

## **BIOLOGICAL 1061**

### Chapter 1061: Not Alone (5)

For seven long days, Erik and June kept watch over the fortress and its surrounding area.

Erik used his Plant Master power to make a simple shelter, which did two things: it hid them from the enemy, and gave them a good view of the surroundings.

Erik used his Plant Master power to build a hidden shelter high in an enormous tree. The shelter was perfect for watching the fortress without being seen.

Erik and June easily climbed it despite the absence of a ladder, since the tree had many natural spots to hold on to, which made climbing easier.

They didn't build a ladder because it might have been easy for Hin's guards to spot. Instead, they used their own climbing skills to reach and take care of their secret lookout spot.

Erik chose a very tall tree for their hiding spot. It was higher than the others, giving them a great view of the fortress and the surrounding area. From up there, Erik and June could easily watch what was happening below without being seen.

But being so high up also had some problems. They needed to be careful about how much they could see and how well they were hidden.

The spot let them see everything, but it also meant they could be spotted if they weren't careful. That was why Erik made the tree grow, so that they would at least be hidden by the foliage growing on it, which increased to scary levels.

From there, they watched the many patrols coming and going around the fortress.

Once the two spotted a suitable target, a patrol. They quickly reached there, and then Erik read their minds to find the information he needed to get access to the fortress.

The process was tedious and often frustrating as he had to sift through a constant stream of mundane thoughts and listen to stupid conversations all the time.

On the second day of watching the fortress, Erik asked June to go back to their main outpost.

June had to tell Mira, Emily, Amber, and the Chimaeric Demons what was happening, but most importantly, that they were safe.

<Do I really have to?>

<Yes, June.>

<All right...>

June flew there, which took him little to arrive. A flying thaid was nothing unusual around those parts, above the trees, of course. What would have been unusual would have been a flying thaid carrying someone.

When June arrived, he explained the situation to the three women.

Of course, they were visibly upset since the two hadn't bothered to tell them earlier what was happening, and that they had disappeared for two days.

However, it wasn't like they didn't understand Erik's and June's positions, and after some reproachful words, they dropped the matter.

"Keep us informed," they said as June left.

"Don't worry."

As the days passed, a clearer picture of the fortress's operations emerged.

Thanks to his instability brain crystal power, Erik slowly but surely uncovered the details he needed to enter the base.

At a first glance, it looked impossible to enter, but that wasn't true. Observing the situation and reading minds, he quickly reasoned there were ways to do that.

Most of the information he got were about the patrol routes, which they mostly figured out on their own, anyway. There was more, though: the shift changes, and the identities of key personnel, were among these many things.

Erik and June were in their tree shelter, which was like those that could be found back in Liberty Watch when it still was a village in the forest.

They were analyzing the information they had gathered so they could take the best decision on how to enter and leave that place.

"Alright," Erik said. "Let's go over what we know."

June nodded.

"We've identified four main patrol routes, each covering a different quadrant around the fortress."

June nodded again. "Right. The North patrols cover the narrow path between the northern cliffs after they check around the northern walls. They also follow the treeline bordering the forest. The South teams zigzag through the flatter terrain of the southern approach and stop at the watchtower on the small hill south."

"The one overlooking the main road, right?"

"Yes," Erik said. "The East patrols navigate the rocky outcrops and stays a lot closer to the walls. Last, the West teams cover that open field and the forest beyond. They go through the ravine and head back."

"Right," June said. "We also know that the shift changes occur every six hours, at 06:00, 12:00, 18:00, and 00:00."

The clone rubbed his chin. "We also know the names and roles of key patrol members. That Lieutenant Renard seems to be the overall leader."

"Yeah," Erik said. "But I think we should focus on those holding the truth-seeking devices, the Veritas Lens, as they call them."

"They should be Wyla, Lysara, Frigg, and Ellis."

"Those devices are our biggest obstacle if we want to enter by shapeshifting," Erik said after a nod.

"They have a 15-meter detection radius. It doesn't leave much room for error, and it is problematic since we can't get too close to those holding them. But fifteen meters is not a bad number to work with. It means we can get close enough to strike if things go south."

"Indeed." The two thought for a while more.

They continued talking about everything they had learned: how the patrol teams were organized, where the guards were stationed around the fortress, and when supplies were delivered.

As night fell, Erik and June found themselves with three possible infiltration options on their hands. Each carried its own risks but would at least allow them to enter.

"The secret passage connected to the armory," Erik said. "It could be our best bet for a stealthy entry."

June nodded, but his expression was cautious. "The only problem is that you might have to fight your way through the guards there. And we'd need to find a way to open the door on the other side of the tunnel. Didn't you say it can only be activated from within the fortress?"

"That was what the woman knew." Erik got this information from Sergeant Helga, one of the South Patrol teams' leaders.

"True. It's risky," June said. "But it might give you the element of surprise once you're inside, and you should also be able to avoid the checkers inside."

But that wasn't what June had in mind.

"Or you could try to smuggle yourself in with the supply deliveries. We know their schedules now. You might enter the crates while in fly form and stay there while invisible."

Erik considered the idea, but this was the option he was less convinced about.

"I might try," he said, "But I would need to locate the convoy, get close to the crates, enter without making noise, and leave the crates as if I did not touch them, alone, at that. Then I should neutralize whoever opens the crates for inspection, and that could happen anywhere, even in the middle of the fortress courtyard with everyone watching."

June grimaced. "Not ideal. Right."

"Our third option," Erik said, "is for me to sneak behind a patrol member."

"Yes, but remember, we don't exactly know how the Veritas Lenses work, and being closer to them might see through invisibility. It's not that I don't trust the system, but... "

"Right." There was a troubled look on Erik's face. "Damn, it's complicated."

"You are used to shapeshifting and sneak your way in everywhere, master, its normal you find all of this a bother, now that you can't. It would be useless since you can only transform into an animal."

"You know it," Erik said. "After all, you are my clone, and well, you have been with me the most out of everyone."

There was a slight pause between the two. "Well, we know who has the truth-seeking devices within the base, so I might be able to avoid them and stay hidden."

This time, it was June who wasn't convinced of the idea. "That's true, master, but it would be better to avoid entirely the Veritas Lenses," the clone said. "The farther you are from them, the better it is. Besides, there is another problem with the entire situation."

June paused. "It is true that, in theory, you shouldn't be visible to the Veritas Lenses, but you will still be physically there, and nothing is going to ensure they won't check where you are hiding. You will be invisible, not untouchable, and given the security here, I think they will do a through check of the surroundings."

Damn, even a cleaner might try to mop where you are, and force you to kill him. What then?"

"This doesn't mean it won't happen even if I enter through a different method."

"I know," June said. "But since we were talking about it, I guessed it was a good time to remind you of this, especially considering how dramatic you are when you do these things. If there is someone you want to kill there, you tend to do stupid things..."

There was an awkward look on June's face.

"Really?"

"Really, master."

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"Regardless, it's not like we have an alternative if we want to find out if they are searching for us. " June said. "Did the guards and patrols have any information about that?" the clone asked.

"No. They were only told people could attack and that this outpost might be a potential target. They are expecting human presence, though. It is me who thinks they know we are here."

They fell into silence, each weighing the pros and cons of their options.

"We will need to take the outpost down, eventually," June said. The clone was suggesting to wipe it out. It was a simple matter at that point, but not nearly as simple as when he saved Richard from the blackguards' prison.

Things changed since then, time passed and basically everyone was becoming stronger, not only thanks to what Etrium did, but even thanks to Erik's himself. People were pushing hard with the technique they stole from him, and the effects could be seen on even Hin's foot soldiers.

"Yes, but that is only when the Chimaeric Demons are enough. The outpost I made could be used as an incubator for the eggs, but we might move our main base of operation to the outpost here."

