

BIOLOGICAL 1131

Chapter 1131: The battle for Maynard Island (8)

The battle intensified as Erik darted across the still-changing terrain. He had lost sight of Terra, who seemed hell-bent on preventing him from reaching Vex and Restro, but he was focusing his Hydra's head to track the Vindicator, albeit with disappointing results.

Because of the ever-changing terrain, he didn't have a clear line of sight of his surroundings, and locating the man turned quite difficult.

Besides, Terra was using his powers in a combination that allowed him to create mud slides and quicksand traps in an environment that was already difficult to traverse, further making Erik's movements on the ground complicated.

<If I fly, I will make it obvious I'm searching for Terra.>

Besides, he might be hiding in an alcove for all Erik knew.

Regardless, Erik had to be careful when he found him because he would have just a few moments to kill the guy and finally turn the battle's tides.

Vex materialized beside him, time slowing to a crawl for him, which simply made the man as fast as him for the younger man.

Erik's fist lashed out, but the Vindicator avoided the attack, leaving Terra's stone spikes erupting where Erik stood a second earlier.

"Motherfuckers!"

Erik tried to counterattack by using his Lightning Lord brain crystal power. Electricity crackled from the young man's fingertips, arcing toward the Vindicators' leader, but to him, the electricity was still avoidable, despite being very hard.

Vex twisted, avoiding the strike. The bolt seared past, detonating against a giant stone pillar Terra raised earlier.

"Now!"

Restro charged, his Aegis Morph looking threatening, as much as it was deadly. The man had turned the outer layer into a continuous source of acid.

<Without a doubt, that thing would sting if I let him hit me.>

Erik reinforced his Force Bastion.

<Maybe I can take advantage of this.>

Instead of avoiding the strike, he created a thin but very durable energy shield in front of him. The fist connected.

As Restro's fist connected, the acid coating his armor splashed outward in a caustic spray. Droplets hissed and sizzled as they struck the ground, instantly dissolving even stone and earth.

Yet, as if guided by an unseen force, not a single drop touched Erik. The acid ended on the surrounding ground, creating a lethal halo that etched deep furrows into the battlefield. It was because of his shield.

Erik didn't waste time and sent a jet of fire toward the man. He pumped enough mana to kill the guy, cooking him inside his armor, which seemed to be the only way for him to by-pass its monstrous defense.

However, Vex wasn't about to let that happen. He teleported right beside Erik and delivered a powerful kick, sending him flying. The force of the blow disrupted Erik's attack, preventing the flames from reaching Restro.

Erik stabilized himself mid-air, his wings unfurling to halt his momentum. In a fluid motion, he unleashed a barrage of wind blades, each wreathed in searing flames, hurtling towards Restro.

The man couldn't avoid the attacks. His armor turned normal and solidified. Erik's blows landed on him but got broken by the man's armor.

<That's damn durable...>

But Restro screamed, mostly because the temperature of the wind blades was high, and he still got burned.

Erik snarled, gathering his power. The ground beneath Restro stirred, the warrior sinking. Restro's eyes widened when some roots and vines came out of the earth and grabbed him, keeping him steady on the spot.

But Restro wasn't going to be a sitting duck. Using his Molecular Restructuring, he turned the vines into water and dashed away from that spot, all the while cooling down a little.

Erik, at that point, had already spun and was flying toward Vex. He glanced left and right, hoping to find Terra, yet there was no trace of him—not a shadow, not a whisper.

<Where the fuck is that guy?>

Terra created a labyrinth of gigantic walls and pillars, providing many places from which he could observe the battle. This made it nearly impossible for Erik to pinpoint his location. Yet, there was one place where he could actually be, which allowed him to see and stay out of the battle.

<He might be on top of the main building...>

Indeed, that was where Erik wanted to check more, but to do that, he needed to get closer to the place, and that by making it look like it was accidental.

Before Erik could reach Vex, he got forced to avoid a gigantic stone fist coming out of a stone wall nearby.

<Damn Terra!>

He dove low, avoiding Terra's attack, and punched it. The gigantic stone fist shattered against Erik's armored punch, and its shards peppered the area.

Vex then appeared behind the young man. He slashed at him; his sword went through his Force Bastion as if it were made of butter, leaving a large gash on his back.

Erik retaliated with a fireball roaring from his palm. Terra made a wall of bedrock rising to meet the flames. The blackguard also tapped into his secondary power and pulled moisture from the air and ground, attacking Erik with high-pressure water jets.

That was how insidious Terra's attacks were. At a distance, with Erik unable to use his body's strength, Terra was exactly as powerful as Uncle Benjamin.

That was the power of ranged brain crystal powers such as his. Luckily, the other two had rather melee-focused abilities, so, despite being at a disadvantage, Erik could still keep up with them using his body alone and the Will of the Hydra pumping his perception and thinking speed.

Vex appeared behind Erik's blind spot, his back, again. The Force Bastion already fixed itself, so Vex couldn't see Erik's wound being already healed.

The Vindicator's brain crystal sword was ready to strike again, only this time Erik created a huge ice boulder. The sword cut through it, but Erik got enough space to avoid being hit again.

He then flew some meters into the sky, not without having released a fireball at the ice.

That hit the ice boulder, causing a vapor explosion. The ice turned into hot steam, creating a vast cloud. The steam spread fast, making shock waves in the air.

"AGH!"

<It looks like Vex couldn't get out of there fast enough...>

The battlefield became hard to see because of all the steam, but there was no doubt Vex saved himself.

<I would expect no less...>

While descending to the ground, Erik sensed danger. His Hydra's head noticed the ground trembling. He turned, only to see Restro midway with a sucker-armored punch.

The young man avoided the blow on his face, but the man was a proficient martial artist, and in some weird way, he twisted enough to put his weight on one leg and kick him on the side.

Restro, realizing that pure defense wasn't enough, used his armor offensively. The adaptive material formed spikes, which pierced Erik's side.

"UGH!"

Pain lanced through the young man, but he was used to it, and it would not hinder his ability to fight. Erik roared and unleashed a shockwave of pure force.

Nathaniel's power could be very powerful, but they were still based on some kind of shock force, meaning they would actually do nothing to bypass Restro's armor, which was focused on protecting him from those kinds of attacks.

<He would be out of the way for a couple of seconds at least.>

Chapter 1132: The battle for Maynard Island (9)

Erik delivered a punch that propelled Restro several meters into the air. He then used fire again, trying to cook the guy alive, but Vex teleported him away from danger. It looked like they understood what Erik wanted to do.

However, Erik did that solely to gain a few precious seconds.

<Did you find him?>

<Yes, master. He is currently on the rooftop of the Blackguards' main building, as you previously mentioned. What should we do?>

<Take 20 clones and kill him. Don't get spotted. He has likely flooded the rooftop with water, so he might be able to hear you coming. Find a way to avoid that at all costs, shapeshift or whatever you think is necessary. I will keep Restro and Vex occupied. How much time do you need?> Erik asked.

<One minute, master.>

Vex and Restro teleported away. They needed some time to recuperate. Vex was panting, eyes narrow. Sweat was trickling down every inch of his skin. Restro wasn't in a better condition.

"Are you ok?" Vex asked.

"Yes. That guy is trying to cook me alive, right?"

"He can't kill you until you wear that armor."

Restro paced back and forth, unable to contain his nervousness. His eyes were wide under the helmet, darting around as if expecting Erik to appear at any moment. He clenched and unclenched his fists, unable to stay still.

"I can't believe it," Restro said. "We're giving it our all, and he's still standing. How is that even possible? We are three against one!"

"What the fuck is that guy, Vex?!"

Vex put his hand on the man's armored shoulder to calm him down. But Vex's hand was shaking a little too much.

"A monster, indeed... I've never met someone so strong aside from the division commanders..."

