

BIOLOGICAL 1071

Chapter 1071: To Sleeb Harbour (3)

"What after that?"

"When everything is under control, we will attack the blackguards. I still need to think about the how, and I need more information to make the right plan. But that's the idea."

"We're with you," Mira said, her eyes blazing with fire. Amber and Emily nodded in agreement.

As they rode on, the sun started to set, turning the sky orange and red. The forest came to life with nighttime sounds—insects chirping and creatures hooting.

As it got dark, the group stopped to rest. Erik made camping easy.

...

...

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The journey to Sleeb Harbour took them two weeks, but in the end, they reached the city.

As the group approached the towering walls surrounding the place, they were struck by the sight of the city sprawling before them.

Despite its name, Sleeb Harbour was not a coastal town with bustling ports and ships. Instead, it was a vast, landlocked metropolis, its towering buildings and winding streets stretching out as far as the eye could see, and, of course, gigantic walls surrounded it.

Erik and the others were currently on top of a hill so they could see the city inside.

Amber turned to Erik. "How are we going to get inside?" she asked. She had never done something like that, and she didn't see a way to do so. Erik was in the same situation because of the Veritas Lenses.

"I didn't ask the Chimaeric Demons how they did it, but based on what they told me, they found a way to let us enter undisturbed." Erik smiled with confidence in his eyes. "The Chimaeric Demons have been scouting the city for almost two months, and I got told they were also gathering information and preparing for our arrival."

"If you say so."

With that, Erik closed his eyes and focused, reaching out through his Instability brain crystal power. He sent a message to the Chimaeric Demons waiting within the city after a long time searching for them, telling the clones they were finally here.

After an hour of waiting, with the sun painting the sky in orange, they saw someone coming in their direction.

Erik recognized the person in question. It was one of his clones, clearly. It wouldn't be possible to mistake someone that looked exactly like you.

The clone bowed deeply as it arrived.

"Master," the clone said. "We have been awaiting your arrival. Everything is prepared for you and the others within the city."

Erik nodded, a pleased smile on his face. "Excellent work," he said. "Lead the way. "

The Chimaeric Demon bowed once more, his eyes gleaming with pride at his master's praise. "Of course, Master. Please follow me. I will guide you through the safest route into the heart of Sleeb Harbour."

With that, the clone turned and led the group down the hill. Erik and his companions followed behind, with the three women scanning the surroundings for any signs of danger.

As they approached the city's walls, the Chimaeric Demon led them to a secret entrance. How the clones found it was unknown. The weirdest thing was that the barrier wasn't working there. But just there.

"How did you find this?"

"We simply scouted around for a while... Hin does not know about this entrance, or better, it forgot since it was created a long time ago."

"And the barrier?" Erik asked. "Why is there no barrier?"

"We managed to send a clone inside to scout by shapeshifting. Even if the Veritas Lenses is going to make it possible for them to find us, if we take the form of small animals, insects, and similar creatures and sneak our way in by taking advantage of people or the surroundings, they won't be able to find us. The clone took the form of a spider and hid under a soldier's clothes.

He tinkered with the barrier and deactivated it on this portion of the walls. Of course, we put it back up as soon as we could. We came in, and once we knew you were coming, we did the same."

The clone led the group through narrow passages. Erik wasn't sure if these were inside the city walls or underground. It was quiet, with only the sound of their footsteps on the stone and metal floor echoing around them.

In the end, the clone led them to an area not so easy to reach.

"Where are we?" Erik asked. The clone immediately understood what Erik wanted to know. They were basically the same person, after all. "Underground, master. We should be around the middle of the city here."

The clone pushed open the door, revealing a dimly lit interior that seemed to have been prepared specifically for their arrival.

The group entered the safe house, feeling relieved. They had successfully snuck into Sleeb Harbour without being caught, thanks to the Chimaeric Demons' help.

Erik couldn't help but be shocked by how easy it had been, especially remembering all the hardships he had to go through to do the same in the past, and even a recent one at that.

<I really should have used the Chimaeric Demons more...>

Erik realized it wasn't helpful to think about what he could have done differently in the past.

Instead, he turned his attention to what needed to be done now and in the future. Getting into Sleeb Harbour without being caught was a good start, and he would not let his thoughts ruin the moment.

"Now we can start the real work," Erik said.

Chapter 1072: First Night in Sleeb Harbour

Night had fallen over Sleeb Harbour, and Erik couldn't sleep. He had too many things going on in his mind.

While Amber, Mira, and Emily were asleep, since everything he tried to go into Morpheus's embrace failed, he decided the best thing to do was to stretch a little, and he left his bed.

The Chimaeric Demons refrained from explaining the situation to him and the others since they made a long journey to reach Sleeb Harbour and didn't want to overload Erik and the rest of the group with stuff that could wait to be said.

But while Erik agreed, at the beginning, the thoughts about the situation filled his mind and made him unable to rest.

"Master, where are you going?" June asked.

"Oh, sorry, I didn't want to wake you up," Erik said. June was sleeping too, but it looked like somehow he still kept an eye on his master, or maybe he simply heard him getting up.

"I'm going to talk to the Chimaeric Demons. I need to ask them some questions."

"Then I'm coming with you, master."

"Are you sure?" Erik asked. "You made most of the muscle work on this journey. You must be pretty tired..."

"It's not a problem, Master... Besides, I had something going on in my mind, and I couldn't sleep either. Taking a walk will help me for sure."

June stood up with heavy eyes. Clearly, he lied and was sleeping well enough to live those few minutes, going from waking up to being fully awake, like hell.

But regardless of the obvious tiredness in the clone's eyes and his foggy mind, he still followed his master.

It took a little before the two found some Chimaeric Demons. The clones greeted their elder brother and their creator with nods and bows.

"What can we do for you?"

"I came to ask you about the situation here in Sleeb Harbour," Erik said. "What have you learned during your time in the city?"

The Chimaeric Demons exchanged glances.

"Master, are you sure you want to talk about this now? I'm sure you are pretty tired after your journey..."

"Yes, I am..."

The Chimaeric Demon hesitated. "Well... Master, consider that we haven't been here for a lot of time, so we don't really have that much information. Most of our efforts were focused on establishing our presence here and securing this place for when you arrived."

"It doesn't matter," Erik said. "Fill me in with whatever you got."

"All right," the Chimaeric Demon said. The clone sighed. "The situation in Sleeb Harbour is dire. The ongoing conflict against Frant has taken a heavy toll on the population, and most of them had been conscripted into the army. This is basically a ghost city."

"So, the city is empty?" he asked. "Weird. It didn't look like this from the outside. I saw many vehicles rushing in and out of the gate."

"Those were mainly military vehicles, and most were on autopilot. The truth is, as I said, that there are few people in the city. Tomorrow we will show you, master."

"All right. So, few people, you said?"

The Chimaeric Demon nodded. "Yes, Master. With so many of the city's inhabitants now fighting on the front lines in Frant, we have been able to move more freely through the streets. That is also the reason we had it so easy to enter and establish a place here, but this also means that we do not have many ways to get the information we need, and those few people still in the city know little."

Erik was conflicted about this situation. This was good news, he realized, but only on one hand, since having hardships in getting information could be a problem so big as to hinder or stop their plans.

But on the other side, with fewer eyes on the streets and a reduced population, they would have an easier time preparing for their attack on the blackguards if they found a way to get to the Maynard island.