After several minutes of deliberation, Erik seemed to have taken a decision. "I think our best bet is the secret entrance. It's risky, yes, but it gives us the most control over our entry points. Based on our information, there are few guards there since they need to keep the entrance a secret, and fewer guards means fewer Veritas Lenses. I'm inclined to go from there."

"I still don't get why they didn't collapse the tunnel. Wouldn't it have been safer?" June asked.

"That's if they predict winning every attack they get, but you know how people are, and especially how those in power are. They keep an easy way out at hand to get out of tough situations. Well, not that I can blame them. I would have wiped out the fortress to not let the enemy take it, and we will need to take this into account for when we conquer it."

June nodded. "The Chimaeric Demons will, master." The clone paused. "All right then, I'm in with the tunnel route. We still have to find a way to open the door, though. If we can find a way to do it from the outside, it could be our cleanest entry point."

"I will see what I find once inside."

"Good then..."

With their decision made, Erik and June planned their next course of action. The two would need to scout the area around the secret entrance, looking for any weaknesses they could exploit, see how many guards were around, and find a way to sneak in undetected.

Erik would not have that many troubles doing that thanks to the Phantom Veil, but being as careful as possible was the best thing they could do in that situation.

"What if you use your Plant Master brain crystal power to create camouflage? The lenses should only be able to see if we shapeshift or if we lie. But if you look like a bush... I might as well enter with you; they shouldn't be able to see me if I'm hiding within them."

"No, you stay out," Erik said. "I can still do something with the Phantom Veil, but you can't, and I don't want to take unnecessary risks."

"All right." June was disappointed, but there was nothing Erik could do at this point. Entering was already complicated as it was; the Phantom Veil was basically a stroke of luck, and he couldn't even completely rely on it.

Besides, for how long would he stay inside the base? An hour? A day? A week? He didn't know. Everything depended on how the situation inside was, and he needed to be able to move without worrying about the clone.

Not only that, but June needed to keep an eye on the outside, because troops might arrive, thaid's might attack, and, most importantly, the others needed to be updated.

"We'll move tomorrow night, then," Erik said.

"Understood, Master."

Night fell, and the fortress became a dark shape against the sky. It was hard to see, except for the occasional starlight reflecting off it. The night made Erik and June feel tense as they waited. Or better, nervous.

Erik didn't know what they he was going to find there, and he already had a lot of thoughts going through his mind. What if they really found out it was him that stole the ship? What if the ships coming back were filled with people chosen to hunt him?

Having met the Leviathan Serpent truly messed up with his confidence, and the power developments Hin showed worried him.

Sure, there was no way that the blackguards got too much stronger, and for sure, they hadn't caught up with him. But if they got too strong, there would be limits to what he could do if they attacked him with a lot of forces.

<I really need to focus on making Chimaeric Demons, and for sure I must stop going around alone.>

Erik had a spectacular force at his disposal, but there were too many things the clones had to do. Those he left behind on Hin's satellite island, for example, they were still in contact with him, and the news he got weren't good.

More and more ships were heading back to Hin, but there were also some from the other countries reaching the island.



The young man was starting to think that the only way if he really wanted to end this war, and destroy the blackguards, was going to take control of the foreign governments.

<But will this make me any different from the blackguards?>

Sure, he had no intention of using all that power for a hidden agenda, or any agenda, truth be told. But he would still control everything. He would be the same as them.

Though reinforcements from other countries were sure to becoming, with their specialties, their soldiers, their weapons.

Man force was the only thing that terrified Erik. One on one, he was clearly the strongest person alive, but through numbers, they could flood him, and he would lose.

Erik and June took turns resting and keeping watch through the night. Their week of careful watching was ending, and soon they would put to the test what they learned.

Erik thought about how complicated this mission was. He had never needed to plan so carefully before. They had to think of so many potential problems and solutions that he was left overwhelmed.

<I wonder if Noah felt like this when he prepared dad's rescue mission.>

He did.

<I need to solve the Veritas Lenses problem in the future. Invisibility should work, but this means I would have to give the power to the Chimaeric Demons too.>

...

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...

As dawn came, Erik got to work right away. He used his Plant Master brain crystal power to change the plants around the entrance.

He made the plants grow thicker and stronger. This created a natural hiding place he could use in case something went wrong, and the Veritas Lenses worked on his Phantom Veil too.

But Erik had to be careful. He knew that if the plants changed too quickly or too much, the guards might notice.

<Keeping a balance is not that easy to do.>

Erik was careful for a few reasons. First, he didn't want to take any chances.

Even a slight mistake could ruin everything before he even started. Also, Erik knew the guards were alert and watching for anything unusual.

By being extra careful with the plants, Erik hoped to avoid making the guards suspicious. He didn't want them to increase security or, even worse, find out that he and June were there.

The second reason, was that he wanted a way to hide in case the Phantom Veil wasn't going to work.

Invisibility should work well against the Veritas Lenses, based on what the system said, but having somewhere to hide was still better than having nothing to use to conceal himself.

It would also make it harder for the enemy to spot him. As for the entrance, there weren't many guards there, at least on the outside, but after a quick check with his Instability brain crystal power, Erik quickly found out that appearance deceived, because in the long tunnel connecting the exit to the entrance, there were a lot of guards.

Regardless, he made vines and thick plants grow around where the entrance was, but not so much for the guards to find out.

As evening came and started to go, Erik and June got ready. They checked their gear, went over their plan one last time, and prepared themselves mentally. Well, June did. He had to prepare himself for the possibly long waiting, and the feeling of not being of much use to his master.

Erik was already as he could be.

"Remember," Erik said as it got dark, "if something goes wrong, go back to our outpost. Don't try to help me alone for no reason. With my Phantom Veil, at least according to the system, they shouldn't be able to find me."

June nodded. "I understand, master. But let's try to make sure that doesn't happen, all right?"

They nodded to each other and started moving towards the entrance. Their week of watching was over. Now came the real challenge.

Chapter 1063: Harder than usual mission (1)

<I'm going.> Erik said.

<Yes, Master.> June still wasn't convinced of everything, and for sure he wasn't happy about the fact he couldn't help his master. Yet, it wasn't like there was something he could do, so he swallowed his pride.

Erik activated his Phantom Veil brain crystal power and turned invisible. Despite the system's reassurance about the fact he wouldn't be seen, he wasn't taking any chances and used the bushes and shadows as additional cover.

As he approached the entrance, there were two major concerns on his mind. The first was how to open the door.

If guards were stationed directly in front of it, his options would be limited unless he made something about it.

He could kill them, but that would defeat the whole point of staying hidden. It was highly improbable no one found out about the kill, especially because the guards had to head back to the base for reports, changes of shift, and so on.

That also meant there was no way to replace the guards with a Chimaeric Demon. Not that Erik had them available.

The second issue was more complex and far-reaching. Erik knew the Blackguards thought he had a skilled hacker on his side, one good enough that he could enter most systems.

Though they didn't know how good it was and how fast it could act, and for sure, based on what the enemy shared on their networks, they didn't know Erik already planted spy viruses on them and that they were under surveillance.

Of course, they weren't so stupid as to think that couldn't happen, and that was exactly what worried Erik.

This likely prompted them to adapt their communication methods. They did it in the past already, and if they suspected he was already on Hin, they might have reverted to more primitive, analogical forms of information sharing—verbal orders, handwritten notes, or other methods that would be impossible to intercept with the biological supercomputer.

This would complicate his mission, because it might force him to stay within the base for an extended period. An hour, a day, a week... Erik told June that, and he expected the clone to report it to the others. Which was another problem itself.