"He might be stronger than them. We are three. Terra is no way inferior to Levium, who fought against him alone, yet we can't kill him!" Restro said.

As the words came out, the absurdity of Erik's powers hit Restro like a tsunami. He struggled to comprehend how one man could possess such overwhelming might. It wasn't just that, but his ability to shrug off Vex's brain crystal powers as if they were nothing.

"Damn, you can slow down time! You can teleport! " How could you not kill him?"

Restro's voice shook. Vex sensed the fear in his voice, yet he refrained from passing judgment on the man. He himself was having trouble breathing.

"He is too fast!" Vex said.

"What?!" Restro couldn't believe what he was hearing. He was too quick for someone who could slow time down.

"What do you mean by 'he is too fast'? You can slow time fucking down!"

"Exactly that. Typically, when I activate my brain crystal power, everything slows down for me, but I remain unaffected. I can move almost exactly as fast as if I'm without using my brain crystal powers. This means I should, in theory, be able to kill him. The problem is that he moves too fast even during those times. I can't reach him, and the fucker is even able to see me! To study me, even!"

"How can we win against someone like this?"

"I don't think we can," Vex said. "The third division commander must come help us; otherwise, I fear even she will die!"

Vex found himself struggling to keep up with Erik. His time freeze brain crystal power, while still effective, was becoming predictable.

"He must have gotten Levium's powers... Aside from telekinesis, he also had a parallel will brain crystal power. Intel suggested that the kid was already smart. This enhanced his intelligence and likely boosted his cognitive abilities and reflexes. It is the only way Erik must be able to keep up with us despite how quickly and frequently we are attacking him."

However, the truth was that, despite his incredible powers and enhanced body, Erik started feeling the strain of fighting three high-level opponents simultaneously. His mana reserves, while substantial, were not infinite, and even if he leveled up and his mana got refilled, he still had to face the physical and mental burden of such a battle.

Having to avoid countless attacks time after time was putting a strain on him. A single moment of distraction or of tiredness might cause his death. That alone was extremely frustrating and tiring.

Erik knew he would face Vindicators here. He had been lucky to have to fight only against three, but this didn't make the actual fight easier.

However, aside from his immediate worries about the battle, Erik was more concerned about a different issue: why there were only three Vindicators.

If the blackguards were so hell-bent on getting the biological supercomputer from him, they should have sent everyone to him. If that happened, Erik knew he would have lost. Erik might have escaped, but he would undoubtedly have faced defeat.

This meant the blackguards either didn't have enough Vindicators or that they thought they would not be enough to defeat him, meaning they were too weak compared to Levium, Vex, Terra, and Restro.

<If this is true, it means the others are on Mur, and if that is also true, in a couple of months, they might be stronger than they are now.>

However, the issue wasn't limited to the Vindicators alone. Although the Vindicators typically had lethal birth brain crystal powers, the true issue lay in the fact that their second power's neural links boosted their stats.

But other blackguards might reach the same level, while the Vindicators might end up with another brain crystal power, and even if they would not be able to make many neural links on the third one, having 20 more was already enough to make them much stronger than having 54 neural links in both their powers.

Regardless, that was going to be something he would have to address with the Chimaeric Demons; he had to find a way to make them strong enough to be able to fight against such kinds of fighters.

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The fight continued, with Erik attacking Vex and Restro non-stop. Meanwhile, without the Vindicators knowing, a group of Chimaeric Demons moved towards the main building. This was where Terra was hiding.

Twenty invisible creatures moved across the battlefield. They were careful not to step in water or make any noise that could give them away.

"Where is he?"

"On the other side of the rooftop."

Terra was kneeling behind the parapet.

He was looking at the battle below with a grave look. The vibrations made during the clash between Erik and his two comrades were becoming stronger and stronger, closer and closer, and he didn't like that. He needed to make sure the battle moved from his position.

Terra was concentrating hard, making rocks come out of the ground, sprouting walls to protect his comrades, making the terrain as hard for Erik to fight as possible, creating traps to slow down Erik, and even giving Restro some weapons to use or to hurl at Erik.

The problem was that nothing worked. Erik looked like a siege engine, a bulldozer squashing everything he threw at him as if it were a paper wall.

The only thing he did was to prevent Erik from killing his comrades. The battle was getting more harrowing, but it was still in a stalemate. Here, the one to win would be the one with more mana, or the one with more stamina. The problem was, who would end up with either of the precious resources sooner?

The Chimaeric Demons climbed up the building's walls. They moved quietly, finding tiny spaces to hold on to as they went up. When they reached the roof, they stopped.

The roof was flooded with water, exactly like Erik said. There was a particularly deep pool at Terra's feet.

It was a simple yet effective defensive alarm. The clones traversed the roof after having turned into insects. The water was effecting alerting Terra if they stepped on the water, but flying wasn't a problem. The water would not stop them from killing Terra.

But their wings' buzz could alert him. The clones had to be careful, flying up to a certain point and crawling whenever they could.

<Team 2, you go on land. Walk over the parapet. Take your time. Team 1 will fly as close as possible, then proceed on foot up to the closest landing point.>

<Understood.>

Terra felt a faint sound. He frowned. Something wasn't right, but he couldn't pinpoint the source of the sound. There were too many sounds around, which made it hard for him to understand the source.

In the meantime, he focused on the battle, targeting Erik again.

The clones moved into position.

<Are you in position?>

<We are.>

<Good. Act now!>

The Chimaeric Demons turned into humans again and appeared above, in front, behind, and on each side of Terra.

The Vindicator reacted instantly, walls of stone erupting from the floor. But the Chimaeric Demons were strong enough to shatter his defenses, exactly like Erik could.

Terra's eyes widened behind the mask. There was no way for him to escape. These guys were as fast as Erik himself, surprisingly, and Vex wasn't with him. He could not teleport, could not fly, and couldn't escape.

Terra created tendrils of earth and stone. He crushed two clones against the floor, making the roof crumble.

Another fell to a spike that shot up from the floor, impaling its mid-leap.

But there were too many, and Terra could not keep up with all of them. Soon after, the clones swarmed him and plunged their mana blades into his body.

Chapter 1133: The battle for Maynard Island (10)

[VINDICATOR TERRA KILLED: MANA ABSORBING PROCESS STARTING.]

[0%...1%... 5%... 30%... 70%... 100%]

[MANA SUCCESSFULLY ABSORBED, STARTING CONVERTING PROCEDURE.]

[3...2...1...0]

[MANA SUCCESSFULLY CONVERTED INTO EXPERIENCE. 959,859 EXPERIENCE POINTS AND 9508.59 DNA POINTS AWARDED TO THE HOST.]

Erik felt a sudden surge of mana coursing through his body and realized what it meant—Terra was dead. A grim smile played across his lips.

<The Chimaeric Demons never disappoint me...>

Vex and Restro were still oblivious to their comrade's fate and readied themselves for another bout, sure that Terra had their backs.

<I need to kill one more if I want to win this battle...>

He had to capitalize on their ignorance.

<Guys.>

<Yes, Master?>

<Collect Terra's brain crystal and blood, then come here. I need to take care of these guys now.>

<What are you planning, master?>

There was a short pause.

<Vex and Restro are at their most vulnerable. Without Terra's help, they won't be able to do much, but they could always flee, or worse, head to their leader. If that happens, I don't know how the situation will be. You need to come here while I keep them occupied and kill them.>

<Yes, master. Give us a couple of minutes to collect Terra's blood and brain crystal, and we will head there.>

<Yes. Oh, remember, there is still water here. If you get invisible, they will notice. If you shapeshift, they will use the Veritas Lenses. See what you can do.>

<Yes, master.>

Erik charged forward, moving incredibly fast, surprising Restro and Vex. In an instant, he closed the gap between him and the Time Freeze user.

"Vex!"

