

Alex glanced at the horizon and noted that the sun was barely visible.  
'It's already sundown. I'm not sure what manner of creatures travel around at night in this forest, but I don't want to be on the ground while night's out.'

Alex grabbed the wolf's corpse and lifted it. It was really heavy, but he barely managed to lift it up to his chest. However, it was very exhausting.

Then, Alex looked at the branches above him.  
The lowest branch that could support the weight of the wolf was a full meter above him.

'I might be able to lift the corpse over my head, but I sure as hell can't throw it up there. Jumping is also out of the question. It's simply too heavy.'

'I need an alternative,' Alex thought as he put the corpse down again.  
Alex paced around as he tried to think of a solution. The forest darkened more as time passed, and Alex became more nervous.

By now, the birds had become silent, making the forest appear deathly silent.  
Even the constant buzzing of the insects became quieter until it eventually stopped.

Right now, the only noise in the forest was Alex's footsteps.

Then, Alex looked up at the bag in his tree.

'I have to try it! I can't waste this corpse!'

Alex quickly climbed up the tree and got his bag.

After opening it, Alex took out all his spare clothes and tied them together. Luckily, he had enough clothes to make quite a long line.

'If old-timey prisoners can use something like this to escape from prisons, I can use it to pull up a corpse!'

Alex tied his makeshift rope to the chest of the wolf.

Then, Alex climbed up to the first branch of the tree and let himself fall down at the other side, holding the rope.

CRRRR!

The rope became taught, and Alex feared that it might snap.

CRRR!

The wolf corpse slightly moved upward but stopped.

'I'm not heavy enough.'

Alex climbed up the rope, happy that his body was fit enough to do something like

that.

Then, Alex tugged the rope under his arm and put his feet on the branch.

After that, Alex pushed himself off the branch.

CRRRR! THUNK!

The corpse moved upwards, but one of the knots loosened.

The wolf hit the ground, and Alex also fell down.

Luckily, he managed to protect his head with his arms. He only received a couple of bruises.

The falling corpse echoed throughout the forest, making Alex even more nervous.

With the current silence of the forest, that sound should have traveled for over a hundred meters!

However, Alex didn't want to give up on the corpse. Food was a necessity!

Alex repaired the rope and tried again, and this time, no knots loosened. Alex made sure of that!

After the corpse was lifted to a good height, Alex climbed up the branch and pulled up the remaining part. His arms hurt and burned, but he didn't have to pull much since the corpse was already pretty high up.

Just when he thought that he had to drop the corpse, he managed to grab it with his arms and finished the last pull upward.

The branch was creaking under the combined weight of Alex and the corpse, and Alex decided to quickly switch branches. If that branch broke, all his work would have been for nothing!

Then, Alex sat down at a different branch and breathed heavily as he moved his cramped fingers.

Parts of the skin on his fingers had been nearly shorn off, making them bleed a little bit. However, such an injury would heal very quickly.

'I hope this was worth it,' Alex thought.

As Alex relaxed, he felt his body starting to shiver.

'It's cold,' he thought. 'It might even reach below freezing later in the night.'

Alex narrowed his eyes as he looked at the corpse and the makeshift rope.

Then, he climbed to the other branch, being careful to not break it.

After getting the rope, Alex released the knots and put parts of his clothes on a higher branch, making a makeshift mattress.

Alex put the other half of the clothes to the side for now. He would make them into a blanket later.

When everything was done, Alex simply sat on his branch, thinking.  
'The issue of food has been solved for now. The issue of warmth should be solved until the weather becomes even colder, which it surely will. What about water?'

Alex looked at the corpse of the wolf that was bleeding onto the ground.  
Alex's body shivered. 'I'm not so desperate yet. I can think about drinking blood when I'm about to die of thirst.'

Then, Alex released a sigh.

'This should be enough for the day,' he thought. 'I should start my expedition tomorrow. Right now, I only need to rest.'

Alex grabbed the remainder of his now-dirty clothes and wrapped them around himself as he lay down on the branch.

It certainly wasn't comfortable.

'I need to sleep,' he thought, closing his eyes.

Minutes passed as the events of the day shot through his head. In just a single day, he had died, met a God, went to a new world with a new body, and killed an animal.

