

BIOLOGICAL 331

Chapter 331: The Chase (4)

As the chaos erupted on the street, the four police officers on patrol duty sprang into action.

They rushed toward the source of the commotion, which turned out to be Simone and his men trying to kill Erik and the others. The officers quickly assessed the situation and realized that they were attacking civilians.

One of Simone's men was using his ability to shoot arrows against someone, but it wasn't clear who he was targeting among the crowd, and he ended up killing some people in the process.

"STOP!" one of the police officers shouted as they charged at Simone's men.

"Fuck," the thug replied as he saw the authorities come.

The other members of his gang were trying to reach Erik and the others, but it wasn't easy due to the many people fleeing, and they had to turn back to face the police.

"Damn," Simone said, and immediately he ordered his men to intercept them. One of them radioed for backup as the situation kept escalating.

More people were getting hurt, and the gang members seemed determined to keep fighting.

Meanwhile, Erik and the others were trying to keep out of harm's way. They dodged arrows, as the archer was still targeting them, and tried to avoid the many people escaping without concern for the other's safety.

Benedict still had Britney on his shoulders, the girl still had problems with her sprained ankle, and they struggled to keep up with the others in that chaos.

Erik and the Red Palace students pushed people left and right in order to escape, but the Mambas kept trying to kill them.

The students had to duck and dodge, doing their best to avoid the flying arrows that came their way. At one point, a bolt narrowly missed Britney's head, singeing her hair.

"AAHHHH!!!" a scream escaped her mouth.

She almost fell off Benedict's back as the terror made her clutch her head. Benedict firmly grabbed her and prevented the girl from falling, determined to carry her to safety and avoid a dangerous situation.

At that point, Martha targeted the archer and prevented him from firing more arrows using her brain crystal power. The vine wrapped around the man's arm, causing him to stumble and lose his balance.

Finally, the officers managed to reach Simone's group, which was in the middle of the group. They quickly raised their weapons and shouted for the group to stop what they were doing. However, they were met with hostility from the gang members, who saw the police as an obstacle to their mission to kill Erik and his friends.

At the same time, one of the thugs, a muscular man with a spiked club, charged at the nearest officer, who raised his sword and started fighting against the thug. The man swung his club, and the officer ducked, soon landing a strike on his arm.

The thug stumbled back, clutching his arm, but quickly regained his composure and charged again.

Meanwhile, the archer fired arrows at the officers from a distance. They dove for cover, but one of them was hit in the shoulder. He cried out in pain and had to take cover with the others to avoid being killed.

The remaining two officers engaged in hand-to-hand combat with the other two thugs. They exchanged blows, and the officers managed to land a few hits.

But the thugs were more challenging than they looked, and they fought back fiercely. One of the officers was kicked in the stomach and doubled over in pain.

The other officer tried to help but was struck in the face by an arrow and killed mercilessly, and the other officer quickly had the same fate.

The funny thing was that if the officers knew they were Mambas, they wouldn't have created problems for them. Their death was meaningless.

Simone watched the fight with a sense of satisfaction. His men were holding their own against the police, but soon four police cars arrived, and he knew they couldn't stay there anymore.

He signaled to four of his men to stay behind and keep the police at bay while he and the other six chased after Erik and the others.

Erik's heart was pounding in his chest as he and his friends fled from the chaotic scene. They had managed to escape the crowd, but they were still in the same street, and the Mambas could see them.

Erik caught a glimpse of the bald man leading the group of thugs chasing them. Simone was his name; he thought he had heard one of his men say it earlier. His eyes were cold and calculating, scanning the area for any sign of the Red Palace students.

His face was angular and sharp, giving him a menacing look. Erik noticed he was wearing a black leather jacket and a silver chain necklace with a small crystal pendant.

As he moved, Erik could see that he was well-built and muscular, suggesting he was no stranger to physical combat. He walked with a sense of purpose and confidence, almost as if he were the king of the streets. Erik also noticed a small scar above his left eyebrow, adding to the sense of danger that he exuded.

As the man's eyes locked onto Erik and his friends, the awakener felt a shiver run down his spine. He knew that they were in for a fight and that Simone and his men would not give up until they caught them. Erik swallowed hard, trying to steady his nerves as they continued to run through the crowded streets.

As they ran, Erik observed the ongoing fight between the police officers and the thugs. The police seemed to be struggling against the Mambas, who were using their powers and numbers to gain an advantage, and he even saw two police officers getting killed.

Floyd saw the same thing, but he didn't have Erik's composure. "We are fucked! I tell you, WE ARE FUCKED!"

Gwen, who was running beside him, smacked the back of his head, and Floyd quickly returned to his senses.

Erik watched everything unfold, and that was enough for him to relax a little. He took a deep breath and tried to focus on the task at hand—saving his friends. They needed to keep moving and find a place to hide.

The group turned a corner and found themselves in an alleyway. Everyone was tired and wounded, Brittney couldn't walk, and Benedict, who had been supporting her, was the most tired of them all.

"We need to find a place to hide," Erik said, looking around for any possible options. "We can't stay out in the open like this."

Erik couldn't shake off the feeling of guilt that was gnawing at him. This whole mess was partially his fault. He could have said he killed Nathaniel, and Matthew would have targeted only him. He thought about it sometimes, but his logical side prevented him from doing so, leading to Anderson's death.

The young man didn't have enough time to let his thoughts wander that way as he heard Simone's shout. "GET THEM!" he said while pointing at him and his friends.

The group increased their speed, with Simone and his men hot on their heels. They weaved through the narrow streets, trying to lose their pursuers. Benedict was gasping for air, his lungs burning from the exertion of carrying Brittney and contemporaneously running through the streets.

He could hear the footsteps getting closer and closer, and he knew they were running out of options.

Martha summoned thorny vines from the ground again to slow down their pursuers. The vines twisted and curled around the legs of the thugs, causing them to trip and slow down.

Aaron, seeing an opportunity, created a pool of corrosive slime at their feet, which started burning and sizzling with the vines, which quickly got on fire. The slime also sizzled and bubbled as it ate away at the pavement, creating a hazardous obstacle for the thugs.

Mikey summoned a swarm of flesh-eating bugs and sent them toward the thugs. The bugs crawled and gnawed at the flesh of the mambas, causing them to scream in pain and distracting them momentarily. However, that was only enough to slow them down.

Despite their efforts, the thugs got out of the traps and continued to pursue Erik and his friends, undeterred by the attacks. Simone, leading the chase, had a look of determination on his face as he ordered his men to press on.

Despite the chaos, the young awakener and his friends managed to navigate the winding streets and alleys of the city, darting in and out of crowds to avoid their pursuers. Their move was effective since they could keep the thugs far, but a chaotic situation quickly spread inside the city as the students kept attacking the thugs.

Martha continued to summon thorny vines; Aaron created more pools of corrosive slime, making it difficult for the thugs to keep up.

Mikey, who had grown increasingly agitated, summoned even more flesh-eating bugs, unleashing them upon the Mambas in a frenzy.

However, despite everything, the men finally reached Erik and the others, bringing desperation to the young students. Simone was right behind them, and he had an enraged look.

Chapter 332: The Chase (5)

The five men from the Zamora Clan, six from the Silverbend Clan, and four from the Montgomery Clan arrived outside the Red Lotus Lounge.

As soon as the clans arrived, they quickly huddled up outside the main entrance to assess the situation. The Zamora Clan's team leader, Carlos, spoke up first. He was a tall and muscular man with a thick beard and a stern expression.

"What's the situation?" he asked, looking around at the other team leaders.

"They appear to be still locked onto the fight," replied John, the leader of the Montgomery Clan's team, with a sharp gaze. "We don't know who did it, but we suspect it's the Mambas."

"That's a bold move," remarked the Silverbend Clan team's leader, Maria, a woman with short blond hair. "Aren't they scared of the repercussions?"

"Matthew is having a mental breakdown; he won't care," replied a member of the Silverbend clan.

Maria sighed. "I miss the good old days when the gangs still knew who their owners were."

"Yeah, they've become too bold lately," Carlos replied.

"I know you want to vent about the situation, but we should head inside."

The other team leaders nodded in understanding.

"Let's go!" shouted Carlos, leading the charge into battle, and they quickly made their way to the Red Lotus Lounge's entrance.

As the fight against Matthew and his thugs raged on, the Red Lotus Lounge was in complete chaos. The surviving parents were fighting for their lives against Matthew and his henchmen, who were attacking relentlessly.

Anderson's father, Mikey's mother, and Adam's brother were the most troublesome of the bunch, and they were putting up the strongest fights.

Suddenly, the scene changed as the men from the Zamora Clan arrived at the lounge, their presence immediately noticeable. Soon after, six members of the Silverbend Clan and four of the Montgomery Clan arrived on the scene.

Mikey's mother let out a sigh of relief as the reinforcements arrived. "Thank goodness they arrived," she told Carl as she saw the insignias strapped on their jackets.

Anderson's father nodded in agreement, "Yes. That kid planned everything. Too bad they arrived late."

Mikey's mother touched his shoulder reassuringly and said, "Don't worry, we will make them pay for what they did to Anderson." The kid's body was still lying on the ground; all his blood had been lost, and he had a white color.

Carl looked at her gratefully and said, "Thank you. I appreciate it."

They both turned back to face the ongoing battle with a renewed sense of hope and determination.

With the arrival of reinforcements, the tide of the battle began to turn.

The Zamora Clan leader and his men were overpowering Matthew's thugs with their fire powers, which further destroyed the surroundings; the Silverbend Clan with their ice brain crystal powers weren't as destructive, but their lethality was high as they were making precision shots at the thugs, hitting their targets with deadly accuracy.