He was Erik's target, as he was the most dangerous of the two remaining opponents.

The man activated his brain crystal power and avoided Erik's attack.

Vex used his power to slow down time. Everything around him moved very slowly, including tiny bits of dust in the air. But even in this slowed-down world, Erik was still impossibly fast.

Vex observed Erik for some time. The young man was channeling mana, ready to use it to pump what looked like his usual electricity brain crystal power, and moving towards him.

<I need to stop him.>

Vex teleported away from Erik's line of sight. At the same time, he moved Restro behind Erik.

<Shit, my mana is almost gone...>

Restro didn't take much before realizing where he was and leaped into action, his armor sprouting razor-sharp blades. He slashed at Erik, forcing him back.

He tried again, slashing left, then right, aiming for Erik's torso. Erik sidestepped the first attack and dove under the second.

Restro followed up with a downward strike, but Erik moved to the side, avoiding the razor-sharp edge. The Vindicator pressed his advantage, unleashing a flurry of quick jabs. Erik weaved and bobbed, staying out of reach of the deadly blades.

Vex then ran to join the fight. Restro was currently facing Erik from the front, while Vex tried to hit him in his blind spots. The problem was that if they wanted to survive that scuffle; they had to leave Erik with no space to move and no time to attack, which was everything but simple.

The young man spun on himself, then kicked Vex in the stomach. He was sent flying several meters. Somehow he kept his wits with him and activated his brain crystal power, teleporting both him and Restro away.

"AGH! AGH!"

"Are you ok?" Restro asked.

Vex didn't look in the best of conditions. Sweat was trickling down his forehead; he was clutching his abdomen with his arms. He crouched on the ground, trying to ease the pain.

"Vex! Are you okay?" Restro asked again.

Vex staggered to his feet, blood trickling from his lips. "I'm fine," he said. Restro looked at him and grabbed the courage.

"We can't win, Vex. We need to ask for the Third Division's commander's help."

"No," the man said. "We need to give her time to prepare that... Otherwise, not even she will be able to win."

"We are going to die like this, Vex! We can't take him out with just the three of us! We tried, we failed. It doesn't matter until we stay alive!"

Restro was right, but it wasn't like they had alternatives.

The only thing they could actually do, aside from fighting, would be to flee, but where? The blackguards would hunt them down for having betrayed them. Erik would do the same.

There would be no one willing to help or hide them. The only thing they could do was to fight and to die in battle if that was the only outcome for them, regardless of what they tried.

"How much do you think the Third Division commander needs?" Vex quickly checked the time on his visor.

"She said she would be ready by 00:00. Five minutes. That's how much we need to resist."

But then Erik appeared.

"Fuck! He is here!"

The two Vindicators moved.

Erik attacked. Wind blade after wind blade, he destroyed everything Terra created to give his comrades an edge.

Vex warped frequently, consuming his already very low mana. He wasn't fast enough to avoid those attacks and didn't have Restro's armor, so that was the only thing he could do to stay alive.

The latter, instead, pumped more mana into his neural links. He still tried to avoid the attacks whenever he could, but he often failed. The armor held, but his mana plummeted more and more.

"Restro, tank him!"

The man went in, knowing this was going to probably be his last battle. While he did that, he started noticing something but didn't voice it.

Restro went in melee, unleashing a flurry of attacks against Erik. Vex did the same, wielding his blade to cut Erik down.

<That sword is dangerous as fuck.>

Erik tried to avoid being slashed as much as he could. If Erik didn't receive a constant stream of mana, even he would have his reserves depleted by now, and the battle would have been lost.

He could not rely on comrades to keep his mana as intact as possible, contrary to his opponents.

Luckily, Erik was surrounded by death, and with each death, he got more mana replenished.

[BLACKGUARD KILLED: MANA ABSORBING PROCESS STARTING.]

[CHIMAERIC DEMON KILLED: MANA ABSORBING PROCESS STARTING.]

[BLACKGUARD KILLED: MANA ABSORBING PROCESS STARTING.]

[CHIMAERIC DEMON KILLED: MANA ABSORBING PROCESS STARTING.]

Somehow, Erik found himself on the defensive. He did his best to avoid Vex's sword but had to take some hits by Restro, tanking them with his Force Bastion. It didn't always work, though, because Restro's brain crystal was powerful, and he could give insidious effects to his armor.

<These fuckers...>

Erik needed to break their rhythm. He activated his Frostwind Fire Tempest, freezing the area.

A swirling vortex of elemental fury erupted around him. Ice shards, carried by howling winds, battered the Vindicators.

Vex teleported away, narrowly avoiding being impaled by an ice spear. Restro's armor hardened, becoming a crystalline shell that deflected the elemental onslaught but which did nothing to stop the cold from seeping into his bones.

Chapter 1134: The battle for Maynard Island (11)

Taking advantage of the chaos, Erik focused on Vex. The time manipulator was dangerous at close range and had single-handedly saved his comrades more times than he could count.

<How much time passed?> Glanced at his clock. <250 seconds. They are going to find out soon Terra is dead; I need to move.>

Erik targeted Vex and unleashed a barrage of lightning bolts that forced the Vindicator to constantly teleport.

"Restro, I need backup!"

The constant spatial jumps were taking their toll.

Restro surged forward and aimed a powerful blow at Erik's head, but Erik anticipated the move. At the last moment, he ducked, seized Restro's arm, and used the Vindicator's momentum to fling him towards Vex, who had just appeared behind him trying to take him off-guard.

The Vindicator's leader slowed time around himself and Restro just in time. But Erik had anticipated this. He hurled a wind blade, its edge sharpened by frost, straight at Vex.

The blade sliced through the air. For Vex, they were moving in slow motion, but there was so little distance, and the blades were still fast enough that he couldn't fully dodge. It caught him in the side, cutting deep into his shoulder.

Vex fell to his knees, holding his wounded shoulder. Restro came to help his friend, using his armor to create a protective shield around them both. Then he turned the outer layer into acid. Whatever landed on it was going to instantly melt.

"Vex, hang on!" The man looked at him. "Where's Terra? Why isn't he helping?!"

He gritted his teeth against the pain, grabbed his radio, and tried to contact their earth-manipulating ally.

"Terra, Terra! Are you here? What are you doing? We need your help."

But there was no answer.

"Terra... Terra's not responding."

Restro's face paled. "What? How could-"

His words were cut short as Erik's laughter rang out. "Took you long enough to notice. Your friend met a rather... unfortunate end. But don't worry, you'll be joining him soon enough."

"You bastard!" Vex snarled, struggling to his feet despite the pain. "Check the clock," Vex whispered.

"One minute."

"We need to resist for a minute, and then we die."

Restro nodded, his armor shifting once more. Spikes erupted all over its surface, gleaming wickedly in the light. He used the spikes to send Acid toward Erik, who was forced to jump away.

"A minute, Restro!"

Vex teleported behind Erik, sending his Time Freeze power into overdrive, slashing at the younger man with desperation.

Restro joined the fray. He couldn't use acid again, or he would injure Vex, but his armor became a whirlwind of blades. However, he moved, he was going to attack, and Erik had to be careful not to injure himself when he did the same.

As the Vindicators closed in, he activated his Phantom Veil and vanished from sight.

"Clever trick," Vex spat, blood dripping from his wounds. "But we're not done yet."

There was still water on the ground they could use to track him down, or so they tried. In fact, Erik simply hovered far enough away to create a dome of fire safely. That made the surrounding water evaporate.

Vex finally saw his chance at winning null.

Erik reappeared several meters from the Vindicators. There was a grin on his face.

"Well, you are done now."

In truth, even without Terra, the two Vindicators were holding their own against him rather well. If the battle had just started, he wouldn't be having a so simple time right now. Most of the situation was currently happening because Terra died.

Erik had to close the game now, though, because he started feeling weird mana fluctuations in the air, coming from the blackguards' main building.