Since things didn't usually go like Erik wanted, and those problems loved to pile at his feet, there was another one he had to consider.

If they really reverted to this kind of information sharing, he would have no way to extract information with his Instability brain crystal power because he would not be able to interact with the others unless he showed himself or if he shapeshifted into humans.

However, his Beastwalker brain crystal power was limited to animal transformations, and he couldn't even use it because of the Veritas Lenses. Not that it would make sense to turn into a beast.

This meant he would need to be creative to make his targets think about the information he needed without arousing suspicion, and that further required time.

<Damn...>

As Erik neared the tunnel entrance, he spotted a guard standing at watch. The man's back was turned toward the entrance, his gaze on the forest. Erik was on the other side of the entrance, behind it, to be precise, hiding behind the bushes despite his invisibility.

Erik slipped past the guy easily. He was too fast, and his strength allowed him to move a lot with few steps. He then entered the underground tunnel.

The tunnel was long and winding. It led into the fortress many kilometers away, and it looked like it also went deep into the earth.

At first, Erik couldn't see anything in the darkness. His most likely didn't illuminate the initial part of the tunnel because it would help keep it hidden more easily. But as he walked, lights started spacing out along the way. But they were not strong. On the contrary, they were barely enough to allow the guards to not trip.

Security within the tunnel was also there, but not as overwhelming as one might have assumed.

<I guess it is because they wanted to keep this place's existence a secret.>

And he was right.

Guards were placed every 200 meters along the tunnel, meaning there were five every kilometer. The tunnel was three to four kilometers long, meaning there were at best 20 guards if they didn't place a cluster of them in front of the door.

<Somehow I'm sure I will be that lucky.>

But it wasn't like he couldn't expect that. This place was basically the only weakness the fortress had. Regardless of the circumstance, they couldn't see Erik. His invisibility and the dim lighting made it easy for him to sneak past them without being noticed.

After walking for what seemed like a long time, Erik reached the end of the tunnel. He saw an enormous stone wall in front of him, which was clearly part of the fortress.

The edges, though, were deep within the bare earth.

<It looks like part of the fortress had been built underground.>

The wall looked strong, and the barrier could be seen shimmering in front of it. A guard was standing there, watching the door close.

<At least they aren't doing a party here... If there were too many people, things would be much more complicated.>

Erik stopped to think. He couldn't fight the guard. Knocking out or killing him would set off alarms, regardless, and he didn't know if this guy had to report to the others. He might be required to do so at the end of the day, but it could be possible he had to do it every hour or a couple of minutes.

<Killing is out of the question, but even knocking the guy out is...>

The guard would wake up, in the end, and warn everyone.

However, observing the closed door, or better, the wall, he noticed something, and that gave him an idea.

There were many cracks in the stone, and they were big enough for something, albeit small, to pass through it.

<Let's deactivate this part of the barrier... System... Do your job.>

The biological supercomputer immediately connected to the base's network. It was close enough for the AI to be able to do that. The barrier, or at least a part of it, flickered out. Now Erik had a way to access the other side.

Erik used his Plant Master brain crystal power to make tiny plant roots grow and then seep into the small cracks along the wall's surface. These roots slowly spread along the stone, then went through the small spaces. Erik guided them to grow deeper into the wall.

Small pebbles and dust came out of the cracks where the roots went through, making some noise. But the guard didn't seem to notice.

<Good. Stay blissful as you are...>

At some point, he felt the roots break through to the other side of the wall. There was no resistance anymore, so they had to be on the other side.

<Great!>

But the guard was still a problem. Erik needed to get rid of him somehow. Then he had an idea.

<Instability might work...>

Erik channeled more mana and started affecting the minds of the guards around. What he wanted to do was to make the guard leave, but he couldn't make only him do it.

He started with the closest guard, making him feel bored.

<If I'm lucky, he will leave the area on his own accord. But I need to make him so bored he will pray to get the hell out of here...>

At first, the effects were minor—guards moved a little, yawned, or checked the time.

As more time passed, Erik's power had a stronger effect. The guard right in front of him moved around more, looking all over the tunnel restlessly. At some point, the guard became unable to stay still and silent anymore.

"This is crazy," the guard said, his voice echoing a bit in the tunnel, but no one heard it because of the distance. "How long do I have to keep staring at this wall?"

Erik smiled wider. <Not for long, you idiot! Hopefully, at least.>

At the same time, he sensed the other guards were thinking similar things.

The guard started complaining more and more, clearly frustrated. His voice echoed in the tunnel as he paced back and forth.

He couldn't stay still, moving back and forth and then suddenly stopping. His body was showing how much he wanted to leave his post, and it was great for Erik, at least.

The guard looked like he was about to make a big decision—a stupid one. He seemed less and less sure about staying at his post as time went on.

"I can't take this anymore," he said to no one in particular. "Surely a few minutes away won't hurt. It's not like anyone ever comes down here, anyway."

Chapter 1064: Harder than usual mission (2)

Despite his training, boredom crept in, causing his mind to wander. Of course, it was all Erik's doing, but he didn't know that.

He shifted his weight from one foot to the other, his boots scraping against the rough stone floor while his eyes darted to the bend in the tunnel, longing for some sign of activity to break the monotony.

As the minutes ticked by, he found himself fighting the urge to pace. He started some time ago already, and he paced so much that he was starting to feel tired.

"Fuck, I'm outta here!"

It was at that point that the guard turned on his heels and strode out.

Erik observed the scene with an amused smile, trying his best not to laugh out loud.

His plan had worked perfectly, and he couldn't help but feel a bit smug about it.

<HAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHA. GREAT!>

Erik waited until he couldn't see the guard anymore. Soon after, he felt the guards he was affecting were unable to take the wait anymore and most likely leaving their post.



Erik's influence extended beyond just one guard. He affected most guards in the second half of the tunnel, making sure no one would be close enough to hear any noise when he opened the door to the armory, the same one they were tasked to protect.

When he was certain the coast was clear, he turned his attention back to the stone wall.

<Now the easiest part...>

Using his connection to the roots that had penetrated the walls, Erik searched for the mechanism to open the secret door.

He guided the tendrils along the room on the other side and probed around. The roots, like ghostly fingers, traced the contours of the chamber on the other side of the wall.

In truth, as Erik's roots explored further, he discovered a short tunnel between the hidden door and the armory. This passage was most likely an extra security measure, thought to make it harder for intruders to get in quickly into the armory if they found the secret entrance.

<Well... At least in theory...>

The roots moved through this connecting tunnel, feeling its smooth walls. When they reached the end, Erik could tell they were close to the actual armory. Then they rushed in. Erik found out because he felt rectangular and squared shapes, most likely belonging to crates of various sizes.

<I'm finally in...>

Erik knew he had to search for a secret level within the room. It was a classic setup, but he wouldn't judge their lack of creativity.

Erik carefully searched the room using the roots which moved across the floor and walls, feeling for anything unusual.

He made them check every small space and crack, looking for hidden switches or levers. The roots could sense tiny changes in how things felt or how warm they were.

This let Erik 'feel' the room in a way normal people couldn't.

After minutes of exploration, the young man felt one of the roots brush against something that didn't belong to the rough stone walls—a smooth metallic protrusion. Its texture stood out amidst the coarse surface belonging to the wall.

<Gotcha! C'mon babies. You can do this!>

Erik used the root to push the switch, and then the tunnel filled with a deep rumbling sound as old gears turned.

<Fuck... this is not good.>

However, despite Erik's worries, it looked like no one heard the door opening. For once, Erik got lucky.

A section of the wall slid aside, revealing the hidden passage beyond. A grin spread across the young man's face.

Erik waited for the door to stop moving. Before rushing in, he gave one last look around, then behind him. The tunnel behind him was still empty, as the guards were still under Erik's brain crystal power's effects.

