

## The Primal 4

### Chapter 4: First battle

The group had previously considered their immediate plan of action upon reaching the ground, with the first objective being to find somewhere safe to set up a camp. The artificial sun in the sky seemed to have moved a bit during their short stay, indicating a day-night cycle.

Bertram had made the educated guess that nighttime would prove even more dangerous than daytime. If beasts filled this forest, they guessed some of them had to be nocturnal. One couldn't ignore the threat of other humans taking advantage of the cover of darkness either.

After walking out of the clearing where the pillar had sunk into the ground, they wandered into the forest. The tension of everyone increased as they found themselves in a far more confined space. The first objective was to hopefully find a source of water to place their camp close to. Due to the trees' dense crowns, it was impossible to spot anything from up on the pillar, so they had to go in blind.

As they walked, gawking at the environment, Jake was weirdly relaxed. Despite his vigilance of whatever may lurk behind the trees around him, he had a feeling that nothing would sneak up on them. He listened for potential dangers still, of course, a difficult task as it wasn't exactly the silent kind of forest. Birds sang, distant roars of beasts rang out frequently, and the rustling of the leaves as the wind swept through was louder than what he was used to. This was likely linked to his slightly higher perception.

As their frontline heavy warrior, Bertram, went over a small hill, he suddenly came to a stop. Jacob quickly walking up to stand beside him. Jake was all the way in the back, but he could still hear them due to their proximity.

"What are those things?" Bertram asked as he looked down the hill at another small clearing. Jake walked up beside them, being the last to arrive. He looked down at a group of what he assumed to be the mentioned beasts of some sort.

"They look like large badgers. Though judging from the deer-like thing they are eating, I think they have upped their diet quite a bit," Jacob answered, turning to the rest of the group. "We already agreed that we might need to hunt. These things don't look very dangerous, so we should be able to handle them. Any thoughts?"

Jake looked at the big badgers. Four of them, each the size of German shepherds. From how they ate the deer-thing, they without a doubt had sharp teeth and claws, as they ripped the flesh off the thing. The perception of their surroundings seemed lackluster, though, to say the least as none of the things had noticed him or the others in his group yet, despite them only being 30 or so meters away.

The feeling they gave him wasn't one of danger at all. In fact, he had a feeling that handling them would be easy.

Interrupting Jakes thoughts, the other archer, Casper, pitched in:

"I vote for hunting. From the roars in the distance, it sounds like much more dangerous things are around, and they may even be our source of dinner tonight. They seem to be low-level beasts," he said, getting a nod from Jacob. Hearing the word, level, Jake mentally slapped himself in the face yet another time today, wondering why he hadn't tried to use Identify yet. This is what the damn skill is for, he thought grumpily.

Focusing on the beasts one by one, as he phased out the conversation around him, he got what he hoped for, somewhat

[??? - lvl 3]

[??? - lvl 4]

[??? - lvl 3]

[??? - lvl 3]

"... I'm just saying, maybe they are closer to ferrets than badgers!"

"I'm not saying they are not slightly ferret-like, I'm saying that you're confusing ferrets and weasels!"

Jake finally zoned back into the conversation, hearing Dennis, the light-warrior of their little group, and Lina, one of the casters, arguing about something pointless. Not exactly surprising. They were cousins and had an ongoing, never-ending charade of pointless discussions going on, some spanning days or even weeks before they finally decide to 'agree to disagree'.

Jake had to confess he couldn't see the resemblance to either creature... but then again, he didn't know the difference between the two anyway. But he was pretty sure of one thing. Ferret or weasel, an arrow to the heart or head was lethal either way.

Breaking up the inane argument between the two cousins, the other medium warrior besides Jacob, Theodore, seemed to have had the same idea as Jake. "Guys, I just tried to use identify on one of them, and it was level 3. I couldn't see the name, though."

"Oh, great initiative! Why didn't I think of that!" Jacob cheered and patted Theodore on his back. Turning to Jake, he asked. "Hey Jake, do you have any thoughts on what to do?"

"No, but I also tried identifying them. Three of them are level 3, and one of them is 4," Jake added. He had never done well in big groups like this, especially when all nine of the others turned his way. Seriously, he just hoped for the useless chatter to stop and the fighting to begin.

They were ten versus four. They had the jump. Every advantage was theirs, so this posturing felt... pointless.

"Okay then, it seems like fighting them is the decision. Now for our tactical approach..."

Several more minutes passed laying down a strategy and deciding on how exactly to engage the beasts. After the earlier discussion, they had retreated behind the hill again to avoid the things spotting them. Peeking up over the hill occasionally, the badger-maybe-weasel-maybe-ferret-like beasts did not seem to be in any kind of a hurry with their meal.

The plan was simple, fire off ranged attacks from a distance, trying to damage or maybe kill one or two, with Bertram trying to go in the front with his shield and get their attention, while Jacob and Theodore flanked him to cover his sides. The plan held the assumption that the beasts were stupid and aggressive if attacked.

Planning so much was maybe a bit overboard for overgrown badgers, but no one seemed willing to take any risk. A sentiment that Jake understood, but he disagreed with it. Wouldn't a fight without any risk be a bit... boring?

The only problem with the plan was that apparently the casters only had around 10 meters range on their bolts, any longer than that and they would fizzle out of existence according to what Ahmed, the last of the casters in their group, had been told during the introduction.

