

BIOLOGICAL 711

Chapter 711: Two Galewings (1)

The flock of flying Thaid, enormous and majestic in flight, soared through the open sky. They were drawn towards a solitary, towering tree, standing as a solitary sentinel in the otherwise barren landscape, its existence a mystery that beckoned them closer.

As the Thaid glided nearer, their vigilant eyes scrutinized the ground beneath them, searching for any sign of danger or intrigue. Despite their keen vision, nothing remarkable caught their attention.

While approaching the enigmatic tree, the Thaid noticed a noticeable shift in the environment. The ambient temperature around the tree dropped, contrasting with the surrounding arid landscape.

Without warning, two members of the Thaid group, distinguishable by their impressive size and sleek, powerful bodies, diverged from their companions. Their sudden departure left the rest of the flock trailing behind.

These two Thaid, the largest and most dominant of the group, accelerated towards the tree. Their mission was clear—to investigate the area for potential threats that could endanger their flock.

As they flew closer to the tree, its features became distinct. The tree stood tall and imposing, its bark smooth and white, almost glowing against the sun. Its leaves were lush and vibrant, a stark contrast to the desolation surrounding it.

The two Thaid circled the tree cautiously, their eyes scanning every inch of its unusual form.

The Thaid surveyed the area, their senses on high alert for any sign of danger or hidden secrets that the tree might conceal.

Hidden in the shadow of the towering tree, Erik watched as two Thaid cut across the desert sky.

The vibrant blues and whites of their feathers blended into the clear sky, their massive wingspans casting gigantic shadows over the white sand. They were Galewings, a species known for their Aerokinesis powers and sharp intelligence.

"Well, at least I know I can kill them since I did it in the past." Erik could sense their physical might, their bodies radiating with power.

While there were other factors, it was primarily their Aerokinesis abilities that troubled him. Renowned for their mastery over wind manipulation, the Galewings were feared for their capacity to fashion lethal blades through this extraordinary power, making them a formidable force to be reckoned with in battle.

His eyes narrowed as he studied them more, but then, to be completely sure he was able to kill them, he asked the biological super computer to lend him a hand.

"ANALYSIS!" The usual white and blue screen appeared before his eyes.

Name: Galewing

Brain Crystal Power: Aerokinesis.

Galewings possess a brain crystal power called Aerokinesis, that grants them the capability to conjure wind currents that enhance their velocity, enable vertical takeoff from a static position, and create formidable wind blades for combat purposes. These wind blades are capable of slicing through both flesh and bone with lethal accuracy.

The Galewings' advanced control over wind currents affords them extraordinary agility, solidifying their status as formidable adversaries in aerial combat scenarios.

According to the hypothesis, the brain crystal power is believed to give the Galewings the ability to perceive even the slightest changes in atmospheric pressure. This exceptional capability not only enables them to predict shifts in weather patterns but also empowers them to navigate effortlessly through tumultuous air currents.

Because of their remarkable abilities, the Galewings are considered apex predators in their environmental niche. In addition, they show a remarkable ability to adapt to the ever-changing and sometimes unforeseeable weather.

Physical Characteristics:

Size: Massive with a wingspan of up to 20 feet

Color: vibrant blues and whites in its feathers

Eyes: Piercing and intense

Mandibles: sharp talons and beak gleaming with a metallic sheen

Wings: Large and powerful, enabling swift flight

Ecology: Galewings are predominantly found inhabiting the lofty altitudes of mountainous terrains and the expansive stretches of open plains. These creatures exhibit a profound affinity for aerial elements, leveraging their brain crystal power to control and manipulate the surrounding air currents.

With their innate ability, the Galewings are able to soar through the skies, showcasing their impressive speed and agility while gliding.

They feed on terrestrial thaids and avian species, which they hunt from their vantage points in the sky. While using their sharp predatory instincts, Galewings are able to execute quick and precise dives in order to capture their prey by using their strong talons. The usual habitat for their lairs is among cliffs and rocky outcrops, with the occasional occurrence of being positioned on tall trees.

Not only do these high-altitude dwellings offer them an optimal observational standpoint, but they also serve as a fortified sanctuary, providing both security and a strategic position for hunting.

{Attributes}

STRENGTH: 137.0

INTELLIGENCE: 6.0

DEXTERITY: 127.0

ENERGY: 1000

{Others}

Power Level: 470

Estimated Experience: 5321 (EXP per kill)

Neural Links: A3tA-level

However, that wasn't the only thing that happened, as the system gave him a new quest, the words flashing brightly on his screen.

<Quest: The Galewing's Assault. >

-Description: Kill the Galewings and survive.

-Rewards for completion: 20,000 experience points, 4,000 DNA points, and ten stats each in strength and Dexterity.

-Failure Penalty: Death.

Erik, taken aback by the situation, pondered over the sudden appearance of a quest. Because of his increased strength, the frequency of quests had diminished, since Thaid's seldom presented a challenge to him.

Therefore, the emergence of this quest showed the Galewings presented a genuine challenge.

As Erik pondered, he mentally assessed his own abilities in relation to the known attributes of the Galewings. His physical prowess was undoubtedly superior. Rigorous training and battles had sculpted his body into a near-perfect fighting machine, endowing him with exceptional speed and reflexes.

Despite his confidence, Erik couldn't shake off the lingering feeling of vulnerability whenever he considered the Galewings' lethal wind blades and their aerial assault capabilities.

Their Aerokinesis allowed them to create wind blades that possessed such immense power that they could slice through the most durable materials.

If they poured enough mana into these blades, the resulting attacks could be catastrophic.

He couldn't help but feel small in comparison as he observed the two monsters, each boasting an impressive 1000 energy points and an abundance of mana.

Erik knew that underestimating these wind-wielders could lead to disastrous consequences. His strategy needed to account for their aerial agility and the unpredictable nature of their attacks.

Erik required a well-thought-out plan, a strategic approach to swiftly neutralize a Galewing, enabling him to divert his attention to the remaining one. With a quick glance, he scanned the environment, carefully observing and absorbing the layout of the land.

He carefully observed and took note of various factors, including the position of the sun, the direction of the wind, and the distance between himself and the approaching Galewings.

Launching an ambush was the most suitable and effective plan of action, given the circumstances. He would use his speed and strength to his advantage, striking at one Galewing before it reacted.

His chances of surviving this encounter would increase if he could land a fatal blow quickly.

Timing was crucial for his attack, so he had to wait for the Galewings to approach the large tree before making his move.

His strategy was simple: target their underbellies, the only place where their protective feathers thinned, exposing their vulnerable flesh.

With each rhythmic beat of their wings, the Galewings filled the air with a low, ominous hum. Erik's muscles tightened, ready to spring into action, similar to a wound coil, gathering potential energy before its inevitable discharge.

Erik's gaze focused on the Galewings, his eyes narrowing as he observed them. While peering downwards, one of the massive creatures extended its neck to see the ground. It was scanning the area beneath for any signs of prey or threat.

The other Galewing took a different approach. It circled the tree, its large wings beating rhythmically, creating a gust of wind with each powerful stroke. This one seemed to survey the area from all angles.

A subtle disturbance caught the monsters' attention. Near the base of the tree, a faint but discernible motion stirred, a slight variance against the stillness of the landscape. It was Erik, making his move.

One of the creatures, with its sharp eyes honed to detect even the smallest of movements, paused its circling flight. With its head tilted, the creature focused its attention on the exact area where Erik had just been.

When the second Galewing noticed the change in its companion's demeanor, it stopped scanning and redirected its gaze to the same spot. The two predators shared a quick and silent exchange with each other.

Upon confirming something out of the ordinary nearby, the Galewings made adjustments to their flight paths. While moving in unison, their synchronized descent towards the base of the tree showcased their precise wing movements, effortlessly slicing through the air.

Their descent was not only a display of controlled power but also a demonstration of grace, highlighting their mastery of flight. Their intense curiosity drove them to investigate the source of that mysterious movement, as they felt compelled to do so.

Chapter 712: Two Galewings (2)

The two Galewings descended cautiously towards the base of the towering tree, their large wings flapping as they maintained a safe altitude.

Their sharp, penetrating gaze swept across the area below, their senses heightened and on guard for any indications of potential danger.

Even though the tree's presence was unusual, they were unable to identify any immediate dangers.

The area appeared to be safe, with the shade of the tree offering a much-needed break from the intense sun of the desert.

After spending a few moments pondering the matter, they determined the location was well-suited for their nests. With a shared glance, they turned, ready to leave and gather materials for their new home.

However, as they did so, something struck the right wing of one Galewing. The impact wasn't strong enough to cause serious injury, but it was enough to disrupt its flight.

With a surprised squawk, the hit Galewing spiraled downwards, flapping its wings to regain control.

As the other creature looked on, filled with horror, it observed its comrade descending towards the barren desert floor.

With a swift motion, it shifted its view to witness the unfolding events, shifting its attention to the comrade who was now plummeting downwards.

However, with its high vantage point, the creature was able to observe a figure swiftly approaching the second Galewing just as it began its descent towards the ground.

In its attempt to see, the beast narrowed its eyes in order to decipher the enigmatic figure before it. The speed at which the figure was moving prevented a clear view. The beast was able to find out that it did not belong to the desert's native fauna.

The fear that the creature felt transformed into a state of panic as it observed the figure drawing near to its friend, attempting to regain control and escape by taking flight.

The Thaid plummeted from the sky, its body spiraling downward in a desperate struggle for control. As it fell, its wings flapped, straining against the pull of gravity.

With each beat, the bird attempted to regain the altitude it had lost, as the air rushed past in a deafening roar. It was clear from the frantic movements that panic and confusion were filling its head.

The ground below loomed closer with each passing second, a threatening presence growing ever larger. The Thaid, in a final and desperate attempt, made one last effort to stabilize its descent, but the approaching ground was becoming increasingly close. Until it was no more.

The beast in the sky knew it had to act fast, had to protect its companion. But what could it do? It was high above the ground, too far away to reach its comrade in time before that creature killed it.