Something was happening there. To close this duel, he needed the Chimaeric Demons, and that was exactly why he was stalling for time.

The Chimaeric Demons were going to pounce on them, but the Veritas Lenses would not make sneak attacks easy to be done. He needed the two to focus on him.

"Are we?" Vex said. He, too, wanted to waste time as much as possible.

"Yes... You are..."

"00:00 Vex!"

They did it, but then twenty figures materialized around the two. They were Erik's soldiers. Their appearance caught even Vex off guard. For a second, since it was now 00:00, he thought the third division commander might have been able to join them in the fight, but their appearance meant he was going to die here. Yet he didn't abandon himself to desperation. He already knew he was going to die today with 90% of the .

Before either Vindicator could react, the clones moved. Their hands shot out, gripping Restro's head. There was a sickening crack as they snapped his neck.

[VINDICATOR RESTRO KILLED: MANA ABSORBING PROCESS STARTING.]

[0%...1%... 5%... 30%... 70%... 100%]

[MANA SUCCESSFULLY ABSORBED, STARTING CONVERTING PROCEDURE.]

[3...2...1...0]

[MANA SUCCESSFULLY CONVERTED INTO EXPERIENCE. 1,035,989 EXPERIENCE POINTS AND 10359.89 DNA POINTS AWARDED TO THE HOST.]

Restro's body crumpled, his armor dissolving into nothingness. Vex prepared to teleport away to escape this nightmare and regroup with the third division commander. Maybe there was still a chance, but Erik was faster. A barrage of wind blades sliced through the air and cut Vex's limbs.

He screamed, blood pooling beneath him. His powers flickered and died, leaving him helpless on the ground.

Erik stood over the fallen Vindicator. "It's over. You fought well, but it wasn't enough."

Vex glared up at him, defiance burning in his eyes despite the pain. "Go to hell, you monster!"

Erik shook his head. "Not before you..." He raised his hand, electricity arcing between his fingers.

Vex opened his mouth, but whatever he was about to say was cut short. A bolt of lightning struck him, ending his life.

As the last of the Vindicators fell, Erik felt another surge of mana.

[VINDICATOR VEX KILLED: MANA ABSORBING PROCESS STARTING.]

[0%...1%... 5%... 30%... 70%... 100%]

[MANA SUCCESSFULLY ABSORBED, STARTING CONVERTING PROCEDURE.]

[3...2...1...0]

[MANA SUCCESSFULLY CONVERTED INTO EXPERIENCE. 1,003,871 EXPERIENCE POINTS AND 10038.71 DNA POINTS AWARDED TO THE HOST.]

He looked around at the battlefield.

The area was destroyed. The ground was pepper-pocked with holes from the fight. The air buzzed with leftover energy from their clashing powers.

Erik turned to his Chimaeric Demon clones. "Well done," he said. "Collect the brain crystal and blood. I want these powers."

"Yes, master..."

But then the ground started trembling.

Chapter 1135: The battle for Maynard Island (12)

The ground shook hard, causing Erik to stumble and freeze in place. The vibrations intensified, and the blackguards' base trembled violently.

Cracks appeared on the walls, spreading like spider webs across the surfaces. Dust and small debris rained down from the ceiling as the tremors grew stronger.

The entire structure groaned and creaked, but it wasn't like it was falling on itself. Quite the opposite.

"What the fuck is going on?"

The sound of fire crackling started raising like the gurgling of a drowning man, swimming desperately to come out of the sea, threatening to kill him. Then, an explosion shattered the building from the inside. The night sky was ablaze, illuminated by a fire as bright as the stars shining in the sky. It was just that, following that explosion, a huge black reptilian head came and peered through the fire. Its slit eyes, staring at Erik.

"Shit... SHIT!"

The creature had massive black wings sprouting out from the back of its massively long and thick armored front arms. They were larger than a ship's sails, only that they were pitch black instead of bright white.

The rest of the body then appeared.

"What? How?!"

It looked like the blackguards were controlling a Black Wyvern. Only that thing looked the real deal.

The Chimaeric Demons got restless. Mira, Amber, June, and Emily felt the same. But the blackguards started cheering.

"It's definitely under their control!"

The creature, now free of what remained of the building, drew closer to him. Purpose evident in its eyes. Erik noticed something off about its appearance as it walked towards him.

The wyvern's body was riddled with wounds. Parts of its flesh seemed to rot, with maggots festering in the decaying tissue. It also missed part of its back right leg.

The wyvern stopped before Erik, staring at him from its height, while breathing on Erik with its putrid breath. From atop the creature's back, a figure leaped down.

It was a woman. She landed on the side of the beast's neck, her piercing gray eyes locking onto Erik.

"Commander Velasquez, Third Division of the Blackguards," she said, her voice cold. "I've been looking forward to meeting you, Erik."

Erik felt rage surge through him. This woman was one of the very reasons he had come to this place. The young man didn't know who or how many people were actually leading the blackguards, but this bitch just confirmed she was one of them.

<Third division commander. Meaning there should be at least three other guys as powerful as her among these mother fuckers. >

He clenched his fists, forcing himself to remain calm.

"I wish I could say the same, Commander." He paused. "Well, actually, I came here to find you, but I would have avoided it if I didn't have the urge to kill you... You know, seeing your ugly mug is not exactly the first thing I want to see in the morning. Well, even in the night."

Monica's eyes narrowed, but then an amused grin spread across his face. She moved her eyes up and down, squaring Erik as if she were looking at a juicy piece of meat.

"I must admit, I'm impressed by the havoc you've wreaked. Three Vindicators... that's no small feat, especially considering how powerful they turned in these four years. Oh, that is also thanks to you, by the way." She grinned.

"But I'm afraid your little rampage ends here. Because I've appeared."

Erik couldn't help but scoff. "You seem confident, Commander. I hope you will not rely too heavily on that thing." He glanced at what looked like an undead wyvern. "But I'm curious," he said. "How did you command such a creature, anyway?"

Monica's lips curled into a smile, but she offered no explanation.

"Would you like to know?" She winked at him.

"Actually, no."

However, the reason was seemingly obvious. The woman had the power to raise and control the dead, or so it seemed.

<The problem is, how strong is that thing?>

—

Name: Black Wyvern (Undead)

Brain Crystal Power: Wyvern's fire.

Physical Characteristics: A massive creature with a wingspan of approximately 30 meters. Its scales appear dull and patchy, with exposed areas of decaying flesh visible throughout its body. The wyvern's eyes glow with an unnatural light. Its muscles, though deteriorated, still ripple beneath its skin as it moves. Many wounds mar its body, with a noticeable injury on its back right leg, which appears partially missing. Despite its decaying state, the wyvern moves well.

{Attributes}

STRENGTH: 610 (900)

INTELLIGENCE: 0 (250)

DEXTERITY: 650 (950)

ENERGY: 2500

{Others}

Power Level: 1673

Estimated Experience: 2,440,723.42 EXP per kill

Neural Links: 140

—

<Shit...>

The wyvern wasn't as strong as Erik expected; it looked like its current state weakened it a lot, or maybe it was because of Monica's brain crystal power.

<But that's just in terms of physical stats. Its mana is insane. It should be X-ranked.>

That was what made Wyverns so powerful. It wasn't just that they could fly, were massive, and had insane strength; it was their mana.

Being X-ranked meant they had a fuckton of mana to spend, and as for black wyverns, their power, Wyvern's fire, was A-ranked. Erik knew that well, because that was what made up the fire part of his Frostwind Fire Tempest brain crystal power.

<It should give me around 2.5 million experience points. I wonder if I absorbed all the Black Wyvern's mana back then if the amount would have been the same.>

It was probably going to be more. The system computed the estimated experience gained based on the beast's current stats, and it was severely weakened now.