Then he went through the opening. The secret door closed behind him. The same deep rumbling sound appeared, but again, no one was close enough to hear it. Besides, no one expected it. He was now inside the fortress.

<June, I'm in.>

<You are?> the clone asked his master. June waited for Erik to give him news about his ordeal for a while and started to get worried. He didn't find a way to open the secret entrance.

<Yes...? Why are you so surprised?>

<Ah... Nothing, master...>

There was a brief silence.

<Anyway... I'll search around for a bit. Keep yourself close to the fortress. I will let you know for how long I have to stay...>

<All right, master. Be safe.>

With that, Erik and June closed their mental connection.

<Let's find out what these mother fuckers know...>

Erik went along the tunnel, and after some minutes of sneaking in, he reached a room that differed from the tunnel he'd left.

The walls were smooth, with bright lights that made everything look harsh. The air felt dry and smelled a bit like metal. Erik smelled this from the tunnel, but now that he was in the room itself, he understood why the smell was so strong.

<I'm at the armory.>

The room was vast and filled with equipment of all kinds.

<This marks another thing on my ever-growing list of things to do. Take control of this place.>

If he really got a hold of this place, his Chimaeric Demons might use these weapons. They might not really need them, but a few trinkets or two were going to be useful. Honestly speaking, leaving all these goodies here would be pretty stupid.

There was a lot of interesting stuff, weapons whose form Erik had never seen. Armors of the most interesting shapes and form. Regardless, everything here looked powerful and precious.

<And most importantly, free...>

Erik gave a better look at the place, but not so long after he was suddenly jolted out of his reverie when he heard voices in the distance, along with machine noises and the sound of boots falling on the ground in rhythm.

<People are coming here...>

Then Erik left the armory. He passed many locked doors with official symbols and security keypads. He needed to find people with the information he wanted, but the fortress was huge, and the people were many. Besides, he didn't even know who to actually search for. That was something else he had to find out.

Plus, he had to figure out how to get this information without talking to anyone or pretending to be someone else.

<This is going to take a while...>

As Erik thought about what to do next, he noticed people rushing around.

<This doesn't promise a happy ending...>

He decided to follow them, hoping they might lead him to something important.

The crowd led Erik to a big, open area.

<What the fuck is this?>

Many hallways met here, and there was a huge holographic image in the middle. Lots of people were busy working on different screens and controls, but most of the people were looking at the images projected in the air.

There was the image of his ship on it.

"A ship had been found not that far from our shores. After an inspection, we found out it was the ship that got stolen in Frant. Those who did it are in our lands..."

Erik's heart started beating faster. <Fuck, it happened too soon...>

The young man had no doubt Hin would find the ship sooner or later, but not so fast. As he thought this, murmurs and indignant voices surged.

"Mother fuckers!" said someone.

"We will make them pay for having dared to come on our shores again!"

Erik sneaked his way closer to a group of officers talking near one of the screens, but as he did, a man walked in from a side entrance on the other side of the room.

<This guy looks important...>

He was right. It took Erik a glance to see that, and he based this on the way the man carried himself, but that everyone treated him with respect, confirmed to the young man this guy must have been a high-ranking officer.

The officer walked under the holographic depiction of the ship Erik stole and stood in silence in the middle of the room, at least for a handful of seconds.

"Put everyone on alert," he suddenly said.

"Send twice as many patrols out and check the tunnel. If someone has arrived on our shores, it will not take much before they find this place. I want to know where these fuckers are right away."

<I'm pretty sure this is the guy I must keep an eye on if I want to learn what the blackguards know.>

Of course, Erik still wasn't ruling out the chance that they kept talking through secure online methods. There was electricity here. After all, the barrier would not sustain itself without it and people replenishing it with mana and brain crystals. But if that wasn't true, he really had to find a way to extract information from this guy.

<But somehow, I'm sure I won't be that lucky... >

The man kept talking about Erik's ship for a while and then about plans and contingency in case there was a small team in the area. The man giving orders not only started preparing in case someone was inside the base, but he also prepared teams to go check outside the base.

<Good thing June remained outside. The Chimaeric demons will need to be prepared in case they get found out.>

Chapter 1065: Harder than usual mission (3)

<I start feeling tired of all of this.

The past two days spent within the fortress had been tough, but he got what he came here for and set out to do. Not only had he learned the ins and outs of the stronghold, which allowed him to understand how to get in and out more easily, but he had also found the information he sought.

With a quick glance to ensure the coast was clear, Erik hurried towards the temporary shelter he and June had made near the fortress.

<June, are you here? June!>

Erik probed around with his mind, using his Instability brain crystal power to find June's familiar presence. It didn't take long to find his clone.

<June!>

<Master?>

<Yes, June. It's me. Where are you?>

<I'm on in our shelter. Why? Are you coming back already?>

<I am,> Erik said.

<Did you find out if the blackguards know about us?>

<I did.>

Erik sounded worried and frustrated. He wasn't his usual self, and June noticed right away.

June felt worried as Erik came back early. He knew this probably meant bad news. As he waited for Erik to arrive, June thought about all the things that could have gone wrong.

<Whatever the blackguards know, it is going to be bad since the master is coming back this early.>

He tried to prepare himself for whatever Erik was about to tell him, but he wasn't that successful. June knew that, even if he knew about it, there was nothing much he could do. He was too weak to fight. The best he could do was to sneak around or carry his master whenever he needed.

<A glorified lookout and getaway driver, eh?>

June thought about his limits as a regular clone. He felt frustrated and wished he could do more to help Erik. He imagined how different things would be if he were a Chimaeric Demon instead.

<If I were stronger, I could really help Master Erik,> June thought. <I could fight alongside him and do more than just watch or drive. But here I am, stuck on the sidelines.>

June felt upset about this, but he tried not to dwell on it. He knew Erik didn't know his powers would turn that way. Even so, June couldn't help but look at his younger siblings with envy.

Erik started running faster, wanting to share what he found out with his clone and friend, head back to their outpost, and make plans for what to do next.

In the end, he arrived at the shelter. June came out, concern on his face. He offered Erik a flask of water, which the young man accepted gratefully, drinking greedily to quench his thirst after his hasty retreat.

"What happened, master?" June asked, his brow furrowed. "What did you find out?"

Erik took a deep breath, collecting his thoughts.

"Oh, many things," Erik said, still holding the flask. "But let's enter before delving into this matter." The two did.

June gave Erik time to rest a little and to catch his breath. But not long after, Erik was the one who broke the silence.

"Over the past two days," Erik said to June, "I've spent time reading minds and searching around. What I've pieced together is... problematic, to say the least."

June leaned in. "How bad is it, master?"

Erik sighed, running a hand through his hair. "Bad enough. We're in more danger than we initially thought. For starters, Hin has informed the blackguards about the stolen ship," Erik said.

"And someone among the blackguards guessed that I'm the one responsible. The ships we got told were heading back from Frant are coming here just to catch us. Based on what I've learned, they moved a lot of their most elite soldiers, and a lot of them are elite among the blackguards. The ships are filled with them."

June wasn't surprised. That was old news for them. It was just that they didn't know who exactly was coming back, just that they were on Hin's ship. It was also a very predictable outcome. The problem was that having certainty about something was different from having a suspect.

At least because it would give them an idea of how to move from there. Erik was certainly more powerful than the blackguards, but it wasn't like he had 100 people's mana. There was a limit to what he could do alone; there was a limit to how fast he could be to avoid thousands of hands holding weapons.

He knew that, and the blackguards weren't stupid enough to think otherwise. Until now, only the Leviathan Serpent and the other thaid showed enough strength to be able to fight against armies alone, and Erik wasn't the Leviathan Serpent.