With a desperate cry, it dove towards the ground, determined to do whatever it could to protect its comrade.

While witnessing the uncontrolled descent of the Galewing, Erik wasted no time in activating his brain crystal powers. Despite the challenging sandy terrain, his body moved with practiced ease as his legs propelled him towards the falling creature.

"You are mine!" His voice carried over the barren landscape. The Galewing descended closer to the ground, its enormous form creating a dark silhouette against the pale sand.

The Galewing made a deafening noise as it crashed onto the ground; the sound echoing throughout the silent desert. A cloud of sand was thrown up, completely obscuring it from view for a moment.

However, Erik showed no signs of slowing down or hesitating as he fearlessly charged through the swirling sand, piercing through it like a swift arrow piercing a mist veil.

By using the power of mana, he directed it towards his Force-Fist brain crystal power, resulting in a significant augmentation of his already formidable strength. He could feel the power coursing through his body, his muscles tightening in anticipation of the blow.

As he neared the fallen Galewing, he leapt into the air. The Galewing had regained its footing, its enormous eyes filled with fear as it looked up at him. But it was too late for the creature.

"You're dead!"

With the ferocity of a thunderbolt, Erik's fist surged forward, his muscles taut with adrenaline. Each movement had an eerie grace, reminiscent of a specter haunting its victim.

The strike to the Galewing's head was executed with lethal precision, his arm embodying the relentless force of nature itself.

With the strength of a tempest, the impact resounded, leaving no doubt about his dominance over the helpless creature lying on the ground.

As he stood there, the world seemed to slow down, creating a surreal atmosphere, while his eyes remained fixed on the creature's body that was jerking and convulsing violently because of the powerful strike. With its brain shattered, its life came to an abrupt end.

While hovering in the air, the remaining Galewing could only watch as its comrade met its unfortunate end. A shift in its demeanor was observed as it transformed from a state of concern to a powerful and palpable surge of anger that seemed to emanate from its physical presence. Though silent, its rage was unmistakable, a storm of emotions brewing within.

[GALEWING 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. 5321 EXPERIENCE POINTS AWARDED TO THE HOST.]

After his jump to reach the beast's head, Erik landed on the ground beside the now lifeless creature, his chest heaving as he took in the sight of his kill.

"One less." There was grim satisfaction in his voice.

Erik's victory over the Galewing was short-lived as the cry of the other creature pierced the air. The sound was mournful, a haunting wail that sent chills down his spine. He turned to face the source of the noise, his eyes meeting the gaze of the remaining creature in the sky.

The beast was watching him, its eyes filled with hatred. Erik could sense the creature's mourning for its fallen companion, but he could also feel its rage at the sight of him.

The Galewing, its eyes aflame with hatred, fixed its gaze on Erik, embodying both grief and fury. As it mourned its fallen companion, the creature's emotions transformed into a seething rage directed squarely at Erik.

It continued its dive, plummeting towards the ground with a terrifying speed. The beast cut through the air like a blade, each wingbeat propelling it faster, closing the distance. Its descent was a focused, vengeful charge, an embodiment of raw, unbridled wrath.

As it hurtled down, its trajectory was unerringly aimed at Erik, turning the creature into a living missile, a force of nature driven by a singular purpose of retribution.

Erik stood up straight, brushing the sand off his clothes as if what he had in front of him was just another bug to squash. "Your turn." A grim grin blossomed on his face, his voice echoing in the silent desert.

He took a step towards the Galewing, his eyes never leaving the creature. "Don't worry, I'll make it quick."

The Galewing let out another cry, its screeching voice trembling with renewed anger.

With a powerful flap of its wings, the remaining Galewing halted his descent. It was still high in the sky, its vibrant feathers catching the sunlight as it started circling above Erik.

Erik felt as the Galewing channeled mana, the air around the creature shimmering with energy. He could feel the power building and could see the intent in the creature's eyes. It was preparing to attack, to use its brain crystal powers against him.

The young man readied himself, his muscles tensing in anticipation. He knew he had to be careful, to be on guard. One wrong move, one misstep, and he could end up like the Galewing now lying lifeless on the sand.

But as he watched the Galewing, something else caught his eye. Behind the creature, eight more figures were approaching. Erik's heart sank as he recognized them for what they were - more Galewings, part of the same flock.

Erik's situation grew dangerous as he surveyed the sky, his eyes shifting rapidly between the solitary Galewing diving towards him and the oncoming swarm in the distance.

He drew a deep breath, steeling himself for the battle ahead. The recent victory over one of the Galewings bolstered his resolve; he knew it was possible to kill them, but that only if he fought one at a time.

However, Erik recognized that success depended not just on brute force, but on strategic thinking and judicious use of his skills.

In the momentary lull before the storm, he contemplated his next move, aware that each action could tip the scales of this precarious encounter.

The Galewing above, fueled by a mix of grief and anger, posed an immediate threat, its descent a promise of retribution.

At the same time, the approaching flock loomed like a dark cloud on the horizon.

As he readied himself, Erik's muscles tensed, and his senses heightened, Erik prepared to confront the Galewing head-on, determined to survive and emerge victorious.

Chapter 713: Two Galewings (3)

Erik's pulse quickened as the Galewing's cry echoed across the desert, signaling the onset of its attack. With a fierce beat of its vast wings, the creature unleashed a volley of wind blades, each one honed to lethal sharpness. The wind blades cut through the air with a whistling sound.

But Erik sprang into action, instincts honed from countless battles guiding his movements. Each dodge was a dance with danger, the blades' chilling rush missing his skin.

He leaped to the side, executing a swift roll across the rough, hot sand, its coarse grains scraping against his skin.

As he regained his footing, Erik's gaze caught the aftermath of the Galewing's attack. Plumes of sand rose into the air, marking where the wind blades had struck the earth. The desert was already a battleground marked by the scars of combat.

Above him, the sun bore down, a relentless orb of heat in the vast desert sky. Its rays seemed to hammer down upon him with tangible force, adding to the intensity of the moment. The scorching sands beneath him radiated heat like a furnace, the warmth permeating the air and threatening to overwhelm him.

Sweat dripped down the young man's brow. Erik moved while gritting his teeth. The Galewing demanded his utmost focus and skill.

Erik surged to an upright stance, his gaze locked on the Galewing as it soared above. He sensed the buildup of mana within the creature, a prelude to another assault. With a spine-chilling screech, the Galewing unleashed a fresh barrage of wind blades, each one a lethal attack aimed at Erik.

In response, Erik's body sprang into action with practiced agility. He dived, rolled, and maneuvered, evading the slicing blades. Each blade carved deep into the desert sand, leaving behind a series of furrows that marked Erik's narrow escapes. The proximity of these attacks sent adrenaline coursing through his veins, heightening his senses.

As he moved, Erik's heart thundered against his ribcage, a steady drumbeat in his ears. His breaths were rapid and shallow, each inhalation a sharp gasp as he continued his evasive dance.

Sand clung to his sweat-drenched skin, a gritty reminder of the harsh environment that surrounded him.

Erik's physical prowess was undeniable, his body a honed instrument of battle, but the Galewing's aerial advantage and its ability to enhance the blades with additional mana presented a problem.

The creature's vast reserves of mana enabled it to intensify the attack, increasing both the speed and power of the wind blades.

Even though the situation was dire, Erik couldn't help but experience a surge of exhilaration. The excitement and adrenaline that came with fighting and narrowly escaping death, sparked a passionate flame deep inside him.

However, he understood the importance of staying calm and composed in that situation. Losing focus could prove fatal, especially with the impending arrival of more Galewings.

Erik's muscles tensed as he channeled mana into his neural links, the power of his Aerokinesis Brain Crystal igniting within him.

As he felt the drain of mana from his reserves, he experienced a unique mix of sensations - both empowering and demanding - which fueled his determination to prepare for his counterattack.

With a surge of energy, he released a wind blade aimed at the Galewing. The blade cut through the air with lethal precision, but to Erik's astonishment, the Galewing exhibited remarkable agility.

With its massive body, the creature skillfully twisted and maneuvered in mid-air, successfully evading the incoming attack. The blade whistled past the creature with agility. The monster took a moment to glance at the wind blade passing behind it before shifting its attention towards Erik.

After that, it let out a deafening screech that echoed through the air, and its eyes burned with an unrelenting rage. It swooped and dived, unleashing a relentless onslaught of wind blades towards Erik.

The blades whizzed through the air like lethal projectiles, forcing Erik to test his agility, dodging and weaving to escape the cutting gusts.

Erik's every move was a dance of survival. The strain of continuous evasion weighed heavily on him, his muscles tense and his body dripping with sweat.

Despite his agility and training, Erik was being pushed into a defensive stance, reacting to the Galewing's aggressive tactics.

As he moved, the surrounding desert became a hazy blur, the scorching sand shifting beneath his feet. As the sweat continued to cascade down his face, dripping into his eyes and stinging them, he knew he couldn't afford to let his focus waver.

The Galewing seemed to sense Erik's predicament, exploiting it to its advantage. It maintained a safe distance, its aerial superiority allowing it to dictate the terms of the battle. Wave after wave of wind blades rained down, each one a potential death sentence.

With his mind racing, Erik tirelessly sought a viable strategy that could turn the tables and change the course of the situation. The Galewing was cunning, its tactics calculated to keep Erik off balance and prevent any form of counterattack.

Its keen intelligence was clear in its every move, its every attack a well-executed plan to wear him down.

"Fucking beast..."

Erik knew he had to bridge the distance to bring the fight within his reach. His gaze darted around the landscape, looking for anything that could be used to his advantage. The desert offered little in the way of cover or strategic points, but Erik was not one to surrender to despair.

He assessed the Galewing's attack patterns, looking for a rhythm, a predictability he could exploit. Every maneuver, every evasive action he took was a step closer to understanding his foe.

He needed to anticipate the Galewing's moves. It was a game of mental chess played at breakneck speed, each move a crucial decision in the delicate balance of survival and defeat.