For the first time, the reality that he would never see his family again hit home.

'Have you already heard of my death, mom, dad?' Alex thought with pain. 'Do you think I'm in some kind of paradise now?'

Time passed as Alex's thoughts wandered.

An hour later, no light of the sun reached this place anymore.

However, it wasn't as dark as one thought.

Why?

Because the moon was close to becoming a full moon. The moon cycle wasn't completely there yet, but it was close.

The moon illuminated the dark forest, creating foreboding shadows.

When a cold wind blew, these shadows moved in an ominous dance in accordance with the cold whistle of the wind.

Drip. Drip. Drip.

The only sounds besides the rustling of the leaves and the whistle of the wind were the drops of blood from the corpse hitting the ground.

Then, another sound joined in.

It was Alex, sitting up on the branch with furrowed brows.

'I'm not tired,' he thought. 'So much stuff has happened that my mind just can't calm down. I need to do something to distract myself.'

Alex sat on his makeshift mattress while his body was wrapped in clothing, looking

at the ground. The grass had a silver sheen to it as it was illuminated by the moonlight.

Alex just sat there.

Drip. Drip. Drip.

The conversation with the God rang through Alex's mind.

Then, he narrowed his eyes.

'He said that absorbing the Mana in the air can strengthen me and heal my injuries.

I can't train my body right now, but I should be able to do that, at least.'

Then, Alex closed his eyes as he sat on the branch.

'There has to be some way to feel the Mana in the air, and there also has to be a way to absorb it.'

As Alex sat on the branch with closed eyes, he concentrated on the wind.

Was there something in the atmosphere?

If there was, Alex should be able to feel it in the wind.

Drip. Drip. Drip.

The sounds of dripping blood, the whistling wind, and rustling leaves were the only things that could be heard in the forest.

Other than that, there was no sound.

The rhythmic sounds slowly put Alex in some kind of trance as he felt his mind drifting.

He felt like he was touching something fundamental.

After a while, his skin started tickling as Alex felt some of his hairs stand up.

Yes, there was something else in the air!

It was hard to describe, but there was something new in the air.

Earth didn't have anything like this, which made this force that much more pronounced.

As Alex connected with the force, he felt it slowly enter his body.

It felt... warm.

It was like Alex was taking a relaxing bath.

Alex slowly touched his skin, but it was still cold.

The feeling of warmth was apparently only spiritual, not physical.

Slowly, Alex's mind started to vanish as he fell into a kind of half-sleep.

However, the Mana in the air still entered his body.

Drip. Drip. Drip.

Drip. Drip. Drip.

Drrrr!

Alex woke up with a start as an unknown sound joined the sounds of the forest.

Alex looked over at the origin of the sound and realized that his backpack was shaking slightly.

He moved over and opened the backpack as silently as possible to investigate the sound.

After some seconds, he found it.

It was the black cube, the thing that was supposed to be his future weapon.

Drip. Drip. Drip.

Alex looked at the slightly vibrating cube with interest.

'Why is it shaking?'

Drrr! Drrr!

Alex furrowed his eyebrows.

The shaking kind of sounded... urgent.

Drip. Drip. Splat.

Alex's eyes widened, and he looked towards the ground.

The forest grew darker as it seemingly transformed into a land of death.

The moonlight vanished from Alex's eyes as he beheld the thing standing below the corpse of the wolf.

It was a being that looked like some sort of panther. However, it had incredibly long forelegs that ended in long claws. This build made it appear more like the thing was pulling itself forward with its forelegs instead of pushing itself with its hindlegs.

It was black as the night, and it had white eyes.

The most recent drop of blood from the wolf's corpse hadn't hit the ground but the creature's head.

All of these things were already terrifying, but there were three more aspects about it that were even more terrifying.

One aspect was its sheer size.

It was nearly two meters high and probably over four meters long.

It was bigger than a tiger!

Another aspect was that it had appeared down there without a sound. If it hadn't been hit by the last drop of blood, Alex wouldn't have noticed this gigantic thing below his tree.

It was as silent as the night.

And the last aspect?

The last aspect was the most terrifying of all.  
The last aspect was that the creature was facing Alex.  
Looking into his eyes.