The Montgomery Clan members used their earth-controlling abilities to shield the parents from any incoming attacks, allowing them to focus on fighting back against Matthew and his men.

The tides were rapidly changing, as there were now more than twenty people on the parent's side, while the thugs were only 11, including Matthew since the remaining ones went after the kids.

Matthew's eyes gleamed with an unsettling fervor as he surveyed the chaotic scene before him. His men were struggling against the parents and the newly arrived reinforcements, but the crazed leader was not about to back down.

"Fight harder, you fools! We must kill them! KILL THEM ALL!" He barked, his voice laced with an insane fervor. The rest of his men stepped back, intimidated by their leader's sudden outburst. Matthew's eyes scanned the room, looking for his next target.

"I will not let these pathetic fools ruin everything!" He roared, grabbing a nearby table and sending it flying toward Anderson's father, who avoided the attack.

"I can't stop them! AAAAAAH," one of his men said before getting impaled by an ice arrow.

Matthew's eyes flashed with wild fury. "MOTHER FUCKERS!" he screamed. The sound of breaking glass and splintering wood filled the air as Matthew and his men fought with reckless abandon.

The parents and their allies fought back with equal vigor, and it was clear that they were going to win and that Matthew wasn't himself.

Through it all, the Mambas leader's crazed laughter echoed through the room, sending shivers down the spines of everyone who heard it. His blood lust was unquenchable, and he seemed determined to destroy anyone who stood in his way.

However, Matthew's face contorted with rage as he watched his men being taken down one by one. He could feel his power slipping away from him as he used more and more mana, and it filled him with rage.

"Damn it!" he roared, slamming his fist into the wall beside him. "What the hell are we supposed to do now?"

One of his remaining men, a trembling young thug, stepped forward tentatively. "M-Maybe we should try to escape, boss. We can't win this fight." Matthew spun around, his eyes blazing with fury.

"Escape? Do you think we can just run away from this? We're the Mambas! We don't run from anyone!" He took a deep breath, trying to calm himself down.

But the more he thought about it, the more he realized that his young thug was right. They couldn't win this fight. And if they stayed here much longer, they were all going to end up dead.

With the arrival of the clans, his plans were foiled. He tried to retreat, but as soon as he opened one of the doors, a giant tongue of fire almost engulfed him.

He let out a guttural scream of frustration, and for a moment, it seemed as if he might lash out at the nearest person.

"FUCK!" He turned to look at the attackers; only five people were with him at that point.

"WHERE THE FUCK ARE THE REINFORCEMENTS WE CALLED 5 MINUTES AGO?!" the man shouted.

"They are on their way, sir, a hundred men!"

Everyone clearly heard this.

"If what he said is true, we should retreat," the Montgomery clan's team leader said.

"I WON'T RETREAT UNTIL HE IS DEAD!" Carl shouted. His eyes blazed with fierce intensity as he charged at Matthew. He swung his son's claymore with incredible force, hoping to strike Matthew before he could defend himself.

But Matthew was quick and had already created a barrier around himself. His power was similar to his son's, but he only had the barrier aspect, as the kid earned the attacking bit from his mother.

The claymore struck the barrier with a loud clang, sending sparks flying in all directions. Matthew sneered at Carl, taunting him. "Is that all you've got? A big ass sword and a heart full of hatred?"

Carl gritted his teeth and lunged at the man again. This time, he aimed for Matthew's head, hoping to strike him where he was most vulnerable.

But once again, the Mambas leader's barrier proved impenetrable. Matthew retaliated with a fast punch that sent Carl flying backward. Anderson's father crashed into a table, sending glasses and plates flying everywhere.

He struggled to get up as the blow was heavy, but Matthew was already on him, his fists raining down on Carl's face and body with brutal force. The clan members could do nothing against his barrier; it was impenetrable.

Carl fought back with all his might, swinging his claymore wildly and ignoring the pain that wracked his body.

Blood dripped from his nose and mouth, but he refused to give up. He would avenge his son's death, no matter the cost. Meanwhile, the other parents were fighting with equal ferocity.

They were trying to shatter the man's barrier using their powers, but not everyone had ranged ones like the clans who had just arrived. They also had improvised weapons, wielding broken bottles, kitchen knives, and even chairs as clubs.

The reinforcements from the Zamora, Silverbend, and Montgomery clans had joined the fray, fighting alongside the parents with skill and precision. They had managed to take down some of Matthew's thugs, but others remained, determined to protect their leader at all costs.

Carl and Matthew were still locked in a deadly dance as the battle raged on. The claymore clashed against the barrier repeatedly, sending shock waves through the club.

"You can't win this!" Matthew yelled, his voice hoarse with exertion. "You will die like a dog, exactly as your fucking son did!"

Matthew was beyond reason. He had lost control and was now consumed by a primal blood lust. His eyes were wide and bloodshot, and there was a crazed look in them. They seemed to glint with a twisted sort of pleasure as he fought against Carl with his barrier-creating brain crystal power.

His movements were frenzied, almost feral, and he was panting heavily with the effort of the fight. Clearly, he had lost all sense of reason and was being driven purely by his own madness. The sight of him was unsettling, and it was clear that he was a dangerous opponent.

Chapter 333: The Chase (6)

Simone and his five men had caught up with Erik and the others, and now the two groups stood across from each other on the street. The air was tense, and no one moved.

Matthew's hound was the first to break the silence; his eyes locked on Erik.

His expression was cold and calculating as if he were trying to read Erik's thoughts.

Erik felt a shiver run down his spine as he looked back at Simone. He knew the man wanted nothing else but to rip them apart.

The thug had a sly smile on his face when he started to speak. "You're all quite impressive," he said, his voice laced with a twisted admiration.

"Most kids your age wouldn't have been able to run for so long from me and my men, let alone fight as well as you did inside the boss's club."

Erik looked at Simone; he was in deep thought, trying to figure out what to do to get out of that messy situation. "We didn't want to fight," he said. "You forced our hand."

"Too bad the boss wanted you dead." The man replied.

"Though, no hard feelings between us, ok? I didn't like this situation either," Simone replied. "Again, I'm impressed about what you did back there. But unfortunately, my job isn't to praise you. Now, I suggest you just accept your fate. You managed to escape until now, but you couldn't outrun us forever."

"We will kill you all eventually."

Erik didn't back down. "I want to see you try," he said firmly.

Simone chuckled. "I like your spirit," he said. "But let's face it; you stand no chance against us. You all somehow managed to survive thanks to your parents, but realistically speaking, you can't win this now that you are alone. So why don't you save us some trouble? I promise we will kill you painlessly."

"A quick chop on the head, and it will be done." Erik looked at Simone and then at his friends.

They all knew that surrendering wasn't an option. Regardless, they had to keep fighting, as death wasn't a viable option.

Simone's men were all looking at Erik and the others, sizing them up. They were all armed with various weapons, and it was clear that they were ready for a fight.

"I will give you ten seconds to think about it. After that, things won't be that simple for you... 10... 9... 8..."

Erik and his friends readied their weapons, looking at the men intently. If they had to die regardless, it was better to create some problems, at least. For what felt like an eternity, the two groups stood in a tense standoff, neither side willing to make the first move.

Simone's men were waiting for him to stop counting, while Erik and his friends were for them to make the first move. Finally, the ten seconds ended, and Simone broke the silence. "I can see your weapon, but I will ask this regardless," he said, his voice low and menacing. "What is your response?"

Erik gritted his teeth, knowing that he couldn't back down now. "We're not afraid of you," he said, his voice steady. "If you want a fight, we'll give you one."

Simone smirked, his eyes glittering with amusement. "I was hoping you'd say that, to be honest," he said, raising his hand and licking his dagger.

In that instant, the standoff was over. Simone and his men charged forward, their weapons gleaming in the neon light. Erik and his friends met them head-on, ready for whatever came their way.

Without warning, one of Simone's men charged at them with a wild cry, his powers already activated as he had a weapon in his hand.

Erik dodged the attack and retaliated with a powerful swing of his flyssa, which made the man shout in surprise due to the strength Erik used. That was no average kid's strength. However, Simone signaled the man to stand aside, and Erik briefly found himself without an opponent.

Meanwhile, Aaron was busy creating corrosive slime that he hurled at another attacker, making it so that the others had to avoid the shots while simultaneously creating a pool behind them.

However, Simone then charged at Erik, and he immediately understood he was the most dangerous of the kids, not only because of his fight inside the club but also because of how his man reacted to his previous swing of the sword.

Erik and Simone circled each other warily, both holding their weapons in their hands. The young man gripped his flyssa tightly, his stance low and balanced.

Simone held his dagger in front of him; his movements were fluid and precise.

He lunged forward suddenly, his dagger flashing in the dim light. Erik sidestepped the attack, his flyssa whistling through the air, but the thug slashed at his side a bit.

He darted forward again, his movements almost too fast to follow.

Erik barely parried his attacks with his flyssa, his muscles straining with the effort. The two fighters moved in a blur of motion, each trying to gain the upper hand. Erik was a skilled fighter now, but Simone was faster and stronger.

He managed to land a few solid blows, each sending Erik stumbling backward, but he was relentless and kept coming at Erik with a ferocity that was almost maniacal.

Suddenly, Simone's dagger flashed in the moonlight.

As the man swung it at breakneck speed, trying to get a hit on the young man. The awakener raised his flyssa, deflecting the blade with expert precision.

But Simone was ready with another dagger in his other hand. He was going to hit him in the stomach, and if that happened, Erik would be dead.

Therefore, the awakener no longer hesitated and activated his metalization and mana exoskeleton's power. The blade hit him but wasn't able to penetrate his skin.

The thug immediately found out what had happened, as he could feel four distinct types of mana emanating from Erik's body. The other thugs noticed this too, but refrained from saying anything due to their professionalism.