Erik's resolve hardened. He would not be bested by this creature. He would bring it down. The young man threw himself to the ground as another volley of wind blades sliced through the air overhead. As he rolled back to his feet, his eyes flickered to the horizon.

What he saw made his heart beat. Rapidly approaching in the distance was the unmistakable sight of the Galewing flock. The creatures flew in tight formation, their wings beating in unison as they converged on Erik's position.

He cursed under his breath. That only two Galewings came to the tree was a lucky event, but now he was wasting too much time killing the second. One Galewing was challenging enough, but against nearly a dozen, he wouldn't stand a chance, not even with his strength.

Erik's mind raced, weighing his limited options. He could flee easily by using a combination of Nathaniel's and the Xeridon Anteris powers, but he would have nowhere to go but inside the tree.

Instead, if he killed this Galewing before the others arrived, he could hide before the monsters spotted him.

The Galewing above him shrieked in triumph as it saw the flock coming closer, as if sensing its reinforcements approaching.

Erik knew he couldn't keep this up much longer. The constant dodging and weaving was sapping his energy, while the Galewing seemed tireless in its assault because of its massive amount of mana.

Erik channeled mana again to create a wind blade of his own while seeing an opportunity as the Galewing gathered more mana.

With a cold glint in his eyes, he sent the razor-sharp gust of air slicing towards the creature. But the Galewing banked, avoiding the attack with ease before renewing its own assault.

"Mother Fucker!"

As Erik's frustration grew, he couldn't help but mutter a curse under his breath. At this rate, he would tire himself out just trying to land a hit on it. Because of his lack of sufficient mana, he was unable to conjure a wind blade that was quick enough to eliminate the creature from such a far distance.

The towering tree captured Erik's attention, its thick gnarled branches and vines seeming to invite him closer.

The only chance he had to kill the beast before the flock arrived was if he could lure the Galewing close to the tree and command it to attack the monster using his remaining mana. This idea was his only hope.

Filled with a sudden rush of adrenaline, Erik propelled himself forward and began sprinting towards the tree.

With a deafening shriek echoing behind him, the Galewing gave chase, closing the distance of 15 meters with each forceful flap of its wings.

As the creature's talons swiped at him, Erik could feel the wind buffeting his back.

25 meters from the tree. Erik's lungs were filled with a searing sensation as he pushed himself to will his legs to move at a faster pace. He had to make it.

10 meters away. Erik could feel the looming shadow of the Galewing as it descended, targeting his vulnerable back.

Just as the attack was about to hit him, Erik dropped to the ground and rolled away, feeling the powerful gust caused by the attack missing him.

Chapter 714: Two Galewings (4)

Scrambling to his feet, Erik covered the last distance.

Erik stood at the base of the massive tree, its gnarled trunk stretching skyward before him. Somewhere around there, hidden in the dense canopy, was the entrance he had created earlier - his only chance at shelter from the approaching Galewing flock. But first, he had to deal with the Galewing that even now was coming toward him.

The moment the Galewing descended from its talons poised for attack, Erik concentrated, channeling a surge of mana into the tree. The tree's vines erupted from the bark, writhing and whipping through the air like frenzied serpents.

Caught off guard, the Galewing screeched in alarm as the animated vines ensnared its wings and body, their grip ironclad. The creature thrashed to escape, its powerful wings beating against the unyielding vines.

Undeterred by the Galewing's struggle, Erik intensified his efforts, directing a stronger flow of mana into the tree. The vines responded in kind, tightening their hold with relentless force, squeezing the Galewing with crushing strength.

The battle between the ensnared creature and the animated vines grew more ferocious, with each twist and turn of the Galewing matched by the tightening grip of the tree's tendrils. The air was filled with the sounds of the Galewing's desperate shrieks and the rustling of the aggressive vines.

Erik's focus remained unbroken, his resolve steadfast as he maintained the flow of mana, ensuring the Galewing remained trapped in the tree's grasp's powerful vines.

The Galewing was trapped, but Erik's mana reserves were draining fast. He couldn't maintain this for long. He had to end this.

With the beast immobilized for the moment, Erik sprinted for the trunk. The bark was rough and pockmarked, providing ample handholds. He climbed, scrambling up the tree with the agility of a squirrel. In seconds, he had ascended nearly 30 meters into the dense nest of branches.

Out of the corner of his eye, Erik spotted a thick vine wrapped around the Galewing's torso, pinning one wing against its body. That vine led back to a massive branch extending overhead. That was his path.

Digging his fingers into the bark, Erik crawled onto the broad branch. He could feel the tree quaking as the Galewing thrashed against its bonds, almost breaking free. Erik's mana was almost depleted; he had to hurry.

Sprinting along the branch, he closed the distance to the trapped creature. The Galewing's eyes burned with hatred, its piercing shrieks deafening this close. Erik steeled himself as he drew nearer to the struggling beast.

Stopping just before the vine, Erik channeled the very last wisps of mana into his right fist, activating the Force-Fist Brain Crystal Power. His hand supercharged with Force converted mana. It was now or never.

Erik, fueled by raw determination, launched himself off the branch with a thunderous roar. Descending, he targeted the Galewing, his body poised like a missile. In the fleeting moments of his freefall, Erik pulled back his fist, channeling a surge of mana into it.

As he neared the creature, Erik unleashed his punch with ferocious power, his mana-infused fist striking the Galewing between its eyes. The impact was cataclysmic, his fist tearing through the skull with a gruesome burst of blood and brain matter.

The Galewing's piercing shrieks ceased, its eyes fading into a lifeless glaze. It twitched violently under the force of Erik's devastating blow, its massive body shuddering in the throes of death. Then, as quickly as it had begun, the struggle ceased, the creature's form going still beneath Erik.

Erik hovered over the defeated Galewing, his chest heaving with exertion. He had triumphed in a battle that tested the very limits of his strength and resolve.

[GALEWING 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. 3620 EXPERIENCE POINTS AWARDED TO THE HOST.]

[QUEST COMPLETE.]

[LEVEL UP.]

Erik cut the flow of mana to the tree. The vines loosened and retracted back into the bark, dropping the lifeless Galewing to the sand below. Erik swung from a nearby vine, landing in a crouch beside the beast's massive carcass.

However, the triumph was short-lived. An enraged shriek from above snapped Erik's focus back to the present danger- the Galewing flock was nearly upon him. He had seconds to reach the shelter of the tree.

Erik's heart raced as he bolted towards the tree, every fiber of his being focused on reaching the makeshift entrance he had made earlier. His breaths came in sharp, rapid gasps as he sprinted, muscles burning with exertion. The Galewings, a furious flock of vengeance, were closing in, their wingbeats thundering through the air like a relentless storm.

The distance to the entrance dwindled: five meters, then three. The cacophony of wings intensified, a foreboding chorus that urged Erik to push his limits. He could almost feel the talons of the lead Galewing, a mere breath away from his back. One meter left.

Erik's legs pumped with renewed vigor, every stride a battle against the imminent danger. The entrance was near, yet the gap between him and the Galewings was narrow. He could hear their enraged shrieks echoing around him, a symphony of rage for their fallen comrades.

In a last, desperate surge of speed, Erik lunged for the entrance. The Galewings were nearly upon him, their shadows engulfing the ground as they prepared to strike. His heart pounded in his ears, drowning out all other sounds.

Just as Erik crossed the entrance threshold, the lead Galewing made its move. Talons extended. It lunged with lethal intent, a blur of feathers and fury. But Erik was faster. He propelled himself through the door with every ounce of strength he had left.

Behind him, the door sealed shut with an ominous finality, cutting off the Galewings' access. Their frustrated screams pierced the air, a chorus of fury that reverberated through the desert.

The first Galewing, unable to halt its momentum, collided with the tree trunk in a violent crash. The impact resonated through the trunk, sending tremors up the massive tree.

Leaves rustled and branches swayed, but the tree stood resolute, too robust to succumb to the Galewings' assault.

For a moment, Erik stood just inside the entrance, catching his breath. His chest heaved, his limbs trembled with adrenaline and exertion.

The sounds of the Galewings' frustrated cries outside served as a stark reminder of the peril he had just evaded.

Exhausted, Erik slumped against the sturdy interior of the tree trunk, his body shaking from the drain of mana. He had pushed himself to the limits, depleting every ounce of energy to reach this refuge, narrowly escaping the wrath of the Galewings.

Outside, the trunk resonated with the Galewings' screams of fury, their cries echoing like a chorus of the damned. But within this natural fortress, Erik was safe for the time being.

His breath steadied, the rapid drumming of his heart slowing to a more manageable pace. Erik's gaze swept over his surroundings, assessing the safety of his surroundings. The trunk's vast interior was like a citadel, offering both protection and strategic advantage.

Then Erik allowed himself to sink to the ground, his back still pressed against the tree's inner wall. His eyes fluttered shut as he fought to regain control of his ragged breathing.

The rush of adrenaline that had sustained him was fading fast, leaving a void filled with fatigue and the unmistakable weight of his drained state.

But the rest was a luxury Erik could ill afford. He knew the Galewings, driven by a relentless thirst for vengeance, would not stop chasing him. They were likely considering making the tree their nesting ground.

Erik rummaged through his pack with trembling hands, searching for his water bottle. Hydration was crucial, and he needed to recover.

Erik had a plan forming in his mind - a daring and dangerous one. He intended to turn the tables on the Galewings, to strike them down in their most vulnerable state. He needed to be ready, to gather his strength for the imminent confrontation.

Resting against the robust trunk, Erik paused to put his thoughts back on track. He recognized the immediate necessity for food wouldn't be a concern thanks to his Plant Master brain crystal power, and he could wait as much as he needed before starting his plan. He could take all the time he needed.

Yet, water was a problem. His current supply was dwindling, and replenishment was crucial. He recollected a stream he had passed on his journey towards the White Desert, earmarking it as a potential water source to visit in the following days.

His mind then shifted to another critical task at hand — getting the blood of the Galewings outside.

If he could make a clone and let it absorb the creature's blood, he would gain a follower capable of transforming into a Galewing.

Such an ability would be invaluable. It would not only facilitate his movement across the landscape but also bolster his chances of survival.