"All right. It isn't a problem. With me here, things will go faster. Now, tell me, have you found a way to move our troops easily onto the island?"

The Chimaeric Demons shook their heads, their expressions apologetic. "No, Master," another one spoke up.

"The blackguards have increased security at the city's ports and airports. This makes it very difficult to bring in a large group without being noticed. We thought about attacking those places, but that would make our attack obvious."

He paused. "The alternative would be to shapeshift and head to Maynard Island, but we're not sure about the thaids between Hin and Maynard Island. People say thaids from the Mur continent might be roaming the area going from Hin to the island, so it would be pretty dangerous."

There was a pensive but uncertain look on the clone's face. "The only way to avoid them with certainty would be to take planes and get out of the flying thaids living area or take ships, but this wouldn't solve the problem at all; it would only put us at the mercy of sea thaids."

Erik sighed. "It's alright," he said. "We'll find another way if that happens."

"Yes, master, but there is another problem. Based on what the local told us," another clone said. "Security has been tightened to an extreme degree not only on Hin, but even on Maynard Island. Every member of the organization had been given Veritas Lenses."

The Veritas Lenses were a new product, but they already proved a thorn in Erik's and the Chimaeric Demons' side. Until the batch with the invisibility brain crystal power hatched, things were going to be complicated because the clones could only rely on shapeshifting for the time being.

Erik glanced over at June, who remained silent throughout the conversation. "What do you think, June?" he asked.

The Chimaeric Demons' ears perked at that. They knew June was much weaker and for sure not as smart as them, but June was an esteemed elder brother, among the oldest, but for sure the one with the most privileged position among Erik's clones, as he was his closest attendant and helper.

"For sure, the Veritas Lenses will be a problem for our plans, but it's not like those using them will find the clones with 100% chance. The Chimaeric Demons said it themselves this evening. It is possible to sneak around turned into small creatures."

He paused. "The problem is getting those planes. We are too close to the blackguards' main base, so information will travel fast. Stealing the planes as we did with the ship will be complicated, and even if we do, the blackguards would have put whatever defense to bring down any plane approaching without authorization."

"Right," Erik said. "But this means we will be taken down, even by flying there by shapeshifting. If we couldn't do it in Frant, we can't definitely do it here."

"Yes." June was thoughtful. "It won't be a pleasant journey," he said. "Especially for Mira, Amber, and Emily. But if we can't get the planes to reach Maynard Island, I would say we will need to prepare more Chimaeric Demons and fly there."

"You said it yourself; the clones will be killed."

"Yes..."

Silence ensued. For Erik, this wasn't a trivial matter. In truth, it wasn't even for June, but he and the Chimaeric Demons had a different perspective on things. Their only reason to exist was for them to grant Erik's wishes and help him achieve his goal. Dying was for them the greatest honor they could get, if it meant giving Erik what he wanted.

But the young man wasn't so cold as to think that was a viable solution, not even given how bizarre the Chimaeric Demons' life was.

"As for the Thaid's," June said. "Most of them can be easily taken down by the Chimaeric Demons. Mur's thaid's might stumble upon us, but that's just a risk."

June paused. "It's not worth to stop our operation or delay it just because of a fear. Besides, we might use the biological supercomputer to come up with something to keep them far from us. What will happen if we give powers that closely resemble the Instability brain crystal power to them?"

June seemed pretty confident about this. "I bet that even the most powerful thaid wouldn't be able to resist a massive mental attack made by thousands of clones."

"As for the Veritas Lenses, if we fly there, hiding won't be a concern because we will simply wipe them out with a large army. I doubt the blackguards, despite the many trinkets they got from Etrium and the two or three brain crystal powers they got, will be able to pose a problem."

Erik agreed with June's plan and thought it was clever. He nodded, seeing how good the idea was.

Erik had faced similar problems before and had used plans like this every time, always leading to good outcomes. This made him feel confident, even if not that much.

Chapter 1073: Gathering Forces

As the clone said, they were not to be underestimated and could be considered elite fighters back on the Mannard continent.

They were even more powerful than Van Dyke at this point, thanks to the technique he gave them.

Amber was even a member of the Red Palace, the most esteemed training organization of the whole Frant, so she knew how to fight.

And yet, the blackguards had always been, and all their technological progresses made them just more powerful.

Going to the Maynard Island, going to Mur, was no joke. Besides, he had grown so powerful, so far beyond the limits of the average human, that he sometimes found himself viewing them as fragile and in need of protection.

<I must stop thinking about them like this. I've already taught them the system's latest technique, so it's just a matter of time before they will make more neural links and grow strong enough to protect themselves against the blackguards. At least in theory.>

There was a pause, in which Erik could do nothing but think. But the young man didn't come here to talk to the Chimaeric Demons just about the blackguards. There was a more concerning matter that needed to be addressed.

Shaking off these thoughts, Erik turned his attention back to the Chimaeric Demons.

"What about the Mur continent? Have you found any information on how we might reach that place?"

The Chimaeric Demons had an idea of what they had to do to reach the place. The problem was how they had to do it. Those there couldn't help but make grim expressions as Erik asked that question.

"Swimming or flying there while shapeshifting is suicidal, since thaids from the Mur continent roam there. This time, it is not just a possibility; it is almost a certainty."

While Maynard Island was still in the human-controlled territory and was far from the influence of Mur's thaids since it was relatively far from the thaid-infested continent, being east of the accursed place, Hin's western side wasn't.

It was actually the closest land to Mur. The waters, teeming with thaids from the area, weren't even that big.

A flying thaid would reach Hin's shores in hours if nothing prevented it from coming, and that was a question in itself.

How could the blackguards stop the creatures from reaching Hin if they were so powerful?

<I don't know yet, but I'm sure I will find out once I reach it.>

However, it wasn't just from the sky that the blackguards had to fear a threat. Even the waters housed horrors that no sane human, even the most powerful one, would dare to fight.

"Suicide, you say?"

He knew that well, but hearing it from the Chimaeric Demons made his heart sink.

"I know that... It's why I asked you to find a way."

The blackguards were able to go on the Mur continent to reach that place, so it wasn't impossible. If they could, there wasn't a reason Erik and his people couldn't.

"How do the blackguards go there, then? My father said they journey there regularly, and that even he got there and returned."

"Yes, master... It's easy. Planes, as we said. It is not secret information that humanity used them the most to transport goods and troops. Flying cars were created exactly for this purpose..."

"So, what's the problem? I get we can't fly there with our own forces, and neither we can take a ship because of the sea thaid's, but why can't we take a plane? We stole a ship. What can a plane be?"

"The distance between Hin and the Mur continent isn't a lot, so we definitely can steal a plane, but of course, you know better than me, it is not the best of the ideas."

Stealing a plane required a plane, and planes were currently under strict control of the blackguards. They wouldn't be able to accomplish the task if the bastards were still around, and especially so if they didn't have Hin under their control. Just to be petty, the blackguards or Hin might destroy the planes and prevent Erik from going to Mur.

"Yeah... It was just to understand what you found out."

There was an awkward silence.

"Yes... Of course, master."

The Chimaeric Demon sighed. "During our time in the city, we heard whispers of a place called the Law Gate. Ah, don't be deceived by the name, master. It is an airport, not a literal gate, a fortified one at that, and it is considered one of the most important locations the blackguards control outside of the Maynard Island."

Erik leaned forward. "Tell me more," he said.

