

BIOLOGICAL 1001

Chapter 1001: The best route

It was true that Becker became again Frant's general, commander, and leader.

But in truth, Erik was the one who really held the reins of everything.

The army he provided was stronger than any army Frant, or any other country, ever had.

Yes, the young man had the power to conquer the world, yet he showed no desire to do so.

Instead, he allowed Becker and the others to decide based on their own judgment, never imposing his will upon them.

Despite his strength and the vast army of Chimaeric Demons at his command, Erik was not a warmonger, nor did he lust for power and control as many others might have in his position.

But relief wasn't the only thing he felt. He also had a sense of pride.

Erik was Lucius' son, and it was well known at that point that he wanted Erik to join him when he first learned he awakened.

Things were different from how he imagined them, but they were still good.

However, a thought went through Becker's mind. "What about Mira, Amber, and Emily?" he asked. "You should know they will want to go with you."

Erik nodded, his expression growing serious, even more than it already was.

"I know," he said. "I will try to stop them from coming, but I doubt they will simply stay put."

He gave the man a knowing look.

Becker understood the dilemma all too well. Becker was... how to put it simply? Damn hot.

He had many problems with women in the past, and he knew well what situations people like him had to go through.

He nodded in agreement, knowing the strong-willed nature of the three young women.

"If I cannot convince them, please tell their parents that I will protect them and... to forgive me."

Becker placed a reassuring hand on Erik's shoulder. He knew the young man would do everything in his power to keep Mira, Amber, and Emily safe, even if it meant sacrificing his life for them. That was who Erik Romano was.

Van Dyke and Fischer looked at Becker and Erik. They had never seen their leader behave this way.

Subdued could be used as a word, but it was not that. Becker wasn't doing things because of fear.

He was not good with Erik because he was more powerful than him, but... because he respected him. And well, he was the son of Lucius Romano.

Though the fact he respected him was already a lot. Becker wasn't a pushover, and earning his respect wasn't simple.

With the matter of Mira, Amber, and Emily's potential involvement settled for the moment, Becker turned the conversation back to the pressing issue at hand.

"All right, now that this has been accounted for, we'd better get back to the major topic," he said, his voice taking on a more serious tone.

The group huddled around the table, their attention focused on the map of the northern front.

"Yes," Van Dyke said. "Hin has established fortifications here, here, and here."

The man pointed to several key locations. "And their fleet is concentrated in these areas. Etrium, instead, is moving from the east. I don't know how they crossed the Eldraith mountain range, given the situation, but they did. They are currently fortifying their position in this quadrant of the forest."

Fischer chimed in, "It's clear they're trying to create a blockade, preventing us from pushing further north. They know Hin is weaker than them, so they are trying to give them time to fortify their position even better."

Erik studied the map. "What about their supply lines?"

Becker ran a hand through his hair. "They're well protected, but not invulnerable. Why, what were you thinking?"

"Me?" Erik made a mischievous grin.

"Nothing too complicated. I just thought about destroying them—at least a couple. It would make them tired or force them to retreat to secure the supply lines again. I bet thaids are not letting them move easily."

"If you want to do this, then you might target this." He pointed to a route on the map, tracing it with his finger.

"This is the best path to reach the ocean. That's not only for you, but even for them. It means you can kill two birds with one stone if you disrupt this supply line. Besides, there is a city there connected to the ancient routes made by our ancestors."

It had been well established that Frant didn't allow enemy troops to use flying vehicles. If the blackguards wanted to move supplies, they had to do it on foot. This meant taking advantage of the ancient roads scattered across the nation.

"The city is at an important crossroads, and it connects to the other supply lines and many sectors. If you really want to do something, you might target this place. But I tell you, given the situation, it is likely these routes will be heavily guarded."

Erik committed the route to memory. "Don't worry. Any other suggestion for the trip?"

Becker's expression grew even more serious as he continued, "Yes, you must know that water thaids are far worse than the land ones. They may be generally weaker than the flying thaids, but humans have limited power underwater."

You should expect that many of these monsters will be even stronger than their airborne counterparts, given we don't kill them that much, as compared to land and flying thaids."

"I'll keep that in mind. I'll prepare accordingly. There was something I would like for you to tell me, though," Erik said. "Should I fly to Hin or cross the sea?"

To that, Becker remained silent. Crossing the ocean was dangerous.

There were many more thaids there than elsewhere, but it was still possible with crews of men boarding warships.

The usual route, though, was flying. But being in a war against Hin, it was likely they were observing the skies.

This made flying as dangerous, if not more, than crossing the ocean.

"Since you are going incognito, the best thing would be to travel through the ocean. I can't give you ships, though."

"It's not a problem," Erik said. "I was thinking of stealing one, anyway."

Chapter 1002: Fathers' Concerns

A week had passed since the meeting between Erik, Becker, Van Dyke, and Fischer.

During this time, Erik told Mira, Amber, and Emily of his plan to go to Hin.

Of course, the three women told him they were going with him.

They insisted on accompanying him, and despite how much Erik tried to make them desist.

It didn't matter how much Erik emphasized the dangers they would face in Hin, and especially later when they would end into the Mur continent.

Mira, Amber, and Emily remained firm in their decision, stating they would join him regardless of the risks. In the end, it was he who had to give up.

Since there was nothing Erik could do about it, the man told three of his Chimaeric Demons to accompany them.

They couldn't travel through the skies since the black wyvern, June, would be easily spotted. This meant that the clones would serve as their mounts but that they would travel through land.

During these five months, the Chimaeric Demons had been given many powers, which Erik had to merge one by one into the Chimaeric Demon brain crystal power. Some of those came from his own arsenal.

Among the powers the clones were given, there were Vibration Burst, Mend Wounds, Sword Conjuring, and Replication.

Erik's decision to give them these specific powers was driven by practical considerations. With Mend Wounds, the 75,000 Chimaeric Demons could serve as healers on the battlefield.

An army of 75,000 healers was something no one ever saw. Healers were rare, and the ability to save people on the battlefield was sure to make battles harder for their enemies.

Replication had a straightforward explanation. It offered espionage abilities, allowing the clones to transform into humans and spy their opponents, but also into thajids and animals for gathering intelligence or fighting.

The power would also make it easier to transport goods or to move fast over different terrains.

Erik gave them this ability since, when he got the Chimaeric Demon brain crystal power, they lost all their previous abilities. But with this, they had it again.