"What the...?" Erik used that moment of distraction to regain his balance and charge at Simone.

"What the fuck was that?" Simone asked with disbelief.

"It's none of your business..." Erik replied.

"Those were two powers? TELL ME!" Simone demanded, greed already surging inside of him.

The two fighters continued their dance of death, their weapons clashing with a metallic ring. Erik could feel his arms growing tired and his muscles burning with exertion just by defending himself

from Simone's attack. The thug, instead, seemed to be tireless, his attacks coming at Erik faster and faster.

The awakener gritted his teeth, determined to hold his ground. He knew that he couldn't afford to make a mistake against Simone. The man was too dangerous and too skilled. One wrong move and Erik could end up dead.

Erik took a deep breath, centering himself. Then he charged forward; his flyssa held high. Simone met him head-on, his dagger flashing in the dim light.

Their weapons clashed with a loud clang, and Erik felt the shock reverberate through his arms. But he didn't falter. He pushed forward with all his strength, his eyes locked on Simone's.

As Erik and the thug traded more blows, Mikey, Martha, and Amber were left to deal with the one they called the flexible thug. The man moved unnaturally, contorting his body to avoid their attacks.

It was like he was made of rubber, stretching and bending in ways that shouldn't have been possible, but not so much as to consider it a powerful brain crystal power.

Mikey summoned his flesh-eating bugs, sending them swarming toward the thug. But he was too fast, easily dodging their attacks.

Martha created some vines that sprouted from the ground and lashed at the man like a whip, but the thug simply bent backward, narrowly avoiding the sharp vines.

"You are good," he said with a smile as if he was enjoying the fight.

His movements were so weird and strange that they gave Gwen and the others the creeps.

Amber attempted to catch the thug off guard with her fast strikes while he was still moving, but he was too quick for her too.

He twisted and turned, always managing to slip out of her reach, and as soon as he saw a weakness in the kids' joint defense, the thug struck back, his arms and legs moving in strange, jerky motions as he delivered a series of powerful kicks and punches at Amber.

Mikey sent his bugs swarming toward him, but once more, the thug simply bent backward and avoided them again by gaining distance.

Martha tried to strike the thug with her vines again, but he dodged it with a quick sidestep while at the same time avoiding the bugs.

While that happened, the two gave Amber enough time to recover, and as soon as she was ready, despite being in pain, she went behind him and moved in for another attack, but the thug grabbed her arm and twisted it behind her back.

Amber gritted her teeth in pain, struggling to break free. The man, though, was going to bring a dagger to her throat when Martha and Mikey used their power again, and Amber herself released her corrosive gas briefly to avoid getting killed.

The man was forced to leave her and quickly retreated, getting out of the gas's range since he knew how dangerous that power was.

Mikey and Martha moved to help Amber, but the thug was cunning; he avoided the fog immediately and used his flexibility to launch himself at Martha with a flying kick.

The girl tried to create a barrier of thorny vines to defend herself, but the man's foot smashed through it like it was made of paper. She was sent flying, crashing into a wall, and landing in a heap on the ground.

Mikey sent his bugs swarming toward the thug once more, hoping to distract him. The man tried to dodge the bugs, but there were too many of them, and due to his current stance, he couldn't get away from them. They began to swarm all over him, biting and tearing at his skin.

The thug screamed in pain, but his flexibility allowed him to contort his body and shake the bugs off quickly. He then turned his attention to Mikey, launching a series of flying daggers at him.

The Red Palace student tried to defend himself, but the thug's daggers flew too fast, and he ended up being stabbed in the arms and shoulders. He stumbled backward, tripping over a trash bag and falling to the ground.

The thug saw his opportunity and struck at Amber, who was close to him and still in pain, landing a powerful blow to the young woman's stomach.

I will also implement this system in my next book, but I need people to join first. It could also be a good place where to talk about the book, discuss spoilers or even ask me questions regarding the choices I made regarding the plot. I will wait for you :D)

Chapter 334: The Chase (7)

Erik and Simone continued their intense fight, with the sound of metal clashing against metal echoing throughout the alleyway. Erik's flyssa and Simone's daggers met in a flurry of strikes and parries.

Simone moved with deadly grace; his movements were almost dance-like as he twisted and turned, his daggers glinting in the dim light.

On the other hand, Erik was more straightforward but imposing in his approach, using his enemy's strength to capitalize on his movements.

The two fighters exchanged blows back and forth, Simone had the upper hand, but Erik managed to defend himself well from the thug's attacks.

The man frequently hit the young man, who was now tired and had low mana, but the kid apparently had two more brain crystal powers, and no matter how much he tried to stab him, he couldn't penetrate his skin. It was frustrating.

"I swear, I will get you and use you as a lab rat!" Simone shouted.

Erik tried to close the distance between them, swinging his flyssa with all his might and hoping to gain an advantage, but Simone's speed and agility allowed him to dart away, avoiding the deadly blade.

The thug struck back with a series of quick slashes, but Erik was able to deflect them with his flyssa.

"I will get that secret out of you. You will beg me to kill you and stop your torment!" the thug added, and then he dashed at Erik while, at the same time, slashing with his daggers with unprecedented speed.

"Shit."

Fighting in that situation wasn't simple for Erik. He had been fighting and fighting against much stronger opponents alone for what felt like hours, and his body was starting to slow down also due to the wounds.

On the other hand, Simone seemed to be gaining strength, with his attacks becoming more frequent and precise.

The awakener knew he was going to lose if things continued that way; a miracle had to happen before he ran out of stamina and mana completely.

Erik tried to make that miracle happen, not wanting to wait for something from heaven to come, and lunged forward, aiming a powerful strike at Simone's chest. The thug dodged to the side, but Erik followed up with a swift kick that caught Simone off-guard.

The man stumbled backward, his balance disrupted, and Erik seized the opportunity to strike. He swung his flyssa with all his might, aiming for Simone's head. However, the thug was too fast not to avoid the attack, and with an inhuman feat, he bent backward and avoided the slash.

The force he put behind the blow caused Erik to lose his balance, and Simone saw his chance. He lunged forward, his dagger poised to strike.

Erik managed to block the first few strikes, but then one of the daggers grazed his arm, causing him to wince in pain.

"AH! Finally, that weird power of yours is coming to an end. I will savor the moment you scream," he said, licking off the blood from the dagger.

As the fight raged on, Gwen and Benedict found themselves facing off against a thug with a strong brain crystal power: super acceleration.

The thug didn't have an insane speed; the problem was the acceleration itself, as he could go from 0 to his maximum in less than a second, and he kept darting around the two students with ease and delivering rapid-fire blows.

Gwen had her armor and was relatively safe. Still, Benedict could only parry the attacks, which wasn't easy for many reasons, and despite their best efforts, Gwen and Benedict were constantly on the defensive, struggling to keep up with the thug's incredible speed.

So, every time they thought they had a chance to land a hit, the man simply dodged out of the way, leaving them vulnerable to counterattacks.

With his slow and heavy style, Benedict charged forward recklessly, throwing heavy hits and swings at the thug with his mana halberd.

However, his lack of speed proved to be a hindrance during this fight, as the thug easily evaded, and if it weren't for Gwen, he would already be dead.

On the other hand, Gwen tried to rely on her speed and agility to keep up with the man. She darted around him, using her quick reflexes to dodge his attacks and strike back with highly technical blows.

Gwen and Benedict charged at the thug; the young man swung his halberd with power at the opponent, who again backed away and avoided the move. Gwen kept following him and tried to punch him several times in the head with her armor's gauntlets, but the result was the same.

The thug seemed to be toying with them, his movements so fast that the two students couldn't keep up.

His attacks were a blur of motion, striking from every angle and leaving Gwen and Benedict struggling to defend themselves.

The two had already accumulated many wounds. With every passing moment, it became clear that their opponent was simply too fast for them to handle.

At some point, he kicked Gwen really hard on the head. The woman fell to the ground like a potato sack; the impact should have been strong enough to kill anyone, but thanks to her armor, she was still alive but unconscious.

He rushed to Benedict and started attacking him relentlessly now that Gwen was KO.

"I need help!" the young man shouted, but there was no one free enough to help him.

"GUYS!"

"No one can help you, kid."

However, at that moment, two flying knives started floating around the thug, attacking him and forcing him to leave Benedict alone. The weapons seemed to follow him everywhere he went, floating around but moving as if they had a conscious of their own.

Seeing two daggers floating around someone and trying to stab him was weird, but that was what was happening. Benedict knew who those daggers belonged to: Patricia.

Patricia was doing what she could to help the others. She only had ten knives at her disposal; aside from that, she couldn't bring anything more to life.

The girl was already shielding Brittney, who couldn't still walk, and now helping Benedict since Gwen was KO.

Despite her being able to help Benedict, the fight against his opponent had been brutal until now, and Patricia and Brittney had taken some severe hits.

But they had fought bravely, their powers working together in ways none of the others could have predicted.

Brittney was still on the ground, unable to move, but she was at least able to use her power to prevent the thug from landing fatal blows on Patricia. She, with her daggers, was putting him in serious trouble, as the thug had to defend against multiple fronts as he had to battle Patricia, her daggers, and Britney's sonic screams.

The air was tense as the young woman and Brittney faced off against the thug. The eight knives Patricia had animated were circling around her, waiting for the moment to strike, while Brittney took a deep breath, preparing to unleash a powerful sonic scream.

The thug, meanwhile, stood calmly, his eyes darting between the two young women as he prepared himself to attack.

However, the first move came from Patricia, who sent the knives flying toward the thug with deadly accuracy. But he was quick, dodging and weaving through the blades with ease.

He retaliated with a swift stab, aiming for Patricia's stomach, but she managed to deflect the blow with one of the animated weapons.