Regardless, Erik knew well how deadly that power was.

<A black wyvern... The blackguards for sure got stronger during these years, after Doran's research came out, followed by Etrium's technology. While I can see them killing wyverns, I'm not sure they can yet do it. So, the question is: Where the hell did this woman get the body?>

Then it came to him.

<The cerulean bird... Or at least something as strong.>

Erik didn't know what that thing was, nor how really powerful it was. But since it killed a black wyvern on Mannard continent, it must have been at least as strong as the black wyvern in front of Erik.

That was what the blackguards were doing. Killing such powerful thaid's was yet not possible for them, but pushing them towards other areas? Possibly somewhere there are stronger monsters who would not look kindly at another thaid's intrusion in their territory? It was, and what if they sent it towards the wyverns?

The creature would end up clashing with them. It already killed one in front of Erik. Back then, Erik couldn't absorb all its mana. He was too far to get it all, yet he still got a ton. If he did, he would have had fewer problems back then.

However, the real problem was, how could the blackguard push so powerful monsters out of their habitats?

<Maybe by creating natural disasters, flooding places, destroying mountains...>

It was actually easier than one might have assumed. What humans had to do was destroy their habitat.

Then Monica said something that both surprised Erik and also irked him.

"Join us, Erik," Monica said. Her tone was deceptively light. "Your power, combined with ours... we could reshape this world." Her eyes hardened. "Refuse, and I'll be forced to eliminate not just you, but everyone here."

"I want nothing to do with you fuckers. Not only did you make my life hell for a long time. Damn, after I got our mutual friend, I thought I could have a better life. But hell no, you had to jump in and make it even harder than it was before. Then, hmm... I remember you having tried to kill me quite more than a few times."

"That was necessary, Erik Romano. You refused to cooperate." She paused.

"I don't recall you having ever asked me if I wanted. Regardless, what would have been the point—have my brain dissected and the biological supercomputer stolen?"

Monica's eyes glinted. "That may have happened. After all, a kid holding such a power was everything but safe. In fact, we were right. You came into possession of that thing, and look at what you did. There is a war affecting the whole of humanity now."

"Well, want you to know something funny? I don't give a shit. I don't like humans a lot to begin with, and if more mother fuckers like you die at my feet, even better."

This time Monica got an annoyed look. "Oh, anyway, mighty third division commander. When you see him, tell hi to Levium for me in hell."

Erik's eyes flashed dangerously, and a grin spread across his face. The woman's power was making him salivate.

<That is going to be a very good power.>

But would Erik be able to win against both the third division commander and the black wyvern? It had an insane amount of mana; it was stronger than him, albeit clearly not at full strength, and the third division commander was sure not weak.

Chapter 1136: The battle for Maynard Island (13)

Monica's grin widened, a predatory gleam in her eyes. Without warning, she leaped back onto the wyvern's back.

<Shit, I hadn't analyzed her yet!>

But the woman was too far now, and based on the beast she commanded, he wasn't even sure he would be able to do that during the battle.

<Nevermind... It won't make a difference anyway.>

As the woman took to the sky, she raised her hand. The dragon opened its jaws and spewed forth flames. It was only that, coming from a beast like that, it looked like a huge chunk of the ocean had been ripped from its abode. It was just that; it wasn't water that started flooding the battle site, but a ravaging fire.

The Chimaeric Demons that had gathered to protect Erik got turned into cinders in seconds.

[ALLIED CHIMAERIC DEMON KILLED: MANA ABSORBING PROCESS STARTING.]

[ALLIED CHIMAERIC DEMON KILLED: MANA ABSORBING PROCESS STARTING.]

[ALLIED CHIMAERIC DEMON KILLED: MANA ABSORBING PROCESS STARTING.]

[ALLIED CHIMAERIC DEMON KILLED: MANA ABSORBING PROCESS STARTING.]

[ALLIED CHIMAERIC DEMON KILLED: MANA ABSORBING PROCESS STARTING.]

[ALLIED CHIMAERIC DEMON KILLED: MANA ABSORBING PROCESS STARTING.]

"You bastard!"

Erik didn't have much time. If he wanted to defeat the woman and the undead she had under her command, there was only one thing he could do.

He turned to one of his Chimaeric Demons.

<Bring them to me. Now.>

The clones knew what he was talking about: the blood vials and brain crystals from the three Vindicators.

Vex's powers were going to be useful because the beast was more powerful than him, and if Vex had been able to keep up with him thanks to it, then he would be able to do even more with it.

They would consume a lot of mana since Erik would not have neural links for them, but at least he would be able to fight on equal ground with the beast, if even a little, and teleport whenever he could not avoid an attack.

However, if he really wanted to win against this creature, he needed for the Chimaeric Demons to keep fighting.

He needed the mana the blackguards had because he was sure his mana would never be enough to kill that thing.

Erik needed to pump his attacks with as much mana as possible so as to make an attack not even that thing could defend against.

As Monica ascended, the remaining clones rushed to Erik's side, handing him the items. He quickly consumed the vials and swallowed the brain crystals.

[Vex's DNA gained. Starting the analysis.]

[Terra's DNA gained. Starting the analysis.]

[Restro's DNA gained. Starting the analysis.]

[Analysis complete.]

[10,000 DNA points each are required to extract the DNAs and the Brain Crystal Powers. 50,000 each to get them without incurring pain and loss of consciousness. 55,000 each to absorb them instantly. What do you want to do?]

"Are you even asking it?"

[Geez, you are a pain. Sufficient DNA points detected.]

[Blood absorbed. DNA-storing procedure started.]

[Procedure complete.]

[Brain Crystal Power absorption process started.]

[Procedure complete.]

Erik knew he needed to protect the remaining Chimaeric Demons. Monica would undoubtedly try to use them as hostages if he left her the chance to do so.

But he couldn't surrender—the stakes were too high, and he had no intention of giving himself to people who would just kill him anyway. As much as it was cruel, the Chimaeric Demons could be replaced.

<This doesn't mean I'm going to let them die...>

However, the greatest worry for Erik were his lovers. While the Chimaeric Demons were going to have more chances of surviving, Amber, Mira, Emily, and June didn't.

<You,> Erik mentally said to one of the clones. <Find Amber, Mira, Emily, and June. Get them to safety, but keep them close enough for Emily to be able to take a shot at the commander. Go, now!>

The clone nodded and left. Erik then took to the sky, his wings unfurling as he rose to meet Monica and her undead mount.

"Impressive," Monica said. "You really have dozens of powers, but they won't be enough for me to stop killing you and your troops. I just need to fight close to the ground."

Erik's eyes darted to the ground below, where his clones were starting to go in a frenzy. "I don't need to protect them," he said. "I just need to kill you!"

Monica laughed. "Let's see then..." She raised her hands, and the very air seemed to thicken.

From the ground, corpses rose. Fallen soldiers, both Blackguards and Erik's own forces, jerked to life with unnatural movements.

"Shit!"

Erik released a series of wind blades toward the woman, trying to stop her. But the wyvern acted on its own and shielded her.

"You're a monster!" He said as the corpses were raised from the dead.

"I prefer to think of me as... pragmatic. Why let good soldiers go to waste?"

The undead wyvern let out an ear-splitting roar, its wings beating furiously as it charged towards Erik. He barely had time to raise a shield before the creature's massive jaws snapped at him.

The young man retaliated with a burst of lightning, the electricity arcing across the wyvern's decaying flesh. To his horror, the creature seemed barely fazed by the attack, as if electricity didn't even travel across the body.

"Shit..."

"It won't work!" She paused. "Did you really think I came here without preparing for elemental attacks?"

"You bitch!"

Erik gritted his teeth. He needed to kill Monica, or the Chimaeric Demons were going to be wiped out.