However, he ordered the Chimaeric Demons to find shape-shifting brain crystal powers for him, because, despite everything, he still decided it would be better to keep it for himself, too.

It took little for the Chimaeric Demons to find those he needed, which he quickly merged until he got a satisfactory result.

Sword conjuring, instead, while not being a powerful ability, provided a reliable backup weapon in case one of the clones lost theirs. It would also help in espionage missions, since weapon conjuring brain crystal powers were common.

Last, he gave them Vibration Burst. The reason he did this was rather... simple. Erik didn't like it.

While he recognized it was a powerful brain crystal power, as it had once belonged to a notorious and feared blackguard, he preferred long-distance powers.

This, in a sense, was, but it would have been much more effective in midrange.

Since Erik didn't use the power very often, almost never, he decided to give it to the clones, and if some of them liked it, well, it would simply be good.

"I'll tell you this now. Don't rely on the Chimaeric Demons, all right? It will stunt your growth."

"Yes."

"Yes."

"Yes."

Erik, June, Amber, Mira, Emily, and the three Chimaeric Demons were at New Alexandria's gate.

A lot of things had been fixed, but there was a lot of stuff to complete. Actually, the citizens were pissed.

After the horde attack and the parasite infection, the city had been rebuilt, but during the rebels' attack, most of the northern part of the city had been destroyed.

Most of the damage was made by the fighters, but also the thaids that rushed in played a part in it.

Three years earlier, if something like that happened, it would have been a huge event. Now, given the blackguards' and the Chimaeric Demons' presence, it was nothing more than a mild inconvenience.

However, the situation had clearly been Erik's fault. It was his plan, after all, but no one said anything. For obvious reasons, of course.

Waiting at the gates were not only the three young women, Erik and his clones but also Richard, Caiden, and their wives, Luna and Lucy were there.

Richard and Caiden approached their daughters with ashen looks. They didn't like the fact they were going to go to Hin, and especially they didn't like they were going to Mur.

They didn't mind they were with Erik. Richard owed him his life, and, frankly speaking, he was the best catch in the whole nation. Most likely in the whole world.

Caiden... Well, he accepted Amber's decisions years ago.

As for what the three women thought.

Mira didn't care, since she had a rough life and knew that the best thing to do was to just enjoy those few moments in which they didn't have to risk their lives.

But Amber and Emily gave up on being exclusive and accepted the peculiar situation they were in. They couldn't refuse anyway if they wanted to stay with him, the most powerful individual on the entire planet.

Well, of course, there were also the thaids to consider, so maybe he wasn't the most powerful being on the planet, rather, the most powerful human.

"Emily, sweetie," Richard said. "Are you sure about this? I mean, going on the Mur continent with Erik? It's not exactly a walk in the park."

Emily rolled her eyes. "Dad, I joined a war. I think I can handle myself."

"Couldn't you just, I don't know, stay here and help with the rebuilding? I hear they need someone to supervise the paint drying."

Caiden chuckled nervously, because what Emily said was true, even for his daughter. The man still looked at his daughter with pleading eyes, but Amber said nothing. "Are you really sure about this?"

"I am, dad. I can't let Erik and June go alone."

"They can handle themselves."

Amber nodded. "Dad, I appreciate your concern, but I've made up my mind. I'm going."

At that same moment, Richard threw his hands up in exasperation, a look of resignation on his face.

"But think about your mother!"

Amber couldn't help but laugh at Richard. Caiden was looking at his friend with an embarrassed look. Then he turned to his daughter with a concerned look.

"Dad, we'll manage. Besides, we've got the Chimaeric Demons to protect us, and I'm pretty sure Erik knows a thing or two about surviving in the wild."

"Right..."

"Right? Are you crazy, Caiden?!"

"Just shut up, Richard."

The two fathers looked at each other. They knew their daughters were no longer the little girls they once were. They showed it with their actions.

"Well, I guess there's no stopping you two," Caiden said.

"There isn't," both the girls said in unison.

Richard and Caiden relented, their shoulders sagging in resignation, but they gave Erik bad looks.

"What? I tried to stop them! You know it!"

Erik stepped back as the two men's gazes tore through him.

Lucy and Luna approached their daughters. It looked like they already came to terms with their daughters' decisions, contrary to their fathers.

Chapter 1003: Fathers' Concerns (2)

That was a real problem for both the three girls, not just Amber and Emily. The two older women gave them more tips.

"And remember, if you encounter anything that you cannot handle, run to the Chimaeric Demons; I doubt they will fail to help you, plus they can heal. So... it would be better to stay close to them at all times. Matter of fact, never leave their side. "

With last hugs and whispered words of love, Amber and Emily bid farewell to their parents and joined Erik, June, and Mira, who were waiting at the gates.

"Are you done?" Erik asked.

"Yes."

The five and the Chimaeric Demon set out the gates, heading north to Frant's shores, to Hin.

Behind them, Richard, Caiden, Lucy, and Luna watched their children disappear, proud but nervous.

...

...

...

The group made their way through the forest. Their journey just started, and there were many things to talk about.

"So, what's the plan?" Amber asked. "How are we going to get to Hin?"

"For sure, we must head north to reach the shore. Once we get there, we'll steal one of Hin's ships to cross the sea. I heard their ships are pretty good." A smirk played on the man's lips.

Mira nodded. "They must be, considering their whole territory is within an island."

The group continued walking, the rustling of leaves and the occasional chirping of birds accompanying their conversation. Luckily, there were no thaids around, at least for now.

"Anyway, Erik, won't we need more people to man the ship? It's not like the eight of us can handle it alone," Mira said.

"Don't worry, I've already taken care of that. I've created fifty Chimaeric Demon eggs. They will help us man it once they hatch."

"Wait, will the eggs hatch in time? We don't want to be stuck in the middle of the sea waiting for our crew to be born," Emily said.

"Trust me, they'll hatch right on schedule. I've created them so that they would hatch once we reach the shore."

"Wouldn't it have been better to just take some of them and go all together?"

Mira was right. It would have been much better for them to have the Chimaeric Demons come along instead of hatching them.

They would have made the journey easier since they would help them kill thaids and enemy troops alike.

Erik shook his head. "Yes, and no. Too many people would have attracted much more attention, and we would have brought more provisions. I preferred things this way."

"If you say so."

"How do you plan to reach the shores, by the way?" Amber asked. "They're bound to be heavily fortified, and there will be patrols from both Hin and Etrium along the way."