The Chimaeric Demon nodded solemnly. His eyes met Erik's. "The Law Gate is where the blackguards send their troops all over the world," he said.

"But it's also the primary departure point for missions to the Mur continent. So, to reach the Mur continent, we simply need to get our hands on the Law Gate."

"The blackguards sure are dramatic," June said.

"Indeed, esteemed brother."

It was like Erik thought. To reach Mur, they had to take control of this place. This way, they could get the planes without risking them being destroyed. However, it also meant the list of targets increased.

Not only Erik had to attack the Maynard Island and take a hold of an entire continent. He also had to attack one of the most, if not the most, guarded places on the planet.

Erik's mind raced. The Law Gate, a heavily guarded airport that served as the blackguards' primary hub for global operations.

It was a daunting target, a fortress that he wasn't that sure he could take. After all, if Hin's troops grew so much with Erik's technique, he couldn't fathom how strong the blackguards were at this point.

It was a while since he saw one of them, but he was sure that every single one of them now had at least two brain crystal powers, and that was without counting the brain crystal equipment that Etrium provided.

<Those mother fuckers are always around!>

But it was also their only hope to reach Mur. In the end, Erik was going to get a clearer picture of the situation once he fought against the blackguards on Maynard Island.

<No... I can't... I need to attack the places simultaneously. If the blackguards at the Law Gate learn about our attack on Maynard Island, they would for sure destroy the plane. >

The blackguards would learn that Erik was targeting them, and the most natural place to go after Maynard Island was the Mur continent.

<I can't do anything without a good army...>

For years, he did most of the stuff alone, but he still was on the Mannard continent. The Leviathan Serpent proved to him that moving alone on Mur was suicidal, even for him. Erik really needed an army, but not just because he had to traverse the sea to reach Mur, but even to fight the blackguards.

<But what after that?>

If they could get at least one of the planes, then he might reach Mur with a small contingent of Chimaeric Demons, and there, make more. The ones staying on Hin would, for sure, send help later. But would he be able to survive until then?

<Shit... I really need to focus on the Chimaeric Demon brain crystal power. They need to mature faster, and I need to make more eggs at a faster rate.>

"We have to find a way," Erik said to the Chimaeric Demons. "I will start making eggs in earnest, and once we have enough people, we will start planning our approach. However, I think we might need to attack Maynard Island and the Law Gate at the same time. If words of our attack on their main base reach them, they might destroy the planes."

"You think they will assume we would want to reach Mur?" June asked.

"Why wouldn't they? Dad said the blackguards are mostly on Mur. At this point, it would be the most natural place to go to destroy them all."

Erik thought for a second. "Can you take care of this?" Erik asked June.

"Me? Wouldn't it be better to send just Chimaeric Demons?"

"No. I need you to do this. The Chimaeric Demons are smart, that's for sure, but their nature and their brief lives make them somewhat naïve. I need someone experienced to do this. While you attack the Law Gate, I will destroy Maynard Island.

In the meantime, the Chimaeric Demons we left at the shores outpost would sneak their way into Hin's outpost, and those with the invisibility brain crystal power will leave the country to infiltrate foreign governments. For them, taking the place of their leaders will be possible, and for sure, they would do a better job than me. "

June nodded. "I will find a way to grant you your wish, Master," he said.

Erik turned back to the Chimaeric Demons. "Thank you for the report," he said. "Your information is a starting point. Now, we just need to make sure we will reach the end one."

Chapter 1074: The Calm Before the Storm

Three months passed quickly. They were spent preparing for the upcoming attack on Maynard Island, the following invasion of the Mur continent, and training. Erik and the others trained hard. They pushed themselves to their limits every day, and it wasn't simple since they had to make neural links.

Erik didn't even hunt, nor asked the Chimaeric Demons to do it for him and to collect brain crystals. At that point, he had no time to waste on new powers. What he asked them was simply to prepare for the attack and to train.

Mira, Amber, and Emily made amazing progress. With Erik's help, they learned his new technique, which allowed them to get neural links at an unprecedented rate. Not only was it fast in general, but it was fast for powers with many neural links. All of this made them much more powerful.

By the end of the three months, the three women had each reached 54 neural links. This was a tremendous achievement, not only at a personal level but at a global one.

Just three years ago, the words of three people reaching the 54 neural links mark would have made everyone consider them the strongest people in the world.

However, the advancements in technology and Doran's research changed things. What should have been once seen as an incredible feat was not as impressive anymore. The world of power and abilities has changed a lot in a short time.

Even so, Erik and his friends knew they had grown stronger, and while their achievement might not be as impressive to others, it was still a big deal for them.

The group saw this as just the start. They had built a sturdy base and were ready to become even more powerful.

Even with all the new technology leveling the field for their enemies, Erik and his friends still had an enormous advantage.

They could use Erik's new neural link training technique, which was still incomparably faster than the other techniques.

Given enough time, the group and the Chimaeric Demons would become unstoppable. The only problem was that they didn't have time.

Erik was amazed at how quickly Mira, Amber, and Emily were improving. He watched them grow stronger every day. Erik felt relieved knowing his lovers were safer from dangers. They were getting harder and harder to be killed.

It was just a matter of time before they went beyond the 54 neural link mark and reached new heights that, this time, no one got to, at least based on what they knew.

Erik also made great progress himself. He diligently made new neural links. The one he focused on was, of course, his Chimaeric Demons brain crystal power. After lots of training, he reached 54 neural links for it, but when he got to that point, he decided to focus on his other powers.

In fact, he got 20 neural links for the Phantom Veil, 10 for the Frostwind fire tempest, 10 for the Lightning Lord, and 20 neural links for the Beast Walker brain crystal powers.

The reason was simple. He needed to get stronger and faster at that, so the best thing would be to increase his overall physical strength and speed by using the neural links to increase his stats.

The only thing Erik didn't improve in was his amount of energy, which he still believed was going to be insufficient on the Mur continent.

<To hunt, I will need to use the Chimaeric Demons...>

Erik needed to kill on the Mur continent and push his energy to higher levels. However, hunting thaids on Mur would not be something he could do alone, and he already saw many Chimaeric Demons dying. If he wanted to find the blackguards and brave the dangers that the damned continent threw at him, he needed to have an army, and that was the main thing on which he was focusing on.

<Dad said the blackguards are surviving there by flooding thaids with numbers. If it works for them, then it should work even better for me.>

Erik thought about his upcoming trip to Mur, feeling worried. The continent was very dangerous, even for the blackguards.

He pictured walking through thick forests where every plant might try to eat him. He imagined vast, empty lands full of poisonous gases and dangerous creatures inhabiting lakes and water puddles.

