ethan's eyes roved over the rusted metallic walls until they settled on the weathered labels next to each door. He leaned in closer and squinted his eyes in an attempt to make sense of the worn-out words, which caused his brows to knit together.

"Look at this," he called to Erik and Samuel, gesturing towards the faded labels. He removed some of the rust, making the ancient markings etched into the metal more legible by rubbing away some of the rust. "Seems like they had labels for every room."

Ethan drew the attention of Erik and Samuel, who moved closer to the labels he had pointed out. The fact that the letters had been eroded and faded could still be read as evidence of their ancestors' diligence and attention to detail.

"That's... interesting," Samuel admitted, his gaze flickering over the signs.

"So, this was their way of organizing things," Samuel mused, tracing the symbols thoughtfully. "It must have been necessary for them to maintain order in such a large structure. This way, they knew exactly where everything was."

"The only problem is: what did they do here exactly?" Erik asked. They continued to make their way deeper into the structure, passing through a series of long corridors that were eerily similar to one another.

The only thing that broke the eerie silence was the sound of boots scraping against cold metal as they proceeded.

Around them were the gloomy remnants of the battle that had been fought in the past here: the skeletons of soldiers who had died while making their final stand, their skeletal hands still clutching the ancient weapons they had used. Ethan couldn't help but look around at the eerie scene, and as he did, he felt a shiver run up and down his spine.

"Did the...you know...the humanoid thaid do this?" Ethan's voice wavered as he spoke, and he cast a wary glance at the wreckage scattered around.

The implications of his words were not lost on the group, and his question lingered heavily in the air as a result.

Erik nodded slowly, his gaze hardening as he took in the scene around them. "It's the most likely possibility," he admitted, a sad note in his voice. "For sure, these people were fighting something strong, and it seems they weren't successful."

The group had been wandering around the maze-like structure for about half an hour when they finally came upon a scene that immediately captured their attention.

Once sturdy and robust, the remnants of a door now lay torn apart, reduced to twisted, jagged shards of metal strewn across the floor.

The excessive damage was unmistakable proof of the massive force applied. Furthermore, it was evident that whatever was once contained within the room was not intended to escape.

The metal label next to it indicated this was a lab. Intricate symbols and aged text, barely legible after all these years, hinted at a place of extensive research and experimentation.

Ethan stopped and looked at the shredded doorway with interest and trepidation. "What do you think they were doing here?" he wondered aloud. His words echoed through the hollow space, unanswered, as the rest of the group shared his bewilderment.

However, the condition of the door suggested that whatever took place in the lab wasn't ordinary.

"I have an idea, but it would be too crazy if it were true," Erik said without processing further.

When the group first entered the laboratory, their attention was immediately drawn to a row of enormous glass tanks. Each tank contained a putrid yellow liquid, illuminated by the dim glow of their torches and cast ghastly shadows all over the room.

The skeletal remains of the thaids were found inside the containers, where they were immersed in the eerie fluid. As they proceeded further, they could recognize the unique characteristics of some of the specimens, whose once menacing forms had been transformed into husks.

"Were they—?" Samuel suddenly said.

"Yeah," Erik chimed in. "They were probably studying the thaids, as that would be the first time they saw them... The problem is... this place is too old..." Erik said.

"Too old?" Ethan asked.

"Yes, you probably don't know since you live in a village, but according to history books, the first Thaid sighting happened around 2588. The problem is that when I was here a month ago, I read some documents that reported dates ranging from 2570 to 2580. This place was active much before the first Thaids appeared. Yet, they already had some thaids here..." Erik said.

Chapter 418: The Humanoid Thaid (1)

"Maybe they found them, and to not spread panic, they brought them to secluded locations to study them," Ethan interjected.

"Well... that could be a possibility..."

Samuel led the group as they talked, his gaze moving from one tank to another. The sight was ghastly yet intriguing, a stantificancestors' scientific prowess their ancestors possessed.

"Look at that one," Ethan whispered, pointing towards one tank that was noticeably larger than the rest. Unlike the others, it was shattered, shards of thick, curved glass strewn around the floor like a halo of broken ice.

The liquid that once held the creature was long gone, leaving behind a dry, cracked floor. However, the way the shards were scattered on the outside sent a chill down their spines, indicating that whatever had been contained within had managed to break free.