Seeing an opportunity, Brittney let out a piercing scream that reverberated through the alley. The move hit the man squarely, leaving him momentarily stunned and allowing Patricia to send her knives flying once again.

But the thug, despite his status, quickly recovered and used his brain crystal power to send a bolt of energy from his weapon as a catalyst that blocked the flying animated weapons and closed in on Patricia. At the same time, the daggers, after having started flying again, autonomously changed their trajectory and pointed at the man from his back.

Brittney tried to help her friend by letting out another Sonic Scream, but she was getting frustrated since she couldn't rush to help her friend fight.

Meanwhile, Patricia struggled to keep up with the thug's fast movements. The man was now in close quarters and kept attacking the woman, who had to pay attention to point-blank attacks. Luckily he didn't use them yet, but she made a ton of other ones, and The Red Palace student was struggling. Then, one of his slashes landed squarely on her side, sending her reeling.

The thug seized the opportunity to press on, slashing at Patricia several times. The young woman was now in serious trouble, as the wound prevented her from moving freely. The animated knives were on the defensive, but the thug was too close, and she was having trouble getting rid of him.

Brittney tried to intervene, letting out another Sonic scream. That gave her Patricia a moment of respite since the thug had to avoid the attack and jumped far from Patricia, but the thug was too quick for Brittney to be caught by her sonic scream. In fact, he dodged the blast, and the move destroyed a nearby wall.

Patricia focused her power on the knives once again. She sent them hurtling toward the thug with even more force and speed than before. But as if he expected that

The thug used another blast of energy against the blades, and as he did that, he charged forward.

Brittney tried to hit the man with the Sonic Scream, but as he was running, the man arrived in front of Patricia, who managed to avoid a fatal blow just at the last moment.

The two friends were battered and bruised, but their combination was giving the man a hard time, despite Brittney being unable to move much. However, as the fight raged on, it became clear that the thug was too powerful for them to handle alone.

They needed help, and they needed it fast, but unfortunately, no one could give them some, as the others were in the same situation. Benedict was still struggling against his opponent, despite Patricia's help; Gwen was unconscious, Erik was full of wounds while fighting against the bald man, and the others were in worse states.

Chapter 335: The Chase (8)

At the same time, as the others fought, Jacob raised his fists, preparing himself for the attack to come. Suddenly, his opponent charged, wielding a glowing mana lance.

The Red Palace student could feel the energy emanating from the weapon, and he knew he was in for a tough fight.

Immediately, he created two clones, as he did in the Thornton high school tournament, but this time he had a trick up his sleeve: he could make a third one.

The thug charged at him, his mana lance held high. Jacob quickly ordered the two clones to get on one of the thug's sides.

The clones attacked from both directions, forcing the thug to defend himself and back down, but aside from the numerical advantage and the fact that the thug didn't know who the real one was, it was clear that Jacob didn't have much. The disparity in physical strength was too much.

The thug thrust his mana lance, but Jacob and his clones managed to avoid the strikes despite the difficulty.

They dodged and weaved, trying to stay one step ahead of their opponent. Jacob's clone suddenly managed to get on the thug's side as he was trying to kill the other clone with his lance, and he managed to strike the man with a quick jab that left the criminal enraged.

"You stupid kid, I will kill you!"

The thug thrust his mana lance again, this time aiming for another one of the three Jacobs' heads. The Red Palace student's clones moved in to intercept the attack, but the thug was too fast.

He spun around and struck one of the clones with his weapon, causing it to disappear in a burst of energy. The thug was left surprised, as he thought he aimed at the right target, but Jacob's power was much more insidious than he thought.

The Red Palace student, instead, understood he couldn't fuck around against this guy and understood he needed to be more careful in his approach. He created two more clones, bringing his total to three. They surrounded the thug, each attacking from a different angle again, and he, too, took his dagger out of his pocket, which was Jacob's favorite weapon.

The thug was forced to defend himself from all sides, unable to focus on a single opponent, which was also as slippery as an eel.

With a sudden burst of energy, Jacob launched himself forward, his fist dagger straight at the thug's chest.

The thug swiftly sidestepped the attack, narrowly avoiding the full impact of Jacob's blow. Reacting quickly, one of the young man's clones leaped forward, aiming a roundhouse kick at the thug's head. But the thug anticipated the move and ducked, causing the clone's foot to sail harmlessly through the air.

Undeterred, Jacob's other two clones sprang into action. One executed a series of fast slashes, aiming for the thug's arms. The thug, with astonishing agility, expertly weaved through the onslaught, gracefully evading each strike.

Meanwhile, the third clone attempted a high kick, aiming to catch the thug off guard. However, the man demonstrated his nimbleness once again, effortlessly ducking under the clone's leg and swiftly countering with a quick jab to the clone's abdomen.

Jacob himself re-entered the fray, determined to land a decisive blow. He tried to kill the man a dozen times at least. However, the thug's reflexes were razor-sharp, and he skillfully blocked or dodged every attack, frustrating Jacob's efforts.

Realizing the need for a change in strategy, Jacob and his clones circled around the thug, their movements synchronized with uncanny precision. As one, they launched a coordinated assault, attacking from multiple angles in a whirlwind of strikes.

The thug, momentarily overwhelmed, instinctively brought up his mana lance in an attempt to defend himself. He parried and deflected their blows with remarkable skill, turning aside each attack with calculated efficiency.

The battle raged on, a symphony of sounds, agile dodges, grunts, and precise parries.

However, despite their best efforts, Jacob and his clones were having a difficult time gaining an advantage against the thug. His mana lance was a powerful weapon, and he wielded it with deadly precision.

That was without taking into account his superior strength and speed. Jacob was starting to tire, and he knew he couldn't keep this up forever.

The thug managed to land a glancing blow on one of the clones' arms, causing him to wince in pain. Jacob and the other clones moved in to attack again, but the thug was too quick.

He dodged their blows and struck out with his mana lance, catching one of the clones in the chest and causing it to dissipate.

Jacob gritted his teeth and tried to focus. He created another clone, bringing his total to three again, and there were currently four of them fighting. They surrounded the thug once again, attacking with renewed vigor.

Jacob landed a solid blow on the thug's side with his dagger, making a wound on his leg.

"You are dead, kid!" The thug shouted as he killed one of the clones with a strike to the head.

Jacob was down to two clones again and started feeling the strain.

At the same time, Patricia and Brittney's fight went on. The two were facing a tough opponent. The thug was wielding a dagger; every time he swung it, a burst of energy shot out of the tip. Patricia had eight animated knives, and they were floating around her, ready to strike at any moment.

Without warning, the thug lunged forward, his dagger flashing in the dim light. Patricia reacted quickly, commanding her animated knives to block the attack. The knives flew toward the thug, their sharpened edges glinting menacingly.

The thug swiped his dagger in a wide arc, deflecting the girl's blades easily. Brittney seized the opportunity, letting out a loud sonic scream, but the man sidestepped and avoided the attack, which ended up destroying a nearby wall. Its destructive power was a lot, and the man didn't want to end up being hit by that absurd amount of mana.

<Damn, these are only kids!> the thug thought, but they fought like trained soldiers.

Patricia took advantage of the thug's momentary distraction, commanding her knives to circle around him and strike from all angles. The thug spun around, his dagger flashing as he parried each blow with precision.

Brittney let out another scream, the sound waves buffeting the thug and throwing off his balance. Patricia took advantage of the distraction, animating a nearby trash can to slam into the thug's side with force.

The thug grunted in pain but recovered quickly, lunging forward with his dagger once more.

Patricia dodged the attack but had to protect Britney. She prepared herself with a sonic scream so the thug couldn't recklessly attack her, or he would die, as he didn't have enough mana to block Brittney's attacks; he could only rely on his speed for that.

The thug was quick; his movements were almost too fast for them to keep up with. Patricia sent her knives flying toward him repeatedly, but each time he deflected them.

Brittney's sonic screams had little effect on the thug, as the thug avoided them easily, and they were only effective enough to keep him away from Patricia.

She let out a frustrated growl, feeling helpless as she watched her friend continue to send her knives at the thug to no avail.

Suddenly, the man lunged forward with renewed intensity, his dagger striking out at Patricia with deadly accuracy.

The Red Palace student managed to dodge the attack, but one of her knives was sliced in half; then, he advanced toward the student and swung his dagger, forcing Patricia to jump back to avoid being struck and to defend Brittney.

Then the thug charged at Britney amid the confusion, as she couldn't still walk and was waiting on the ground helplessly.

Patricia's daggers flew forward, trying to block the man from attacking her friend. However, as the daggers flew toward the man, he twisted around them and rushed toward Brittney. The daggers twisted in the air but slower than the man's speed. They turned and started searching for him.

His blade plunged into Brittney's side, and she screamed. She was already on the ground but would have fallen if that wasn't true.

Patricia's knives continued to fly until they reached the man's back and plunged inside his back, but the damage was meager, and she was distracted by Brittney's cry of pain.

"Brittney!" she shouted, and the thug took advantage of the momentary distraction. He turned around and pushed himself to the limit. Despite the knives in his back, his weapon sliced through Patricia's heart, and she cried in agony.

Erik and the others had been fighting their own battles, but they heard the cries of their friends and turned to see what was happening.

Erik's heart sank as he saw Patricia and Brittney fall, blood pooling around them. If they died, the situation would end for them too. But then something happened.

"GET OUT OF HERE!" Brittney shouted. She was losing too much blood, and she couldn't move. Clearly, she wouldn't make it, as the wound must have been too severe.

"BRITTNEY, NO!" Amber shouted.

The young woman's eyes flashed intensely, and she started charging a powerful sonic scream.

"RUN!" Amber shouted, and the kids barely had time to move away from their assailants and to recover the unconscious Gwen when a humongous scream erupted from her mouth.