Everyone knew about the situation, even the citizens. So, for people like Erik and the others who worked with Becker and the others, this information was common knowledge.

The area was heavily fortified and the presence of enemy camps was assured. Not only did Hin make camps, but even built fortified outposts.

As Hin was based on an island, they had to establish and maintain strong defensive positions along the shoreline to protect their supply lines and their ships.

Taking people through a monster-infested sea wasn't easy. Hin had to ensure the smooth transport of troops and resources.

The shores themselves were lined with fortifications, including watchtowers, artillery positions, and fortified bunkers created with the help of brain crystal powers.

Erik was an example of how easy and convenient that was, since he often created shelters with his Plant Master Brain Crystal power.

He did it when he traveled alone and did it when he went to New Alexandria with Mira, Amber, Emily, and June.

"I know, but I have a particular route in mind. It's the fastest way to get there."

Mira's curiosity piqued. "What route are you talking about?"

"We'll be following the same path as one of their supply lines. "

"Won't that put us in more danger? We'll be walking straight into enemy territory, and use roads likely full of patrols."

Erik held up a hand, a grin spreading across his face. "In a sense, yes. There will be more patrols and enemies along the way. But the route itself will be less treacherous. The supply lines are bound to follow the easiest paths, which means fewer natural obstacles for us to deal with."

Mira nodded. "And with Hin and Etrium's troops in the area, the number of thaids we encounter should be lower, right?"

Erik was happy about having Mira on this journey. She had a lot of experience surviving in the wilderness, and years of hunts made her insightful.

She right away understood one of the reasons he chose that path.

She knew that sticking to the supply lines kept them away from obstacles and monsters and helped them gather enemy intelligence and resources.

"Right," Erik said. "They'll have cleared out most of the monsters to keep their supply lines safe. It's like having a built-in security system, even if it's not meant for us."

The group exchanged glances. It was a gamble, but one that made sense, given their circumstances.

Besides, with the Chimaeric Demons scouting and taking advantage of the enhanced sense that their shapeshifting provided, they could avoid most, if not all, the enemy units.

But then, it was June's turn to ask questions. "You said you wanted to go to Hin to reach the Mur continent, Master, but what are you exactly planning to do once we reach Hin?"

"I want to get to the Blackguards' headquarters."

The others, except for June, gasped in shock. "Is that really the right thing to do?" Emily asked. "I get Hin's troops, but the blackguards, with just 58 people, it is not that safe."

Erik nodded. "Yes, for two reasons. First, I want to get rid of them once and for all. Second, I need to gather information about their troops in Mur, which is where we'll ultimately be heading."

June nodded in understanding. "Besides, most of the enemy troops will be in Mur, and in Frant."

Erik had a point. "Yeah... It kind of makes sense to strike there now."

"Yeah right? With how many people they sent away, it is unlikely there will be many troops there. It's a chance we can't miss."

"How do you plan to infiltrate the headquarters?" Erik grinned like he never grinned before.

"Isn't it obvious? I will steal someone's identity."

Chapter 1004: The Outpost (1)

The group was still halfway through their journey, but luckily, things hadn't been problematic.

Thaids were relatively few on the path Erik had taken, but that was because half of the journey had been spent traveling through Frant's controlled territories.

That was thanks to the Chimaeric Demons. Since the others couldn't hunt these thaids as easily as them, given they were from the Eldraith Mountain Range, the Chimaeric Demons got ordered to eradicate them all, at least those on their side of the front lines.

This made Erik's and the others' journey very smooth. Things would not go on like this forever, though, because soon Erik and the others would end up in enemy territory.

There, the situation might be different, or the same, at least on the thaids' front, but the group also had to consider the enemy troops. They had to be added to the equation.

Erik and the others were almost at the front lines at that point, and they all decided to make a stop at one of the Chimaeric Demons' outposts before crossing them.

There were two reasons. The first was because Erik needed to resupply; the second was to get info about the front lines themselves.

Based on what he got told by Fischer and Van Dyke through the phone, the battlefield was changing. Hin's and Etrium's troop started getting aided by the blackguards on a greater scale than before.

In fact, for the past week, Becker had been able to conquer several cities in the south, since the blackguards presence there lowered.

The pricks moved. They decided it would have been best to make a united front against Becker's troops instead of splitting the battlefield in two.

For sure, it would have split Frant's forces in two, but it was likely they didn't have the troops to keep a double front on. That was further testified by the increase in thaids attacks in the past weeks.

Fischer told Erik, in fact, that the Chimaeric Demons reported a massive increase in monsters' presence.

That made him think the blackguards were moving troops to Mur.

Given the situation, Erik was forced to make a stop. The outpost was nestled in a small valley, its location chosen to make it impossible for the enemy forces to find it, since the valley was a vast jungle.

The group rode there and approached the outpost's entrance.

One of the sentries, a Chimaeric Demon, stepped forward with a crisp salute.

"Welcome, Master," he said, his voice filled with dutiful respect. "It's an honor to have you and the others here."

Erik returned the salute, a smile tugging at the corners of his mouth. "Thank you. It's good to be here."

"We got told you were coming. Might you tell us how we can serve you?"

"We need to restock our supplies and gather some information. Can you bring us inside?"

The sentry nodded, standing tall. "Of course, Master. Right this way."

The group followed the sentry into the outpost.

The place was well organized, but Erik didn't expect less from the Chimaeric Demons. The outpost didn't have buildings, since the Chimaeric Demons preferred using tents, since it would be easier and faster to move in case problems arose.

In the main area, rows of labeled and neatly stacked supply crates housed food and ammunition.

There were also wooden walls covered with shelves displaying tools, medical supplies, and other necessities.

In a corner, there was a kitchen tent with several tables where meals were prepared and served.

Racks of rifles, pistols, and bladed weapons lined the walls, while a workbench with repair tools stood in the center.

There was also an infirmary with beds, medicine cabinets, and medical instruments, but it was small since all the Chimaeric Demons had healing powers.

<I can't understand how the hell the enemy troops are still standing against the Chimaeric Demons.>

Of course, how could someone fight against someone who could not only easily kill their enemies but also heal their comrades?

However, that was a more rhetorical question, because Erik knew well the reason. It was because of the number of enemy troops. Considering that, the real question should have been, how could the Chimaeric Demons resist this horde?

Erik turned to the sentry. "Who's in charge of this outpost? I need to speak with the leader about the current situation on the front lines."

"That would be Commander Zephyr-71-E, sir. I'll bring you to him right away."