He could evade potential threats with greater ease, scout for water sources more effectively, and kill thaids with more ease.

With these thoughts swirling in his mind, Erik leaned forward and started planning his course of action. Every detail mattered in this hostile environment, and he couldn't afford any miscalculations.

Chapter 715: Night Attack

Erik cautiously approached the entrance of his shelter. With a deft touch, he tapped the wooden knob, and moving the door just enough to survey the scene outside.

What he saw sent a jolt of fear down his spine. In the branches above, at least ten Galewings were settling in, making themselves comfortable over the sprawling branches of the giant tree. Their massive forms were easily visible.

"Damn it. I was right all along. They came here to claim the tree as their nesting place. I can't blame them, but they are right above where I'm hiding."

The situation was problematic, with the Galewings perched so close, their wings rustling and creating a constant, unnerving sound. The desert beyond now seemed an unreachable territory with these predators nearby.

He realized that leaving the safety of the tree would be like walking into a death trap. The Galewings would pounce at the first sign of movement.

Yet, remaining hidden inside the tree was not a sustainable solution. He needed food, water, and freedom to move. Freedom to hunt.

Erik's brain worked feverishly, assessing the predicament from every angle. It was clear he had to take care of them somehow. But a direct assault on the creatures could provoke an all-out attack from the flock, a risk too great to take.

He retreated into the tree, contemplating his next move. The Galewings, while currently at rest, wouldn't stay passive for long. He needed to hunt as soon as the moon was high.

"Think, Erik, think. How do I approach this mess?"

Stealth was key. He needed to leave the tree without drawing attention. A plan formed in his mind, one that required precision and timing.

As he waited in the relative safety of the tree, Erik prepared himself mentally and physically for the critical moment to make his attack.

...

...

...

Erik, having spent the entire day training inside the tree, paced in the hollowed trunk as darkness enveloped him. He muttered to himself, wrestling with his strategic options.

"Maybe I should use the Xeridon Anteris brain crystal power."

But then he shook his head, dismissing the thought. "No, it's too risky. The vines... yes, that's it. I can use them to crush the Galewings while they sleep. If I'm careful and quick, I can take out several pairs before they even realize what's happening."

He stopped his restless walking, repeatedly gripping and releasing his hands. "The key is silence. I can't afford any of them to shriek and alert the others. This has to be precise, silent, and deadly."

Erik knew the plan was dangerous, the margin for error was nearly nonexistent. A single mistake could spell disaster, but it was a risk he had to take. He couldn't leave the monsters there.

He checked his gear one last time, feeling the familiar weight of his equipment. His shoulders squared as he prepared for the task ahead.

"I should keep resting for now." He sat down against the rough inner wall of the tree. "As soon as the moon is at its highest, that's when I strike."

Leaning back, Erik exhaled a long breath. He closed his eyes, visualizing the upcoming night. The tension in his body eased as he focused inward, gathering his mental and physical strength for the challenge that lay ahead.

...

...

...

Night fell over the White Desert, blanketing the windswept dunes in darkness. Inside the hollowed trunk of the ancient tree, Erik lay awake, unable to rest.

Steeling his nerves, Erik crept to the concealed entrance and peered out. The moon bathed the sprawling branches in pale light. Erik could make out the slumbering forms of the Galewings nestled throughout the canopy. Now was the time to strike.

<Quest: Night Killer. >

-Description: Kill the Galewings and survive.

-Rewards for completion: 15,000 experience points per kill, 3,000 DNA points per kill, and 5 stats each in strength and Dexterity.

-Failure Penalty: Death.

"Really? This had been a generous week, right system?"

[I DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU ARE TALKING ABOUT. HOST.]

Erik crept out of the trunk with the stealth of a ghost. He began his ascent up the massive tree, using the rough bark as handholds. With each movement, he monitored the flock nesting above.

Reaching the lower branches, Erik crouched, his body tense and motionless, barely allowing himself to breathe.

Only ten meters away, nestled among a tangle of branches, lay the first nest of the Galewings. Two of the formidable creatures were asleep, oblivious to the looming threat.

Erik could feel his heart pounding against his chest, yet his hands remained steady. The silence was crucial; any slight noise could spell disaster.

Although he possessed considerable strength, Erik knew he was no match for ten Galewings at the same time. He would not have the space to even dodge.

He needed to take care of the Galewings and move on with his training. However, he also decided to place the Thaid repelling plant all over the giant tree as soon as he was done. So that he wouldn't have the same problem in the future. The tree would still attract other Thaid, but at least they would not stay so close to the place.

Erik inched closer to the first nest. The Galewings, nestled in their nest, exhibited the motions of deep sleep.

Their massive forms shifted from time to time, scaring Erik. Claws from time to time scraped against the branches, a sound that spoke of their predatory nature even in repose.

The rhythm of their breathing was steady and deep, each exhale a soft whoosh that melded with the nocturnal symphony of the desert. In this state, they were vulnerable, their usual vigilance surrendered to the embrace of dreams.

However, at each movement, Erik remained still, becoming one with the tree until they calmed down. Sweat formed on his forehead due to how tense the situation was.

His progress was slow. Every inch he advanced brought him closer to his goal, yet also closer to potential death. The night was quiet, the only sounds being the occasional rustle of leaves and the distant calls of nocturnal creatures.

Erik closed in on his target, now directly beneath the Galewing's nest. He observed the monsters above. Their wings twitched occasionally, betraying dreams filled with predatory instincts.

With silent movements, he retrieved a pouch containing Dune Blossom powder, a substance known to mask human scent. He applied it over his skin and attire, ensuring he was undetectable even to the keenest of Thaid senses.

Then the moment arrived. Erik's mana moved. Harnessing the power of his Plant Master Brain Crystal, summoned the vines to life with a silent command.

They crept forward, slithering across the bark with stealth and purpose. Like serpents in the night, they moved with a fluid grace, inching closer to the sleeping Galewings.

The vines wound their way up the tree, twisting around branches and leaves, their movements almost imperceptible in the moonlit darkness.

As they approached the Galewings, the vines paused, as if sensing the slumbering creatures. Then, with a delicacy belying their lethal intent, they encircled the beasts.

The tendrils coiled around the Galewings, looping around their massive forms without disturbing their rest. Each vine found its place, weaving a web of entrapment that left no avenue for escape.

Erik watched, controlling the vines' every move, ensuring they did not so much as brush a feather too harshly. The silent encroachment continued until the Galewings were surrounded, ensnared in an embrace that was poised to tighten at the slightest sign of awakening.

However, Erik knew the mana required to maintain this entrapment was a lot. He couldn't kill them using that power. At best, he could trap them and prevent them from screeching.

Acting with a swiftness that defied his earlier caution, he ascended the trunk and rolled into the nest.

The vines, responding to his command, burst forth with renewed vigor, ensnaring the Galewings in an unyielding grip.

They tightened around the creatures, immobilizing them. The Galewings, awakening to their predicament, attempted to screech and struggle, but the vines constricted their beaks, muffling their cries and rendering them helpless.

Erik focused his energy, channeling mana into his fist using Nathaniel's Brain Crystal Power. His hand glowed with a concentrated energy, primed for a lethal strike.

He then delivered two devastating blows, one to each of the trapped Galewings. His powered fists connected with their skulls.

The Galewings' bodies jerked under the impact before falling still, life extinguished by Erik's assault. He stood there for a moment, catching his breath, his heart pounding from the adrenaline. The once-threatening creatures now lay motionless.

Erik knew he had to move. He began harvesting what he could from the fallen Galewings, aware that his time in this nest was limited.

[GALEWINGS 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. 10642 EXPERIENCE POINTS AWARDED TO THE HOST.]

<Fantastic! >

Erik leaped from the nest and dropped into the concealing shadows below, not before having taken a bottle of the Galewing's blood. He was going to use it for the next part of his plan.

He was hoping the flock didn't hear the commotion. Erik held his breath, listening to any sound that could give him a hint. Only silence greeted him. He could keep moving.

Chapter 716: Night Killer

Erik scaled the tree with a ghost-like stealth. He blended with the darkness, an unseen predator among the twisted boughs and dense foliage.

The branches beneath him remained unmoved, capable of supporting his weight without problems. That was only natural since they could easily sustain the Galewing's weight, and they were much bigger creatures than him.

As he climbed higher, his gaze went past the leafy canopy, locking onto his next prey. Two Galewings lay nestled together on an upper bough, their forms entwined in slumber. Erik's heart pounded in his chest, yet he moved with the calm of a seasoned hunter.

The higher branches were slick with the remnants of the Galewings' feasts. Blood of various Thaid's, their unfortunate prey, stained the bark, making each step a precarious endeavor.

Erik's hands grasped each handhold with caution, his fingers finding secure grips despite the slick surface.

He advanced, mindful of every breath and movement. The slightest mistake could send a cascade of sound through the silent night, alerting the Galewings to his presence.

Erik's progress was slow, almost imperceptible. Then he perched at the base of the nesting branch, became a statue of silence. He listened, but the only sounds being the breathing of the Galewings and the rhythmic beating of their hearts.

Gathering what remained of his mana, Erik knew he had just enough energy left for these two Galewings. Yet, he knew he would need to rest and replenish his spent power to kill the other Thaid.

He couldn't help but wonder if the system would consider his quest complete after he killed these two monsters, or if it required the elimination of the entire flock.

Erik moved upward from the underside of the branch. He was right below the unsuspecting Galewings, hidden by the leafy canopy.

Their massive wings lay folded in slumber, their beaks slightly agape. Erik's heart beat faster, but he maintained control over his nerves. Speed and precision would be crucial to what he was about to do.

His hand grasped an upper branch to hoist himself into a better position. He was poised to strike, every muscle tensed for the imminent strike. But as he shifted his weight, his foot nudged a small piece of loose bark. It detached, falling through the leaves with a soft rustling sound.

Erik's eyes widened as he realized what had happened. He froze, holding his breath, his gaze locked on the Galewings above. Time seemed to slow as the bark tumbled downward, a seemingly insignificant sound that held the potential to awaken the slumbering creatures.