The kids managed to get out of that range soon, but the thugs stumbled as they tried to reach the kids, clutching their ears in pain, and Erik and the others saw their chance to escape, albeit being slightly affected by the attack. However, Patricia wasn't that fast and unconscious on the ground.

"BRITTNEY! PATRICIA!" Jacob shouted. They came to save their family together as they were friends, but now only he was among his original group.

"WE MUST TAKE THEM!" he added.

"WE CAN'T; IF WE DO, WE ARE DEAD MEAT!" Erik shouted.

His mind was racing as they fled. They had lost two of their own, and it was only a matter of time before the thugs caught up with them.

He glanced back over his shoulder but saw the thugs still on the ground; however, they were quickly recovering. Though both Brittney and Patricia were losing a lot of blood.

"B-britt-ney..." Patricia wanted to rush to help her friend as she saw her deadly pale on the ground in a pool of her blood, not understanding she was in the same situation due to the shock.

She used her power and decided to kill one of the thugs. She was successful, but once she started standing on her feet to rush to Brittney's help, a dagger reached her neck, and she died.

The other kids were far away and didn't see what was happening. "FAST!" Erik said, his voice urgent. "We need to find a place to hide."

The others nodded, their faces grim. They had been through so much already, and the thought of losing anyone else was almost too much to bear.

They ran down the street, their hearts pounding in their chests, trying to put as much distance between themselves and the thugs as possible.

Erik couldn't help but think about Patricia and Brittney as they ran. They had been such strong, brave fighters who had given everything to protect the group. He didn't know if they would make it, but he knew they would never forget their sacrifice.

Finally, they came to a small alleyway, and Erik motioned for the others to follow him inside. They huddled together, their breath coming in ragged gasps, listening for any sign of pursuit.

Chapter 336: The Chase (9)

Erik and the others ran through the city's busy streets, trying to blend in with the crowd. The fear and apprehension were palpable in the air as they tried to keep a low profile, hoping not to draw attention to themselves.

They were all injured and scared, and the threat of the Mambas lingered in their minds.

Erik, who was leading the group, glanced over his shoulder to check that they were still being followed. They managed to get the hell out of the thugs' sight, but it was too soon to breathe sighs of relief.

He could feel his heart pounding in his chest, but the system immediately calmed him down. "Keep moving," he muttered, urging them forward. "We can't stay here."

The group weaved through the crowd, trying to stay together as they made their way through the city's streets. They kept their heads down, avoiding eye contact to prevent anyone who might recognize them from doing so.

Every noise made them jump, and every sudden movement made their hearts race. They couldn't shake the feeling that the Mambas were lurking somewhere nearby, waiting to strike.

Erik kept checking over his shoulder, paranoid that they were being followed.

He was aware that the mission was going to be hard when he accepted Anderson's proposal, but everything went down the drain.

As they turned a corner, they nearly collided with a group of people. The sudden jolt made them stumble, and a wave of panic washed over them. They were in the open, exposed, and vulnerable. They quickly regained their composure and continued on their way, praying that no one had noticed them.

"Hey! You fuckers, where are you going?!" one of the girls said as the group went away.

The Red Palace students quickened their pace, dodging through the crowded streets as they tried to escape far away from the last battle site. Floyd and Aaron were limping while Mikey was clutching his side.

Stella and Martha were holding each other up while Enya could barely stand, and Gwen was unconscious. Benedict and Amber were the only ones who seemed to be holding up well.

"Amber, can we go to your house?" Aaron asked.

"It's too far from here," the woman replied.

"Is there someone who lives around here and that does know you?" Mikey asked, but everyone nodded negatively. The only way for them to survive was to hide, but they couldn't stay on the streets anymore.

It wasn't long before they found themselves on a quieter street with fewer people around. Their luck ended, as the people would help them blend with the surroundings; the problem was that they were moving to the east, which led them to more private places.

"Can't we just ask for help from a nearby person?" Jacob asked. "I bet they would help us."

"And what if they sell us?" Erik said. "No, we can't trust anyone."

Then he tried to remember some places they could use to hide, and it was there that he remembered one.

"There is an area full of abandoned buildings 2 kilometers from here; we can hide there. Follow me," the young man said.

They did as he said, and as they moved, the streets became emptier and emptier. The only good thing was that Brittney's attack at least stopped the thugs from following them, and they were now far enough from them to hide.

That went on until they reached a block they had never been to, but Erik and Aaron knew well where and what it was.

This was the place where the Thaidis attacked last time; it was a place of death, where many people died, and where Aaron's father lost his life. The young man saw it the last time he took a taxi.

This was the ideal place to hide, as many abandoned buildings were partially destroyed. If they chose the hiding place well, they would be safe.

The deserted street the kids had just entered sharply contrasted with the bustling ones they had left behind. The tall, gray buildings loomed overhead, casting deep shadows on the cracked pavement below.

The few streetlights flickered weakly, illuminating the surrounding darkness with a sickly orange glow.

The air was thick with the stench of decay and neglect as if the street had been abandoned for years. Empty storefronts lined the sidewalk, their windows boarded up with wood.

A few broken street signs hung limply from rusted metal poles; their letters were barely visible in the dim light.

The only sounds were the distant hum of traffic and the occasional scurry of the small animals, who had left the area and were hiding in the shadows.

It was as if the street had been forgotten by time and left to decay on its own. Even the graffiti on the walls seemed faded and worn as if the artists who had painted them had long since moved on.

The truth was that the mayor was currently constructing everything from scratch here since most of the buildings had been destroyed by the monsters.

They could observe many working sites in the surroundings. Erik's eyes scanned one of them, taking in the heavy machinery and piles of construction materials.

Towering cranes reached up towards the sky, their metal frames glistening in the sunlight. The sound of beeping trucks and clanging metal echoed through the air.

With their sharp blades and intimidating size, massive bulldozers were parked in a neat line, waiting to be put to work. Erik could see piles of bricks, cement bags, and steel bars stacked neatly next to the construction site's entrance.

As the kids walked further down the street, they felt a growing sense of unease. It was as if they were trespassing in a forbidden place, a place where they did not belong. They quickened their pace, eager to leave the deserted street behind and return to the city's safety.

It was then that Erik saw a good hiding spot. It was an inconspicuous wooden building behind an apartment complex.

Erik quickly alerted the others and pointed to the abandoned building he had spotted. They ran towards it, weaving through the deserted streets until they reached the entrance.

The door was locked, but Aaron forced it open. That was not an unusual sight around those parts, so it didn't make a difference for them.

The building was dark and damp, with a musty odor that made Erik's nose wrinkle in disgust. The floorboards creaked beneath their feet as they cautiously made their way through the corridors, trying to make as little noise as possible. The only sound was the soft thud of their footsteps and the occasional water drip from a leaky pipe.

"Let's go to the top floor; we will be able to keep the surroundings under watch," Erik said, and that was what they did.

The problem was that Enya, Jacob, and Stella started crying as soon as they arrived. That was normal since they had never faced such situations. Amber and the others did once, so they knew what to expect. However, it was clear that everything took a heavy toll on their minds.

They all knew the people who died by years; they went to school together, trained together, and competed with each other, and losing them was hard. That was especially the case for Aaron and Mikey, who lost their best friend.

Enya, Stella, and Jacob sat in a circle, their eyes red and puffy from crying. They were all still in shock over what had happened, unable to fully comprehend that Patricia, Brittney, and the others were gone.

"I can't believe this is happening," Enya said, her voice barely above a whisper.

Stella shook her head in agreement. "It's just not fair. They didn't deserve this."

Jacob let out a deep sigh. "I don't know what we're going to do now. We're down so many members, and we don't even know if the thugs have more people coming after us."

Enya wiped away a tear that had fallen down her cheek. "We should call for help now; we couldn't until now since we had to run, but this is our chance."

Stella nodded. "Amber, where is your father's team?"

"I just sent him a text message telling him where we are. The team should have departed by now, so it's just a matter of time until they arrive."

Jacob looked up with a small glimmer of hope in his eyes. "Good..."

As they sat there in silence for a few moments, each lost in their own thoughts, the anger and frustration began to boil over, and their fear settled down.

"This is all just so messed up," Jacob said, his voice rising angrily. "Why did Nathaniel's father do that? Why did he think one of us killed Nathaniel? He was a prick, yes, and everyone hated him, but to go as far as to kill him? I don't think anyone would have been able to do that, even considering what we have done at the Red Lotus Lounge. It doesn't make sense!"

Stella nodded. "That is true, but I think something happened that made him think that was the case. Maybe he had been really killed by someone."

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As the others mourned and cried, Erik quickly looked at the place. The walls were covered in peeling wallpaper, and some of the wooden panels were missing or had been nailed back in place haphazardly.

The only light source was the moon's dim glow shining through the roof's cracks, casting eerie shadows on the ground. Erik saw that the building had once been used for storage or perhaps even as a small factory.

Old, rusty metal machines and tools lay scattered around the rooms, covered in a thick layer of dust. A few broken windows let in a faint breeze that ruffled the dust, making it swirl in the air.

The room was empty except for the machines, tools, and a few abandoned crates that had been left behind. Erik noticed that some of these had been pried open, and their contents were taken, leaving nothing but empty shells.

The floor was littered with debris, old pieces of wood, broken tiles, and nails that had worked their way loose. It was a dangerous place, with hazards lurking in every corner. The walls were damp, and mold grew in patches on the wallpaper. The wooden support beams creaked as if they were about to give way.

Despite the ominous atmosphere, the building was strangely peaceful. The silence was almost soothing after the chaos of the past few hours. Erik took a deep breath, filling his lungs with stale air. He could hear the sound of his own heartbeat—a steady thumping in his chest.