Erik nodded. "Oh, make someone bring Amber, Emily, Mira, and June to restock while I talk with Zephyr-71-E."

"Yes, sir!"

The clone made a gesture to another one; he quickly told him what he had to do. Then Erik turned to Amber and the others. "Go with them."

Finally, Erik and the sentry reached the commander's quarters, a small but well-organized space filled with maps, charts, and other documents.

The sentry didn't even announce himself. "Master Erik is here." That confused the commander, but once he saw Erik entering inside the tent, he got straight up.

"Master," the commander said, bowing his head in respect. "It's an honor to have you here. How can I be of help?"

Erik smiled. "Commander Zephyr, we need to restock our supplies and gather any information you have about the situation on the front lines. The first is already on the way to be done."

The commander nodded. "This leaves us with the second task. Of course, Master i will gladly help."

"What did you want to know?"

"Well... considering we are heading behind enemy lines, I would like for you to tell me the situation."

"Yes, of course. But I'm sorry master... I'm afraid the news is not all good."

"Tell me everything."

Erik and Commander Zephyr-71-E sat across from each other. A map of the front lines was spread out on the table between them. The commander's expression was serious as he began his report.

"Master, I have both good and bad news," Zephyr-71-E said.

"Let's start with the good. We recently destroyed a battalion on the east, 20 kilometers from here. The enemy casualties were high."

"Good." That meant enemy forces were going to be less concentrated on the east. Erik expected to be relatively free from attacks from that area.

"I need to reach this place." Erik pointed at the shores where he was thinking of going. "I'm going to take this route, stopping here."

Erik pointed at the map again. "Is there a place where we could prepare for our assault?"

The commander then pointed to several locations on the map. "Our defensive positions are here, here, and here. They remained intact, but we got attacked often. If you need to rest, the best thing you should do, given where you are headed, is to stop here." The commander pointed to a particular area on the map.

Chapter 1005: The Outpost (2)

"That's good, Master. But I'm afraid there might be some problems. As I said, the news is not all good."

Erik looked up, his brow furrowing. "Go on, Commander. What's the troubling news?"

The clone hesitated for a moment, as if gathering his thoughts. There was a lot to say, to be honest, but it wasn't like he had that much time available to explain the situation. The best he could do was to summarize it as best as possible.

"Blackguards have reinforced the enemy. I think you should know this, sir."

"I am, but without knowing the situation here, I can't make plans or decide on anything."

"All right, so explain the situation, then. Why are the blackguards so troubling?"

"Yes, sir. The point is that these guys are making the situation on the front lines increasingly difficult because of these damned dual wielders. Somehow, they got a tremendous boost in power, as if they got a dozen neural links in a short amount of time. Now, we found a massive increase in their numbers in the last two weeks."

Erik's eyes narrowed. " So the problem is we might end up facing them? Where? "

Until they were on the side of the country which Frant was controlling, to do that was possible. After all, there weren't enemy humans. The Luminara Serpentis Erik sprouted around was making the thaids stay away from them, so the trip had been relatively calm.

But from here on, Erik had to keep Amber, Emily and Mira into account. The Chimaeric Demons were there to protect them, but things might happen at any time, so Erik wanted to avoid too difficult situations, and this was one of them.

Zephyr-71-E pointed to a section of the map, his finger tracing a line of red marks. "Around this area, sir."

Erik looked at the map for a couple of seconds. "Sir, with all due respect, I don't think Amber and the others will be strong enough to fight if that happens. The blackguards basically found a way to get past the 54 neural links mark without having to rely on techniques like the others, and they have multiple brain crystal powers."

The clone paused. "All of us," he said, referring to the Chimaeric Demons, "have your best training technique, but we are in a unique situation than our enemies because it is much harder for us to make neural links, despite the technique."

"I know the situation might look dangerous, but me, June, and three of your brothers are with them. Nothing will happen."

"I know, sir. But I must tell you this, even we are having trouble. Individually, the blackguards are not stronger than us. On the opposite, we are much stronger. The problem is that they also have much better equipment. We have multiple brain crystal powers naturally, but aside from the many dual wielders, they also have brain crystal weapons.

Etrium's involvement made it so that the troops got equipped with the finest weapons on the market. It is not infrequent to meet people with 5, even 6 brain crystal powers coming from their equipment."

Erik nodded. "I see. I expected this, but I didn't think the blackguards would have left the south. Honestly, this should have happened after I reached Hin. How is this affecting this sector?"

The commander's expression grew even more serious. "The battles have grown more intense, Master. Casualties on our sides had been inevitable, despite the number of healers on the battlefield."

At that, Erik's face fell. He knew his clones had started dying. The scale of the battles they were in was too big for stray shot not getting them, and that was without considering when they actually lost.

"Besides, our forces are being stretched thin given how few we are compared to them."

Erik sat back in his chair, his eyes fixed on the map. "Thank you for the report, Commander, but don't worry, I think we might be able to get past without problems."

Zephyr-71-E bowed his head. "Yes, master..." The clone lingered a couple of seconds too long. It was clear there was much more he wanted to say.

"Speak."

"Yes, sir. There is something I haven't said yet."

"You are making me worry, commander."

"Sorry, Master. It's just that... It's just that the situation is becoming worse from the Thaid front as well."

Erik leaned forward, his brow furrowed with concern. "What do you mean? What's happening with the Thaid?"

Zephyr-71-E pointed to the Eldraith Mountain Range on the map. "Something big must have happened in the mountains, sir. We've seen a significant increase in the number of Thaid's coming down to the plains, and they're not the usual types we've encountered before, even without considering a migration was already occurring almost a year ago."

Erik's eyes narrowed, a sense of unease settling in his gut. "That's problematic."

"Yes, sir. They're even stronger than the Thaid's that came from the Eldraith mountain range for the past year. Much stronger, master. The rarity of the Thaid's we're encountering is also increasing at an alarming rate. "

Erik sat back in his chair. It was possible that more Thaid's from the Mur continent came to Mannard. They were far more powerful than those found here.

If another beast like the cerulean bird, the one that had killed the black wyvern, came here, that would explain the current situation.

"Commander, I need you to be less vague."

Zephyr-71-E's expression was grim. "The Chimaeric Demons are struggling, sir. These creatures are approaching what we estimate to be the 250-strength point mark, with some even exceeding that. It's making it increasingly difficult for our forces to hold the line. We had to clear the area behind us several times, just to keep the front line intact.

