

BIOLOGICAL 47

Chapter 47: Outside the barrier (2)

Logan, Conal, and Orson stared at the six creatures before them, their faces a mix of disbelief and fear.

Conal recognized these beings from his school lessons. They were Lomalins, a species of flesh-eating thaids that fed on lizards and insects. Known for their ant-like collective behavior, they thrived in colonies.

The creature's appearance was startling. They had round, black heads devoid of visible eyes and ears, just a slitted nose, and a set of sharp mandibles.

Their heads, attached to their muscular torsos with no neck, added to their strange form.

Each Lomalin had a multitude of short legs attached to their abdomens and four sturdy, medium-length arms.

Their appearance was unsettling. They had bodies covered in a mottled brown exoskeleton speckled with striking white dots, contrasting with their dark heads.

They possessed a social structure mirroring that of ants, with a queen responsible for laying eggs and overseeing the colony. The ones before the group were workers, the only variant of their kind.

These Lomalin possessed unique abilities. Their acute hearing could detect heartbeats from afar, they adapted to environmental changes, and they could curl into a defensive ball.

Despite not being the strongest thaids, their brain crystal power posed a challenge, enabling them to form an additional protective exoskeleton.

Fortunately, they were less robust than other thaids, less agile, and slower. Their primary defense involved consuming their mana by using their brain crystal power to create mana-hardened shells, making them difficult to penetrate.

Their survival tactic was simple yet effective: encircle their target, overwhelm it with numbers, and kill it by biting, then shield themselves behind their fortified exoskeletons in case of trouble.

"SHIT!" Logan's shout cut through the air, echoing their collective fear.

A tidal wave of panic engulfed the three young men. They stood frozen, their minds racing yet blank, unprepared for a confrontation with thaids.

Such survival skills were taught at the Military school, a stage of education they had not yet reached.

Fear clutched at their hearts, manifesting in wide, terror-stricken eyes and pale, drawn faces.

Their bodies tensed, each muscle coiled like a spring, ready to react yet paralyzed by the unknown.

Orson's breaths came in brief gasps, a stark rhythm of fear, while Conal's hands trembled almost imperceptibly at his sides.

Logan, the confident leader, now wore an expression of stark dread, his usual bravado replaced by the unmistakable glint of primal fear.

At that moment, they were no longer the bullies of their school but vulnerable youths facing a threat far beyond their usual scope of intimidation and aggression.

Their time outside of school was often wasted in idleness or in bullying weaker students, leaving them undertrained for actual combat.

Yet, they faced an inescapable reality; they had to fight. The alternative was unthinkable—if they didn't defend themselves, the thaids would overpower and kill them. Time was slipping away as the creatures closed in.

"What do we do, Logan?" Orson's voice quivered with fear, his longing for the safety and familiarity of home a stark contrast to their current predicament.

"I don't know!" Logan said, urgency clear in his tone. "We have to find a way out somehow."

Their hesitation, however, provided the thaids with the perfect opportunity to encircle them.

"FUCK!" Conal said, his voice shaking as much as his resolve.

Then, as one of the Lomalins lunged at Logan, he reflexively channeled mana.

"Use your power!" Logan said. Conal and Orson sprang into action, tapping into their own abilities. Conal's arms transformed into powerful lion-like limbs, while Orson's body sprouted an array of sharp, spiky bones out of his body.

Meanwhile, Logan conjured his poisonous darts, hurling them at the attacking creatures.

The venom took immediate effect, coursing through the Lomalin's body and causing it to writhe in agony.

As the venom from Logan's dart began its rapid assault, the Lomalin's reaction was immediate and visceral.

The creature's body contorted a grotesque dance of pain under the unforgiving poison's influence. It fell to the ground, its limbs jerking, each spasm a visual echo of the agony coursing through its veins.

In a burst of frenetic energy, Orson charged at another Lomalin. His arm transformed into a lethal weapon as a long, thick, and hardened bone extended forward, impaling the creature's head with deadly precision, and ending its life.

Meanwhile, Logan furiously stomped on the poisoned Lomalin. Despite his efforts, the creature's hard exoskeleton resisted his attacks.

The mana-conjured dart was able to penetrate the Lomalin's defenses, but Logan's physical strength alone proved insufficient against the creature's natural armor and it was only thanks to it being made of mana he was able to kill it.

Conal was engaged in his own battle. He swung his lion-like arms, keeping two Lomalins at bay.

The creatures snapped at his shins, their mandibles opening and closing with a rhythmic clank as if biting the air in eager anticipation of their meal.

Orson, now facing another Lomalin, adopted a strategy of stillness. He stood his ground, poised and ready, waiting for the creature to come within range before skewering it with his protruding spiky bones.

