

BIOLOGICAL 39

Chapter 39: Hole in the barrier (2)

The young man approached the edge of the invisible barrier, the air shimmering slightly with its presence. Beyond it, a golden sea of wheat swayed gently in the breeze, an undulating blanket of gold stretching to the horizon.

The sun cast a warm glow over the field, igniting the tips of the wheat stalks into a fiery amber. Erik paused for a moment to take in the sight, the tranquility of the scene belying the tension of his hunt.

With a deep breath, he stepped through the barrier, the change almost imperceptible but for a slight static charge that prickled his skin. Fortuitously, the field was deserted, granting him a moment of reprieve.

He began his trek back toward civilization, each step creating a soft crunch as he disturbed the sea of wheat, leaving a trail of bent stalks in his wake.

As Erik wove through the towering grains that brushed against his palms with a whispering sound, his mind raced with thoughts of the barrier and its gaping flaw—a massive hole that had somehow escaped the military's vigilant eyes.

The wheat field waved and rustled around him, a living maze that seemed to absorb his quiet wonder and confusion about the unseen breach in security.

How could such a vulnerability exist so close to something so meticulously monitored?

Erik found himself at a crossroads of decision, torn by the tempting prospects and lurking dangers that lay before him.

The allure of harnessing more power was strong; the opportunity to slay lesser thaids and harvest their brain crystals to amplify his abilities was an enticing one. Each crystal held the promise of untold strength, a siren call to his ambitious spirit.

Yet, the weight of risk shadowed his eagerness. Venturing beyond the city's protective embrace meant gambling with his life—a life he knew was backed by limited experience in the treacherous wilds.

This realization anchored his enthusiasm, breeding a hesitance within him. To step outside the city's bounds was to dance with fate, and Erik couldn't shake off the prudence that whispered caution in his ear.

Erik's heart pounded with a mix of trepidation and resolve as he whispered to himself, "If I surrender to my fears, I'll achieve nothing... It's time to face them. I owe it to myself; I owe it to the future I yearn for."

Fuelled by this newfound tenacity, he continued his journey through the whispering wheat, each step carrying him closer to his destiny. The golden grains waved him a silent farewell as he stepped onto the rough, untamed path that led away from the field.

As he reached the beginning of the dirt road, his breath caught with a mixture of relief and anticipation. "I'm finally here," he breathed out, allowing himself a moment of pride for overcoming the inertia of his fears.

With the farm of Mister Fox now within reach, Erik slowed his pace, reflecting on his progress. He paused a solitary figure against the sprawling farmland, and delved inward to assess his status, seeking to understand the full measure of his capabilities before continuing on his quest.

[Host Information]

NAME: Erik Romano

AGE: 16

SYSTEM LEVEL: 3

POWER LEVEL: 16

EXPERIENCE: 0/265

DNA POINTS: 120

HEALTH: 220/220

MANA: 20/150

{Attributes}

STRENGTH: 9

INTELLIGENCE: 7

DEXTERITY: 5

ENERGY: 6

Available Attributes point: 5

[Powers]

{Biological Super Computer Powers}

-Brain Crystal Manipulation

-Brain Crystal Power Extraction

(Allows the absorption of the brain crystal, making the host able to gain the power contained within.
Notice: the DNA must be changed to allow the body to use the power. See DNA extraction.)

- (LOCKED)

- (LOCKED)

- (LOCKED)

- Brain Crystal Power Strengthening

(Allows the gaining of the energy attribute points)

-DNA Manipulation

-DNA Extraction

(Allows the absorption of foreign DNA, making the host able to replicate it inside his own body.
Notice: Changing the DNA is a slow process, and it is required to use new brain crystal powers.)

- (LOCKED)

- (LOCKED)

- (LOCKED)

DNA Strengthening

(Allows the gaining of the Strength, Intelligence, and Dexterity attribute points)

- Analysis

(Gives the host information about his surroundings, plants, creatures, and ores)

-Brain Information Injector

(It allows the injection of information directly to the brain-Based on touch)

-Device Manipulation

(Allows the Host to manipulate electronic and mana-driven devices- Based on touch)

{Host's Powers}

-Rapid Growth [Plants] (Eσ2E-Ranked)

(Allows the host to make Plants Grow Faster)

-Sharpening (Eσ1D-Ranked)

(Makes Everything sharper according to the quantity of mana imbued into the item or body part)

{Skills}

-Kyokar hand-to-hand style (BEGINNER)

(A military fighting style developed in Frant)

He now found himself with five attribute points at his disposal, yet he was uncertain where to allocate them. Enhancing his strength would bolster his muscular build, yielding greater power and swiftness.

Opting to upgrade his dexterity would render him more nimble, refining his hand-eye coordination significantly. This would prove beneficial in his training, simplifying the process of mimicking the maneuvers from the instructional videos he had gained.

Investing in energy would bolster both his vitality and his mana reserves—resources he direly needed, considering his starting levels were notably deficient.

But what about intelligence? It wasn't clear to him what it exactly did.