Erik approached the shattered tank, his mind racing. The image was in stark contrast to the other intact tanks. He crouched down, picking up a piece of the shattered glass.

It was thick and heavy, clearly designed to withstand immense pressure. Yet, it had been blown outwards by a tremendous force from within.

"It escaped..." Samuel murmured, breaking the silence. His voice was low, filled with a grim realization of the implications. "Whatever was inside escaped..."

The room, which was once a hub for scientific exploration, had become a scene of devastation.

As the men in the group became more aware of their immediate environment, the tension in the air intensified and became increasingly thick. Erik looked around the room with serious eyes; his senses were on high alert for potential threats.

"Stay vigilant," he warned the others, his voice echoing off the cold, metal walls. They had found their answer, or at least a part of it.

"Do you think that—"Ethan was interrupted by a loud scream.

KYAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAH

The piercing scream echoed through the metallic confines of the building, a haunting herald of the impending danger.

One of the other villagers exclaimed in surprise, "What the heck was that?!"

Instantaneously, everyone's attention was drawn to the door. When they saw the grotesque figure lumbering into view, a wave of chilling dread washed over them. There was no way that horror could have been mistaken for anything other than the humanoid thaid.

The monstrously mutated muscularity of the creature was displayed grotesquely by its hulking silhouette. It towered over them, standing well over three meters tall, with dark, sinister purple skin that served as a haunting symbol of its transformation into a monstrous form.

The dim, ethereal light emanating from the Aclatrium ore in the room cast an eerie glow over the creature, highlighting its grotesque appearance. Fragmented pieces of clothing hung from its massive frame, each bearing a story from the creature's former life as a human.

The sight was a horrifying testament to the perverse fusion of man and beast. The humanoid thaid's face bore traces of distorted humanity, the once recognizable features now gnarled and swollen.

Its eyes, once the windows to a human soul, now glowed a fiery yellow, devoid of empathy but ablaze with a primal hunger for whatever it could get its claws on. These eyes were set deep into its skull, adding an ominous depth to its glare.

They were hidden beneath a ridged and heavy brow. Nevertheless, the monstrous mouth of the creature was the characteristic that attracted the most attention to it. A horrifying, gaping maw filled the space where the lips and teeth should have been. It was lined with rows of jagged teeth set in a chilling circular arrangement.

This horrifying scene was framed by four appendages resembling mandibles, each twitched and flexed with macabre anticipation. When the mouth opened, a low growl rumbled from within it, which caused each man to feel a chill of dread run down their spine.

"Unsheathe your weapons! Ready your brain crystal powers!" Samuel's voice was piercing and commanding, breaking through the oppressive tension.

The villagers quickly obeyed, but as they did so, their hands began to shake while they held their weapons. The monstrous figure standing before them was something out of a nightmare.

The humanoid Thaid charged at the group with a bone-chilling roar, its hulking figure slashing through the dimly lit laboratory. The grotesque maw opened wide, revealing the macabre sight of those monstrous teeth while its beastly eyes burned with ferocious hunger.

Each resounding step shook the ground beneath them and reverberated throughout the vast room, serving as a foreboding introduction to the fight that was about to take place.

The villagers stumbled backward, their eyes widening with fear as they clutched their weapons with white-knuckled determination. But amid the chaos, there was one figure that stood firm.

Samuel took a step forward while maintaining his stern expression and brandishing the weapon he was holding.

Despite being old, his physique was that of a seasoned warrior; he had broad shoulders, hardened muscles, and an unwavering gaze that met the unflinching look of the monstrous thaid.

"GET OUT OF HERE!" Samuel yelled. He issued the order, his voice reverberating throughout the laboratory. His voice radiated a sober sense of bravery that served as an anchor, pulling the others out of their state of panic.

They stood there in stunned silence as Samuel charged toward the monstrosity, his elderly body moving with a suppleness and strength that belied his age.

The mana around Samuel began to stir, and its spectral tendrils began to coalesce and take shape.

An ethereal dance of energy becoming matter, the shimmering, ethereal substance solidifying into stone right before Erik's eyes, was an incredible spectacle.

It was a breathtaking scene, and Erik had never seen anything like it. Samuel was surrounded by mana, normally invisible, but it was manifesting in a way that seemed to go against the natural order of things. The energy glowed and whirled around the old man, morphing and condensing like a storm before it set into stone and protected him.