"The blackguards are trying to keep everything secret," Erik said. "They've sent communications about us to Hin, but only a select few are privy to the details. That's why most of the soldiers don't know about us. They're deliberately limiting the spread of information to maintain secrecy."

"That was also something predictable, but in the end, we still found out."



"Right, but there are too many problems."

Erik paused.

"For starters, I know they are aware of us, but that's it. We don't know what they are exactly planning; we don't know if they are aware of where we are; we don't know if they have that information but are waiting for us to make a move.

There is basically more that we don't know than what we know, and without the ability to use the biological supercomputer, it's not like we can get this information."

"We could send the Chimaeric Demons, master."

"It wouldn't work," Erik said. "The Veritas Lenses are too problematic. They have a lot here already. I can't even fathom how many they have on Sleeb Harbour or on Maynard Island."

"Besides, this time they have taken things far. They've started using couriers and storing information on paper," Erik said. "Not just about this matter, but most of them. This means that Frant and I don't have a complete picture of what Hin and the blackguards are planning, and they most likely are going to change their war momentum soon.

The virus I spread is going to become useless as soon as they perfect their information-sharing method."

Erik paused. "I've sent a message to Becker, telling him to send Chimaeric Demons groups to search for these couriers, and explained their truth-revealing devices to them. I've also sent messages to all the Clones and Chimaeric Demons around to be careful and to leave immediately if there is even a slight chance they might be found out."

"What about the clones having taken the identity of Savage Blood? He should be pretty high in the blackguards' ranks at this point."

"I contacted the clones yesterday, and while they got promoted, they are not high in the ranks yet. Besides, they barely found out in time about the Veritas Lenses. One of the clones had to disfigure

himself so that he could stop using his shapeshifting powers. That in itself was suspicious, because a healer could have fixed that."

"So, they are keeping an eye on him?"

"Yes. There is not much he can do right now," Erik said.

There was another brief pause.

"We'll need to infiltrate the other countries to stay informed, then. If they changed their tactics so thoroughly, it might be possible they are already coordinating with them to invade Frant," June said.

"Right." Erik nodded. Shapeshifting, which had served them well in the past, would no longer be a viable option for gathering intelligence, and all the clones using it had to either retreat immediately or find a solution to the predicament. Of course, not all of them could disfigure themselves. It would be suspicious.

Erik's next words caught June off guard, though. "I've decided to give the Chimaeric Demons my Phantom Veil brain crystal power. They'll need it more than I do."

June's eyes widened. "Are you sure about that, master?" he asked. "This is now your only way to sneak around unseen."

Erik nodded. "I am. At this point, I don't really need to use it anymore, not to sneak around anyway. The Chimaeric Demons will do that on my behalf, and I will just prepare as many troops as I can to send them around to do the job.

It's the only way to ensure they can operate without problems, and besides, they will be much more effective than me in getting information, just because I would be able to send a ton of them around."

June understood the sacrifice Erik was making. The Phantom Veil power had been a valuable asset so far, even before getting merged with Shade's brain crystal power. "The Chameleon Veil..."

Giving it up was no small decision.

Chapter 1066: Harder than usual mission (4)

"But the Chimaeric Demons are not ready!"

"I know. I wasn't talking about them; I was talking about us. The Chimaeric Demons will have to stay behind and slowly conquer all the outposts around. I've found out there are several, and if we silently take them all, we will gain an advantage on Hin, and we will slowly surround their capital and the blackguards' island."

June thought for a second. "If this is the case, master. Then I suggest you don't give the Chimaeric Demons the Phantom Veil brain crystal power," June said.

"Why? It is clear is the best thing to do."

"It is a good thing to do, master, but not the best, and it will put you in danger. Instead, I have another idea, one that we sadly couldn't do because of us having to leave Liberty Watch. You should send the clones to hunt thaids and collect blood and brain crystals. We might be able to create the same, or at least similar, powers as before.

This way, we should be able to give the other clones what they need without you having to stay without."

"But we will lose a lot of time," Erik said.

"We won't lose too much, master. If we really need to send Chimaeric Demons around the countries and also conquer the bases on Hin, we would still need for you to make more of them. Entering Sleeb Harbour won't be easy. We will need time regardless, given Etrium's new technology having spread here and with new tools built just to get a hold of you.

We need more fighters, and 20,000 Chimaeric Demons will not be enough."

"Right... But..."

"Master," June said. "You focus on training and making stronger clones. We will take care of the rest."

"Now..." June paused. "We'll need to gather our resources and plan our route carefully. We will have plenty of time to do that while we get enough Chimaeric Demons. I will prepare a team to go

to Sleb Harbour so that we might enter without problems, and being able to go there with a foothold already established will be beneficial."

"All right, then."

Erik nodded, thanking June for his help. When things got tough, Erik sometimes had a hard time thinking clearly. This, along with his habit of taking risks, led him to make poor decisions, and right now, he couldn't afford them.

Despite not being the strongest of his clones, June proved to be much more than his brothers. Since he was among the oldest of the clones, he gained some sort of wisdom the others didn't have yet.

June's idea of making more Chimaeric Demons and slowly taking over outposts around Hin showed how smart he was at planning.

His plan helped with what they needed now and also set them up for success later. Erik was impressed by how June could think about both immediate problems and long-term goals.

He wondered if Noah and his other early clones, his firstborns, had become just as good at planning in their own situations.

Erik hadn't seen his first clones in a long time. He wondered how they were doing. Were they safe? Were they doing well? He thought about Liberty Watch, hoping his clones had found a place there and become important to the community.

Erik imagined his clones living in Liberty Watch. He felt proud, thinking they might be helping the community grow and stay safe. But he also felt worried because he was far away from them.

<I hope they didn't get on Samuel's nerves. That guy can be rather annoying some times.>

"Should we head back, then?" Erik said.

"Yes, master... but...?"

The clone gave a look at the bag Erik was carrying.

"What's there?"

"Oh... this? It's just a gift for Emily, Mira, and Amber."

The bag looked full, bulging at the seams with the mysterious contents. The clone's curiosity was piqued.

"Master, if I may ask," June said, his gaze fixed on the bag, "what exactly is in there? It seems quite full."

Erik glanced down at the bag, a hint of amusement in his eyes. "It's three full sets of armor and some weapons. Nothing exceptional, though. Most of the good stuff had already been given to the soldiers. This was what remained inside the armory."

June's eyebrows raised slightly. "Master, does this mean you've decided to bring Emily, Mira, and Amber with us to Sleeb Harbour?"

Erik nodded, his expression turning serious. It was unusual for him. "Yes, I have. Given how much more dangerous the situation has become, I believe it's best to keep them close to me. At least until the other Chimaeric Demons' eggs hatch."

"I see," June said. "It's a wise decision, master."

The young man sighed, running a hand through his hair. "Exactly. I don't want to take any chances. Once we have more Chimaeric Demons at our disposal, we can reassess the situation. But for now, this seems like the safest option."

Erik and June started their journey back to their outpost right away. June changed his appearance to that of an Erendu, which helped them travel faster. The trip took two full days and nights.

As they traveled, Erik thought about the bag of armor and weapons he carried. He wondered how Emily, Mira, and Amber would feel about going to Sleeb Harbour. Would they be worried? Would they be scared? Would they show the same determination they showed when they decided to come with him here?

<That will more likely be their reaction. I bet they feel a lot more confident in their strength now.>

The journey was peaceful, even though the two decided to avoid fights.

When they reached their outpost, Erik felt relieved because there was much to do and not a lot of time to do it. He was ready to start their new plans.