<System, show me the status.>

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[Host Information]

NAME: Erik Romano

AGE: 18

POWER LEVEL: 1346

SYSTEM LEVEL: 238

EXPERIENCE: 1,411,610 / 1,413,769

DNA POINTS: 18,342

HEALTH: 22,640 / 22,640

MANA: 22,570 / 22,570

{Attributes}

STRENGTH: 543

INTELLIGENCE: 475

DEXTERITY: 523

ENERGY: 1127

Available Attribute Points: 0

{Powers}

[Biological Super Computer Powers]

Brain Crystal Manipulation

Brain Crystal Power Extraction

Brain Crystal Power Merging

Brain Crystal Power Analysis

Brain Crystal Power Editing

Brain Crystal Power Strengthening

(LOCKED)

DNA Manipulation

DNA Extraction

DNA Merging

DNA Analysis

DNA Editing

DNA Strengthening

(LOCKED)

Analysis

Brain Information Injector

Device Manipulation

[Host's Powers]

PLANT MASTER: Aι3B-RANKED

CHIMAERIC DEMON: Aα3X-RANKED

SELF HEALING: Aι2A-RANKED

INSTABILITY: Aλ2B-RANKED

Phantom Veil: Aθ2A-RANKED

Frostwind Fire Tempest: Aη3A-RANKED

Force Bastion: Av1B-RANKED

Lightning Lord: Aη3A-RANKED

Beastwalker: Aθ1B-RANKED

{Skills}

Kyokar Hand-to-Hand Style (MASTER)

Etrium's Sword Style (ADVANCED)

Crypt of the Desert Style (MASTER)

Alchemy (Intermediate)

Architecture (Beginner)

Thaid Expertise Proficiency (Advanced)

Flora Expertise (Master)

Tactical Expertise (Advanced)

Management Proficiency (Intermediate)

Stealth Proficiency (Intermediate)

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<It's not enough...>

Erik knew the strength he possessed wasn't enough. He knew his mana wasn't enough, yet progress demanded time.

Despite this, he improved, and even if he hadn't tested it yet, the new neural links were going to have a big impact on his overall prowess.

<Almost 600 strength points, but...> Energy was still at the same levels as the previous months.

Though Erik looked at the rank of his Chimaeric Demons' brain crystal power. <Aα3X, uh? It's almost a dream...>

He paused.

<This is going to make things easier...>

By getting these many neural links, the speed at which the clones hatched and matured decreased.

Hatching speed now decreased to two weeks and just a month and a half to mature. This was a huge step forward and opened up many new possibilities for their plans because Erik could get more clones in a much shorter time frame.

Erik took advantage of this by making more eggs, with a focus that bordered on obsession. Over the course of the three months, he made around 45,000 eggs.

However, not everything went as it should have been because the brain crystal power didn't make creating eggs cheaper in terms of mana.

Before, he could make around 500 eggs a day, with a mana cost of 45 each. That remained the same. The only difference was that they were combat-ready in a much shorter amount of time.

As time passed, many Chimaeric Demons matured, and as he anticipated, he sent them out to accomplish his goal: to take control of foreign governments, which they achieved, at least partially.

Some of them already got to important positions, and many stole key positions by impersonating other people. It was terrifying if one thought about it, because a loved one could truly be someone else. But Erik had no other way to stop this war and to eradicate the blackguards.

<If this won't be enough to cut their support, nothing will be aside from eradication. Well... It's not that I don't plan on eradicating them. It's just that a thorough cleansing will require much more time.>

However, a lot of Chimaeric Demons, more precisely the 20,000 Erik made when he reached Hin's shores, remained on the island. As per Erik's order, they took control of different outposts and cities across the country.

The Chimaeric Demons didn't circle Sleb Harbour completely yet or cut off Maynard Island from Hin, but they were slowly going there.

<Only a few places remain. The four fortresses in the north-east and two cities in the far east.>

Even though Erik and his team had been successful in these missions, they knew their biggest challenge was still to come.

They had to fight the blackguards on Maynard Island, where their enemies were strongest and had the most defenses.

Erik thought about how well-protected the island might be after all this time.

<Since they know we are here, I bet they locked down. That would explain the increased security at each airport around Hin.>

In fact, as the Chimaeric Demons said months ago, security increased to absurd levels. Veritas Lenses spread, and even the lowest-tiered guards were much stronger than usual. Most of them had two brain crystal powers, and based on how strong they got, making more neural links made their bodies stronger.

There was a problem, though. The speed at which they gained stats was higher than Erik.

<This is the only limitation the system posed.>

The biological supercomputer explained to Erik that too many changes to the DNA in a short amount of time could lead him to mutate uncontrollably and become a monster. For this reason, since Erik was bound to get a ton of powers, and from it, many neural links, it limited the energy that Erik could invest in his stats.

However, these people didn't have the biological supercomputer; there was no one ensuring they didn't end up brainless beasts, and all the energy from the neural link-making procedure ended up being used to power up their stats.

Erik got around 1 point for each stat, for a total of three, while those who had more than one brain crystal power without the system got 3 for each stat. It was three times faster than Erik.

However, despite this massive problem, winning the actual fight wasn't his main worry. Erik and his Chimaeric Demons were strong enough to beat the island's defenses.

The real problem was figuring out how to get to the island in the first place. The dangerous waters around Maynard Island made this a tough task that needed careful planning, and despite a lot of time having passed since Erik reached Sleeb Harbour, they still hadn't found a solution to the predicament.

Chapter 1075: The President's Daughter (1)

Since Erik and his friends needed to get to an island, but it looked like there wasn't an easy way to reach it, in the end, most of them agreed on the fact that the only way to get there was to use

shapeshifted clones to fly there. This was risky, but they thought it was the best way to arrive with no one seeing them or messing up their mission.

<Damn time... It's never enough.>

Erik had lost enough of it already, and he wasn't willing to waste more than he already did. As soon as they got control of Hin, he would start his attack. It was just that he would not do it without an army behind him and protecting Mira, Amber, Emily, and June.

There was a reason Erik didn't just rush to Maynard Island after he got the Chimaeric Demons, and that was because meeting the Leviathan Serpent truly impressed him. No, impressed wasn't the right word to use. It terrified him.

When Erik met the Leviathan Serpent, he felt a fear like never had. It wasn't just because the creature was gigantic or how it affected its surroundings and generated waves that could destroy a city.

That alone was frightening, but it wasn't the most terrifying aspect of them all. What terrified Erik was the power it had without the need to use its brain crystal power. It deeply shook Erik, as he realized he couldn't match its power in his current situation, even if he possessed five times the energy stats.

This fear wasn't something Erik could just think away. It was a gut reaction, like what his human ancestors might have felt when facing the first thaid ever to appear or when they saw the elephants for the first time. Even with all his powers, Erik felt tiny and unimportant next to this creature.

That there might be more beings like the Leviathan Serpent, or even stronger ones, made Erik even more afraid.

There was no way he was going to get there without having enough power, enough troops, and enough preparation.

So Erik spent time making his forces stronger and getting ready for the last part of their plan. They were almost ready, but one important thing was still missing: control over Hin.

The Chimaeric Demons had taken the place of many important people in Sleeb Harbour, aside from having replaced key figures in most of the fortifications across the country and foreign ones.

However, they couldn't get close to the country's leader, President Salena Turke, which they needed to replace if they really wanted to cut any kind of support to the blackguards.

Her close advisors used the Veritas Lenses, which made it very hard to find out where she was or what she was doing because the Chimaeric Demons couldn't get close to her.

Erik had even tried using the biological supercomputer to track her online, but he found nothing.

It looked like every scrap of information about the president had been scrubbed from the world, leaving them with no leads to follow.

At least for some time. The Chimaeric Demons had uncovered a potential weakness in the president's defenses.

Her daughter, a young woman who had been living under heavy protection, got sent to Khunelerp on a diplomatic mission.

She was now on her way back to Hin and would have landed at Sleb Harbour's airport today. This was the most important, and maybe the only chance Erik had to get information about Salena Turke's location, and he would not let that pass.