In the tense silence of the night, one of the Galewings stirred, disturbed by the faint rustling. Its avian head emerged from beneath a wing, eyes blinking open to scan the darkness.

The moonlight reflected off its round eyes, creating a glinting effect as they darted around, searching for any sign of danger.

The creature's beak opened slightly, ready to emit a piercing shriek that would alert the entire flock to any recognized threat.

Erik remained immobile, not even daring to breathe. He watched as the Galewing's powerful talons flexed in anticipation, its wings slightly unfurling.

He knew that if the Galewing detected his presence, it would signal a disastrous cascade of events.

In a swift move, Erik swung beneath the branch, clinging to the underside with an iron clawed grip. He suspended himself there, using just his fingertips, every muscle taut with the effort of remaining still. The Galewing continued its vigilant search, but it did not think to cast its gaze below.

Erik regulated his breathing to the quietest rhythm possible, aware that even the slightest gasp might betray his location. The Galewing, after a tense moment, seemed to dismiss the sound as inconsequential, its vigilance fading.

The creature turned its head away, appearing to lose interest in the sounds that had woken it up. With what seemed like a final, dismissive glance, it nestled back into the comfort of its nest. Its eyes closed, and once again, it was enveloped in the protective embrace of sleep.

Erik waited, every sense heightened, his mind racing with the need for caution. He remained suspended in his precarious position, letting the silence envelop him again.

The minutes stretched on, each one a minor victory in his high-stakes game of survival. Assured the threat had passed, Erik maneuvered himself back onto the branch.

Erik's nerves were tense as he realized the urgency of his situation. He knew he had to hasten, as his window of opportunity could be shattered at a moment's notice. Once more, he gathered his strength and reached up for the branch above. With a determined effort, he pulled himself up, his movements swift and fluid.

As he rolled into the nest, he called for the surrounding vines, commanding them to entangle the Galewings that lay there.

The creatures were startled from their slumber, their shrieks of alarm slicing through the stillness of the night. The sound was piercing, undoubtedly alerting the rest of the flock to the disturbance.

Erik felt a surge of pressure. The element of surprise had vanished; now it was a race against time. He focused, directing the thorny vines to tighten their grip around the flailing Galewings.

The vines responded with lethal efficiency, ensnaring the creatures in a constricting embrace. The Galewings struggled, their powerful wings and sharp beaks lashing out in desperate attempts to escape.

Despite their efforts, Erik's control over the vines was unyielding. He pulled, drawing the vines tighter and tighter. The Galewings' struggles grew more frantic, but their efforts were futile against the constricting force of the vines.

After having successfully subdued the Galewings, Erik's chance came. He moved to dispatch the entangled creatures.

With swift, decisive punches, he struck each Galewing on the head, using his mana-charged fists to deliver the fatal blows. The impact was immediate; the Galewings ceased their thrashing, their life force extinguished by Erik's powerful strikes.

[GALEWINGS 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. 10642 EXPERIENCE POINTS AWARDED TO THE HOST.]

As if sensing Erik's wish to retreat to safety, a new notification appeared in front of the young man.

[QUEST COMPLETE.]

<Well. This answer my earlier question...>

Erik looked above, hearing the screech of the now aroused Galewings. He knew the rest of the flock would soon be upon him, roused by the commotion. The time for stealth had passed; now it was a matter of survival.

Erik braced himself for the fight, but if he could, he would avoid fighting. Six Galewings remained, and they were still too much to face alone.

Erik clambered from the blood-soaked nest, his heart pounding in his chest. All around him, the tree was erupting with the sounds of the disturbed flock.

He could hear the flutter of wings, the scrape of talons on bark, and the piercing cries of the Galewings as they emerged from their nests in alarm.

The moonlit branches came alive with dark, swirling shapes as the creatures took to the air, their shrieks and caws filling the night.

Erik's attack had roused them from slumber and now their inky forms whirled through the canopy, beady eyes searching for the intruder.

Erik had run out of time. The element of surprise was lost, and the flock was upon him. He knew he had to get down from the tree and back to the relative safety of the hollowed trunk before the murderous Galewings converged.

Erik could feel the gusts from their wings already buffeting the branches as the creatures bore down on him.

Erik dropped from bough to bough, barely staying ahead of the slashing talons and snapping beaks. The flock chased him, unleashing piercing wind blades that shredded leaves and sliced furrows in the bark.

The young man twisted and ducked, avoiding the attacks by a hair's breadth while jumping from branch to branch in a rapid descent as if he was a monkey.

Halfway down the trunk, a blast of wind knocked Erik off balance. He slipped, barely catching himself on a lower branch. The shrieks grew louder as the Galewings converged upon him, enraged by the spilled blood of their brethren.

Ignoring the pain in his shoulder, Erik swung himself down to the next branch. He couldn't fight them all. He only hoped to reach the ground before the flock overwhelmed him.

The trunk gaped below, so close now. But the Galewings were almost on him, flying behind him with murderous gazes.

Erik leaped, landing in a roll at the base of the giant tree. Without hesitating, he threw himself toward the dark hollow in the trunk. With a quick movement, he entered his shelter. The Galewings were confused since from their point of view he disappeared.

Erik collapsed against the inner wall, chest heaving. The enraged cries of the flock echoed outside. But they could not reach him here. For the moment, he was safe. Erik allowed himself a grim smile. The Galewings' numbers were reduced, and dawn was coming.

The real hunt was about to begin.

Chapter 717: A new Egg

As dawn broke, Erik opened his eyes inside his shelter. Soft morning light flooded the interior of the tree, casting a warm glow and creating a peaceful ambiance.

Throughout the night, there was an unending onslaught of noise and chaos. Driven by an overwhelming rage and sorrow from the tragic loss of their companions, the Galewings launched a relentless attack on the tree.

The furious Galewings, spurred by vengeance, had circled the tree continuously, their wings thundering in the night air.

They had launched furious gusts of wind, each powerful enough to rattle the branches and leaves, to uproot the tree and reach Erik.

Their sharp talons had clawed at the bark, stripping away large chunks in their effort to breach his refuge.

The sounds of their talons scraping and tearing at the wood had echoed through the night, a reminder of the danger lurking outside.

Inside his haven, Erik had lain awake, listening to the unending assault. He knew venturing outside would be a certain death sentence.

The tree, a formidable natural fortress, creaked and groaned under the Galewings' attack.

Yet, its deep roots and robust trunk had withstood the onslaught. Erik had even used his Plant Master Brain Crystal Power to regenerate the damaged areas, ensuring the tree's integrity.

The night's ordeal had tested the tree's resilience and Erik's nerve, but both had endured.

As the first light of dawn seeped through the leaves, the sounds of the Galewings already subsided. Their attacks had ceased, allowing Erik a moment of respite.

Erik stood up as the first light of dawn crept into his tree shelter. The sounds of battle faded, replaced by the calm stillness of morning. Stepping towards the opening of the trunk, he peered outside.

The immediate vicinity of the tree was a scene of aftermath. Broken branches and scattered feathers lay strewn around, evidence of the Galewings' attack.

Deep gouges marred the earth where the creatures had vented their anger. Yet, in the silent light of day, there was no trace of the Galewings themselves. They had retreated.

A smile crept across Erik's weary face. Despite the tumultuous night, he had achieved his goal. His strategic attack on their nests had halved the flock's numbers, weakening them.

Just six of the Galewings remained, and Erik felt confident in his ability to handle them should they dare return.

However, Erik couldn't help but feel a twinge of regret. He had missed an opportunity to claim the full reward the system might have offered for annihilating the entire flock.

Yet, he consoled himself, knowing that his chance to kill such beasts was far from over. The White Desert still held many challenges and opportunities.

He also had to search for the creature that tore apart the cargo plane he was sent to find some time prior. The beast was dangerous, but he needed to find it.

However, now, with the most imminent threat gone, Erik pondered his next move. The remaining Galewings, should they choose to attack him, would find him prepared.

Erik delved into his backpack and retrieved a bottle. Inside, the deep red hue of Galewing blood shimmered.

Erik held the vial up, allowing the light to filter through its contents. The small container was simple, yet it served its purpose.

The blood within glowed with a rich hue. Its color was a vibrant crimson. The blood seemed to have a life of its own, its viscosity slightly thicker than human blood, hinting at the extraordinary nature of its source.

Within the bottle, the blood movement was hypnotic, swirling as Erik turned the bottle in his hands. It caught the light and shimmered, casting a soft, reddish glow around its immediate vicinity.

"At last, the blood of a flying Thaid."

Erik studied the blood inside the bottle. "With this last component, I can finally make the clone I needed."

Erik needed to use his CHIMERIC BIOMETAL SOLDIER Brain Crystal Power to make it. The clone, once given the Galewing's blood, would have the ability to shapeshift into it.

The only thing he had to do was to make the egg. This would boost Erik's mobility a lot and add him a myriad of new fighting tactics.

Enemies he had problems fighting now were going to be easier to hunt. No longer were the Flying Thaid's going to pose a threat to him. The time of their aerial advantage was going to end soon.

Erik settled into a more comfortable position and prepared for the process. He closed his eyes, focusing his thoughts on the task at hand.

While channeling mana through the neural links connected to the Brain Crystal, he felt the familiar surge of power.

He visualized the egg, picturing its size, texture, and the life it would contain. Erik kept his concentration steady, guiding the energy with precision.

As Erik pressed the sharp knife against his finger, a small bead of blood formed, slowly trickling down. Mixed with the trailing wisps of mana, the blood formed a shimmering crimson orb—his latest creation, the egg, pulsating with otherworldly energy.

With a practiced eye, he observed it, displaying his familiarity with the process while remaining attentive to every single detail.

With a tap on the vial, Erik acknowledged the next step in his plan. "Now I just need to wait for this little fellow to hatch."

With delicate care, he cradled the egg in his hands and transported it across the room, placing it in the exact spot designated along the wall.