The transformation was incredible. The stone formed a protective shell around Samuel, encasing him in an impressive suit of armor.

However, it was the gauntlets that had suddenly materialized around Samuel's hands that caught Erik's attention.

They were so enormous that they made the man's already enormous fists look even larger, making him look like a medieval knight armed for battle.

The gauntlets had an unnaturally large size, coming close to being grotesque in appearance. However, they were created with a specific goal in mind. Kill.

The stone had transformed into a material that was more durable and brittle than anything else that Erik had ever encountered. Each gauntlet was a formidable weapon, the size, and weight sufficient to deliver blows of such force that they were devastating.

While Erik watched, his heart raced in his chest as he felt the transformation end. Although it only lasted a couple of seconds, that was long enough for it to take shape completely.

Samuel's face took on a sinister appearance due to the eerie glow cast by the stone armor in the dim light of the torches.

Chapter 419: The Humanoid Thaid (2)

Clad in armor, Samuel confronted the thaid as it came rushing toward them at full force. The old man moved with a grace that belied his strength as he rained blow after blow on the beast while he danced and circled it.

However, he had a difficult time fending off the thaid despite the formidable strength of the stone gauntlets he wore and the protective shell that encased him.

The man was sent stumbling backward by the recoil of each of his attacks, whereas the thaid had no trouble withstanding the majority of his blows.

It appeared that each of his attacks was bouncing off the creature's thickened skin. In Erik's mind, there was no question that Samuel's punches were powerful, but the beast was incredibly resilient.

Sweat was dripping down the older man's forehead, staining the stone of his armor, and his face was a mask of concentrated effort and strain.

The sound of the mighty blows he traded with the beast resounded disturbingly throughout the laboratory as they were exchanged. However, the beast was unrelenting, and the combination of its monstrous size and lightning-fast speed proved to be an overwhelming force.

"Run!" Samuel shouted over the din, his voice straining against the roar of the battle, his eyes never leaving the snarling face of the thaid. "Go! I'll hold it off! You can't possibly face it!" he added as he realized his comrades were useless against the beast. Besides, their reason being there wasn't to fight the creature but to fend off the Acidspitter Arthropods.

Protests were voiced in response to his command; however, an air of finality to his tone cut through the confusion. Samuel was holding his ground, giving the others enough time to make their getaway.

The room was filled with the sound of his orders, which prompted the others to take action. They wanted to stay and fight, but they knew their place was not here, not when the man best equipped to deal with the beast was having trouble doing so on his own.

The villagers, torn between their desire to help and the requirement to follow orders, started to retreat while casting lingering, worried glances toward the figure engaged in combat. As they stumbled out of the laboratory, leaving behind a fight that was still going strong, the image of Samuel encased in stone and slaying a monstrous beast was seared into their memories.

As Erik watched Samuel fight the beast, there was an unwavering determination in how he looked at the older man. He was aware of the instruction to run, but his entire being fought against the concept of doing so.

The issue was that he could not check Samuel's statistics; otherwise, he would have become aware of the fluctuations in mana, which would have led to the discovery of the biological supercomputer.

Though, he did analyze the humanoid thaid. The young man had hoped Samuel would be strong enough to kill the beast, but it appeared he was not powerful enough. He was incapable of and unwilling to abandon Samuel to face the monstrous humanoid thaid on his own.

His hands tightened into fists, and his determination grew stronger by the second. As he channeled mana through his neural links, they burst into life and began functioning as usual. It felt like an electric charge was running through his veins, which in turn caused his skin to tingle and raise the hairs on his arms.

During the past month, Erik's stat increased a lot thanks to the many new neural links he made. That was the main advantage the Biological Supercomputer brought.

That meant he could increase his strength by using the Xeridon Anteris brain crystal power. The problem was that doubling 40 strength points required much less mana than doubling the 75 he currently had.

If he did so, the mana he had available wouldn't last long before he ran out, and even in that case, the strength he would gain wouldn't be enough to face the monster.

Besides, Erik doubted he could cut the monster with his flyssa, not by using the sharpening power. However, there was a limit to what a D-ranked power could do. He needed Nathaniel's power and its concussive force.