For the past weeks, while Erik trained and made more eggs, they focused on preparing an operation to kidnap the woman to replace her and avoid arousing suspicions. Erik was going to read the woman's mind once she was inside the walls.

Of course, this was only possible if she was aware of her mother's location, which was far from a given.

"Are we ready?" Erik asked to a Chimaeric Demon.

The clone nodded.

"Yes, master. 500 Chimaeric Demons are already in position at the airport," he said. "They are waiting for the target to arrive."

"A pity we couldn't send more." If they did, the chances of success would be 100%, but 500 Chimaeric Demons weren't enough to ensure everything went smoothly.

Sleb Harbour was already sparsely populated, and a sudden influx of new faces at the airport would raise suspicions.

"If we tipped our hands too soon, master, we would have made it clear we are targeting the president's daughter."

Erik took a deep breath. "I'm going to join the operation," he said.

"There's no need, Master. We can handle this on our own. Your safety is paramount."

But Erik shook his head. "I know you can, but I won't take any chances. If things go wrong and we fail to capture her, there won't be any other chances. I want to be there. If we need to extract the information quickly, I can read the woman's mind on the spot."

The Chimaeric Demon bowed his head. "As you wish, Master." The Chimaeric Demons would not go against their master's wish.

Erik's plan was simple. They needed to replace the president's daughter and her entire entourage with Chimaeric Demons.

They would then bring the woman to their base and there extract all the information they needed. She couldn't resist Erik's Instability brain crystal power, after all.

"If we fail, the blackguards will know about us, so try not to mess up, all right?"

"Yes, master."

"Oh... and prepare the troops to attack Salena Turke as soon as we get the location. After that, we are going to attack the blackguards..."

"Yes, master..."

Erik was about to leave, feeling the weight of his choices. He stopped at the door, thinking about what they were going to do.

Capturing the president's daughter was a big step in their plan. It meant there was no going back. Erik took a deep breath to gather his courage. He then opened the door and walked into the hallway.

"Let's go," Erik said.

"After you, master."

Chapter 1076: The President's Daughter (2)

An operation like this required lots of time and preparation, and since there were guards, workers, and people with Veritas Lenses, they needed to take care of that first.

Besides, they had to get a hold over the control tower because it was there that news about arriving planes got first.

If there was a change of schedule, a change of plans on the enemy side, it would get there first.

"Your transport is ready, Master," the Chimaeric Demon said, gesturing towards the flying car.

Erik nodded. A door slid open, revealing a luxurious interior. How the Chimaeric Demons got the car was a mystery. It was probably stolen, but at this point Erik didn't care. He climbed in, settling into the plush seat as the Chimaeric Demon took the pilot's position.

"Set course for the airport."

The flying car started up with a soft hum. Its special engines lifted it into the air. As they flew higher, the buildings below looked smaller and smaller.

<Pretty Ironical...> Erik thought.

<For years I fought against this organization... the blackguards... who, from the shadows, manipulated governments and caused the deaths of countless people. And yet, here I am, plotting to take over countries and replace people exactly like they did.>

Erik often wondered if he was going too far. After all, going to the extreme of replacing governments' leaders was not something anyone could or would do. It was morally bad, and for years, Erik only had his morality.

When he didn't have money, when he didn't have friends, when he couldn't ask for help to escape the Crystal Cross Gang, Erik used morality as his compass to behave. Sure, he did his fair share of bad things, but it wasn't like the people he killed didn't deserve it.

His morality led him to help Liberty Watch, who went from a starving village in the forest to a flourishing metropolis in a gigantic mountain. That allowed him to have a foothold in the world, a place he could really consider his home, where he had friends.

That foothold allowed him to get his people to safety when he got kicked out of Etrium, which allowed him to rescue his father, even if the result had been his death, regardless.

Yet Erik felt bad.

<It's almost like it is me who is the bad guy.>

But then the young man shook his head, trying to clear away the doubts. He reminded himself of his true intentions. <No, I'm not the bad guy here. I'm doing what needs to be done to stop the real monsters.>

He realized his actions might look extreme to others. He thought about what his dad, Richard, Caiden, and Becker would think if they knew what he was planning. They probably wouldn't like it.

It would have been a scary thought for all of them—a single man putting the whole human world under control.

<At least the blackguards are many, but I... I'm just one.>

The amount of power Erik had was already enough to make people tremble and countries shiver, which most likely was the main point that the blackguards were using among their ranks as a justification for them to capture him.

As for Becker and the others. He firmly believed that the only thing that prevented them from outright trying to kill him was that they needed him, and somehow trusted he wouldn't misuse his powers.

At least in theory, fear might have been another reason, one that he needed to address if he wanted to live peacefully after the blackguards got destroyed.

Erik had thought little about how his actions might affect his relationships, especially with allies like Becker.

There was one thing he knew, though. That after defeating the blackguards, Becker might see him as dangerous and want to get rid of him. The trust they had built would fall apart.

Erik's plans to take control of governments were making things worse. He thought these actions were necessary to fight the blackguards, but others might see them as Erik abusing his power.

He worried that the people who once supported him might become his enemies in the future. At that point, what would Amber and Emily do? Stand with their parents, or join him, turning their backs on humanity?

<I wonder what would happen after all this...>

Erik had no intention of abusing power once he gained control. He just wanted to eradicate the blackguards and their influence, then step back, retreat into some hidden part of the world, make a farm, and live a simple life, hopefully with the three women with him. Having kids, bringing them to school, the usual.

Erik worried that his plan for a peaceful life after defeating the blackguards might not be possible.

He realized that his current actions and growing power could make it hard for him to just disappear and live a normal life later.

He thought the world might not let him go easily once they knew what he could do and what he did to achieve the peace, he would gift everyone. This made Erik feel even more troubled about his situation.

<This is just temporary,> Erik said to himself. <Once the blackguards are gone, I'll make sure these countries return to proper democratic rule. Yes...>

Erik tried to calm his racing thoughts and focus on the task ahead. He knew he couldn't let his doubts and worries distract him now.

The current mission was too important since a lot depended on it. He took a deep breath and pushed his mixed feelings aside.

He couldn't let his personal struggles get in the way of their plan. There was too much at stake to lose focus now.

<This is necessary. It is the only way I have to purge this world from the blackguards.>

Chapter 1077: The President's daughter (3)

Erik and his team arrived at Sleeb Harbour's airport. The air was tense. Even though the mission seemed simple, Erik felt worried, nervous, and alert. The mission was important, and Erik knew it could provide great results, and that was why he felt that way.

The problem was that the group had to be careful and sneaky to make sure no one realized they were actually going to replace Turke's daughter and her entourage.

<I wonder what she was really sent to do out of the country under her mother's orders. That's if she really went under her mother's orders and not someone else...>

Erik and the Chimaeric Demons he was with entered the airport.

Sleeb Harbour's airport was busy and modern. The terminal had high ceilings and large windows, making the place flooded by light.

There were screens showing flight times, and security guards keeping watch.

The airport was busy. People were walking around, and there were many sounds—announcements, luggage belts moving, and people talking.

However, the airport wasn't as crowded as it would have been during peacetime. The ongoing war had affected the number of travelers, and Erik could see in their faces what effect the war had brought on the population.

Many people looked worried and tired. Their eyes were sunken, and their faces were pale. There was clear stress on them, fear even, which could be seen in the way they stood and looked around. People spoke quietly, often with long pauses.

Erik gave a quick look around and focused his attention on the people. They were missing—those who had been called to fight in the war.