In a silent and secluded corner, he had taken the time to create a makeshift nest. The nest, a blend of soft leaves and fine sand, lay ready to house the egg during its crucial incubation period.

Erik lowered the egg into the heart of the nest. He arranged the leaves around the egg, ensuring it was nestled securely.

Erik observed the nest while stepping back. He felt satisfied with the egg's secure position. This cozy corner of the house would provide a warm and concealed spot for the egg. Now it just needed time to mature before bursting into life.

Following two weeks, the egg would hatch, and subsequently, the clone would undergo a month-long process of maturing.

Once ready, Erik would give his clone the Galewing's blood. Until that point, the young man had no choice but to wait.

The young man took one last glance at the fragile egg nestled in the corner, its delicate shell reflecting a soft, warm glow.

Since he felt happy with its safe location within the house, he walked across the room. The sound of his footsteps resonated on the wooden floorboards as he approached the front door.

After having reached the heavyset door, Erik pulled it open. As the sunlight streamed in, it created a stark contrast with the dimness of the interior, revealing the floating specks of dust.

As Erik stepped outside, the glaring brightness of the desert sun forced him to squint. He took a moment, allowing his eyes to adjust to the stark contrast from the dimness inside the tree. With a firm hand, he closed the door behind him; the sound echoing up the expansive trunk, a deep and hollow reverberation.

Before him stretched the vast expanse of the White Desert, a sprawling canvas of shimmering sands that seemed to merge with the horizon.

The sun hung high in the clear blue sky, its rays unrelenting, turning the desert into a furnace of heat and light. Yet, under the colossal tree's vast canopy, a sanctuary of shade provided a cool respite from the desert's harsh embrace.

The tree's shadow cast a large, cool area where the temperature was noticeably lower, a stark contrast to the scorching heat just a few steps away.

The air here was fresher, infused with a hint of moisture that the tree's immense presence seemed to draw from the very earth itself.

Beyond the shade, the desert sands danced in the heat, creating mirages that blurred the line between reality and illusion.

The landscape was barren, with only the occasional hardy shrub, surviving on such unforgiving conditions.

Erik stood at the threshold of this natural oasis, contemplating the beauty of the desert ahead. The serene coolness under the tree's shelter was a brief solace.

But he couldn't linger anymore. He had an important task ahead of him. He turned his gaze outward. Erik set off into the depths of the desert, sand shifting underfoot. His senses were alert, focused on the hunt for Thaid's to kill.

"I hope I will find something strong enough to give me enough experience for a quick level up."

That was wishful thinking. Although there were many monsters present, locating them proved to be quite challenging. The focus of their specialization in this desert was on ambushing strategies, with their brain crystal powers tailored for this purpose.

However, in this dangerous place known as the White Desert, there were going to be many opportunities to encounter Thaid's, which would provide him with massive amounts of experience to boost his strength.

Chapter 718: Terrapedes (1)

Erik burst forth from the shaded confines of the tree, his boots sinking into the pale sands of the White Desert as he ran.

The green giant receded into the distance behind him, its verdant canopy fading from view as Erik traversed deeper into the barren wasteland. But it took a while before it stopped appearing on the horizon.

As Erik went far, the sun beat down, bleaching the landscape in blinding white light. Sparse tufts of brittle grass crunched underfoot as Erik maintained his tireless pace across the endless sea of sand. The dunes rose and fell in wind-sculpted waves, broken only by jutting rocks that cast small shadows here and there.

Erik had been running for the better part of half an hour when the first beads of sweat materialized on his brow.

<This heat is killing me...>

Pausing in the shade of a large boulder, Erik caught his breath and wiped the sweat from his eyes. The heat shimmered in wavy lines on the horizon ahead.

After having rested and drank some water, Erik resumed his journey. However, he didn't find monsters. Not a single one was on the horizon.

Erik continued sprinting across the desert landscape. Everything looked normal until the hard-packed sandy ground trembled under Erik's feet.

<What the...? >

He glanced around, his senses on high alert as the hairs on the back of his neck stood up. The low, ominous rumbling grew louder. Erik was able to tell the rumbling came from his front, somewhere in the barren landscape.

While looking out toward the horizon, Erik scanned for the source, his muscles tensing. The vibrations through the earth intensified, making the sand around his boots quiver and jump.

Erik's heartbeat quickened, thudding in his ears over the deep rumble. His eyes narrowed, full of wary focus.

<What the hell could it be? >

There were many monsters who could make such a phenomenon. However, to do it on such a scale, either the beast had to be enormous or in high numbers.

<The only way for me to know is to go there and see...>

The trembling progressed until it felt like the very bedrock beneath the desert was awakening. Loose pebbles danced along the ground as the intense quaking continued to strengthen.

Erik planted his feet on the ground, the reverberations traveling up through his legs. His mind raced, calculating, assessing the possibilities of what could cause the intense seismic disturbance. The rumbling grew louder still until it was almost deafening.

Erik skidded to a halt, eyes fixed on the towering dunes in the distance.

Then some of the dunes in front of him crumbled, enormous chunks of sand breaking free and cascading downwards. A truly massive wave of granular destruction hurtled towards Erik with alarming speed.

Erik reacted in a split-second and channeled all his strength into his legs to leap skyward. He rocketed upwards just as the thundering sand slide arrived at his former position. Suspended at the apex of his jump, Erik hovered in midair as the world seemed to slow around him.

While looking down, he watched the colossal cascade churn below, obscuring everything in a thick, choking haze of sand. The noise was deafening, a constant rumble punctuated by the sharp cracks of tumbling boulders.

The moment of weightless suspension soon passed as gravity reasserted its control. Erik plunged back down through the dust-filled air, angling his body to land in a controlled roll. He hit the ground and found his footing, grains of sand pelting against him.

Though he had narrowly escaped the landslide, Erik knew more danger lurked below. His muscles tensed, prepared to react in an instant.

Eyes darting, he scanned the environment for any additional threats. Adrenaline pumped through his veins, every sense primed for whatever this treacherous desert might unleash next.

The quaking intensified. From the shifting sands emerged an unearthly horde - at least a hundred Terrapedes erupting forth. But it could be more based on what Erik was seeing.

<Ah... Now I get it...>

Erik recognized the beasts. How could he not? These creatures possessed an earthen exoskeleton adorned with dark mottled patterns.

Rows of small faceted eyes regarded Erik with malevolence. Their powerful mandibles could crush steel. Countless legs propelled them towards Erik with alarming speed.

These were ungodly, ugly beasts, not particularly hard to kill, but usually roaming in vast groups like this. However, they were not Xeridon Anteris. These chungus could reach even 100 stat points in strength.

One Terrapede had the audacity to jump out of the sand and charge at Erik, mandibles gnashing. The young man dove and rolled, feeling the snap of its jaws just inches from his head.

He planted his feet and leaped upwards, delivering a powerful kick to the creature's underside. It recoiled with an enraged shriek.

Two more terrapedes converged on Erik, their multitude of legs churning up the sand as they scuttled towards him.

The Thaides were sluggish and uncoordinated compared to Erik's physical strength. Their mandibles snapped, but barely reached him as he evaded the attacks.

Erik found himself amidst a relentless siege, his opponents fueled by an unyielding primal instinct. The Terrapedes lunged at him with ferocity.

These creatures, resembling the offspring of a nightmarish union between scorpions and centipedes, were annoying opponents.

Their attack was coordinated yet frenzied, a testament to their hive-mind aggression. As two terrapedes bore down on him, Erik executed a series of swift evasive maneuvers.

He dodged their lunges with a grace that belied the danger he was in. Erik responded to their assault with a counterattack of his own.

His fists struck with precision and power. The impact of his blows was devastating; upon contact, the heads of the Terrapedes exploded, sending showers of ichor splattering across the sands.

The explosion of ichor from the creatures' shattered exoskeletons was a grisly sight, reminiscent of overripe fruit bursting under too much pressure.

The air was filled with the acrid scent of their alien blood, mingling with the dry desert air.

<This smells like the damn yogurt Mira eat every morning... >

[TERRAPEDES 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. 3312 EXPERIENCE POINTS AWARDED TO THE HOST.]

However, that was a mistake, as the rest of the horde noticed the young man. As the ichor dripped from his hands, Erik readied himself for the next wave of attacks.

<Ah. Fuck. It looks like I killed their uncles... >

More terrapedes arrived. "Sorry, bro! I didn't want to kill your little brother!"

But despite the pleas, another Terrapede came to kill Erik, while the rest was slowly getting closer with the rest of the colony.

[TERRAPEDE 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. 1104 EXPERIENCE POINTS AWARDED TO THE HOST.]

The scene mirrored a nightmarish fusion of a churning sea and a writhing mass of grotesque, oversized earthworms.

The horde resembled a wave crashing against a steadfast cliff. Each bug that dared to approach Erik died, only to be replaced by another surge of monstrous vermin.

Together, they looked like a grotesque blanket of squirming, segmented bodies, undulating and overlapping in a horrifying display. The sight of the swarm, with its incessant,

While fending off attacks, Erik faced no real danger from the individually feeble monsters. But their endless ranks surrounding him posed a problem. The situation was hard, not because of their strength, but because of the respawning members.

With sweat stinging his eyes, Erik retreated up a steep dune. The creatures followed, cresting the slope with unnerving speed. As one lunged, Erik batted it aside and leapt, rolling back to the desert floor.

However, as he killed, Erik got notifications after notification.

[TERRAPEDES KILLED: MANA ABSORBING PROCESS STARTING.]

[TERRAPEDES KILLED: MANA ABSORBING PROCESS STARTING.]

[TERRAPEDES KILLED: MANA ABSORBING PROCESS STARTING.]

Each monster was giving him a decent amount of experience, and since it wasn't hard to kill them, and there were a lot around him, his level up bar was filling up nicely. Since this wasn't a hard situation, Erik gave a look at the system's interface.