#### Chapter 1067: Path to Victory

They were going to grow fast, but for some time, they would be in that miniature state. Emily, Mira, and Amber were amid the playful chaos, engaging with the curious and energetic clones.

<I hope they are not wondering if I was like this when I was a kid...> He sighed. The Chimaeric Demons looked like him, after all...

The three women, upon noticing Erik and June's arrival, stood up and rushed towards the pair. They had been out for many days, and while June got back to tell them the situation, they still hadn't seen them for a while, especially Erik, who, instead, had to stay back wherever they were. The three women were worried, and as soon as they got close enough, they started pestering the duo with questions.

"What took you so long?" Emily asked.

"Are you alright?" Mira checked for injury.

"What happened out there? We've been worried sick!"

Erik held up his hands. "We're fine; don't worry. But we need to talk. There's a lot I need to tell you."

He turned to the Chimaeric Demons and called out, "Gather round, everyone." The small Chimaeric Demons looked at their older brother and started walking towards him. "Not you! Just the mature ones!"

The young Chimaeric Demons looked sadly at their older brother's words. Some pouted, and others sighed. But they didn't stay upset for long. Soon, their playful nature took over.

"Last one to the big rock is a rotten egg!" They quickly forgot about being left out as they enjoyed their new game.

Erik smiled as he watched them. He admired how quickly they bounced back and how much energy they had.

The group made their way to one of the buildings Erik had made in the past week. It wasn't the biggest one, but it was enough to accommodate everyone inside. It was a makeshift meeting room of sorts.

Once everyone was settled, questions poured in again.

"What happened?"

"Did you get to the fortress?"

"Is the situation bad?"

"Calm down. I need to explain things in detail, so this discussion will take a while."

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Erik explained everything. How the blackguards knew about them, how they were sending people here, and how they needed to prepare for a huge fight.

As he finished his recounting, his clones' and lovers' minds were only full of more questions. "So, what do you want to do now?"

"We need to go to Sleb Harbour as soon as we can, but June has insisted that we send a team ahead to establish a foothold within the city first."

"It's a good idea. For starters, you will make the Chimaeric Demons work instead of doing everything yourself like usual. What's the point of having clones if, in the end, you are always the one who puts himself at risk?" Mira liked the idea very much.

"Yeah," Erik said. "Regardless, while the Chimaeric Demons do their job, we'll stay here and focus on making more of them. There are many things we need to do, and this means we need to strengthen our numbers. Aside from that, we will also need to focus on making neural links.

This time, I will only make those related to the Chimaeric Demon brain crystal power, hoping to further reduce the hatching time, and the mana needed to make them."

"Great idea, master." A Chimaeric Demon said. "But your face tells me we will do more."

"Yes. There has been a problem. Etrium found a way to detect shapeshifters easily, and this... Well, you know what it means. I wanted to give the next batches of Chimaeric Demons the Phantom Veil brain crystal power, but June didn't agree."

"Our esteemed elder brother is right, master. If shapeshifting doesn't work anymore, you need to keep something that allows you to escape if needed," another Chimaeric Demon said.

"I didn't actually use it to flee, but... I get it. Anyway, this means I need your help with a few things. First, we need to start mass-producing brain and body-stimulating serums. Everyone needs to grow stronger, and these serums will be essential, especially given we are going to Mur next.

We'll need to find or create the tools to craft them, and then all the Chimaeric Demons will need to help to make them."

"Yes, master."

Erik paused. "Second, I need you to hunt as many thaids as possible and find the most useful brain crystals you can. We need to arm the clones with them to give them an edge in battle, but I want you to focus on all the powers that might end up giving them invisibility once merged or not; otherwise, I will be forced to give them the Phantom Veil brain crystal power."

At those words, it became clear what the Chimaeric Demons' top priority request was .



However, this could be problematic because it would make the clones stay out of the outpost.

"But the other Chimaeric Demons won't mature for another two months. We won't be able to hunt before then. We are too few."

Erik nodded. "I know, and that's why I'm asking you specifically to take on this task. I'll handle taking care of the younger Chimaeric Demons."

The clones looked around, still uncertain. "Are you sure, master? They are very demanding..."

Erik's expression was resolute. "I know. Trust me, I took care of many of you when I was alone."

It was clear, though, that Erik wasn't done talking. The atmosphere grew tense.

"Now, after this, I want to send as many Chimaeric Demons as possible to infiltrate not just Hin, but all the other countries as well. This clearly means you need to find the brain crystal powers first."

Everyone in the room nodded.

"We'll start with Hin. Sending a batch of Chimaeric Demons to the rest of the island will be our priority. As soon as they're ready, I want them to conquer all the bases surrounding Sleeb Harbour and take the place of the soldiers there. This will allow us to establish a firmer hold on Maynard Island, where the blackguards have their main base."

"Are you thinking about conquering Sleeb Harbour first?" Amber asked.

"Yes. We will replace their leaders and pull out their troops from Frant, but that is only when the other clones will be ready in the other countries."

#### Chapter 1068: The Gifts

Erik didn't doubt his Chimaeric Demons' ability to replace key figures, even if they were the leaders of foreign countries. In the past, things like this happened frequently, and if the ancient humans, devoid of power, could do that for the Chimaeric Demons, who could shapeshift and assume the identity of multiple people at the same time, it was bound to be even more possible.

The only problem was the Veritas Lenses, but even that had a limited scope of use, especially considering they had a limited range of use. If the Chimaeric Demons played it well, no one would be able to find out they replaced these people.

"How much do you think it will take?" Mira asked.

"It depends on how fast you can get those brain crystal powers." Erik paused.

"Invisibility will be needed by the Chimaeric Demons to get as close as possible to their targets, to allow them to replace them. Of course, this doesn't mean they won't need to do their research, and this is exactly the problem."

Erik stopped to think for a second. "Assuming we get them in a week, if you do it fast, after having merged them and made something suitable, the first 500 should be ready in three months, maturity included.

But then, I will say at least four months to find enough information on their target, study them enough so that they would arouse no one's suspicions when turned, then actually replace them," the young man said.

This was a challenge for Erik's plan. He would need to wait before he could attack the blackguards. However, taking seven months to replace world leaders and control the human continent wasn't actually that long. Usually, such big changes would take years. In comparison, seven months was a very short time.

Hin was going to get conquered much sooner, and anyway, he wanted to send the Chimaeric Demons around, at least for the information gathering purpose.

Even if they couldn't immediately replace the world leaders, they would at least prepare the ground for that to happen and allow Frant to resist the blackguards, likely new helpers.

Erik had no doubt the fuckers asked for the other countries' help, now that the Chimaeric Demons made it impossible even for them to conquer it easily as they expected.

The problem was that aside from Frant's remaining troops, which were not much to begin with, only 70000 Chimaeric Demons were on the Mannard continent, and soon, they would not be enough to stop their enemies.

The virus Erik planted in Hin's, Etrium's, and the blackguards' communication systems would not help for much longer, given how frantic their migration to analogical ways of sharing information had been here on Hin.

Emily, Mira, and Amber exchanged glances. "We're with you, Erik," Emily said. "Whatever you need us to do, we will."

Mira and Amber nodded in agreement. The Chimaeric Demons, too, stood tall, ready to grant their master's wish.

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...

As the meeting came to a close, Erik pulled Emily, Mira, and Amber aside. He reached into his bag and pulled out the armor and weapons he had brought for them.

"I want you three to have these," he said, handing each of them a set. "This equipment will help protect you, and since you often said you wanted to be more useful, this will help you achieve the goal."

"Are these...?"

"Brain crystal equipment," Erik said, not without a tint of pride in his voice.

"There is a set of armor with various defensive brain crystal powers for each of you. The weapons have one too. I tried to pick the ones that would suit you the most, but I didn't have that much time to see what the fortress' armory had, so I might have missed the really good stuff."