Making an army like that again in a short amount of time was impossible, and he was sure that if he gave more time to the third division commander, she would prepare an even deadlier thaid to command, and that was without considering the other division commanders.

<I need to destroy that wyvern...>

He dove, weaving through the air as the wyvern gave chase. Its massive form was agile, matching Erik's movements with unnerving precision.

<It's not even going at full speed!>

On the ground, the battle had devolved into chaos. The Chimaeric Demons found themselves fighting not only against the blackguards but even those they already killed, aided by their brothers' bodies.

While the blackguards could be killed relatively easily, doing the same with the other Chimaeric Demons wasn't as immediate nor as simple.

Erik's troops struggled, making his worry increase. He wanted to help them fight on the ground, but he knew the biggest danger was in the sky.

<If I kill Monica, her army of undead soldiers should collapse.>

Erik spun around to face the approaching wyvern. He focused and created an enormous wall of ice right in front of it, keeping it afloat with Levium's powers. The wyvern smashed into the ice wall, increasing the number of injuries marring its body, but going through it as if it were made of butter.

"HAHAHAHAHA! I told you, it's useless!"

Chapter 1137: The battle for Maynard Island (14)

The battle increased in intensity. Erik darted through the air, avoiding another blast of the black wyvern's flames. The undead creature was relentless, as was the woman riding on it.

"Is that all you've got?" Monica taunted from atop her monstrous mount. "I expected more from a man who defeated three Vindicators!"

Erik gritted his teeth as he was forced to use Time Freeze again. The world around him slowed to a crawl, giving him precious time to evade the wyvern's snapping jaws. But he felt the drain on his mana reserves with each use.

Erik didn't have neural links for this power and didn't even know how to use it properly. But he couldn't avoid it because the wyvern was too fast, too strong, and its brain crystal power was too deadly.

The monster was releasing a torrent of flames, lighting the black skies, and illuminating the battlefield below, which showed a grim sight.

<I can't keep this up forever,> Erik thought, searching for an opening. <But how can I kill that thing? It's already dead!>

The most logical thing was in theory to kill the woman, but she was on top of the wyvern, and Erik couldn't get close to her.

As time resumed its normal flow, Erik countered with a barrage of wind blades. They were faster than fireballs but slower than lightning.

They weren't as deadly as the latter, but at least they weren't going to be neutralized by whatever the third division commander was using to prevent that from harming her.

The wind blades sped towards the wyvern but weren't enough to cut the beast.

<I need to use more mana...>

But Erik was reluctant to risk remaining without mana. He had many powers he needed to use, and some just to survive. If he spent all his mana attacking, without the Chimaeric Demons providing him more by killing the blackguards below, he couldn't replenish it, and he would end up powerless against the beast.

Monica's laughter rang out. But she said nothing.

Erik summoned a massive gust of wind, buffeting the wyvern and throwing it off balance.

In that split second, he activated his Molecular Restructuring power, focusing on the air around the creature's head. Erik found out, in fact, that he could actually affect the surrounding area with that power up to a couple of meters.

Restro could likely do the same, but there was a downside to this since the missing direct contact made the mana consumption increase.

Yet Erik had no choice. Two meters were the closest he could get to that thing, and even that was awfully close.

The oxygen molecules began to separate and concentrate, creating a combustible pocket within the wyvern's mouth and throat.

"Let's see how you like this," Erik said, unleashing a focused burst of lightning into the wyvern's maw.

The result was explosive. Flames erupted from the creature's mouth and nostrils, the internal combustion tearing through its decaying flesh. The wyvern let out an ear-splitting shriek.

Monica, caught off guard by the attack, nearly lost her grip on the writhing beast. Her eyes blazed with fury as she locked gazes with Erik.

"Clever," she said. "But don't think for a moment that this changes anything!"

She raised her hand, mana swirling around her fingers. She was using her second brain crystal power. The wounds on the wyvern closed, necrotic flesh knitting itself back together.

"You got a healing ability as your second brain crystal power?"

"It works well with my minions!"

Whatever she used, in fact, could be fixed in this way. This complicated things for Erik.

Most of the wounds on the wyvern's body disappeared. Its maws got fixed; the few cuts Erik created closed. The damaged leg even regrows, partially at least.

But Monica didn't heal the wyvern's wounds in full.

<That's curious...>

There was also a hole in its chest. <That must be the wound that led to the wyvern's death. Monica didn't heal it despite how dangerous that wound was.>

That was instead puzzling.

The wyvern charged at Erik with renewed vigor. Its massive wings created gusts of wind that threatened to throw him off balance.

Erik activated his Force Bastion, the energy shields from Nathaniel's power forming around him just as the wyvern's talons raked across his chest. The force shield held, but Erik felt the impact reverberate through his body and a massive chunk of mana getting spent just to parry an attack.

There was too much weight behind it.

<I need to separate Monica from that thing. As long as she's in contact with it, she can keep healing it.>

Erik dove, weaving through the air with the wyvern in hot pursuit. He needed to draw Monica closer to the ground, where he might have a chance to isolate her.

As they neared the earth, Erik could see the chaos of the battle below. His clones fought valiantly against the blackguards, but the undead horde was posing too much of a problem.

[ENEMY HUMAN KILLED: MANA ABSORBING PROCESS STARTING.]

[ALLIED CHIMAERIC DEMON KILLED: MANA ABSORBING PROCESS STARTING.]

[ENEMY HUMAN KILLED: MANA ABSORBING PROCESS STARTING.]

[ALLIED CHIMAERIC DEMON KILLED: MANA ABSORBING PROCESS STARTING.]

The undead below could not use brain crystal powers, or mana, since it already left their bodies. But these were still powerful, especially the corpses belonging to Erik's Chimaeric Demons.

That was why his clones were slowly being overwhelmed.

<I need to do something,> Erik thought.

He spun in mid-air, facing his pursuers. Concentrating, he activated his Frostwind Fire Tempest power. The surrounding air swirled, a maelstrom of fire and howling winds forming.

"You can't run away from me!"

Erik was targeting the enemy troops but was trying to not make it obvious because he knew that if the Third Division commander understood he was going to target her minions directly, she would do the same for Erik's clones.

No, Erik needed to make it look like it was an accident.

Erik used a huge chunk of mana because this time, he wanted to kill as many enemies as he could. Burning them was going to neutralize the woman's powers, as the bodies would get destroyed completely, leaving her with nothing to use.

Besides, if he could free the Chimaeric Demons from their fight, they might be able to help him against the third division commander.

Monica's eyes widened as she saw the elemental fury building before her. "Brace yourself!" she said to her mount, who then ascended to the sky, avoiding a massive flame, more looking like a tsunami than a fire.

The torrent of fire missed the wyvern and its rider, but the wind-driven flames consumed the enemy ranks below.

[ENEMY HUMAN KILLED: MANA ABSORBING PROCESS STARTING.]

[ENEMY HUMAN KILLED: MANA ABSORBING PROCESS STARTING.]

...

[ENEMY HUMAN KILLED: MANA ABSORBING PROCESS STARTING.]

[ENEMY HUMAN KILLED: MANA ABSORBING PROCESS STARTING.]

...

[LEVEL UP.]

[LEVEL UP.]

[LEVEL UP.]

...

[LEVEL UP.]

<What the fuck?>

The amount of level-ups was insane; Erik got 16 levels. <Why?>

The biological supercomputer answered his question.

[These blackguards are powerful. The three Vindicators had around 100 Neural links, and you got millions of experience points, but these guys are no less strong. They have around 70, considering both brain crystal powers. Based on what you did now, you just killed around 5000 people. Well played, Erik.]

Chapter 1138: The battle for Maynard Island (15)

<Fuck... It never worked until now!>

[That's because they didn't expect this attack. The Chimaeric Demons are keeping them occupied, and your attack appeared to target their commander. They would have never allowed you to do this damage. Look at how many barrier masters are there!]