{SYSTEM INTERFACE.}

<Oh... cool. I almost levelled up! >

[Host Information]

NAME: Erik Romano

AGE: 18

POWER LEVEL: 378

SYSTEM LEVEL: 47

EXPERIENCE: 111054 122500

DNA POINTS: 37150

HEALTH: 3440 3440

MANA: 3370 3370

{Attributes}

STRENGTH: 178

INTELLIGENCE: 220

DEXTERITY: 158

ENERGY: 167

Available Attributes points: 5

{Powers}

[Biological Super Computer Powers]

-Brain Crystal Manipulation

Brain Crystal Power Extraction (Allows the absorption of the brain crystal, making the host able to gain the power contained within. Notice: the DNA must be changed in order to allow the body to use the power. See DNA extraction.)

Brain Crystal power Merging (Allows to merge two powers birthing a new one. It requires the merging of the DNA to work.)

Brain Crystal Power Analysis (Allows to analyse the target brain crystal without the need to know the creature.)

- (LOCKED)

- Brain Crystal Power Strengthening (Allows the gaining of the energy attribute points)

-(LOCKED)

-DNA Manipulation

DNA Extraction (Allows the absorption of foreign DNA, making the host able to replicate it inside his own body. Notice: Changing the DNA is a slow process, and it is required to use new brain crystal powers.)

DNA Merging (Allows to merge two DNAs, birthing a new one. Required to accommodate merged powers.)

DNA Analysis (Allows to analyse the enemy DNA from the distance for a better understanding of the target's stats.)

- (LOCKED)

DNA Strengthening (Allows the gaining of the Strength, Intelligence, and Dexterity attribute points)

-(LOCKED)

- Analysis (Gives the host information about his surroundings, plants, creatures, and ores.)

-Brain Information Injector (It allows the injection of information directly to the brain. Based on touch)

-Device Manipulation (Allows the Host to manipulate electrical and mana-driven devices. Based on touch)

[Host's Powers]

POISONOUS MANA DARTS: Cσ3D-RANKED (Conjure poisonous mana darts whose lethality depends on the mana injected)

POISONOUS ASTRAL WOLF BITE: Cσ2D-RANKED (Conjure an astral but solid projection of a Leylarhad's head whose only aim is to bite at whatever target the host is aiming. Its teeth have a poisonous element whose toxicity depends on the mana used. Notice: the target must be close to the projection.)

FORCE MANIPULATION: Cv1B-RANKED (Manipulate a mana-driven force to produce powerful shockwaves that can change in intensity, radius, speed, and power. It is also possible to use the power differently as to generate force shields.)

PARALLEL WILLS: Cv1C-RANKED (Allows the user to passively increase intelligence based on the number of neural links. It also allows the construction of a mana brain that allows independent thoughts and can be used for multiple purposes.)

ICE SWORD: Cσ1E-RANKED (Allows creating a powerful ice blade, but needs a real weapon to be used as a base)

STRENGTH ENHANCER: Cp2D-RANKED (Depending on the amount of mana used, the amount of strength increases)

PLANT MASTER: Cπ1B-RANKED (Allows to grow and control plant based organism. The usage depends on the plant and the user's will.)

CHAMELEON VEIL: Cp1C-RANKED (Allows to turn totally transparent and to project what is behind you, making it almost impossible to be seen. The user can move while using this Brain Crystal power. However, notice that the ripples in light the power creates while moving decrease the power's hiding abilities, increasing the chance of being seen.)

BESTIAL ROAR: Cσ2C-RANKED (Allows to emit a roar that can instill fear into the surrounding creatures. It affects all but the user.)

TARGET LOCK: Cσ3D-RANKED (Allows the user to lock onto the mana signature of a target in order to always find it.)

CHIMERIC BIOMETAL SOLDIER: Co2A-RANKED (This power allows the user to create a human-worms hybrid with 50% of the user's physical stats. The clones are permanent, but to make them, a lot of mana is necessary; they can't use brain crystal powers. The clone is born from an egg, and it takes a month for them to reach maturity after having hatched two weeks after the eggs were made.

Before that, their physical stats are lower than 50% of the original's body. The clones are half as intelligent as the main body, but know everything the main body knows when he created them. They also have several biological abilities.)

THELEPATHY: Cp1C-RANKED (It allows Telepathic talk with creatures of the same species or similar DNA)

SOLIDIFYING SLIME: Cσ1D-RANKED (It allows to produce a slimy substance whose viscosity, stickiness and quantity depends on the amount of mana used. The Slime can solidify and its hardness depends again on the mana used)

AEROKYNESIS: Cσ3A-RANKED (This innate ability grants the wielder precise control over wind generation and manipulation. The potential of this power is intricately linked to the proficiency of the user, affording them the capacity for both offensive and defensive maneuvers, as well as the versatility to engage targets both near and far.)

{Skills}

Kyokar hand-to-hand style (ADVANCED) (A military fighting style developed in Frant)

Crypt of the Desert Style (ADVANCED) (Flyssa fighting style developed by Master Nieminen)

Etrium's sword style (INTERMEDIATE) (Basic Sword Style developed in Etrium.)

Chapter 719: Terrapedes (2)

Erik found himself surrounded by a horde of terrapedes. Their sharp claws churned up the sand as they scuttled and snapped their jaws.

Despite the chaos surrounding him, Erik remained composed as he tightly held onto his sheathed Flyssa.

The sound of steel reverberated through the air as he unsheathed the blade. Its metal gleamed, thirsty for violence.

The first Terrapede attacked, shooting forward with startling speed. Its mandibles gaped wide, ready to crush Erik's torso.

But with lightning reflexes, Erik stepped into the strike zone and pivoted his hip, dodging the snapping jaws.

With the fluidity of a master painter's brushstroke, he brought the Flyssa around in a vicious backhand slash.

The razor-sharp blade cleaved clean through the creature's carapace, sending up a spray of viscous fluids and blood.

The Terrapede crumbled like a withering flower, its life force seeping away into the arid sands like tears absorbed by a desert.

Ten more took the fallen one's place, their legs producing rhythmic clicks and shuffling sounds as they skittered over the sand in a coordinated attack. They surrounded Erik, seeking to overwhelm him with their numbers.

But Erik remained firm on the spot, the blade held on a low guard. However, that didn't mean he wasn't focusing on the surroundings.

From all sides, the Terrapedes came together as one, attacking with their gnashing mandibles.

Erik's energy exploded at that very moment. Like a rocket ascending from Earth's surface, he burst forth and brought to life a mesmerizing performance.

The sword style his master devised, the Crypt of the Desert, was nothing short of extraordinary. With minimal yet absurdly fast movements, the swordsman embodied death incarnate.

The terrapedes didn't stand a chance to even approach him. They began perishing one by one, but to any observer, it appeared as if they met their demise at the same time.

[LEVEL UP.]

While Ignoring the notification, Erik raised his sword to his face, peering ahead to witness the ten terrapedes lifeless on the ground. However, for every ten that had fallen, twice as many as before now emerged.

<These fuckers are surely more than a hundred...>

One Terrapede reared up, exposing its underbelly. Erik was forced to leave his position and leaped. He ran up on its torso, using it as a foothold to launch himself upwards.

At the peak of his ascent, he flipped and brought the blade straight down, impaling the creature through its head.

It spasmed in its death throes while Erik landed, wasting no time to engage the others.

From his low crouch, Erik shot forward and severed the legs from one terrapede before it could react.

As it collapsed, he transitioned into a spinning upward slice that caught another under the jaw, decapitating it.

The remaining creature snapped at him furiously, but he slipped just out of reach before delivering a fatal stab through its eye cluster.

On and on the battle raged, with Erik cutting down each terrapede that dared attack him. He fought with mechanical precision.

The creatures sought desperately to surround and overwhelm him to get a piece of his tender meat, and pushed by the overwhelming need to devour the man who killed their kin.

Erik leaped and spun between enemies, the blade singing as it sliced through exoskeletons and sent up sprays of insect blood.

The bodies piled up around him, but still the Terrapedes came. These beasts knew no fear or self-preservation, driven only by primal bloodlust.

But Erik had been honed into a flawless killing machine, and the Terrapedes were no match for his skills.

If Erik had more mana, he would have used his many brain crystal powers to deal with the monsters. The problem was that they were too many, and he didn't have enough mana to unleash such a destruction to end things fast and with minimal effort.

Though he couldn't always do so, from time to time, he found himself compelled to employ Aerokinesis to dispatch dense clusters of terrapedes. If he allowed those clusters to get too close, he'd be in a predicament as dire as trying to walk through a maze of tangled vines on the ground.

Flyssa twirling in lethal arcs all around his body. The razor tip found every vital area, and the Terrapedes fell into pieces.

Then Erik would explode upwards, launching off a corpse to flip over the attackers and strike from an unexpected angle. His movements flowed from one kill to the next with perfect continuity.

Despite the intense fight, Erik did not tire. His stamina was legendary, muscles honed to tireless perfection. With mana nearly at full capacity, he could go on for a while.

Instead, the Terrapedes exhausted themselves. Their numbers reduced. But Erik would not stop with the death of one or two. He intended to annihilate this colony of terrapedes.

Then a sudden tremor jolted Erik, leaving him bewildered and wondering about the source of this unexpected upheaval.

The ground beneath him quivered like a slumbering giant awakening from its deep sleep, causing the sands to dance and swirl around his feet in a disoriented frenzy.

Then he saw it. A colossal terrapede, three times the size of the others, erupted from beneath the sands.

It towered over Erik, mandibles clacking.

"Is it really you, Oni-chan? "

Erik's fingers clenched on the hilt of his Flyssa. With a blur of motion, he began a waltz around the colossal beast, akin to a matador facing a raging bull.

As he moved around the monster, through the shifting sands, the other Terrapedes lunged from every direction, their mandibles snapping hungrily at him.

Erik dispatched the attacking monsters with fast strikes, preventing them from closing in on him and obstructing his way.

With each deft step, he approached the monstrous terrapede, his Flyssa flashing like a lightning bolt.

Swift as a desert storm, he carved deep gashes along some of the creature's massive legs, crippling its mobility. Then, with a nimble retreat, he evaded the beast's attempts to retaliate.