Mikey coughed, breaking the silence, and everyone jumped. It was as if they had all been holding their breath, afraid to make a sound. Erik turned to face the group and saw that they were all looking around, taking in their surroundings.

"Well," Floyd said, breaking the silence, "this is certainly not the Ritz." Martha chuckled weakly. "You can say that again."

They all looked at each other, unsure of what to do next. Clearly, the building wasn't safe, but it was better than wandering around the city streets. However, it was clear they were all aware that they needed to rest, take a moment to catch their breath, and plan their next move.

"Let's try to find a room to rest," Erik said, his voice barely above a whisper.

The group nodded in agreement and began exploring the building, searching for a safe place to rest their heads.

Though as they did so, Floyd approached Erik. The awakener knew that he was going to ask him something regarding his powers. He had extensively used them during most of his fights, and it was clear that some of his friends noticed. In fact, Martha, Benedict, and Mikey followed suit behind her.

"Hey, Erik," Floyd said, breaking the silence that had settled over the group as they waited for the right moment to talk to him in secret.

"Sorry if I do not beat around the bush, but can you tell us what happened at the club and the alley?"

Erik shifted uncomfortably and looked down at his feet. "I don't really know what you are talking about," he said.

"Man, I'm not stupid, and it talked with the others; we all saw it," Floyd said.

"Saw what, exactly?" The awakener asked.

"You used more than two powers, Erik. That and the huge surge of mana you had at the club are pretty suspicious things..."

Benedict, who had been standing quietly in the corner, spoke up. "I saw that too, Erik," he said. "I saw at least three powers in you. One made your skin like metal; the other created an exoskeleton and then your usual sharpening power."

Floyd nodded in agreement. "You used two of those powers to protect yourself against the thugs' attacks. I even saw a thug hitting you right in the stomach earlier, but then you acted as if nothing happened," he said. "I've seen some crazy shit in my life, but what you did back there was next level," he added.

Erik sighed; it was clear that what he did at the club couldn't go unnoticed forever. The awakener only hoped they overlooked Nathaniel's power because if they did, they would connect it to his death, Matthew's attack, and the kidnapping.

The young man shook his head. "What?" he said. "Are you crazy? That would mean I have four powers; something like that is impossible." Erik replied.

The awakener shifted uncomfortably under their gaze. He knew his actions had been extreme, but he had been desperate to protect his friends and his life.

"We saw you; don't lie to us. Is that how important we are to you?" Floyd asked, stepping forward.

"We never gave you a reason to doubt us. I know what you think—you are scared we will tell someone about this, and you will become a lab rat. It won't happen; don't worry. Aren't we friends?" Erik looked up at him, his eyes serious. It was clear that there was no reason to deny it anymore.

The young man sighed, "All right. First of all, don't tell anyone what I'm going to say," he demanded. He then sighed. "It's true; I have more than two powers."

Martha, who had been sitting quietly in a corner, spoke up. "Is this real? This would make you special even among awakeners."

Erik's expression softened. "Yeah, that's why I didn't want to tell anyone," he said. "Do you have an idea what will happen to me if people find out? I must even find a solution to the fact that one of the thugs saw me use them, otherwise, I'm screwed."

The group fell silent, lost in their own thoughts. They had always known that their powers made them different, but seeing Erik in action with four had taken things to a whole new level. They were all a little afraid of what he could do.

During their discussion, Floyd and Mikey wore worried expressions. They furrowed their brows and exchanged concerned glances as they listened to Erik's account of what happened at the alley and the club.

The gravity of the situation weighed heavily on their shoulders, and they knew they were dealing with something beyond their control, even beyond what they were currently experiencing. One thing was to face 50 people; another was to face an entire nation searching for you. He had to be careful.

Finally, Floyd spoke up again. "We'll work together," he said. "We'll figure this out and make sure that we're all safe and no one will find out."

The others nodded in agreement, and Erik felt a slight sense of relief wash over him. However, it was clear that since his secret had been partially exposed, he wasn't going to stay in New Alexandria anymore.

"When did you find out about your powers?" Floyd asked.

"At school. I chose only to reveal the sharpening one, as it was the most useful in the fighting department. The others are more defensive and on the utility side," the young man said.

"That is cool, man. I wonder why you have all these powers," Benedict said.

"I wish I knew," Erik replied, lying.

"What will you do now that the thug has found out your secret?" Mikey asked. "I think you know what I will do," Erik replied.

As Erik spoke, his words hung heavily in the air; Floyd and Mikey struggled to comprehend the full extent of his power and what his situation would be if he got found out.

"What?" Benedict asked.

"..."

"Are you sure? Amber will be devastated." Floyd replied.

"It's not like I have a choice in the matter. If I want to become old, I need to..."

Floyd, Mikey, and Martha understood what he meant, but Benedict was left in the dark.

"What if you tell Becker? I bet he will do anything to protect you," Floyd said.

"That, or I will be his lab rat or hunting dog. No, I can't do that; besides, that man gives me the creep," Erik replied.

Floyd's eyes widened, and Mikey's face creased with worry as Erik explained the situation. Martha sat quietly, her eyes fixed on Erik as he spoke.

"Are you sure there's no other way?" Mikey asked, his voice tinged with sadness. "I don't want to lose another friend," he added.

"I wish there were, but this is the only option," Erik replied with a heavy sigh.

Benedict leaned forward, his expression curious. "What do you mean, becoming old? What's going on?" he asked.

Erik sighed and rubbed his temples. "Nothing Ben. Can we stop talking about this?"

Floyd nodded. "Yeah, sorry. We should focus on figuring out our next move."

"Yeah, that would be the pressing matter," Erik replied.

They moved through the creaky wooden floorboards of the abandoned building, making their way toward the room where the others were waiting.

Suddenly, Amber appeared in front of them; concern etched on her face.

"Are you okay?" she asked everyone, her eyes scanning their expressions, but she was clearly more concerned about Erik.

Floyd forced a smile. "We're fine. Just a little tired, that's all."

Amber looked unconvinced, but she didn't press the issue. "Okay, well, Enya, Jacob, and Stella have been asking about you guys. They want to know what you intend to do now."

Erik couldn't help but feel exhausted. He had to find a way to solve this situation now. Besides, he knew that Enya and Stella were close with Patricia and Brittney, and they must be feeling the loss deeply, meaning they were in an awful mood.

The group made their way to the room where Enya, Stella, and Jacob were waiting. As they entered, Enya immediately addressed the point.

Chapter 338: The Chase (11)

"So, what are we going to do now?" She whispered, her voice shaking, but looking at Erik in the eyes as if he was the leader.

Floyd looked at him as if waiting for him to provide an answer. Stella and Jacob did the same, their expressions still clouded with sadness.

Erik furrowed his brows and chewed on his bottom lip, deep in thought. He desperately searched his mind for a solution to their current problem.

He knew that they needed to act fast if they wanted to keep themselves and their loved ones safe.

His anxiety grew with each passing moment, but he refused to let it consume him. He had to come up with something, and fast.

The problem was that there wasn't much they could do. Without the parents, they couldn't win against the thugs.

They managed to do it outside the club thanks to the number advantage and the surprise effect since he had killed the first guard before he could do anything. Then it was mainly three against one.

The situation was different now since their pursuers were six, and it seemed they specialized in that kind of job.

Erik was right. Simone led a team of five skilled and trained assassins who were part of Matthew's specialized group.

They were experts in covert operations and carried out tasks requiring high precision and discretion.

Simone was the leader and the most skilled among them. He was known for his ruthless nature and his ability to get the job done no matter what.

The rest of the team consisted of five men. They were all handpicked by Matthew himself and underwent intense training before becoming part of Simone's team. Each of them had a specific skill set that made them valuable assets to the group.

Their tasks were varied, ranging from taking out high-value targets to sabotaging rival factions and gathering intelligence. They were known in the underworld for their efficiency and their ability to carry out complex operations without leaving a trace.

However, since Erik wasn't part of the underworld, he didn't know that. However, he was sure that those guys were stronger than the ones they faced until that point.

Erik took a deep breath. "I think the best thing to do would be to hide here, rest and recuperate mana, and wait for Caiden's team," Erik said, breaking the silence.

"Are you sure about that?" Martha asked, her voice small.

"Yes," Erik said. "It's not like we have much of a choice," he added.

"What if they find us?" Gwen asked.

"We run, or we fight," the awakener replied. There was a moment of quiet determination that passed between them. They might not know how to move forward, but they knew they had to keep going.

He then asked, "Amber, any news about your father?"

"I called him five minutes ago, and he said his men were on their way. He also told me he contacted the clans and that they went to the club to save the hostages."

"Good," Floyd said. "At least we have good news."

"What about YOUR FATHER'S group?" Mikey then added.

"I told him to send them here; they should be here in ten minutes at most," she replied.

However, Jacob, Stella, and Enya weren't convinced and talked among themselves, trying not to be heard.

"Hey, do you think her father's group will actually come?" Jacob asked, his voice laced with uncertainty.

"I don't know," Stella replied, her voice tinged with frustration. "They promised to help us, but it's been an hour already, and there's still no sign of them."

Enya, who had been silent until now, spoke up for everyone. "Maybe we should try and find another way out of here. We can't just sit around and wait for them to save us."

"Do you have any suggestions, then?" Gwen asked, her eyebrows raised in curiosity.

"I don't know; maybe we could try to reach Amber's house? There's got to be a way," Enya said.

"Or we could try and find a way to contact someone closer. Maybe the police or something," she suggested again.

Erik, who had been lost in thought, finally spoke up as he was fed up with this suggestion. "Why are you fixated on the police? I already told you it is a bad idea; they are corrupt! We don't know who we can trust right now."