Erik watched below. There were many of them. In fact, the number of shields protecting the blackguards from harm was astronomical. At that point, the battlefield changed. The undead had taken the front, while the blackguards went to the back of the formation.

That was also why Erik killed more blackguards rather than undead. But that wasn't necessarily good, because the undead Chimaeric Demons were still fighting, and they were the real problem.

Regardless, for a moment, it looked like Erik's gambit worked because the clones got a little bit of respite.

But Monica saw this, and she didn't like it. She ordered the wyvern to fly low; it was already producing flames from its mouth.

"No, you won't!"

<System, allocate all the attribute points I gathered to Energy.>

<Mighty Fine!>

[90 attribute points allocated to Energy. 1592 energy points available. Available mana 47,790]

<Great.>

The wyvern almost got to the Chimaeric Demons, but Erik got close enough to release a massive wind blade to Monica and not fail. The creature had to do something, or its rider would die.

It diverted its fire toward the wind blade. The heat and the power behind Erik's attack dissipated. But it didn't stop Monica.

Her mana flared, a wave of energy healing most of her troops. However, that had not only the effect of closing their wounds but also giving their vigor back.

The blackguards resumed their attacks with renewed ferocity, their wounds healed, and their strength restored. The battlefield once again erupted into chaos as the two sides clashed, the tide of battle shifting unpredictably.

Erik attacked again, using wind and fire to create a powerful whirlwind aimed at Monica and her undead wyvern.

But the woman was quick to react. She ordered her wyvern to dive, avoiding Erik's attack. The wyvern's rotting wings flapped hard, creating a wind that scattered some of Erik's elemental attack's power.

"Is that all you've got?" Monica said. The wyvern turned towards him and started chasing Erik again.

Erik found himself in a dangerous aerial battle with the wyvern again. The undead creature was forcing him to use all his brain crystal powers and skills to stay alive.

He could feel its foul breath close behind him, forcing him to slow time down.

That made the wyvern's movements easier to see and avoid. The young man used this chance to move away, avoiding a potentially fatal attack.

The wyvern's claws missed Erik as he dodged its attacks, but just barely.

He then got some distance from the beast and stopped injecting mana into the Time Freeze brain crystal power.

<Shit...> Erik was out of breath.

Using Time Freeze so often was quickly draining his energy reserves. He knew he couldn't keep doing this forever, but if he stopped, the undead monster would likely kill him.

Monica laughed from her seat on the wyvern's back. "Already with your back on the wall, Erik? We've only just begun!"

The wyvern attacked again, seeming to move even faster than before. Erik had to use Time Freeze once more, pushing himself to his limits, but he got his mana back again a couple of minutes earlier, so he was still able to keep up with the creature.

Suddenly, a sharp crack echoed across the battlefield. Monica jerked, her concentration breaking for a split second as blood blossomed from her shoulder.

<Emily.>

She had taken her shot. Unfortunately, she missed the third commander's head.

Yet Erik saw his chance. He created a powerful mix of water and fire to flood the area in vapor, then he warped, teleporting directly on top of the dragon's back.

His hand closed around her throat, but the woman, while closing her wound, while being helped by the wyvern, freed herself and gripped Erik in a chokehold of her own.

However, she realized she didn't have the strength to kill Erik like this. She left the choke and jumped into the sky. She had to get as far away from Erik as possible. However, the black wyvern twisted on itself, dismounting Erik and grabbing the woman before she could free fall.

"Shit."

"Nice try!"

But Monica's eyes blazed with hatred. "I'm wondering, Erik Romano!" She said while the young man evaded another one of the wyvern's attacks.

"You think killing me will change anything? You have no idea what forces you're dealing with!"

Erik avoided a swing from the wyvern. "Then why don't you enlighten me?"

Before Monica could respond, a roar from above caught their attention. The wyvern snapped his jaws at him.

Erik cursed.

Time slowed as the wyvern's jaws gaped wide, flames building in its throat. Erik Warped, but the Wyvern found him easily.

The undead's flames engulfed Erik, his Force Bastion straining against the temperature. He felt the heat seeping through, his skin blistering despite his defenses. Erik activated the water-controlling power he had gotten from Terra. That helped to defend against the flames.

"There are more of us you can imagine, Erik Romano. What you are seeing here is no longer the best of what we have. I, who was once the strongest, am not anymore! Even if you defeat us here, we have hundreds of thousands of soldiers elsewhere, and they won't be as weak as the three Vindicators you fought today."

"Are you done spouting bullshit?"

"Bullshit? Oh, you will see... Erik Romano. What we achieved is something even your biological supercomputer can't achieve!"

"Are you talking about the increase in physical strength your troops got with just two powers?"

The woman grimaced for a second.

"That's it! Sorry to disappoint you, but the biological supercomputer didn't give me all that might because it's dangerous."

"Dangerous?" But then she scoffed. "You are just trying to mess with me."

"Yeah, that's true," he said, avoiding another torrent of flames. "But it is also the truth."

"What do you mean with dangerous?" the woman asked.

"You wish, I'll tell you!"

"You fucker!"

Then Monica turned. She finally understood from where the sniper attacked.

Chapter 1139: The battle for Maynard Island (16)

The battlefield churned with chaos as Chimaeric Demons clashed against blackguards and their own undead brethren. The air filled with the clash of metal, grunts of exertion, and the sickening sound of flesh tearing.

A Chimaeric Demon charged towards a group of blackguards. His starlight fireball crackled, powered by the rays' of the above stars, burning a blackguard to death.

The Chimaeric Demon moved incredibly fast. In seconds, he crossed the battlefield and reached the group of blackguards. They were shocked to see him appear so suddenly.

The clone's Flyssa connected and cut a blackguard's head, then he kicked, sending another one flying backward into his comrades.

Bones crunched on impact, and the man went limp. Without resting, the clone spun, its leg sweeping out in a powerful arc that killed two more blackguards.

Close by, an undead Chimaeric Demon moved toward the clone. Its movements were jerky, but still fast. The two looked exactly alike, except for the grievous wound on the undead counterpart.

The clone looked above at the woman who dared to turn one of his brethren into enemies. There was no semblance of intelligence in him anymore. It was just attacking, killing, and looking at him as the next prey to feast upon.

The fighters' swords crashed. Sparks flew into the dark sky. All over the battlefield, similar fights were happening.

The living clone's got an edge since it could still use his brain crystal powers, but the opponent wasn't weak.

For the first time, he realized how hard it was to fight against him and his brothers. But the undead too had an advantage. The creature felt no pain, no fatigue. It just pressed forward, its attacks growing more frenzied with each passing moment.

A blackguard then lunged at the clone from the side, but despite him being focused on the undead, he still reacted fast enough to duck, making the attacker injure the undead.

The undead's head snapped back and was nearly severed by the friendly fire. The Chimaeric Demon grabbed the blackguard, using him as a shield against the undead, now charging at him.

The undead enemy thrust its sword through the human shield, aiming for the clone. But he was quick and jumped back. The sword pierced the man's body and came out through his back.

The blackguard choked and died.

Blood then sprayed as the Chimaeric Demon's blade found flesh. The undead was no more a couple of seconds later.

All over the battlefield, fierce fights were happening. Chimaeric Demons battled hard against the tough blackguards and their own kind, who had been turned into undead fighters.

Starlight fireballs lit up the night. The sound of bones breaking echoed around the battlefield as both living and undead fighters fell and were stepped on by others rushing into battle.

A group of clones formed a tight circle, standing back-to-back. They fended off relentless waves of enemies, their swords flashing in deadly arcs. Bodies piled at their feet, but it was never enough.

One of them jumped out of the circle, leaping high into the air. It landed in the middle of a group of enemy fighters.

As soon as he landed, the clone's sword moved.