He decided to use Nathaniel's power to fight, which granted him the speed he required in single bursts rather than causing him to continuously waste mana, as would have been the case if he had used the Xeridon Anteris brain crystal power.

He charged forward, concentrating solely on the beast in front of him. He knew this would be a brutal fight, and the most he could do was give Samuel some opportunities to kill the beast, but he didn't waver in his resolve.

His heart pounded in his chest, but he didn't back down. He was well aware of the shocked expressions on the faces of the villagers as they watched him run headfirst into what appeared to be certain death, but he didn't care about their reactions.

Samuel caught sight of him from the corner of his eye and cursed. "Erik, no!" he roared, but it was too late. Erik was already within reach of the thaid.

His first strike was nothing more than a test, and it was directed at the creature's flank to see how it would react. The strike was sudden and surprisingly powerful, but the thaid did not flinch in response.

Although Erik was aware that the force of the impact was traveling up his arm, he did not feel relieved by the feeling. The thaid struck back with a vicious swipe, but Erik could sidestep it just in time.

"FOR FUCK SAKE!" Erik yelled as he successfully sidestepped the beast's attack. That was the closest moment Erik had been to death.

Samuel did not let the chance to step in pass without seizing it. He attacked the thaid with a roar and launched himself at it, diverting the attention of the monstrous creature away from the younger man.

The grotesque form of the creature was pummeled by his stone-enhanced fists, which landed blows that reverberated throughout the wrecked laboratory.

"Erik! What the hell do you think you're doing?!" Samuel bellowed over the din of battle, his voice thick with concern and frustration. "Get the fuck out of here!"

The stern command of the elder resounded throughout the room, but the palpable sense of dread that he conveyed caused Erik to become hesitant.

He dithered between the natural urge to fight and the rational choice to flee the scene. It caused him to pause when he saw Samuel grappling with the monstrous thaid, with each of Samuel's punches causing the beast to stagger backward.

"Erik!" As Samuel struggled with the monster, he let out another yell, this time with a hoarse voice from the effort. "Leave! Now!"

"I can't just leave you, Samuel!" Erik yelled back, and his voice reverberated off the crumbling walls of the abandoned laboratory. The relentless thumping of his heart against his ribcage and the pounding in his ears drowned out everything else, leaving him unable to hear anything other than his dogged determination. "You can't fight this thing alone! You need help!"

Chapter 420: The Humanoid Thaid (3)

Samuel grunted in response, his stone-armored fists delivering bone-jarring punches to the monstrous thaid. His eyes flickered at Erik for a fraction of a second before being drawn back to the raging battle that was taking place.

He was engaged in a titanic struggle, channeling every fiber of his mana into his being to keep the beast at bay. "Keep fighting, Samuel! Let me help!" Erik insisted, his voice carrying over the crashing and roaring sounds of the environment.

He was unyielding, and the sound of his determination could be heard clearly over the din of the bloody melee.

Once more, Samuel grunted, but this time it was tinged with annoyance and a reluctance to accept the situation.

"Fine! Just... don't get yourself killed, Erik!" He let out a yell, and his attention was instantly brought back to the beast that stood in front of him.

His fists began to fly faster, and each blow demonstrated his unyielding determination. Erik's mind was already preparing for the impending conflict as he nodded and prepared to join the fight.

His heart was racing. He was prepared to engage in combat and eager to help Samuel in this dangerous dance with the monstrous humanoid thaid.

Erik's brain crystal flared with the white-hot intensity of his mana, the energy surging around him like an electrical storm.

After taking a few deep breaths, he immediately sprinted toward the beast, his heightened speed making him appear as a blur against the dimly lit background of the laboratory.

The thaid was agile; upon detecting his approach, it spun around, its yellow eyes flashing with the intent to hunt. Erik was attacked with a gnarled hand, but he was quicker than it and dropped to a slide, gliding across the filthy floor to narrowly avoid the attack.

Samuel was given a brief period of relief due to the distraction, and the older man did not squander the opportunity. He lunged forward, and his stone gauntlets smashed into the creature's body.

The air seemed to shake as Samuel landed the blow on the thaid. Fortified with his stone-clad fists, the older man delivered a strike of immense power.