That was why there weren't many thaid's on the way here, sir, but it had not been easy."

"What about the blackguards? How are they doing against them?"

"They're having problems too, Master, but their sheer numbers give them an advantage. They can take down these Thaid's more easily than we can, even if they suffer heavy casualties in the process."

Erik nodded, his expression thoughtful.

"Besides, sir, even though we are stronger than them in physical terms and have multiple brain crystal powers, their equipment is leveling the playing field."

"Etrium again, uh...?"

Zephyr-71-E nodded. "Exactly, sir."

Erik stood. "Commander, I'm going to be disrupting Hin's supply lines on my way to Hin. This might help you. But if there's anything I can do to help while I'm out there, let me know."

The commander's eyes lit up. "Actually, Master, there might be something. Our intelligence suggests that Etrium is transporting new batches of weapons and armor to this area. If you could locate these shipments and share the coordinates with us, we could send a team to retrieve them. There might also be manuals and schematics that we could use to improve our own equipment."

Erik smiled. "Consider it done, Commander. I will find these shipments."

The clone bowed his head. "Thank you, Master."

Chapter 1006: There is no rest

"There is some news," he said as he entered the tent where the others were resting. The group gathered around him.

"Somehow, I think I might not like this news at all," Amber said.

Erik didn't reply.

"The commander just briefed me on the situation, and it's not looking good. The blackguards have reinforced the troops around here, and their equipment is making it harder for our forces to hold the line."

June, his brow furrowed, stepped forward. "So, what did they ask us to do, master?" That was the only logical conclusion to the situation since Erik was here. It was clear the clones were going to ask him for help.

Erik sighed. This situation would make them lose some time, but it wasn't like he could simply walk away. These were his clones; they were protecting his people.

"The commander mentioned Etrium is transporting new weapons and armor to the base, taking care of this sector. If we can locate these shipments and share the coordinates with the Chimaeric Demons, they can send a team to retrieve them. There might even be manuals and schematics that could help us in the war."

Mira nodded. "That's certainly a great idea, and I agree with helping them. Getting our hands on those schematics and equipment could help this sector push the front lines. The schematics alone might help the whole front lines."

Amber and Emily, though, remained silent.

"The problem is, even our intelligence doesn't know exactly when and where these shipments will arrive at the enemy base. We don't even have the precise location of the base itself; we just know it's in this sector."

"Well, there might be a simple solution for that." June turned to look at Emily. The woman noticed and understood what June was thinking.

"Emily, do you think you could use your brain crystal power to help us out? I know it's stronger when the visions come to you in dreams, but any glimpse of the future, even if not that precise, might give us a clue and cut the time we need to find this place."

Emily wasn't certain she might be able to do this. Her powers were... complicated. As Erik said, they were very precise when they came to her, but they were much less clear when she tried to glimpse at them voluntarily.

The young woman took a moment to compose herself, then nodded.

"I'll try my best, but I can't promise anything. The problem is that I do not have control over the quality of my visions, but I can't even control what I see. I might end up seeing something completely unrelated to the matter at hand, so I suggest keeping searching regardless of what I do.

However, if I can get even a hint of when and where those shipments will arrive, I'll let you know immediately."

Erik smiled, placing a hand on Emily's shoulder. "Thank you, Emily. You just try your best, ok?"

Emily blushed at that.

"Does this mean we'll have to wait here while Emily tries to see the future?" Amber asked.

"No, we can't afford to stay put. Regardless of the situation, as Emily suggested, it will take us some time to reach the enemy base. Actively searching for it is our best course of action, especially considering that we might shorten the time needed to reach the place."

The group nodded in agreement.

Erik turned to the three Chimaeric Demons accompanying them. "You three will have to help us. When we camp, take on the form of some flying thaid and scout around. We might miss the base, but with an aerial view, the chances of that happening would lower."

"Yes, Master."

Erik clapped his hands. "All right, everyone, since we are done here, let's pack our things. We're leaving immediately."

Mira scoffed. Even if he agreed to Emily and Erik's suggestion, she hoped they would stay here at least for a couple of days. To get a warm shower, at least.

"And here I was, hoping we'd get to sleep on actual beds and use actual toilets for once instead of having to dig holes in the ground to do my business."

Emily and Amber gave each other a look, knowing exactly what Mira meant. They were also looking forward to the outpost's convenient amenities.

"Oh, come on," Erik said, trying to lighten the mood. "Stop whining! You were a mercenary before joining us. You should be used to it. Besides, camping is fun, you know? You've got to take things in a positive light."

The three women gave each other a look, slightly annoyed. They knew Erik meant well, but his enthusiasm for roughing it in the wilderness wasn't exactly contagious.

"Oh, yes, Erik. There's nothing quite like the thrill of squatting in the bushes and praying you don't get poison ivy on your backside," Amber said, making the girls laugh.

"Hey, see it as a fun adventure, at least!"

"Master, I think the ladies might appreciate a bit more comfort than what we are currently doing. Perhaps we could make our campsites a bit more accommodating?"

Erik's brows furrowed, but then he nodded. "All right, I will make some wooden buildings with a toilet and a way to send our waste far from us."

He turned to the Chimaeric Demons. "Can you find some better bedrolls for us all?"

"Yes, Master!"

Mira, Amber, and Emily couldn't help but laugh at that point.

"Anyway, master," June said. "I think it would be a wise idea to spread some of the Luminara Serpentis around these parts. We have planted it a lot since we left New Alexandria, but here, it might be really useful."

"Yeah. I've already thought about that. I don't know if it will actually work against so strong thaid, though. Remember what it did with the wyverns? It only made them enraged."

"That's true, but it will keep the weaker ones away. They might end up attacking someone else." June gave Erik a wink.

"Let's hope so."

The group then packed their belongings and prepared to set out once more.

The mood in the outpost had lifted a lot thanks to Erik's presence, and for sure, the commander told everyone he would help them.

This was an outpost where only Chimaeric Demons were present, so there wasn't even a risk of someone warning the enemy.

Regardless, this didn't mean Erik and the others didn't have to pay attention.

There were many ways for the blackguards to learn about what Erik wanted to do, so the more they kept silent, the better it would be.

With a last check to ensure they had everything they needed, Erik and the others set out of the outpost, knowing they would have to spend some time in the area.

Chapter 1007: Where the hell is the enemy base?

Erik wasn't taking this news well. He didn't have a deadline, but with each passing day, the situation in Frant could change.