Amber got two daggers, a weapon, the same ones she got taught back at the Red Palace. One of them could create flames, the other Ice. They were powerful weapons. That much was clear to both her and Erik.

The woman accepted the daggers from her lover with excitement. As she grabbed the handles, she was struck by their unexpected lightness. They did look very solid, so the lightness surprised her.

However, their appearance belied the strength she could sense within them, or better, the mana that the mana clusters in their handles had.

Amber turned the weapons over in her hands, her fingers tracing the designs etched into the metal.

"These are beautiful," she said.

For a second, the blades gleamed when the woman moved her wrist, then her eyes went to their edges. They promised deadly efficiency.

She was amazed by how well the daggers were made. The designs on the handles flowed smoothly into the carvings on the blades. This made the daggers look beautiful, more ornamental than meant to be used to fight.

"Etrium sure knows how to craft stuff," she said.

"It is what they are famous for, after all... I've lived there for some time, as you know, and this is just the tip of the iceberg."

The blades were much better made than any daggers she had used before.

Amber tried spinning the daggers around. They moved easily, almost like they were part of her arms.

"They're so much better than my old ones. I just need to figure out how to use their brain crystals."

"Try calling forth your mana. It should work. These weapons are made to be simple to use."

The woman did as Erik said. Focusing on the first dagger, a small flame appeared on its edge. She made it disappear just by thinking about it.

"It's easier than it looks like."

Then she looked at the other and did the same. A thin layer of ice coated it, increasing its slicing power but also increasing its length. Amber smiled. "Yeah, pretty easy."

She gave Erik a look.

"Thank you."

The others, too, received their gifts. Mira got a bow. Its power was simple, as it increased the user's strength, making it possible for him or her to knock more powerful arrows. She tested the weapon using mana. Immediately, pulling the string became much easier. But the string itself was much harder to pull than any other bow Mira ever used.

That was because it was entirely made from thaids' body parts, and the string looked like it was made from tendons.

"It works. I can already see it will increase my strength a lot."

As for Emily, instead, she got a sniper rifle. The brain crystal wasn't particularly powerful, but allowed the user to create mana bullets by using pure mana. That meant never running out of ammo and making bullets able to pierce the natural mana shields thaids had. Besides, their strength and piercing power depended on how much mana was used.

"Don't try it here. It will make a lot of noise, and that is the last thing we want."

"Yes," she said.

In her hands, Erik had no doubt the weapon would be catastrophic. The women accepted the gifts with grateful eyes. These were powerful weapons, and for sure, they were costly. Not that Erik spent money on it, but that wasn't the point.

Erik smiled. "Now... I need to finish some stuff, and then, finally, I will go to rest a little."

"All right," Amber said. "We will go back to the Chimaeric Demons. I hope we will be able to rest tonight. They can be quite mischievous and grow stronger each day, which makes keeping an eye on them complicated."

June approached Erik. "I'll head out too. You've got that other task to handle, and I could use some shut-eye myself after this much time of traveling."

Erik gave a grateful nod to his clone. "Thanks, June. We'll catch up tomorrow."

One by one, they filed out of the room. Amber, Mira, and Emily headed towards the Chimaeric Demons' quarters. June stretched as he walked towards the exit.

The door closed behind the last person, and Erik found himself alone in the now-silent room. He took a deep breath, mentally preparing for the discussion he was going to have.

<System.>

<Yes?>

<Can you make another neural link training technique?>

<I can.>

<...>

<You can? Just that?>

<Well... I mean, you asked. What should I have said? Graghahhgegaga? That would make no sense.>

The young man sighed, deliberately ignoring the system's weird antics and wondering if the woman that was used to make this thing was like this.

<Can you make it so I can create neural links more quickly?>

<I can, but improving this part isn't as simple as increasing the number of brain crystals' neural links you can train simultaneously. It will require a lot of DNA points.>

<Yes, but I remember you saying that the technique you made could be improved further. Can't you simply make it more efficient?>

<That...> The system said. <Depends... The technique I made was thought to train multiple brain crystal powers rather than one. It works well with single powers but is not thought to increase speed that much. You saw a difference between the technique taught at school and yours, just because the first was awful. The one I made is a piece of art.>

<Well, that piece of art needs to be improved again, or a new technique needs to be made,> Erik said.

<Let's see what I can do then...>

Chapter 1069: To Sleeb Harbour (1)

Over time, their hard work paid off. They found more and more brain crystals that, in June's opinion, would work well if together.

But they focused on that only. Erik wanted for them to get powers that would give the clones an edge in the upcoming fights, but they basically had no time to find them.

There was an abundance of brain crystal powers that, if merged, would turn powerful, but it would also increase Erik's DNA point expenditure, and since they wouldn't be on par with Lightning Lord and other similar powers Erik had, they focused on finding the best brain crystals to make the invisibility.

Besides, giving too many powers wasn't exactly a good idea, especially in the Chimaeric Demons' situation, since they had a much harder time making neural links. In the end, they found everything they needed, and when they brought the brain crystals to Erik, he merged them and gave the ability to the clones, but thanks to Mira, Emily, June, and Amber, Erik spent little DNA points.

It was going to take some time before the first batch of Chimaeric Demons with the invisibility power hatched, but as soon as they were ready, they were going to leave to complete their quest, aided by the clones who had already left for the other countries.

As for the clones with them, Erik sent them out to search for the tools and materials needed to craft the brain and body-stimulating serums.

The group had to go to cities and villages, which took some time, during which more Chimaeric Demons matured. Their efforts, too, were rewarded. Because they returned not only with the tools they needed, but even some of the materials required to make the stimulating serums.

Erik and the clones then worked on the serums, creating the powerful stimulants. Once they were ready, they were distributed among the group; the effects were as astonishing as everyone expected.

Even the clones took advantage of them and trained whenever they could. Everyone got new neural links, but Erik was the one who got the most.

The system worked hard to make the new neural link training technique Erik requested. He had to invest massive amounts of DNA points for the system to do something decent in a quick amount of time, and the result was, despite everything, astonishing.

The new technique was an improved version of the one Erik already got, but not only did it make the process of creating neural links easier and faster, but it also allowed Erik to train eight different brain crystal powers at the same time.

He also taught the technique to Emily, Mira, and Amber, but they still had problems understanding it. Mana, Neural Links, were, after all, something that the human mind couldn't quite comprehend yet.

Somehow, Erik thought that whoever made the system did, but before he reached the Mur continent, there was no way for him to know. Though it was also clear based on what the mysterious AI could do.

Thanks to the new technique and the stimulating serums, Erik made a ton—45, to be precise. However, before leaving for Mur, Erik wanted to get the greatest and fastest power boost he could, so he tried to bring up to par all the brain crystal powers with few neural links, knowing that the early stages of development would yield the fastest gains.

He said he would focus on a few ones, and that was what he was doing since he wasn't getting more brain crystal powers, but he still trained more of them. In truth, the reason was also that Erik got a lot high in the number of Neural Links for the Chimaeric Demons' brain crystal powers, and progress slackened.



As for the Chimaeric Demons' eggs, since they started hatching months ago, the initial batches matured during this time.

That allowed him to send a group of Chimaeric Demons to Sleeb Harbour. As June suggested, they were going to make entering the city easier for him and the others when they went there.

The team did well in Sleeb Harbour. They found a safe place to stay in the city and learned important information about who was in charge of the entrance guards and how the city was protected. But Erik couldn't get more information from this point of view.

It looked like the situation in Sleeb Harbour wasn't the best, and during their last conversation, the Chimaeric Demons group had to cut contact.

The journey to Sleeb Harbour was underway, with Erik leading his small group through the forest. Amber, Emily, and Mira followed close behind, each mounted on a clone.