Floyd nodded in agreement. "He's right. We can't risk getting caught by the wrong people."

Stella's face turned red angrily, and her eyes narrowed into slits as she glared at Floyd. Her hands were balled into fists at her sides, and she stepped forward, leaning into him.

"Always better than to wait for our deaths like this," she replied, clearly agreeing with Enya's suggestion.

Silence descended upon the group once more as they contemplated their options. A couple of minutes went by, but Stella was getting increasingly agitated.

The fact that Caiden's group still hadn't arrived made her more and more nervous by the minute.

She stood up from where she had been sitting, pacing back and forth, her fists clenched tightly by her sides.

"Where the hell are they?!" Stella snapped, her voice shaking with anger.

"We're sitting ducks here, waiting for them to come and save us!"

Erik tried to calm her down. "Stella, we need to keep calm and avoid shouting."

"Don't you dare tell me to calm down!" Stella interrupted, her voice rising in anger. "We're in this mess because of you. Weren't you the one supposed to find a solution to this mess? Wasn't the whole plan to rescue our parents your work? We wouldn't be in this situation if it weren't for you!"

Amber jumped in, defending Erik. "Stella, that's not fair. Erik did the best he could. We wouldn't even have had the chance to free your parents if it wasn't for his plan."

Stella turned her attention towards Amber, her eyes blazing with anger. "Yes, but my mother died regardless, and she wasn't the only one. Not only parents, brothers, and sisters, but even our friends!" The girl shouted.

"Anderson, Luisa, Serena, and Darragh. They are all dead!"

"This is not Erik's fault, Stella; you know it!" Amber replied.

"FUUUCK! We should have never gone to that club in the first place!" Stella replied.

Amber's face fell as she tried to come up with a response. "We did what we could, Stella," Floyd said. "What's done has been done now," he added.

"Oh, fuck off, Floyd," Stella snapped. "I agreed only because I thought Amber's father's team would come soon.

That didn't happen, and now we're stuck here, waiting for some murderers to come and kill us all, hoping that a group of strangers will come and save us. What if they don't come? What if they're not enough? What then?"

Erik tried to reason with Stella. "We have to trust that Caiden's group will come. We just have to hold out until they arrive."

"SHUT UP, PLANT HUGGER!"

"You don't know what you're doing, Stella," Erik spat. "You're risking all of our lives with your foolish act. We need to stick together, stay silent, and be calm, and you're acting like a damn child."

Amber stepped forward, trying to diffuse the situation. "Guys, please," she said, her voice soft. "We don't need to fight amongst ourselves. We're all scared and worried. We need to focus on staying alive and getting out of here."

The tension in the room was palpable, and the rest of the group watched nervously as the argument played out. Gwen took a step forward, her voice firm. "Guys, this isn't helping anyone," she said.

The words seemed to have an effect, and the group slowly began to calm down. But the tension still hung in the air, and it was clear that the argument had left a rift between Erik and Stella. Not that he really cared about her.

He didn't have a good relationship with her at school, which wasn't good now, either.

As they settled back into silence, the fear and uncertainty of their situation washed over them once more. They all knew that their time was running out, and they needed to devise a plan before it was too late.

Simone and his men fanned out across the eastern district, moving swiftly and with purpose. They scanned the faces of passersby, scrutinized alleyways and side streets, and kept a keen eye out for any signs of the kids.

As they made their way deeper into the district, Simone's men became more and more vigilant, their senses on high alert for any sign of the kids around these parts.

Matthew's hound knew that Erik, the nation's only awakener, had a secret. Not only was he an awakener, but he had more than the two powers he should have had for some weird reason. He couldn't understand how all of that was possible.

As they moved through the streets, they passed abandoned buildings, boarded-up shops, and rundown houses.

Simone's men checked every possible hiding place, looking for signs of the Red Palace students, who could have ended up only in the eastern district.

He would have hidden in one of the abandoned buildings around these parts if he were in their shoes.

Simone was leading the search, his gaze scanning the area with laser-like intensity. He was determined to find the kids, no matter what it took.

As they approached a particularly rundown area of the district, Simone's men spread out, covering as much ground as possible. They moved silently, their footsteps muffled by the damp, grimy streets.

Suddenly, one of Simone's men spotted movement in the shadows ahead and communicated this over the radio. Soon, Simone arrived there and crept forward to see what the guy saw, his hand hovering over his weapon.

As he drew closer, he could see the faint outline of a figure in the darkness. He approached cautiously, his senses on high alert.

When he got close enough to see who it was, he saw that it was the kids they had been searching for. They looked tired and worn out, hiding inside a building, as he had predicted.

Chapter 339: The Chase (12)

Simone and his five men entered the abandoned building, their eyes scanning the dimly lit hallway. As they quietly pushed open the creaky door, they saw a dark interior as the only light source came from the small cracks in the boarded-up windows or roof.

Dusty cobwebs hung from the ceiling, and the floorboards creaked with every step. The air was thick with a musty scent that suggested years of disuse. Moonlight streamed in from the few holes in the roof, casting uneven beams of light on the cracked floor.

The walls were covered in peeling paint, revealing the bare brickwork underneath. The few windows were boarded up, allowing only slivers of light to filter in.

As Simone and his men moved deeper into the building, they could see it was divided into several small rooms.

Each was empty except for a few furniture scraps, such as a broken chair or a rusted metal cabinet, and there were also some with machinery, tools, and empty wooden crates suggesting this place had been a kind of workshop.

The sound of their footsteps echoed through the abandoned building, making it difficult to distinguish the source of the noise.

They cautiously navigated through the maze-like corridors, searching for any signs of the kids.

They found an ample open space when they reached the center of the building. It appeared to have once been a common area.

Simone's eyes narrowed as he surveyed the area. He saw the kids here, so he was sure they were hiding somewhere in the building, but he couldn't find any signs of them on the first floor.

The thug's eyes darted around the room, scanning every corner for movement. His men did the same, carefully checking each room and hallway.

They moved silently, their footsteps muffled by the debris on the ground. The only sound was the creaking of the old floorboards beneath their feet.

Simone gestured for his men to split up and search different rooms. He moved cautiously, his hand resting on the hilt of his knife. He had a feeling that they were close.

Simone couldn't help but feel a growing obsession with capturing Erik after he saw the kid using more than the two powers he should have had. That also meant that he was going to kill his henchmen since he didn't want to share the secret with them once they learned it.

They were loyal but greedy, and he couldn't trust them to stay silent. There was something special about the boy—something that could make him powerful beyond his wildest dreams, and sharing wasn't his forte.

He had already told them he wanted to capture the kid, and it was clear to his men that Simone wanted to learn how to use more powers from Erik.

The thugs had previously noticed that weird phenomenon, which Simone confirmed once they asked him about it. They were curious as to how that was possible while he imagined what he could do with the secret Erik possessed.

He could finally take control of the city and become the most powerful person in the entire nation. The thought made his heart race with excitement.

Simone's eyes scanned the dark interior of the abandoned building, taking in the layers of dust and cobwebs that adorned every surface.

The air was thick with the musty scent of disuse, and the floorboards creaked ominously under his weight.

At that moment, his eyes caught a glimpse of movement from the corner of his eye. He quickly signaled to his men, and they crept toward the source of the movement.

As they turned the corner, they came face-to-face with Erik and the others. Simone's men immediately raised their weapons, ready to take down the kids. But Simone held up his hand, motioning for his men to stand down.

The thugs' leader entered the room in which the kids were waiting without any concern, and he stared at Erik.

"Well, well, well, what do we have here?" He said it with a smug grin on his face. "It seems like we've caught ourselves some little rats hiding in the shadows."

The kids' faces were a mix of terror and disbelief as Simone and his thugs barged into the room; how they managed to find them was a mystery. They had been hiding, hoping they wouldn't be discovered, but their luck had seemed to run out.

Stella's eyes were wide with fear, her breaths coming in short gasps as she clutched onto Enya's arm for support. Jacob's fists were clenched, his jaw set in a determined line as he tried to hide his fear.

But amidst all the chaos, Erik remained calm. His face was stoic, his eyes flickering with a cold determination as he stared down Simone and his thugs.

Simone noticed this; the contrast between the other kids' expressions and Erik's calm demeanor was stark, and it only served to increase his need to capture the kid, as that meant he didn't fear them.

Despite the fear gripping their hearts, the kids looked to Erik for guidance. They knew that he was their best chance of survival and trusted him implicitly.

As Simone and his thugs advanced toward them, Erik didn't back down or flinch, even as Simone drew closer and closer to him.

The tension in the room was palpable, and it seemed like the slightest wrong move could set off a chain reaction that would be disastrous for all of them.

Gwen glared at the man, her fists clenching and an ashen look on her face. "Get ready to fight!" she shouted, and she and the others went into a fighting stance.

Simone laughed: "Spare me the fight, will you? You couldn't do much before; what makes you think you can do so, no?"

"So, we should just let you kill us without complaining?" Enya interjected, her voice shaking. "We did nothing to you; why are you doing this?"

Simone raises an eyebrow. "It doesn't matter if you did; the boss wants you dead, and since I've already lost a lot of time because of you, I'm upset, to be honest. Is there a chance you will spare me the trouble and stay put?" Then his men went past him and put themselves in a single row, preventing the kids from escaping through the door.

Erik stepped forward. "I don't think we will," Erik said. The look on his face was enough to tell Simone that he wasn't going to give up without a fight. Simone smirked, knowing that this was going to be a fun little game of cat and mouse.

"Hello, Erik," he said calmly, looking at the kids. "I've been looking for you."

Erik didn't flinch. He just stared at Simone, his expression unreadable. "What do you want?" Erik asked. "There's nothing here for you," he added with a cold glint in his eyes.