Friends, family members, and coworkers had left to serve, leaving a noticeable gap. The people who remained seemed to move with sadness, thinking about those who weren't there.

<Were are the others?> Erik asked.

The place had too few people, but at least 500 Chimaeric Demons must have been here.

<Look closer, master.>

<Wha—? How should I find them if they are— >

But then Erik noticed it. There was a small pin on their lapels. It was a tiny emblem that looked like an ordinary decorative piece to most people.

But for Erik and the Chimaeric Demons, it was an unmistakable sign.

The pin's design incorporated elements that only the Chimaeric Demons would understand, allowing them to identify each other without arousing suspicion. Even Mira, Amber, and Emily wouldn't be able to find out about it.

Of course, that so many people had that pin would have aroused suspicion, but the pins were not easy to see, especially when the clones moved, and there weren't enough people to notice them.

Essentially, the others were already there, shapeshifted into people, insects, and various animals for the sake of appearance.

The Chimaeric Demons, who looked like humans, spread out across the airport, acting like normal travelers.

Some went to the airport bar, ordering drinks and chatting with other "travelers" about delayed flights and vacation plans. Others looked at perfumes and electronics in the duty-free shops, pretending to be interested.

A few Chimaeric Demons bought snacks and coffee in the food court, keeping an eye on what was happening around them.

Some even used the restrooms, timing their visits to match when other people typically go.

In the main area of the airport, several pretended to be families, with "parents" looking after "children" who were getting restless while waiting at their gates.

To make their act even more believable, some Chimaeric Demons dressed up as business people. They sat in the airport lounge with laptops open, looking very focused on their work.

By doing all these normal activities, the clones had been able to keep control of the surroundings.

But they weren't the only people at the airport. In fact, Erik's attacking group was not that big because they couldn't flood the place with people.

<How is the situation?> Erik asked to a Chimaeric Demon.

<Most of us shapeshifted into insects to avoid being seen completely. We already replaced the security with the Veritas Lenses, so there won't be a problem about anyone finding out we filled the place.>

<Good. What about the landing site?> Erik asked.

<The others have already surrounded the place and taken that of the workers there. There is no way she will escape.>

<Good. Landing lane?>

<B-5, sir.>

<I'll shapeshift and keep an eye on the surroundings. Will meet you there.>

There was a look of determination on Erik's face, and that was because the mission was a onetime chance to really get a hold on Hin.

<Yes, master.>

Erik split from the rest of the group and turned into a bug. No one was going to find out he had shapeshifted, but he couldn't be certain, and for sure, he had a knack that things were going to turn ugly for some reason. He was that lucky, after all.

Among the travelers, there were no blackguards disguised. He flew close to the ground, zipping past people's feet and under benches.

In the meantime, each member of the group started going into position.

Some of the Chimaeric Demons headed to the security checkpoint. This was where people had to go through metal detectors and have their bags scanned.

The Chimaeric Demons knew this was a key spot to watch, as it was the last place people went before entering the main part of the airport.

In case they had problems, for example, the target might flee the landing site and reach here; they could use that as a last line of attack. Or, in case they got attacked, it would serve as another checkpoint preventing people from going to the plane.

But these weren't the only places where the Chimaeric Demons went. Some acted as roaming guards; some others went into offices in case the target tried to hide; others acted as cleaners and roamed around bathrooms to prevent the target from hiding there.

There wasn't a single place in that airport that wasn't under the Chimaeric Demons' control.

Chapter 1078: The President's daughter (4)

Meanwhile, Erik made his way to the private jet landing area. There was a tall tree in the distance, far away from any possible Veritas Lenses, in an area where he could see people approaching if they came from side entrances or using the vegetation surrounding the airport as cover.

From there, he had a clear view of the landing strip and could see everything that was happening where the president's daughter's plane was supposed to arrive.

Erik saw that there were indeed a lot of security guards present, but none of them had the Chimaeric Demons' pins. The Chimaeric demons didn't take their place yet, but there was a reason for that.

The guards were bound to be in communication with Hin's government, or whoever took charge of the president's daughter's security.

Erik didn't want to risk the Chimaeric Demons being found out by whoever was on the other side of their communication channels because of a lack of information and divert the plane to another and safer airport. They needed to take their place while the plane was landing, but before it did.

It was a different matter with the personnel working at the airport, though, because they weren't involved with the president at all.

Erik gave a look at these guards, or better, these bodyguards.

The guards wore dark suits and even darker looks. They didn't show emotions, as their eyes were hidden behind a pair of black sunglasses.

Even not knowing they were here for the president's daughter, it was clear they were here to protect a high-profile individual, and even a casual passerby would have understood that.

It was just that there was no one, aside from the Chimaeric Demons, able to see them.

These guards were clearly professionals, always looking around for any danger, but were not a real problem. Though, like everyone else here in Hin, and most likely around the world, they were stronger than they should have been.

—

Name: Frank Lancaster

Brain Crystal Power: Lightning Sword

Physical Characteristics: Frank Lancaster, the target, is a mid-40s man standing 1.9 meters" with a muscular build visible even in his suit. His square-shaped face features serious gray eyes, and his short hair is a mix of gray and dark. A small scar on his eyebrow serves as a distinguishing feature. Despite his size, Lancaster appears to be a fast-moving fella.

His demeanor is vigilant, suggesting extensive training. His steady hands show combat experience.

{Attributes}

STRENGTH: 198

INTELLIGENCE: 30

DEXTERITY: 150

ENERGY: 745

{Others}

Power Level: 350

Estimated Experience: 14839 EXP per kill

Frank Lancaster was just one of the many people there, but he represented them well. He was one of the bodyguards, and compared to how strong most humans were, he was powerful. Not as much as the Hevadrin, who had around 100 strength points more than the dude, but still, he was much stronger than the average.

The fact he had 42 neural links was a dangerous sign of the fact that the blackguards and their allies were getting stronger.

Erik shared his training technique with Frant, so it was clear even they were getting stronger, but their forces weren't as many as those of the other countries after everything that happened.

He himself was responsible for the deaths of many of the soldiers, and that affected the country's total fighting power.

<At least I left the Chimaeric Demons back in Frant, but at this point, given the disparity in numbers, I wonder if they were enough.>

Though, with the plans Erik was brewing and executing in Hin, the war would not last for long, and even if Frant somehow lost the fight before he could get a complete hold of the other countries or defeated the blackguards, he would still end up completely freeing the country from the blackguards' presence.

After that, it wasn't his job anymore to see what happened there. Erik was still mad with Frant and with Becker about how things had been handled or about what he lived in that country.

Yes, maybe part of that was because of the blackguards, but certainly not everything was.

While Erik had these thoughts, the Chimaeric Demons arrived at the landing site. Some of them had to go to the control tower to find out when the plane was coming, and just a bunch of them came here.

However, who arrived started scouting out the best places to hide and keep watch. Some of them flew up high, perching on to ceilings or on top of light fixtures. From there, they had a bird's-eye view of the entire area.

<Are you all in position?> Erik asked to the Chimaeric Demons.

<We are sir.>

<Good. When should the target arrive?>

<At 15:00, master.>

It was currently 14:00 in the morning, so in an hour, the woman was bound to arrive. At least in theory.

<Let's wait then, and be prepared for a complete takeover of these guards. Also, keep in mind the president's daughter will for sure have more people with her, bodyguards included, and we must also replace them.>

<Yes, Master.>

And so they waited.