Besides, the lack of progress itself frustrated him. He had been hopeful he would be able to find the outpost relatively soon, but he didn't.

In a city, there were plenty of people and of electronics to talk to and use, so it was simpler to find something for Erik, but in the wilderness, in the middle of a war, with people trying to hide bases and secrets with the best of their abilities, it wasn't simple at all.

For all he knew, the blackguards might have started communicating by using birds. That was how bad the situation was for him.

Emily had been using her brain crystal power to glimpse the future and get some hints about the base location. After all, since Erik wanted to find this place, it was likely she would have seen something in her visions, because he knew he was bound to find it sooner or later.

Maybe it was because of Emily's power that he would find it, and in turn, finding it, gave the hint to Emily.

<I better stop thinking about these things if I don't want my brain to fry.>

However, while her visions were vague and difficult to interpret, those few clues they got narrowed down the search area.

The group knew they were in the right area, but the exact location of the base remained a mystery.

One of the most perplexing aspects of their search was the lack of enemy patrols or soldiers in the area.

It appeared the blackguards had vanished, leaving no trace of their presence. But the absence of visible enemies did not mean they weren't there, or that they were safe.

In the end, Erik was too tired and too nervous to keep searching.

"Let's make our camp, shall we?"

The others nodded. It was the middle of winter, and despite the temperatures, which were not that rigid, for some reason, it was still cold. There was a limit to what walking could do to keep them warm.

Since in the past months Erik used his Plant Master brain crystal power to make small wooden buildings they could use to rest, they didn't even need to start a fire to warm themselves because the insulation was great, and the number of people within those buildings made the temperature rise.

"This time, don't forget to make the foliage grow on it, and also remember to spread the Luminara Serpensis around. I don't want to wake up again in the middle of the night because of a wandering thaid," Mira said.

"All right, then. Let me get to work."

Erik channeled mana through his neural links. The surrounding air got filled with energy, which redirected itself at the surrounding vegetation.

The ground beneath him began to tremble and sprout, plants bursting forth with an almost sentient purpose.

Tall, sturdy vines shot up from the earth, intertwining and thickening to form the walls of a small building.

The vines wove together, creating a structure large enough to house ten people.

Leaves and branches formed a roof, providing exceptional insulation against the winter chill but also protecting them from anyone who could have seen it.

The wooden building looked like a giant bush, and at the same time, it looked like a tree.

Erik manipulated the plants further. Vines started taking the shape of beds, and plants with large leaves filled them.

Other plants, growing larger than they would normally have, twisted and shaped themselves into tables and chairs.

Next, Erik turned his attention to creating a secondary structure. He commanded the plants to shape a smaller building next to the main shelter.

This time, the vines grew in a more compact form, shaping themselves into a toilet.

The plants dug into the ground, creating a system that would carry waste away from the area, ensuring sanitation and preventing foul smells from reaching the ones who used the toilet last.

As he finished, Erik opened his eyes and surveyed his work.

<This is a good ass shelter. I should really work on architecture. Maybe when all of this is done, I can go into construction work. It would be cool to help people settle in a unique part of the nation. If I plant the Luminara Serpensis, I can prevent Thaidians from attacking.>

The two structures stood ready. Satisfied, he nodded, knowing his companions would appreciate.

"That's nice," Mira said. "What about the beds?" she asked, giving Erik a wink.

"They are inside. With the bedrolls, I'm sure they will be very comfortable."

The group inspected the building. When they left, the other Chimaeric Demons may have used it as a small outpost.

They were Erik's clones and had his memories, so not having the Plant Master brain crystal power might have been odd. It simplified things too much in the wilderness.

Erik's thoughts went back to when he made that giant tree in the White Desert. <I wonder if it is still standing...>

Maybe it died, but at least the trunk had to still be standing. It was gigantic, after all.

Emily approached Erik. "Sorry for not having been of much help," the woman said.

Erik looked at Emily with a frown. "Not helpful? We have been able to narrow down the search area a lot thanks to you. Don't be sorry."

Emily nodded. Indeed, her visions didn't help so much as to find the base, but they had been useful.

The vision Emily had was blurred. It wasn't perfect, but Emily had been able to glimpse at something that gave them an idea where this base might have been located. She saw an orchid put in a vase.

At the beginning, Mira, Amber, and June weren't that convinced that might be a useful clue.

After all, orchids could have been picked everywhere. Though Erik knew it wasn't exactly like that here in this forest. The most plausible thing was that the orchid had been plucked recently.

The problem was where. The group didn't know the area that well, and they did not know where the plant might have been picked up.

However, Erik had always had a special connection to plants, and orchids need certain conditions. Orchids led to water. So, there weren't many places to search around.

That meant Erik and the others had to find bodies of water, even if small, and he sent the Chimaeric Demons to search around, shapeshifting into something that could fly.

They found it, but Erik expected they would find the base itself, which they didn't.

Chapter 1008: The Gathering Night

"I'm starving," Amber said. "Should we eat something?"

"Great idea," June said.

The group gathered around the table and brought out the provisions the Chimaeric Demons gave them.

They didn't need to be cooked, and, since the Chimaeric Demons following them turned into large beasts, carrying them wasn't hard.

The clones basically gave Erik four months' worth of food, ready to be eaten. Each member of the group picked at their food, their minds wandering as they chewed, lost in their own thoughts and perhaps contemplating the situation they were in.

Mira broke the silence. "I just don't get it. We've been searching for days, and there is still no sign of this damn base. Didn't your clones say it was in this sector? And Emily's vision confirmed it should have been in this area."

"Maybe we were mistaken in assuming it was here because of that orchid."

"No. The orchid was a valid clue. I'm sure it's around these parts."

"Yes, but we should have already found it by now."

Erik remained silent in thought, his gaze fixed on the food in front of him but touching none.

"What if..." June had a look of realization on his face. "What if the reason we can't find the base is that it's underground?"

The others turned to face the clone.

"Think about it. This area is full of natural rocky formations—not quite mountains—but large enough to house an army or a camp. And if there's a natural cave system in the vicinity, it would be the perfect place to hide a base."

"I already thought about that," Erik said. "Honestly, that was my main thought. The problem was that we have no proof, and the only way to be certain of that is by ruling out the possibility that it might have been above ground. But yes, an underground base would explain why we haven't been able to locate it, despite all our searching."

"But searching for an underground cave system could take even longer than what we've already done. We need to narrow it down," Mira said.