Logan, undeterred, conjured another venom-laden dart. This one was potent enough to be lethal, and he launched it at the already suffering Lomalin, ensuring its demise.

The kids were fighting with all they had, but their lack of strength, training, and strategy was clear.

However, with three Lomalins defeated, a newfound confidence surged within the boys. "We can do this," Conal said, a hint of confidence in his voice.

Unseen by them, Erik observed from his hiding spot. He had watched the brief skirmish from behind a tree, contemplating the turn of events. The Lomalins weren't able to kill the students, which contradicted the adults' tales of the Thaid's might.

Erik pondered this discrepancy, wondering if the creatures' reputation had been overstated, given that even children seemed capable of fending them off.

With his original plan failing to yield the desired results, direct intervention became inevitable. He reached down, picked up a stick from the ground, and infused it with mana.

A layer of mana enveloped the branch. At Erik's will, this mana sheath refined itself, becoming sharp, transforming the humble stick into a potent weapon.

<Analysis, > Erik thought, his gaze fixed on Conal. Instantly, a virtual screen materializing Conal's information materialized before his eyes, providing the insights he sought.

The screen floated in his vision, a window into the strengths and weaknesses of his target.

- Name: Conal Price.

- Brain crystal power: Beast partial shapeshifting.

- Physical Characteristics: Stands at an estimated height of one meter and seventy centimeters. Possesses a well-built physique. Weighs around seventy-three kilograms. Belongs to the human race.

- Personality and Traits: Known associate of Logan Reid and Orson Smyth. Exhibits a tendency to intimidate individuals perceived as weaker. Often aligns his actions with Logan's directives. Displays a higher level of intelligence compared to his companions, yet exhibits tendencies indicative of personal cowardice.

-Power Level: 32

-Approximate Strength: 7

-Approximate Intelligence: 14

-Approximate Dexterity: 6

-Approximate Energy: 25

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<WHAT THE FUCK? > Erik's thoughts raced as he took in Conal's approximate statistics.

<He's got twenty-five points in energy, yet he's still ranked E on the Ferebitz scale? >

Erik's attention was drawn to another aspect of the screen. It revealed that he had greater strength and dexterity than the bully, showing a potential to overpower him.

He was aware of this since the fight in the cafeteria, but now he had tangible proof. Back then, he was too emotional and not used to the system to analyze Conal and the others.

Then he didn't think about it, because he believed he solved the matter once and for all. If he knew things would take this turn, he would have done this earlier, and prepared better.

<I had to do this way before today. >1

As he pondered this, another screen materialized before him, offering further insights.

<Emergency quest: Revenge. >

-Rewards for completion: 3000 experience points and 200 DNA points.

-Failure Penalty: Death or prison.

(Kill Logan, Orson and Conal.)

<Hahaha, even the system wants them dead! >

With that notion in mind, Erik propelled himself forward, clutching the mana-infused stick in his right hand. As he approached, Conal, Orson, and Logan's figures became bigger.

The trio was still engaged in a fierce battle with three Lomalins. The creatures, having lost their initial advantage of surprise, were gradually being overpowered.

Orson, in particular, was displaying a level of prowess that Erik hadn't expected.

However, Erik's target was not Orson, but Conal. Erik recognized Conal's superior intellect compared to his peers—an intelligence that even surpassed his own. To leave Conal alive posed a significant risk, as he might change the situation.

As Erik neared the group, Logan, Conal, and Orson instinctively turned towards him. Their expressions morphed into horror upon seeing the masked figure rushing at them. They realized his intentions were far from peaceful and Conal understood this was all his ploy.

Erik paid no mind to Orson, who was fending off a Lomalin, or to Logan, who was preparing another venomous dart.

His focus was on Conal. Raising his arm, he brought the deadly branch down in a powerful arc. The weapon met its mark, carving a deep gash across Conal's chest.

"AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAH!" Conal's scream tore through the air. Logan and Orson, caught in a moment of shock, were unable to intervene as the masked man assaulted their friend.

His strikes with the tree branch came in rapid succession, each one swift and unyielding. They didn't connect the dot between Erik and the masked man, but Conal did. However, he wasn't able to voice it.

The branch, being light, allowed Erik the ability to deliver multiple swift blows.

With each swing, Conal's body bore a new gash until Erik delivered a final slash across his throat.

"CONAL!" Orson's cry of despair and disbelief echoed Logan's helplessness. He made a desperate move to aid Conal, but as he turned to confront Erik, still obscured behind his mask, he faced an additional threat.

The Lomalin, seizing the opportunity, advanced towards him, its mandibles poised to clamp down on his leg, ensnaring him in its own deadly grip.