Erik couldn't help but feel nervous as they did. The success of getting a hold on Hin depended on their ability to replace their leaders, but since finding Hin's proved to be much harder than usual, they had to resort to kidnappings.

<This is fucking ironic.>

He took a deep breath, as much as a fly could, and tried to calm his nerves. He reminded himself that they had planned this mission carefully, and that everyone knew their role. The Chimaeric Demons weren't infallible, but they were close to it as much as he was, and he had no doubt things were going to turn out how he wanted.

<That's it if things do not go to shit like the usual...>

Some time passed, and as Erik was lost in thought, he suddenly heard a low, rumbling sound in the distance. It grew louder and louder, and he realized that was the sound of an approaching plane.

Chapter 1079: The President's Daughter (5)

<No, sir...> The Chimaeric Demons started becoming nervous.

<Then what the fuck is happening?>

The clones could see well into the distance thanks to a brain crystal power he gave him some time ago, and they didn't like what they were seeing approaching in the distance.

<That's... That's the target's plane,> the Chimaeric Demon said.

<Wait, what?! Wasn't that supposed to arrive in an hour? I arrived ten minutes ago!>

<We don't know, master! Something's weird. Based on the information we got from the control tower, the plane should have arrived later.>

<Yet, the plan is here! We can't even replace the guards now!>

<We will replace those we can, so that at least the number of forces on their side will decrease, master.>

<Do it now!>

Erik sent that mental order to all the clones in the surroundings. There was no time to lose.

...

...

...

The president's daughter's plane was about to land. Erik tensed his tiny fly muscles, ready to move at a second's notice.

<I knew things would not go according to plan. SHIT! Why do things always turn like this?>

He saw the Chimaeric Demons around him doing the same, tensing while getting into position. Some of them replaced a couple of the black-suited guards, but not all of them.

There were still some they couldn't act on or that were in positions too easy to see, making it impossible for the Chimaeric Demons to replace them without pandemonium exploding.

The sound of airplane engines grew louder as a private jet appeared on the landing strip. As it got closer, Erik observed the jet's details.

The plane was white, with black-tinted windows reflecting the surroundings like a mirror. The tail had the colorful Hin flag on it, standing out against the white plane.

Erik thought the jet looked a little over-the-top. It was almost silly in how important whoever made it tried to make it look like.

However, this still was a presidential plane, and it was clear that whoever made it designed it to show off wealth and power. Every part, from its shape to its paint job, screamed luxury and high-tech features.

<This plane must have cost a fortune.>

Erik felt like he was watching royalty arrive, even though it was just politicians. The jet was like a flying mansion, probably worth more money than the average person would ever see in their lives.

<I bet even the toilet paper is made of gold.>

The plane touched down on the runway, its wheels screeching as they met the tarmac. It slowed down, taxiing towards the designated parking spot near the terminal, a sort of barrack meant to house the private plane and give privacy to whoever came out of it.

It was exactly where the Chimaeric Demons were hiding.

<How is the situation?>

<We've taken over a few more guards, master, but not all of them yet,> one of the Chimaeric Demons reported mentally.

<Shit...>

The situation wasn't perfect, but they had to work with what they had. They couldn't take any risks now, especially when they were so close to their goal.

<Move faster! We're running out of time,> Erik said. He started getting nervous.

Time was running out. Erik's compound eyes moved left and right, looking for any movement from the plane, which in the meantime came to a stop. Soon after, the engines powered down.

The plane door opened with a soft sound, and then a set of stairs was quickly moved to the plane's side.

A tall man in a black suit and sunglasses stepped out. He looked around, ensuring that nothing weird was going on outside the plane.

Another man dressed the same way followed him. They were both security guards, apparently.

More people came down the stairs after them—advisors, helpers, and more security guards.

About ten people got off the plane, forming a small group at the bottom of the stairs. There was a short pause, and then the person they were all waiting for appeared at the door.

The president's daughter, Mia Turke, stepped out of the plane. She caught everyone's attention right away. She was an attractive woman in her early thirties with long, dark hair flowing over her shoulders.

She wore a smart navy blue suit that fit her slim figure well, along with a white shirt.

<Status update, now!>

<We've replaced about half of the guards, master, but we can't take them anymore! They are all heading toward the plane!>

<FUCK! Alright, hold your positions, but get ready to strike.>

<Yes, sir.>

In the meantime, the woman walked down the stairs. Her high heels made a clicking sound each time they touched the ground.

Erik observed Mia Turke a little more. It was incredible how, even after a long flight, she looked neat and well-put-together, standing up straight and moving gracefully.

She was used to being in the public eye, although no one was apparently there to watch her, yet she kept her composure regardless of who was watching. When she reached the bottom of the stairs, she paused for a moment.

Erik noticed signs that Mia was tense. Her jaw was tight, making her jawline more visible.

There were small lines around her eyes, especially at the corners, as if she didn't sleep all night, and the makeup covered just the bags under her eyes.

Yet she didn't look tired at first glance. Only someone who knew what to search might have noticed all of this.

Mia was trying hard to hide these feelings from the surrounding people, but wasn't very good at it.

<I don't like this.>

The woman's reaction gave him the impression that something big was going to happen, but Erik had no information about what.

<Whatever, it's not like we can do anything about it... Even if she suspected we were going to attack, it's not like she can stop me from reading her mind.>

In truth, that he was going to attack her wasn't the only thing that might happen. Maybe she expected paparazzi, or maybe she was so used to being attacked, being the president's daughter and all, that it became natural for her to be tense.

As Erik thought about why she could be so nervous, then Mia turned to her chief of staff. He was a tall man with gray hair and a serious face, wearing glasses and looking around nervously. Almost as if...

<As if they expect being attacked... Fuck... > One might look nervous, but two? It was a weird coincidence.

Erik couldn't be certain about that. It could always be that she was frequently attacked by people trying to kidnap her. After all, this was Mia Turke, the only daughter of President Salena Turke of Hin.

She wasn't a random person, and Erik was pretty sure she must have been the target of many organizations in the past, of course, all tied to the blackguards.

But it could also be that they expected them.

The man she was talking to stood straight, like someone with military training, which he most likely was, since that kind of demeanor could only come from someone having served.

He was positioned just behind and to the right of the president's daughter. Even though it was early and their schedule had changed unexpectedly, his suit looked neat and unwrinkled.

"James, remind me of my next appointments once we're in the city. I want to make sure we're on schedule despite this early arrival."

James nodded, pulling out a tablet from his briefcase. He tapped the screen a few times.

"Of course, young miss. Your first meeting is with the Minister of Foreign Affairs at 3 PM. Following that, you have a press conference scheduled for 5 PM to discuss the new education initiative your mother has worked so hard to make."

The woman nodded. "And tomorrow?"

"Tomorrow morning, you have a breakfast meeting with the Khunelerp's Ambassador at 8 AM, followed by a tour of the new children's hospital at 10 AM."

"Oh god... It's never ending!"

She sighed.

"I don't understand why I have to do all these things instead of mom. Isn't this part of her role? Why do I have to do this?"

"The president is very busy right now. All the help you can provide will be greatly appreciated by her."

Mia sighed again. There was nothing she could do about the situation, and her mother must have had serious reasons to ask her to do all of this instead of her.

"Thank you, James. Let's make sure we're prepared for all of these. I want to review the talking points for the press conference during the car ride."