Simone laughed, his eyes gleaming with malice. "Oh, I don't believe that for a second," he said. "We saw what you did already." Erik's eyes narrowed.

As Simone and Erik were talking, Jacob couldn't help but ask. He had a feeling that something wasn't right.

"What is he talking about?" he asked Erik.

Erik didn't reply; he knew at least Simone noticed his powers and his men likely did too.

Simone took a step closer, his weapon still pointed at him. "Oh, you are going to play the silent card, uh?"

Erik didn't back down. He just stood there, staring at Simone with a cold, steely gaze. Simone knew he was in for a fight but didn't care. He was willing to do whatever it took to capture Erik, as he held the secret to absolute power.

"What is he talking about, Erik?" Amber interjected, too, her eyes shifting from Erik to Simone. Floyd and Mikey looked at each other. It was clear Amber and the others weren't going to say anything, but Jacob, Stella, and Enya would likely do it. Letting them know was a risk.

Simone turned to Amber, a sly grin spreading across his face. "Just discussing some business, little lady," he replied, his tone dripping with condescension. Gwen stepped forward; her arms crossed over her chest. "What kind of business?" she demanded.

Simone's grin widened. "Oh, it is not me you should ask this, but your friend over there, but it is not something you should care about. I said what I said just because I want to let Erik be aware," he said, casting a sidelong glance at the awakener.

The awakener scowled at Simone, his fists clenching at his sides. "You may know, but so what? It's not like you can do the same."

Simone chuckled. "Really? What if that is not true?"

"Well, I mean, I know you can't," Erik replied, but Simone's face twisted in a scowl.

"You are making a bad choice, kid," the thug replied. "I suggest you tell me how to do it if you don't want to suffer," he said, sneering.

The man and his thugs took a step forward, and the tension in the room grew even thicker. The air was heavy with anticipation, and Simone could practically taste the fear emanating from the kids.

Chapter 340: The Chase (13)

"If this is what you want to do, then you leave me no choice," Simone told Erik.

At that moment, the man lunged forward with his dagger, aiming for Erik's stomach. But the awakener was quick to parry the attack with his Flyssa.

The two men circled each other warily, waiting for an opening. However, this time, Erik didn't care anymore about hiding.

It was clear that Simone and his men knew his secret, and since some of his friends did too, it was useless to hide it anymore.

Holding back his powers didn't make any sense at that point, and he channeled mana through his multiple neural links.

Simone struck again, this time aiming for Erik's head. The young man sidestepped the attack and swung his Flyssa in a wide arc, but the thug was ready. He blocked the strike with his dagger, easily doing so thanks to his higher strength, then kicked Erik in the stomach, sending him stumbling backward.

Erik regained his footing and swung his Flyssa in a tight circle, forcing Simone to back away. But the man wasn't deterred. He took his chance and lunged forward again. However, Erik used his bone-manipulating power to try to skew the man, who avoided the attack but got almost impaled since he didn't expect that power.

"Amazing!" The men shouted in glee. "THIS IS AMAZING!" he added. The greed in his heart surging.

It was then that Simone charged again and attacked. The two men continued to exchange blows, their weapons ringing against each other in a deadly dance. Of course, Erik was having a lot of problems due to the difference in stats, he got hit more often than not but thanks to the metalization and the mana exoskeleton powers he managed to avoid accumulating more wounds.

Though, he was using a lot of mana.

Simone was fast and agile, darting in and out of range with his dagger, while Erik relied on his multiple powers. He used the bone-manipulating brain crystal power to project some bones in order to impale the thug.

That meant that Simone had to pay attention not only to Erik's flyssa but also to the bones coming out of his body. It wasn't easy to do that since it was like he was getting shot every time, and evading the attacks wasn't simple especially at point blank.

Amber looked at the scene unfolding and was left flabbergasted. Her eyes widened in shock as she watched Erik's display of power. She wasn't aware that he could do that; it was something no one had ever been able to do.

Her mind raced as she tried to make sense of what she was seeing. Had Erik been hiding this power all along? Or had he only just discovered it? Either way, it was clear that he was in complete control of it.

She watched in awe as he put up a tough fight against a man much stronger than him. Who no kid his age would have been able to face.

Now Simone's previous speech made sense. It was true that he hid this from her, despite her being his girlfriend.

Simone feinted to the left, then lunged to the right, aiming for Erik's chest. But the awakener was ready. He twisted his body to the side, narrowly avoiding the attack, and counterattacked with a powerful bone thrust.

The thug blocked the move, and he launched himself forward, his dagger flying. Erik deflected the blows with his Flyssa, but the man was relentless and attacked again.

He was like a wild animal, all teeth and claws, fighting with a ferocity that left Erik struggling to keep up.

The man, though, was excited by what he was seeing. Erik was fighting equally against him and was using more powers at the same time. He was aware Erik should have still been at the RHO level with one power, meaning that he was exerting the strength of at least a NI ranked individual while being at the lower levels of the power spectrum. That was incredible.

Simone felt Erik's mana swirling inside of him, and he found out he was using at least three brain crystal powers simultaneously: the sharpening one, Nathaniel's, and the bone manipulating. Of course, he didn't know what Erik was precisely using.

"HAHAHAHAHAH! That is amazing! Amazing!" Simone said.

As the man was absorbed by what he was seeing, Erik saw an opening and lunged forward, his Flyssa aimed at Simone's heart. At the same time, he was thrusting multiple bone spears at him, and the thug found himself forced to avoid them.

He sidestepped one thrust, then another, and so on. The attacks missed their marks but at least gave Erik the chance of wounding him.

Simone quickly rolled on the ground and then kicked Erik on the side of the knee, sending him tumbling to the ground.

The thug lunged forward, his dagger aimed at Erik's shoulder. The man couldn't risk Erik dying before he said how he was able to use more than one power.

The awakener saw Simone's arm aiming at him, and without hesitation, he spun his flyssa in a defensive maneuver.

The blade met the dagger with a loud clang, sending sparks flying. Erik's arm trembled with the force of the impact, but he held firm, pushing back against Simone's attack. Erik projected some bones to jump back on his feet and quickly backed away.

The thug couldn't help but feel impressed with Erik's fighting skills. The young man was holding his own despite being outpowered and facing an opponent who should have been stronger than him.

Simone had expected the boy to be a challenge once he learned the kid had multiple powers, but he had not anticipated just how skilled he was.

"Looks like you're not just all talk, Erik," Simone taunted, grinning maliciously. "I can see how you were able to survive at the club."

Erik didn't respond; his eyes focused intently on the thug as he prepared for the next move. He knew he couldn't afford to let his guard down for even a second if he wanted to come out of this fight alive.

The two warriors started circling each other, waiting for an opening. Simone struck again, this time aiming for Erik's leg, but the awakener used his bone-manipulating power, conjoined to his metalization one, and blocked the attack. Then he countered with his blade.

The sword grazed Simone's arm, drawing a thin line of blood. Simone grimaced but did not waver.

This time, he aimed for Erik's shoulder, since there was already a wound there and he wanted to increase the damage, maybe cripple him.

Erik was too slow to completely avoid the attack this time, and wasn't even ready to block it with his other powers, so he raised his arm and brought his flyssa in the dagger's trajectory, parrying the blow with his sword, but the force of Simone's attack sent him reeling.

He stumbled backward and nearly lost his balance. The thug saw the opening and charged forward, his dagger poised to strike.

Erik recovered just in time to block the attack, but the strength behind it was massive. The young man had to pump a lot of mana through his neural links and create a concussive force that helped him block the move.

<Fuck... This is not good...> the young man said as he saw his mana severely decrease.

Consequently, he created a shock wave under his feet so that he could get away from the man.

He stepped on the ground with his left leg, pushed himself forward with a quick ankle movement powered by Nathaniel's power, and drew his blade in a quick and short arc.

Erik got in front of Simone in an instant, but the blade cut through the air, slicing through Simone's coat. The man tried to retaliate but due to the momentum Erik carried, he was already on top of him.

He slammed his good shoulder into Simone's chest, knocking the wind out of him and sending him crashing to the floor.

"You fucking kid!" Simone shouted. "I will make you pay!" he added. The thug quickly stood on his two feet after a quick somersault. He went into a fighting stance and swung his dagger again, trying to stab the kid.

Amber, Gwen, and Jacob watched in horror as the two men fought. They were terrified and unsure of what to do.

The two men continued to exchange blows, neither gaining a clear advantage. The room was filled with the sound of clashing steel and the grunts of exertion, not only coming from Erik and Simone's clash but everyone else's.

It was incredible; what the kid did was incredible, something no one had ever replicated before.

Simone lunged forward with his dagger, aiming for Erik's chest. But the awakener quickly sidestepped the attack and slashed his Flyssa across Simone's forearm.

Blood spurted from the wound, but Simone didn't even flinch for the pain. Instead, seeing what Erik could do pumped his excitement.

"HAHAHAHA, I CAN'T WAIT TO SEE HOW STRONG I WILL BE ONCE I LEARN HOW TO DO THIS!" Simone said, his voice high and dangerous.

Simone darted forward again, his dagger flashing in the room's dim light. Erik tried to parry the attack, but the dagger slipped past his guard and sliced across his cheek. He grunted in pain, feeling the blood trickle down his face.

Matthew's hound chuckled darkly. "You're not as strong as you think, kid. Maybe you should've taken my offer when you had the chance. I could have killed you without making you suffer."

Erik gritted his teeth, his eyes blazing with fury. "I'll die before telling you anything!"

Simone laughed again, his eyes glittering with amusement. "Well, then, it looks like you'll suffer for a long time, Erik. Along with your friends."

With that, Simone launched into another attack, his dagger flashing in the air. Erik braced himself for the impact, determined to fight until his last breath.