This left Jake and Casper, easily dismissing Dennis with his throwing daggers, having no faith in his accuracy at 30 meters, or 10 meters for that matter, if he could even throw them that far. And as for Casper... the first time he had ever held a bow in his life was earlier that same day when he got it from choosing the archer class.

"So, Jake. You got confidence to hit one from here?" Jacob inquired, seemingly not holding much faith in the plan they had spent the last 10 or so minutes making. That the planning had been a waste, Jake agreed on. The beasts would already be dead if it was up to him.

"Of course," Jake answered, once again slightly less awkward than before with everyone staring at him. His well-hidden frustration at the passive group outweighing his social anxiety.

He took out an arrow from the quiver on his back and inspected it. Wooden shaft, steel tip, with fletchings made of a kind of feather he did not immediately recognize. The weight was good and balanced, the arrowhead sharp, and overall it seemed to be of good quality.

"Okay, ready when you are," Jacob said, getting ready along with everyone else. From the looks of everyone, the lack of confidence was all around. They weren't fighters. The only one who appeared to have some kind of proper training was Bertram.

Jake walked up over the small hill, followed by everyone else just behind him.

He looked at the beasts and nocked the arrow. He raised his bow as he focused. His vision instantly sharpened, instinctively knowing that Archers Eye had activated. Time seemed to slow down ever so slightly as he pulled back the string.

For the first time today, something felt right. The morning routine, work, the introduction, and everything else was just... wrong. But at this one moment, as he held the bow, everything felt like it was as it should be. He smiled, took aim, and shot the arrow. Before even seeing the result, he had already taken out another arrow, preparing to shoot once again in one fluid motion.

The arrow had been aimed for the neck of the strongest beast, the one at level 4. He had briefly considered the heart or the head, but he had limited knowledge of their physiology. The heart couldn't be placed where he assumed, and the hardness of the skull was way too unpredictable. The arrow flew in a straight line, with more speed, power, and accuracy than Jake had ever shot an arrow before.

The arrow hit the beast straight in the throat as it raised its head from the carcass of its prey a mere moment before the attack arrived.

It fell back over, and before the other badgers had even registered what had happened, the second arrow arrived, hitting the left-most badger square in its chest, penetrating deeply. The remaining two badgers looked over at the hill and instantly charged at Jake, showing no regard for their lives.

Before they had even moved 5 meters, another arrow arrived. This time they were ready, however, and dodged a head-on hit, only leaving a shallow scratch on the one on the right as it dodged. Jake only managed to get off two more arrows before they arrived at the group, both only leaving minor injuries on one of them.

Before the beasts could sink their teeth into Jake, a huge figure moved in front of him, carrying a huge shield and a short-sword, followed by Theodore and Jacob off to each of his sides. Jake flanked around, still hidden behind the three men in front of him, trying to see if he could get off another shot.

The first badger to reach them was the uninjured one, smashing into Bertram's shield, predictably getting knocked back from the impact. Following just behind it was the injured one, this one slightly more cautious as Jacob tried to keep it at a distance by pointing his sword at it, making threatening motions.

As Jake took his time to line up a shot, the beast that had smashed into the shield was stabbed by Theodore, who had somehow managed to get it in its hind legs. With the thing disabled, the two warriors quickly managed to hack away at it.

Jacob was still attempting to take on the injured badger, swinging his sword back and forth, with the beast jumping around trying to attack him while not getting hit by the sword. Jacob had gotten several scratches on his arms already, and the badger also seemed to have taken a couple of hits.

Jake aimed his bow, and just as the badger jumped away from the swipe of the sword, Jake released the arrow, hitting the badger in the side. Before the thing had a chance to collect itself, Jacobs's sword fell, cutting into its head, promptly ending its life.

Bertram and Theodore had also managed to finish off the last badger around the same time. Looking at the two initial ones he had hit, both were also dead. The first one he had hit in the throat had died instantly, while the other one had managed to run a couple of meters towards them before it succumbed to its injury. Judging from the blood, Jake had hit something important, likely even the heart.

"Holy shit, we did it!" yelled Theodore, swinging his bloody sword around. Behind them, Caroline was rushing up to Jacob. She started mumbling some words, and a white light appeared around her hands as Jake saw cuts and bruises on Jacobs's arms slowly heal. Jacob thanked her and looked over at Jake with a weird look in his eyes.

Jake did not feel like having any unnecessary social interaction, and as the adrenaline slowly wore off, he looked at the system messages he had missed during the fight.

\*You have slain [Badger Cub – lvl 4] – Bonus experience earned for killing an enemy above your level. 8 TP earned\*

\*'DING!' Class: [Archer] has reached level 1 – Stat points allocated, +1 free point\*

\*You have slain [Badger Cub – lvl 3] – Bonus experience earned for killing an enemy above your level. 4 TP earned\*

\*You have slain [Badger Cub – lvl 3] – Bonus experience earned for killing an enemy above your level. 2 TP earned\*

\*'DING!' Class: [Archer] has reached level 2 – Stat points allocated, +1 free point\*

\*'DING!' Race: [Human (G)] has reached level 1 – Stat points allocated, +1 free point\*

\*You have slain [Badger Cub – lvl 3] – Bonus experience earned killing an enemy above your level. 2 TP earned\*

Well, Jake thought. That was a bit more than expected. He felt good. Right. The warm glow from the increased stats sure helped, but it was more than that.

He had won. It was an easy battle, but it still felt great. The feeling when he hit each of the badgers still clear in his mind, the satisfaction that came with every kill. He wanted to hunt more.