A limousine was getting closer to the plane. It was most likely there to fetch her and bring her, who knew where.

<Are you all in position?> Erik asked.

A chorus of mental voices responded.

<Ready, sir.>

<In position.>

<Standing by.>

<Awaiting your command.>

Chapter 1080: The President's Daughter (6)

The Chimaeric Demons didn't wait much before going into action, following Erik's order.

Basically, the moment the president's daughter stepped out of the plane stairs, they moved.

Not all of them were on the landing site, but first the Chimaeric Demons that were the furthest from the sight got closer, then the others moved.

There were actually few people there. The guards and the very few selected to bring the woman's stuff and empty the plane, and half the guards were in truth Chimaeric Demons.

Regardless, with the other clones in the form of bugs approaching them, those who hadn't been replaced yet got surrounded.

As that happened, the guards noticed something was wrong but didn't act fast enough for them to make a perimeter around the president's daughter.

The first strike came from a Chimaeric Demon near a baggage handler. He approached one of the bodyguards from behind, his hand morphing into a long tentacle, and he snapped the man's neck before he could even mount a semblance of resistance.

As the guard crumpled to the ground, the other Chimaeric Demons made their move. Two of them sidled up to another pair of bodyguards, their hands shifting into heavy, blunt body parts that crashed against the guards' skulls.

James, the chief of staff, was looking in the right direction at the exact moment the two Chimaeric Demons struck.

But he had plenty of military experience and quickly understood what was happening. He knew they were under attack and who the real target was, and contrary to the others, he didn't die as soon as he realized.

"We're under attack! Protect the president's daughter!"

The man moved to shield the Mia with his own body and reached for the blade on his hips.

Yet he struggled to comprehend clearly what was happening. Yes, they were getting attacked, but the people attacking were their own men and women, those that he himself carefully chose.

He knew these people from years; they were professionals, but they weren't violent; they also weren't people easily swayed by money. They were trusted, chosen by President Turkes's closest advisors and aids, to which he belonged to.

Why were they doing this? The thought that someone paid for them to kidnap or kill Mia crossed his mind briefly, but then... Then everything clicked.

<Shapeshifters.>

But James didn't know that these shapeshifters were worse than he could have ever imagined. He didn't know these were the Chimaeric Demons.

Attacks like this one were not infrequent, and for sure, the last thing James thought was that these were basically demons in human skin, from his point of view, of course.

Regardless, these were also the most dangerous ones, and coupled with who actually was making this attack, the danger doubled.

Over the years, James had stopped many attempts to kidnap the president's daughter. This gave him the fame of being an excellent bodyguard. Of course, that was among close circles.

Very few knew he worked for the president as her daughter's shield. The fame, the countless life attempts at Mia, and the Veritas Lenses that the blackguards provided for him and his entourage made him feel more confident about his job.

James thought that with these lenses, they would see any threat as soon as they left the plane.

He believed the Veritas Lenses would keep the president's daughter safe in any situation involving shapeshifters.

But as things were happening now, the man realized with horror that their best security tool wasn't working against these guys.

But why did no one notice? Why weren't the Veritas Lenses working? What were his men and women doing?

He turned to look at those he knew should have had the brain crystal tools and saw them strangling some other guards.

<They had been replaced. I've been too naïve.>

The other guards finally realized what was happening, too. The attack was so quick and quiet that no one else had noticed aside from James before he shouted.

But the attack, the brutality of it, made even them feel scared and panicked. James, being very experienced, kept himself composed.

Mia, instead, didn't really know what to do. She felt her heart beating fast and loud as a drum.

She still wasn't used to such a situation, and terrified, she hid behind James, holding onto his jacket tightly, as if it could protect her.

Chaos erupted at that point. The Chimaeric Demons dropped all pretense of disguise and launched themselves at the remaining security.

They moved with inhuman speed and ruthless determination. The guards were not in the best of the positions since they had to pay attention not to injure their allies, and most importantly, Miss Turke.

The fact they were getting surrounded by people appearing out of thin air didn't make things easier for them.

But while they had this handicap and could only fight melee, the Chimaeric Demons were in a similar situation.

Since they had to replace everyone there, not only they had to avoid ruining their clothes, they also had to be as silent and fast as possible to avoid the other travelers from finding out what was happening.

They had to pull their punches and restrict their transformations to avoid causing a scene that would attract unwanted attention.

One Chimaeric Demon leaped over a luggage cart, his legs coiling like springs. He landed on a bodyguard's back, his arms transforming into a garotte that tightened around the man's neck. The guard thrashed and struggled, but the Chimaeric Demon held fast, squeezing until the man went limp.

Another Chimaeric Demon charged head-on at a pair of guards who had formed a protective circle in front of James and the president's daughter. The guards took out their swords, but the Chimaeric Demon avoided the slashes easily.

He barreled into the guards, his arms expanding into a net of grasping, crushing tentacles, then necks snapped.

The rest of the Chimaeric Demons, who had already replaced some of the bodyguards but hadn't acted yet, turned on their supposed allies.

The tactic was the same: crush their necks. The real bodyguards fell quickly.

As the fight got worse, things got messier. A bodyguard fighting a Chimaeric Demon fell into a luggage cart.

Suitcases flew everywhere, spilling their stuff all over the ground. At the same time, another bodyguard accidentally knocked over some chairs while trying to defend himself from a clone. This made a lot of noise.

The airfield was now full of loud sounds. The noise was loud enough that some of the Chimaeric Demons stopped fighting for a moment and went on checking if someone was coming here. Of course, they immediately got replaced by other clones, who did their part of the job in their stead.

But even if someone heard something, they would be done already by the time they arrived, and if someone actually did, they would get alerted by the clones replacing the guards, security, and personnel within the airport. This fight could only go one way, and the clones were going to make sure it would.

In the end, they defeated all the bodyguards without problems.

James had been the last one to fall. The president's daughter looked at him dead on the ground, tier in her eyes.

She wanted to cry, but she knew that if that happened, she would look weak, and her situation would worsen.

She needed to stay calm and think. She had to find out who the hell just attacked them, who killed James, and why many of the people she knew took part in this. She might be able to give the information to her mother.

But there were no more fights, no more screams, no more death. Because there was no one alive on her side.

<The mission had been completed, master.>

The president's daughter stood alone, wide-eyed and trembling, surrounded by the bodies of her security detail and by the Chimaeric Demons who took the guards' and workers' place.

She was unharmed—not a hair out of place—but the shock and fear in her eyes could still be seen.

<Finally.>

Erik shapeshifted back into his human form. He was naked, but he didn't care.

He walked, going through the empty lane and heading toward the barrack, where the fight ensued.

Once there, he gave a quick look around, seeing the aftermath of the violent fight. Dead bodyguards were scattered on the ground, but there was no smell of blood in the air. The Chimaeric Demons had been as lethal as they promised, and that without a single drop of blood being spilled.

Erik then glanced at the president's daughter. She was standing in front of the plane's stairs, looking scared and shocked, but trying to keep a calm facade.

<She sure can't act well.> The woman failed to look convincing.

But Erik didn't care, or better, couldn't stop, and that forced him to ignore those feelings he was having.

What Erik was doing was undoubtedly wrong, yet he believed the end goal justified the means. His actions and decisions weren't driven by greed or malice. Still, he felt conflicted—apologetic and guilty about his choices.