The strike's impact resonated through the room and echoed in the monstrous figure as it was careening across the lab. It crashed into a row of rusted metal tanks, sending them toppling like dominoes. The force of the impact reverberated throughout the lab, the crashing sounds deafening in the otherwise silent ruins.

The force of the blow reverberated throughout the room and echoed in the monstrous figure as it was propelled across the laboratory.

It slammed into a line of rusted metal tanks, causing each one in the line to topple over like dominoes. The intensity of the collision resounded throughout the laboratory, and the sounds of breaking glass and metal filled the otherwise silent ruins with a deafening din.

For a moment, silence hung in the lab. After taking a deep breath, Erik looked at Samuel with a glimmer of hope in his eyes as he caught his breath.

"Did you kill it?" He inquired with a voice that was only slightly louder than a whisper. On the other hand, Samuel gave a slight shake of the head while maintaining his gaze on the Thaid's figure.

His features were chiseled into a stone mask, and strain lines ran across his face. "I wish..." The truth hung heavy in the air like a cloud: the battle had not yet been won, and the threat was not even close to being over.

Despite its severe injury, it was abundantly clear that the creature was not even close to being defeated.

Samuel's wishful thinking wasn't enough to kill the beast; they still fought with their hands.

Erik took a few deep breaths to regain his composure and then stared in awe as the thaid slowly emerged from the wreckage, the hulking form of its body cast in shadow by the scattered Aclatrium shards.

It's still daunting frame seemed less so - less the invincible monster it had appeared moments before. Samuel's attack had hit its mark, and the beast visibly staggered.

The beast appeared to be thrown off balance as a result of Samuel's attack, which had been successful.

"C'mon!" Erik said as the dark figure of the behemoth began to sway precariously as its legs struggled to keep it upright.

Even though the beast was raging, the sound did not feel any less reassuring than it did before.

"I think it is mad now..." Erik said.

"You are right," the older man replied.

Samuel and Erik stood there as they watched the humanoid thaid struggle to stand up. The older man's stony gaze met the creature's glowing yellow eyes, and a challenge hung between them.

The beast bellowed in fury, but the sound was not less assuring than before despite the injury they managed to make.

The conflict was in no way resolved. Erik pounced on the opportunity while the beast was stumbling around, trying to regain its balance.

Nathaniel's power transformed the mana into a destructive power, which the young man then used to sprint toward the beast while simultaneously charging his fists with pulsating force. The young man's attention was laser-beam sharp, and he exuded mana from every pore of his body.

The humanoid Thaid, however, did not lack any form of defense. It let out a low growl, gathered its strength, and countered Erik's attack with a monstrous punch of its own, all while maintaining its distance. There was a sickening thud as the fist met the force Erik produced, and the recoil sent the young man flying backward several meters.

His body collided hard against the cold, metallic floor of the lab, the impact jarring him to his very core.

The humanoid thaid did not pause but capitalized on the successful counterattack it had just launched. It let out a rumbling growl and then lunged forward at a speed disproportionate to its enormous size.

Erik barely had time to register the threat before the monstrous figure was upon him, bearing down with an insatiable bloodlust. Erik regained his balance and stood up, again drawing the monster's attention.

Erik spun back to his feet, catching the creature's attention again. He dodged the swipe the beast attempted and was just a heartbeat away from becoming the beast's prey. Samuel made the most of the distraction and landed another powerful punch on the Thaid's side.

The creature let out a roar as the impact knocked it back, but it was in no way defeated. The conflict continued to rage in a dance of lethal violence. Samuel was the target of the creature's attention now, but Erik served as a dexterous distraction by dodging and ducking his way around it.

Erik was the agile distraction, ducking and dodging, drawing the creature's attention away from Samuel, keeping his distance from the monster, as it could kill him with a mere swipe of his giant arms. He moved with high speed, a darting figure the thaid couldn't quite pin down due to the young man's unpredictability and the thaid low intelligence.

Each of his blows landed with a concussive force that shook the creature to its very core. The thaid's defenses were chipped away by his gauntlets, which caused the creature's health to deteriorate over time.

Both Erik and Samuel worked together, their actions creating a rhythm that was born out of a combination of desperation and bravery. Samuel's attacks were lightning fast and ruthless in response to every attack the thaid launched.

Their tactic was bearing fruit; the monster was showing signs of becoming careless, its movements were becoming less refined, and its fury was causing it to become sloppy.