June turned to Erik. "Master, what about reading the minds of the thaids in the area? They might have some instinctual aversion to certain places, especially if there's a concentration of human activity. They might even feel the opposite and think of a place where there is a lot of food, or something like that."

Emily got curious about what June just said. "Can you really read the thoughts of thaids, Erik? I thought you could do that only with humans. What do they think, anyway?"

"It's not quite like reading thoughts, Emily. Thaids... Let's just say their minds work differently from ours. They don't think in complex ways like we do; rather, they act on instincts and primal feelings."

He paused, trying to find the right words to explain. "When I go through their minds, it's more about sensing their emotions, their base reactions to the world around them. And in a way, that's even better for us. Feelings are much stronger and more immediate than thoughts, and easier for me to pick up on."

The group fell silent for a moment. If Erik could sense the instinctual versions of the local monsters, it could lead them straight to the enemy base.

"So, we focus on areas where the thaids seem to avoid, or those they like to go to? It's not that clear."

Erik nodded. "I think we should focus on places they are avoiding. If thaids wanted to attack humans, they would have done so, but I don't see many thaids around, which tells me that: one, there is indeed human presence here, since they might have killed the thaids around. Two, it tells me that the few remaining thaids are steering clear of the actual base's location. We'll start at first light.

The Chimaeric demons will turn into flying thaids and help us scout the area."

A small silence ensued. Mira then glanced around, and with a mischievous smile playing on her lips, she broke it. "So, what do you guys want to do to kill time?" She was intently looking at Erik.

The man raised an eyebrow, then shrugged. "Why don't you suggest something?"

Mira's smirk widened as she leaned in closer to Erik. "Oh, I have some ideas in mind."

Amber, catching the exchange, rolled her eyes and chuckled. "Is it your 'turn' tonight, Mira?"

The woman nodded, a sly grin spreading across her face. "Yep."

Amber sighed and stood up, motioning for the others to follow. "Alright, guys, let's give them some privacy."

June, Emily, Amber, and the three Chimaeric Demons all got up and left the small building, filing out into the cold night. Once outside, the atmosphere turned awkward.

"So, uh, anyone up for a riddle game?" June asked, to break the awkward mood.

The others sighed in unison, clearly used to this routine. They had long ago decided to establish 'turns' with Erik to avoid any problem or jealousy.

June's suggestion was met with nods, and Amber started things off with a riddle.

"Alright, here we go," she said. "My ability to speak does not rely on a mouth, and my ability to hear is not dependent on ears. I have no body or physical form, yet I come alive with the wind. I can carry sounds across distances despite having no tangible presence. What am I?"

The group settled down for their game, cracking jokes and guessing the answer. They were gathered around an outside table Erik made for them, snacks and drinks within reach.

They laughed heartily, taking turns making wild guesses and teasing each other about their choices. The camp was filled with laughter and conversations.

Each wrong answer was met with groans and playful banter, making the atmosphere light and enjoyable. The friendly competition only added to the joy of the moment, as everyone felt free to be themselves and join in the shared experience.

Meanwhile, Erik and Mira were really digging the alone time.

Chapter 1009: A Stealthy Approach

<Can you see anything from up there?> Erik asked the Chimaeric Demons through his Instability brain crystal power.

The group was already out by a lot, as they were searching for the enemy base.

Things were much easier now that they had a clearer idea of the situation and what to search for.

Erik and the others were searching from the ground, while the Chimaeric Demons turned into flying thaid's and were scouring the area through the sky.

<Master, the trees are hiding a rock pinnacle. From the ground, it's impossible to spot, but from up here, it's clearly visible.>

<Where?> Erik asked.

<Northwest, Master. But be careful, because I spotted something moving in the area.>

Erik nodded, a smile tugging at the corners of his mouth. He turned to June, Emily, Amber, and Mira. "The Chimaeric Demons have found something. A rock pinnacle, hidden by the trees. It's to the northwest."

The group exchanged glances. "How far?"

"Not that much, I guess. The clones didn't say it, but based on the situation, it mustn't be far."

"Couldn't you ask?" Mira said.

Erik didn't reply. The group set off northwest, but they tried to be as careful as possible since the Chimaeric Demons saw movement in that direction.

If they were lucky or unlucky, in a sense, it might be because of human presence.

"So, how's your neural link training going?" June asked. There wasn't much to do while they moved, so it was better to make things livelier by talking a little.

Amber was the first to speak. "Well, considering we were learning Erik's technique around the time we left for New Alexandria, we learned it during our time there, and we were able to make a lot of progress. I can't still believe how effective it is."

Mira chimed in, and a playful smirk appeared on her face. "Yeah, it's amazing. I can't understand how Erik still has so few neural links, considering he's the one who developed the technique to begin with."

Erik, feigning offense, placed a hand over his heart. "Hey, I'd be further along if I had just one brain crystal power to focus on. You try developing neural links for multiple brain crystal powers, then let's see if you will have this smug look!"

The others laughed.

"Speaking of which, how many neural links have you developed?" Erik asked.

"Not as many as I'd like, that's for sure," Mira said.

"Right. I got to 40 neural links," Amber said with a sad look on her face.

Erik got the shock of his life. He knew the technique the biological supercomputer made was amazing, but he didn't know how effective it would be if used for just one brain crystal power.

"40 neural links? That means you are almost as strong as Zakir!"

"That guy? He had this many? I thought he had more."

"40 neural links is not a joke."

"It is, if you consider what you told us, that there is no limit to the number of neural links one can have."

"That hasn't been proven for humans. It might be that only thaids have this ability."

There was a pause. "What about you?" Erik asked Emily and Mira.

"Around the same."

"Yeah. I got 40 too," Mira said.

Silence fell once again.

That was indeed incredible. The three reached the blackguards' levels, essentially, and that in what three years of training?

Besides, Amber, with her brain crystal power, had the potential to become a weapon of mass destruction, capable of causing unprecedented damage and altering the course of conflicts.

Mira, with her ability to control trajectories, could rise to become one of the most elite assassins in the world. Her skill set would not only make her a formidable opponent in any scenario but also establish her as the best archer known to mankind, able to hit targets with unmatched accuracy and lethal efficiency.

And Emily, although her power of future sight wasn't as immediately impactful in direct combat situations, it remained an invaluable asset.

Her ability to foresee events provided advantages that could turn the tide in any kind of situation. Her foresight allowed for advanced planning and pre-emptive actions, which ensured success and safety in various situations.