The colossal terrapede screeched in fury and pain as Erik's blade carved into its limbs. It reared up, trying to smash him under its weight, but he rolled aside with ease.

As the creature's underbelly was exposed, Erik launched upwards and drove the Flyssa deep into its thorax. Foul fluids gushed from the wound as the Terrapede thrashed in agony.

Wrenching the blade free, Erik dodged a swipe from the monster's barbed tail. He landed and sprinted to his side, hacking at the joints of the monster's many legs as he passed.

The Terrapede stumbled, insect blood splattering the sands. It whipped around with shocking speed, but Erik had already vaulted behind it.

Then, as the monster was big enough, he sprinted up the carapace and plunged the Flyssa into one of the creature's eyes.

KYAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA

Now blinded on one side, the terrapede flailed, trying to dislodge Erik. He held on, twisting the blade deeper into its head.

The monster rammed itself against the sand below, launching itself like a kid diving into a pool, but finally knocking Erik loose. He tumbled through the air and landed in a crouch, shaken but unharmed.

The Terrapede swiftly regained its bearings, its lone eye scanning the surroundings for any sign of Erik. Upon spotting him, it abruptly halted its movements, fixating on his presence.

Within the monster's solitary eye, an intense and uncontrollable fury boiled like molten lava, consuming its focus on Erik with the intensity of a relentless wildfire.

KYAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA

The Terrapede charged, seeking to crush Erik. The young man waited with a smirk on his face.

"Don't try this, bro!"

At the very last second, Erik dove to the side, evading the creature's charge. The monster slammed full force into the sandy ground below, sending a billowing plume of sand into the air as its form crashed down with a thunderous impact.

Erik seized the opportunity and leaped, delivering an overhead chop that severed one of its mandibles.

KYAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA

His assault continued, the Flyssa carving off chunks of the exoskeleton and slicing through sinew.

The Terrapede tried to pin him against the sand, but he scrambled up the horizontal surface, evading its massive body.

While constantly moving and killing other approaching terrapedes, he rained down precise blows on the vulnerable points of this monstrous terrapede.

Slowly, the wounds drained the fight from the massive beast. It could not touch Erik as he danced around it, the blade chanting death with each movement.

What had seemed an invincible titan was reduced to a shambling hulk, ichor staining the sands dark purple.

With a last burst of effort, Erik landed on the Terrapede's back and plunged the Flyssa to the hilt through the top of its skull.

It shuddered violently for several seconds before collapsing into the churned-up sand. Erik wrenched his blade free and gazed down at the fallen behemoth.

However, there were still a significant amount of terrapedes that needed to be eradicated, and they showed no intention of allowing Erik to leave peacefully. Not that he intended to do so.

Chapter 720: Terrapedes (3)

Erik, standing atop the fallen titan, had barely a moment to catch his breath before the remaining terrapedes approached. Drawn by the potent pheromones released by their slain kin, they surged towards him in a wave of blind rage and vengeance.

The creatures, undeterred by the fate of their colossal brethren, scuttled over the titan's lifeless body.

It became a grotesque bridge, leading them straight to Erik. Their many legs skittered and clicked against the hardened exoskeleton of the fallen giant, creating a chilling cacophony in the otherwise silent desert.

Erik watched as they swarmed over the titan, their eyes glinting with a primal, unyielding determination. They clambered atop one another, forming a living, writhing mass of chitin and fury.

"Ah... Fuck... This is annoying."

Erik steeled himself for the next wave of combat. He knew he could not afford even a moment's hesitation.

As the Terrapedes drew nearer, the air around Erik thrummed with an unnerving symphony of their approach. The sound, an escalating buzz, filled the desert, becoming the dominant sound all around the young man.

The beasts were so many that the very air itself trembled because of their skittering.

For Erik, even though he did not fear the creatures themselves, the sound they produced was unsettling.

It seemed to penetrate his very being, an assault that was impossible to ignore or escape. It was as if the sound itself was a living entity encircling him.

In that moment, amidst the desert's isolation, the sound of the approaching terrapedes took on a surreal quality, a discordant melody that underscored the savage dance of survival about to unfold.

The sight of the Terrapedes, using their fallen comrade to reach their target, was also equally unsettling. These were very savage beasts.

They possessed no sense of individuality, no fear of death, only a collective drive that pushed them forward in a relentless tide of aggression.

As the first of the swarm closed in, Erik readied himself for another fierce round.

Ready to spring into action, his muscles tightened, his body poised for the impending fight.

The desert, its sands still scarred from the previous display of force, prepared for another wave of violent upheaval as Erik prepared for his next move.

The young man leaped and spun as the creatures surrounded him once more. The Flyssa sang as it sliced through exoskeletons and sinews.

Mandibles snapped shut just shy of Erik's limbs as he contorted his body to avoid injury.

The creatures were in a maddened state, impervious to pain or injury. They would fight to the death to avenge their fallen leader.

SWOOOOOOSH

Erik stood his ground. With a swift gesture, he summoned a blade of wind. It materialized as a swirling vortex and sliced through the atmosphere with a fierce howl.

The blade spun wildly, but aimed at a target, cutting a swath through the horde of terrapedes at his left. The air crackled and hummed with its power, as three dozen foes fell victim to its razor-sharp edge.

[LEVEL UP.]

"Ahahahahahahahahahahaha It's Christmas time!"

Simultaneously, Erik shifted his focus to his right, where the same number of monsters was coming.

With his stamina still strong, Erik did not waver. He allowed the endless waves of terrapedes to use their fury against him, only to meet his blade.

The weapon was devoted to kill, to hack them apart as they dared to approach the human. Soon the titan's corpse was piled high with dismembered corpses.

The sand grew thick with blood as the battle raged on. Erik's absurdly high physical statistics allowed him to fight on indefinitely against such small fries. He entered the flow state, mind empty of distractions as he focused only on the next kill.

Erik could sense the Thaid's tiring. Their attacks came slower, the frenzy fading as their numbers dwindled. He remained focused, conserving his mana as he eliminated the creatures one by one.

With their titan leader dead and the swarm decimated, the last remaining Terrapedes tried to flee back underground.

But Erik would not let any escape to fight another day. With lightning speed, he cut off their escape routes, herding them back to their doom.

The Flyssa lashed out in all directions, severing legs and piercing bodies. The Terrapedes could only screech and snap impotently as Erik's blade found every vital area. Now fighting for survival, they tried to overwhelm him through sheer numbers.

His blade work sped up, movements so fast they blurred. No matter how the creatures tried to elude him, the Flyssa was there first.

Erik weaved his way through the writhing mass of creatures, a merciless cyclone of death. In his wake, only mutilated and lifeless bodies remained, bearing witness to the unparalleled brutality of his technique.

With one last flurry of lethal strikes, the last Thaid collapsed into the blood-soaked sand. Erik flicked the gore from his blade and scanned the area for any more signs of life.

All around him lay the broken bodies of the defeated creatures. The swarm was no more. His expression was devoid of emotion - this had simply been his function.

[TERRAPEDES 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. 54281 EXPERIENCE POINTS AWARDED TO THE HOST.]

[LEVEL UP.]

"I got a lot of levels today," a smirk appeared on the young man's face.

As the last echoes of battle subsided, Erik pulled a worn cloth from his pack and meticulously cleaned each inch of the Flyssa's blade.

The dark metal re-emerged from beneath the violet gore as he worked. Once the sword was pristine again, he slid it home in the sheath with a ring of metal.

Erik stood amidst a surreal landscape, a spectacle of death that contrasted with the normally pristine desert. The surrounding sands were now marred by a macabre collage of red and black.

Scattered across the dunes lay remnants of the monstrous insects he had vanquished. Chitinous limbs, severed and twisted in bizarre angles, were strewn about, their dark exoskeletons glistening under the sun.

Pools of ichor, thick and dark like tar, seeped into the sand, creating inky blotches against the lighter background. T

Guts and entrails, once housed within the armored bodies of the insectoid foes, now lay exposed to the desert elements, baking under the blazing sun.

"Not bad for just an hour of work..."

Erik had single-handedly eradicated a terrapede's colony, and he did so while battling against the full swarm of Thaid. If someone shared what he just did, they would think he would be rambling.

However, that was a feat he could do only because the monsters had defensive powers and they attacked with their bodies.

If they had offensive brain crystal powers, especially if they allowed distant attacks, Erik couldn't escape a group of almost 300 terrapedes.

Erik looked at his surroundings again. For him, this was merely routine - he felt neither pride nor remorse for the lives he had taken.

"You beasts should have fled when you had the chance," he said while wiping away the last viscous flecks from his body.

Now for the true spoils. Erik retrieved his harvesting knife and approached the nearest terrapede body.

He inserted the blade beneath the creature's armored skull plates and popped them open one by one to reveal the alien anatomy within.

Nestled amid purple tendrils made of the creature's innards, sat the crystal - the real prize he had come for. With this, he could strengthen his clones.

Erik teased the tendrils back to grasp the crystal with his calloused fingers. He held it up, admiring how the light fractured into prismatic shards within the translucent gem.

Flawless. Erik placed the ichor-slicked crystal into a padded leather pouch on his belt for safekeeping.

Next he produced a small plastic bottle, holding it to the Terrapede's exposed body where it still oozed violet and black.

With care, Erik filled the bottle and watched the viscous liquid rise. When it reached the perfect level, he slid the stopper in place and stowed the filled vial in a separate pouch.

This would be enough for him to get the brain crystal power and give it to his clones to morph into a terrapede.

Having something that could crawl into the ground and hunt would be useful, especially considering they would be stronger than the average terrapede.

"Let us hope this haul will lure other Thaid's here." Erik rose, surveying the scene one last time.

With the crystal and blood harvested, it was time to continue his quest across the desert.

While sheathing the harvesting knife, Erik gathered up his traveling pack and checked his remaining supplies. The desert wind echoed with the screams and cries of the defeated swarm.

Erik turned toward the desert innards and the open wastes beyond. Leaving the broken bodies behind without a second glance, he set off once more across the sands, while paying attention not to lose the giant tree in the distance.