The blackguards fell, like grass being cut down. However, for each enemy that died, a Chimaeric Demon died too. The clone turned to look at his group, only to see them dead on the ground.

Two clones found themselves back to back, surrounded by their undead brethren. Slowly, inexorably, the undead closed in.

Mira, Amber, Emily, and June stood on a hill with 20 Chimaeric Demons. They watched the battle below and above closely. The Chimaeric Demons behind them showed no feelings as they saw their fellow brothers fighting, but they felt pain and anguish, especially observing the undead kill their brothers. They didn't like their brethren being used like that.

"Can't you do something, Emily?" Mira asked. The battle was taking an ugly turn, both for Erik and the Chimaeric Demons.

Emily looked through her sniper rifle's scope, trying to find Monica in the chaotic sky above. Despite her skills, Emily found it hard to even aim at Monica. No, to even make her enter her scope.

The wyvern she rode moved too quickly and unpredictably for Emily to keep her in sight.

"No, she's moving far too quickly for me to get a clear shot," Emily said.

"Her movements are erratic and unpredictable. Every time I think I have her in my sights, she's already gone. It's like trying to hit a phantom."

"You hit her once before, though," Mira said. "That shot was impressive, considering how elusive she's been."

"That was luck... If she doesn't stop, I won't be able to hit her. The rifle is powerful, but the wyvern is too fast. Even if I shoot, the bullet will never reach her. I can't hit her even if I see into the future."

"That's a problem."

Mira shot her arrows, choosing her targets among the blackguards. She knew her attacks wouldn't work against the undead. So, she focused on killing the living enemies to reduce the number of fighters threatening the Chimaeric Demons.

Mira looked over the battlefield, spotting her targets thanks to the many lights the fighters produced.

Starlight fireballs from the Chimaeric Demons, the still-burning bodies of those Erik killed, the clashing weapons' sparks lighting up the area. It all helped her see the blackguards among the many potential targets.

"The woman has nasty powers." She understood why she was one of the blackguards' leaders. She basically had an undying army, and the blackguards were using them as cannon fodder. A deadly kind of cannon fodder, but still one.

"Are we sure Erik can handle her?" Emily asked. "She seems incredibly powerful. Even Erik might be out of his depth here."

"It looks like he is doing well."

Erik and the Wyvern flashed through the sky. They were no more than streaks, but the attacks they released, mostly flames and wind blades, weren't.

Often they parted the dark clouds hanging below the moon like curtains and often pushed away the darkness.

"Oh, no..." Emily said.

"What?"

"She... She's found our position," Emily said. "The blackguards' leader. I can see her through my scope. She's heading straight for us."

"Fuck..."

Chapter 1140: The battle for Maynard Island (17)

Monica's eyes narrowed. Since she received the shot in the shoulder, she tried to find where the sniper was.

The guy was a real concern. He landed a hit on her earlier, even though she was riding the undead wyvern, and that thing didn't go slow. Quite the opposite.

The sniper was skilled and dangerous if he could do something like that. She had to get rid of him.

Without warning, once she was sure of the guy's position, she yanked on her mount's reins, directing the undead wyvern toward a small hill at the battlefield's edge.

In hindsight, it was clear the sniper had to be on the hill. The only problem was to pinpoint its exact location.

Erik cursed as he realized what she wanted to do. Emily posed a real threat to Monica—while he could be kept at bay by the wyvern's overwhelming power, a well-placed shot from Emily could end the battle instantly without the third division commander being able to do anything.

<She can't allow that...>

"Stop!" Erik unleashed a barrage of wind blades toward the diving wyvern. The creature's massive tail whipped around, dispersing the attacks into harmless gusts.

Erik's wind blades weren't as effective against the undead as he hoped. The creature's body was rotting; that was true, but that didn't mean the wyvern's scales weren't as durable as they were when the creature was alive.

It was still a wyvern, after all. Instead of cutting deep, the wind blades only tore at the wyvern's decaying skin. This caused little damage to the creature overall, and since it didn't feel pain, it didn't stop.

Monica smirked.

"Is someone I shouldn't kill there?"

Monica's smirk ignited a fire in Erik's chest. The arrogant curve of her lips and the gleam in her eyes radiated confidence and disdain, stoking his fury.

"I'll kill you!"

But in truth, the wyvern was gaining more and more ground. He didn't know if Emily and the others noticed Monica heading for them, but even if they did, there was no way they could escape in time if he didn't give them the time.

<She's faster than I thought,> Erik realized he needed to pour more mana into his next attack. The problem was that to make significant damage to the wyvern, enough to stop it in its tracks, Erik needed to use a huge chunk of it.

But it didn't matter. Emily, Amber, Mira, and June were more important.

The air itself seemed to crystalize as he formed dozens of wind blades, each one sharp enough to slice through steel. This time, there was no doubt the wind blades were going to cut through that thing.

<I need to aim at the wings...>

Monica sensed the surge of power behind her. The amount of mana Erik was moving was astronomical, and it was impossible for her not to notice. Her eyes widened as she felt the sheer amount of mana Erik was willing to use to stop her, but that only made her want to kill the sniper more.

"Fuck..." Banking sharply, the creature avoided the first of the attacks, then the second. Erik couldn't throw a barrage to Monica, or he would consume all his mana, so he used only what he needed to prevent the woman from going toward the four.

The wind blades sliced through the space where Monica and her mount had been moments before.

<That was close,> Monica thought.

Erik seized the momentary distraction to send a message to Amber. <Get out of there now! She's coming for you!>

<We saw! Keep her off us for 30 seconds!>

The Chimaeric Demons were going to shapeshift, but not into flying thaid's, or Monica would notice them. They needed to go down the hill on foot and reach the base, hiding behind the trees growing on it. But that required time.

<30 seconds? I don't know if I can give you 30 seconds!>

Erik focused his attention on Monica.

The aerial chase intensified as the woman urged her mount toward the hill. The wyvern's powerful wings drove them forward at terrifying speed, while Erik pursued close behind, unleashing attack after attack to slow their advance.

Monica gritted her teeth in frustration as another of Erik's attacks forced her to adjust course. "You're persistent," she said, "but whoever is there will die by my hands, and it will be your fault!"

The wyvern banked around a particularly vicious wind blade, its decaying wings straining with the effort.

Erik launched another concentrated wind blade, aiming for the wyvern's left wing. The undead barrel-rolled, but not fast enough—the blade sliced through a portion of its wing membrane. However, the damage seemed inconsequential as the beast continued its advance, and that didn't even last for long since Monica immediately healed the creature. Yet Erik still gained precious seconds.

"Why so desperate?" Monica asked, her voice carrying over the howling wind. "Are your friends there?"

Erik combined fire and wind into a devastating cyclone. The super-heated air roared toward Monica and her mount, forcing them to veer right. The attack gave him some more precious seconds, but the hill still grew closer.

Monica wasn't going to just let Erik attack, though. She was still trying to kill or catch him, after all, and ordered the wyvern to attack.

The undead's black flames got vomited from its enormous jaws, forcing Erik to dodge. He used Warp to teleport above the blast, but Monica had anticipated this. The wyvern's tail whipped, nearly catching him off guard.

Time slowed as Erik activated Time Freeze. The drain on his mana reserves reached astronomical levels at that point.

He twisted away from the tail's path, launching ice spikes at the wyvern's wings. Several of them found their mark, but the creature's momentum carried it forward regardless of the damage. Though it had some problems flying before Monica healed its wounds.

<Fifteen seconds.>

Erik followed up with a barrage of lightning bolts.

Monica got angry as Erik's attacks forced her to change direction again. She was very close to the hill now.

After a grueling chase, the wyvern finally hovered over the hill. With a guttural roar, it unleashed a torrent of flames, setting the entire area ablaze. Monica's maniacal laughter echoed across the battlefield, a chilling sound that cut through the crackling inferno.