As they continued their trek through the dense and shadowy forest, the sound of distant voices gradually grew louder, catching their attention and piquing their curiosity.

They exchanged glances and decided to investigate the source of the noise, but it was clear at that point who these voices belonged to.

Moving stealthily, they crept closer, navigating through the underbrush and peering through the thick foliage of the trees.

In the end, they spotted a group of five soldiers loading heavy wooden crates in front of a cave entrance.

It was clear they had finally found the right place. June's intuition had been right. The five men tried to be as silent as possible, but ultimately failed.

Mira turned to Erik. "Do you think that's the cargo the Chimaeric Demons were talking about?"

Erik's brow furrowed, and he shook his head. "I'm not sure, but there's only one way to find out. We need to get closer. We might need to enter the base to see if they brought more crates, but that is a likely scenario."

The group exchanged glances. However, it was clear who would be the one to enter inside and search around the base.

With silent nods of agreement, they approached the cave. At some point, Erik got a question to ask Amber.

"Amber, does your fog also corrode non-organic materials?"

"Not if I want."

"Good, because we might be able to deal with these guys easily if you play it well."

If the woman had 40 neural links, it meant that her mana consumption decreased, and that meant she could make much more fog than she previously could. Taking care of the entire base was feasible.

Amber grimaced, her expression twisting into a look of discomfort. She took a deep breath.

"What?"

"Well... It's not like I'm that eager to commit a mass murder, Erik. I honestly don't understand how you can do it. I get we are in a war, but..."

"We have no choice, Amber. Keep that in mind. This is not mass murder. This is doing our duty."

Chapter 1010: A Fly on the Wall

"Wait, Erik. I think we should hold off on any immediate action." The older woman wanted to give Amber some help.

Erik, his brow furrowed, turned to face Mira with a questioning look. He was confused by their hesitation.

He knew Amber had a gentle and caring nature, which made her uncomfortable in using her powers on so many people. However, Erik struggled to understand why they didn't grasp the urgency of their situation.

This was a war, and sometimes harsh decisions had to be made quickly. He found it perplexing that they couldn't see the necessity of taking immediate action. However, Mira wasn't stupid, and for sure, wasn't that compassionate. If she said it would be better to wait, there was a reason.

"These people could give us information. We could learn about their plans, steal important documents, or even sabotage their operations from within."

She paused. "Besides, we're even unsure if they've loaded everything yet or if this is the shipment we've been waiting for. It would be better to observe them for a while, gather intel, and then make our move, and that move, I suggest, would be to call the Chimaeric Demons and make them take care of all of this."

Erik considered Mira's words. It wasn't like he didn't think about this, but simply wiping out these people would have been faster.

It would have made the Chimaeric Demons less busy, and it would have made the front lines shift north.

After a moment, he nodded. "All right." He turned to look at Amber. "Sorry, I will try to avoid asking you this unless necessary."

Amber said nothing, but it was clear there was relief in her look. It wasn't like she wasn't willing to fight, or to kill, but to do so much wasn't easy, at least for her.

"What now?" Emily asked. They all turned to look at Erik. "I will go give a look inside, see if I can find some useful information for us, then come back and call the Chimaeric Demons. I will make them some new eggs, so that they might be able to work more efficiently."

With a deep breath, Erik channelled mana through his neural links, his body beginning to shift and change. In a matter of seconds, he had transformed into a tiny, unassuming fly, his clothes falling to the ground in a heap.

<Take care of my stuff for me,> Erik told to June.

<Yes, Master.>

The others watched in amazement as the fly took flight, buzzing towards the cave entrance. Erik went through the bushes surrounding the cave entrance. Then he wove between leaves and branches.

As it approached the cave entrance, Erik observed the soldiers loading more crates.

<I'm pretty sure this is the cargo the Chimaeric Demons were waiting for...>

Erik went past these men, getting closer to the cave's entrance.

The air grew cooler and damper there. Erik entered, disappearing into the cave's depths. The rocky tunnel sloped downward, leading further into the heart of the gigantic rock formation.

To Erik's surprise, the path ahead was not entirely shrouded in darkness.

Lining the walls and ceiling of the tunnel were artificial light, spaced at regular intervals.

<Well, at least I won't risk literally hitting walls this way.> Though Erik was having the urge to go see those lights closer.

The young man followed the trail of light, and as he got closer, the sound of people talking and machines working grew louder.

After a few minutes of flying, Erik approached what appeared to be an entrance to a larger chamber, or better, to the base itself.

In fact, in front of him, there was a metal grid, closing the area and acting like a wall.

There were guards and personnel milling about, their voices echoing off the cave walls. They didn't have to bother playing it silently here, because they were far below the ground at that point.

The crates he had seen earlier were being carried inside by the soldiers, and passing through a small passage where they were likely scanned.

That wasn't all, though. The entire area was protected by a barrier that seemed to be manned by a single individual on the other side of the grid.

<This guy must likely be the one responsible for creating and maintaining the barrier.>

Erik felt mana coming from him, so that was a pretty reasonable assumption.

The man flew closer to the barrier and landed on one of the crates as it got scanned. That was the only way to enter. Once inside the area, Erik's eyes widened at the sight before him.

<Talk about effort...>

The cave had been transformed tremendously. From a natural formation to a manmade one. There were various sections and rooms branching off from the main area.

Soldiers and personnel hurried about their duties, lights got placed everywhere. Holographic computers were ever present, and there was even a hangar with some military vehicles. Erik really wanted to know how the hell those could be brought out of this place.

<Well, we will find out sooner or later.>

Crates and boxes were stacked along the walls. There were labels and markings which Erik couldn't read from his position, but that were likely supplies and equipment.

<Let's see if you are the babies the Chimaeric Demons were talking about. Erik buzzed closer and looked at the labels.

<That's indeed good stuff, but not what I was hoping for.>

The crates had been placed there, but among them were not only those belonging to today's shipment, there were also some from older ones. Though not all of them contained brain crystal weapons, most contained provisions and other stuff.

At that point, Erik left the area to search around. Lengthy tunnels and chambers cut into the mountain's heart formed at the base.

Erik found smaller rooms branching off the main chamber as he explored the base. Spartan bunks and belongings littered some living quarters.

Some rooms were for specific purposes, like armories full of weapons and ammunition or transmission centres, from which this place communicated with the other sectors.

One room caught Erik's eye. The central table was covered in maps and documents and was far larger than the others he had come across until now.

There were two people in that room, two blackguards at that, and they were having an interesting conversation.