The forest's sounds seemed to match the serious mood of the group.

But while Amber and Emily couldn't help being rigid, Mira was used to such things. It resulted from the countless battles she had already gone through before joining Erik. For years, she roamed every kind of landscape in search of thaids to hunt with his team. Lila, Aiden, and Kael.

It had been a while since Erik and Mira saw them. Of course, the woman was feeling their absence more than anyone else. They had been her comrades for years, after all, and they shared a great deal of harrowing experiences together.

Mira thought about how things might be different if she and her friends hadn't joined Erik's group or if she hadn't started dating Erik. She wondered if her old team would still be together and if their lives would have taken a different path. If she would have remained in Etrium and joined the country in their war effort against Erik.

But regardless, the choice to join Erik had been the correct one, if not for the fact he was right and the blackguards wrong, at least because everyone benefited in terms of power gained.

Mira was an obvious example of how joining Erik's group was beneficial. She gained a lot of power by learning Erik's techniques. While she couldn't share these techniques with others without Erik's permission, what she learned would still help everyone, including her friends, in the long run.

The woman then approached her lover.

"Erik," she said, "what exactly do you plan to do when we reach Sleb Harbour?"

Erik turned to face her as June galloped. "The first step is to meet up with the Chimaeric Demons who have already infiltrated the city," he said. "I don't know what they learned, but I need to find out. Besides, they said they found a way for us to enter unseen and without much trouble, so meeting them is paramount."

"Once we've established a foothold on Sleb Harbour, I'll make more Chimaeric Demons. We'll need a force large enough to not only conquer Sleb Harbour but also to launch a full-scale assault on the blackguards themselves."

He paused for a moment. "Once we're established, we will find a way onto Maynard Island," he said.

Mira nodded. "And how long do you think that will take? The Chimaeric Demons take time to hatch and mature."

"Realistically, I think we'll need at least two months before we're ready to take on the blackguards directly," he said.

"But that time won't be wasted. While we're building our forces, we'll also be working to replace key figures in the human-controlled countries, including Hin."

Erik looked at his friends. "I need the blackguards isolated, because otherwise, they might simply ask for help if we are not fast or strong enough to swiftly deal with them."

"It's just that," Mira said. "Everything is a little surreal. I mean... The blackguards had been the symbol of peace and justice for... who knows how long, and learning they were the ones behind kidnappings, deaths, and criminal activities... Well, I still can't believe it..."

"You have seen it yourself. Mira, the only reason these guys are so hell-bent on capturing me is because they want the biological supercomputer; they want power, for god knows what reason. Appearing as justice's paladins was just a pretense they used to make people inclined to cooperate with them."

"Yeah... I know... that much is clear. But there are still things I find weird."

"For example?" Erik asked.

"For example, the blackguards knew about the biological supercomputer, but how?"

"I don't know. This thing had been found on the Mur continent, and since they frequently went there, it might be possible they found some information there..."

"Yes," Mira said. "This is very possible, but whatever information they must have gotten, it shouldn't have been that precise. The biological supercomputer is basically an almighty being, capable of turning people into gods. Whoever or whatever made it should have kept all information about it a secret."

This means that even if they found information on Mur, they shouldn't have known what the AI could do, at least in theory, and they shouldn't have been aware of the fact it had been completed."

Chapter 1070: To Sleeb Harbour (2)

Amber and Emily approached the two as they talked. They too wondered what the biological supercomputer that gave Erik all his powers was. They wondered about its origins and how the blackguards got information about it.

"I wouldn't be so sure about the fact they didn't have precise information," Amber said. Everyone turned to look at her, even the Chimaeric Demons she was riding on.

"Why so?"

"Because we simply don't know what's on the Mur continent." She turned to look at Erik. "You said that your father talked about a company named Silver Line Corporation, saying that it was them who made the biological supercomputer."

"Yes, I did."

"Exactly. Now, I know this might sound weird, but the level of technology in the ancient times, while not as good as ours, wasn't bad at all. It was primitive, certainly, but they could send data across the world easily, even more easily than we can. However, while we mostly use no-cable connections, they did most of that with underwater sea cables.

They were pretty fast in sending and receiving data."

"So, you are suggesting they actually sent some of this information to the Mannard continent before Mur fell?"

"Well... I mean... You just come up with something that even today is ground-breaking. Not sending words about it would be pretty stupid. The only question is, If they did, why didn't they send the entire creation process?"

"Maybe they didn't have the time, or maybe, whatever place they sent this information to get destroyed by the thaids," Emily said.

"Indeed. This makes me think," Amber added. "If the blackguards knew about the biological supercomputer, it might mean they were strictly related to the Silver Line corporation. Maybe..."

"Maybe they are the Silver Line corporation," Erik said.

"Yes."

But that would be an incredible thing. Basically, no organizations survived the advent of the thaids. Countries were destroyed, armies decimated. At that time, Thaids were simply unstoppable; even a Densoph was hard to kill for humans back then.

"It makes sense," Erik said. "But..."

"But what?" Mira asked. "I can't follow you two at all."

"There is something else," Amber said. "If the blackguards are the Silver Line Corporation and they survived until now, it means they knew how to do so, meaning they knew about thaids before they even came up and had a way to protect their compounds, their research, and their people."

"Are you saying?"

"Amber is saying that maybe the blackguards and the Silver Line Corporation have something to do with the thaids. They were working and succeeded in creating an AI that basically allows complete control over mana, a device that can turn a man or a woman into a god," Erik said.

"Maybe the thaids are a by-product of that research."

There was silence for a short while, although it wasn't for just a couple of seconds.

"Anyway, going back to the previous topic, what about Hin?" Amber asked.

"What are you asking for, exactly?"

"You said you want to change their leaders, but won't their army resist the stance change? Even if we place some of our on at the top of the food chain here, Hin has been loyal to the blackguards for long... I doubt they will agree with anything we decide that goes against the blackguards or the war against Frant, even if it comes from their own government."

Erik nodded. "You're right. Hin is a special case. While replacing leadership in other nations would be relatively straightforward," Erik said, "Hin's army might resist the change. They've been indoctrinated for generations, much more than in Frant, where Becker, dad, Richard, and your father did whatever they could to prevent their influence from spreading."

Emily frowned. "So, even you are not sure they will refuse to turn their backs on the blackguards?"

Erik nodded. "Yes. The army, the foot soldiers, the officers, might resist not helping the blackguards. I actually think they will rather try to send help when we launch our attack."

"That's troubling," Mira said, her brow furrowed.

"It indeed is. For sure, we need to be prepared for potential resistance. That's granted," Erik said, his voice grave. "The Hin army's loyalty runs deep, and we can't underestimate their devotion to the blackguards. We might face internal struggles even after we've nominally taken control."

Amber leaned forward. "This is a little generic."

Erik took a deep breath. "Yes. Sorry. During these two months, the Chimaeric Demons I've already created will physically conquer Hin's outposts. We need to place a powerful presence in the country. Slowly replace their officers, and even foot soldiers if needed.

We won't be able to replace everyone, but at least the key figures."

The young man paused. "Hin isn't just another country we need to control. It's our gateway to the Mur continent, our safe place in case we need to retreat, and the first place where we have to go when we come back."

"So, you want to replace the entire army?"

"Why are you so surprised, Mira?"

"We would need a ton of Chimaeric Demons to do that, and because of the Veritas Lenses, we might also need to replace their holders, just to avoid them finding out their officers had been replaced. We are talking about millions of people here."

"I know."

Another long silence stretched.

"What about Frant?" Emily had his mother and father in mind. "Will we be able to withdraw the enemy forces from Frant once we have control of Hin?"