<System, what would happen if I increase intelligence? It is not clear.>.

[HUMAN INTELLIGENCE IS A COMPLEX ARRAY OF MENTAL CAPABILITIES. IT ENTAILS THE ABILITY TO LEARN FROM EXPERIENCES, ADAPT TO NEW CHALLENGES, UNDERSTAND ABSTRACT CONCEPTS, AND UTILIZE KNOWLEDGE TO INFLUENCE THE SURROUNDING WORLD. MY ANALYSIS INDICATES THAT INTELLIGENCE IS CRUCIAL FOR ANTICIPATING FUTURE EVENTS AND FORMULATING EFFECTIVE STRATEGIES.

IT INVOLVES EMOTIONAL INSIGHT AND SELF-PERCEPTION, WHICH ARE VITAL FOR MANAGING SOCIAL RELATIONS AND PERSONAL REFLECTION.]

The system took a couple of seconds. To process the info, or maybe because it was simply hesitating.

[I RECOGNIZE THAT ENHANCING INTELLIGENCE CAN TRANSFORM BEHAVIOR IN VARIOUS WAYS. IT'S IMPORTANT TO REALIZE THAT GREATER INTELLIGENCE DOESN'T AUTOMATICALLY EQUATE TO BETTER DECISION-MAKING, AS BIASES CAN STILL SWAY EVEN THE MOST INTELLIGENT AMONG US. FURTHER, EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE HAS A PROFOUND EFFECT ON SOCIAL INTERACTIONS.

INDIVIDUALS WITH HIGH LEVELS OF EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE TYPICALLY EXHIBIT STRONGER RELATIONSHIP SKILLS AND ARE MORE ADEPT IN SOCIAL SETTINGS, DEMONSTRATING ENHANCED EMPATHY AND AN ACUTE ABILITY TO INTERPRET EMOTIONS. ON THE FLIP SIDE, EXCEPTIONALLY HIGH IQS SOMETIMES CORRELATE WITH INCREASED ANXIETY AND SOCIAL DISCOMFORT WHICH MAY MANIFEST AS CLUMSY SOCIAL BEHAVIOR.

THIS OFTEN RESULTS FROM AN OVERLY KEEN AWARENESS OF SOCIAL EXPECTATIONS AND AN INTENSIVE SCRUTINY OF SOCIAL NUANCES, WHICH CAN PROVE TOO INTENSE FOR SOME. SO YES, IT CAN CHANGE YOUR BEHAVIOR.]

"Fuck..."

Enhanced intelligence would undoubtedly sharpen Erik's cognitive abilities, allowing him to absorb and recall information with greater ease.

Yet, with his biological supercomputer, his capacity to store knowledge had become virtually limitless.

The thought of amplifying his intelligence had brought a measure of trepidation.

Erik knew that such an increase could have fundamentally altered his thought processes, leaving the essence of who he was hanging in the balance.

This internal conflict had left him uncertain; boosting his intelligence might have transformed him into someone unrecognizable.

However, this metamorphosis wasn't necessarily negative. The benefits of heightened intelligence—faster learning, improved memory, superior reasoning—were clear, but they also came with potential drawbacks, including the risk of feeling alienated from his former self and from others.

Without a definitive answer, he resolved to experiment by adding just one point to his intelligence. This minor change, he surmised, would be a safe trial to assess the impact of enhancing his cognitive abilities.

He resolved to enhance all his attributes, ensuring he'd be quicker, more nimble, more intelligent, and more robust in confronting the thaids beyond the barrier.

To achieve this, he strategically allocated two points to dexterity for improved quickness in training, one point to intelligence as an initial test, and one point each to strength and energy, fortifying his overall prowess.

Upon allocating the points, Erik immediately felt a surge of vitality coursing through his veins. His muscles tensed with newfound strength, and every movement was imbued with a swifter, more fluid grace, a testament to his increased dexterity.

However, for the single point he had cautiously assigned to intelligence, the change was imperceptible. Perhaps boosting intelligence needed a larger investment to yield noticeable results, or maybe the subtleties of cognitive enhancement were not as easily discerned by the mind they affected. Erik was unsure.

With no clear signs of heightened intellect, he put the quandary aside and continued his journey towards Mister Fox's farm.

Erik reached Mister Fox's farm, the familiar sight of the man among his fields greeting him. He raised his hand in a casual wave. Mister Fox, spotting him, paused and grinned, his voice carrying across the distance. "Quite the leisurely pace today?"

"Morning, Mister Fox," Erik's voice carried a note of sarcasm as he returned the greeting.

The farmer leaned on his hoe, eyes narrowing with a mix of curiosity and amusement. "Something's different about you... a lighter air?"

Erik met his gaze, an earnest nod accompanying his confession. "I've kept it quiet, but somehow I found out I'm an awakener."

The weight of his admission hung between them for a breath. Erik searched Mister Fox's face for a sign, unsure if his revelation would build a bridge or a barrier.

"You are what?"

"An awakener..." Erik replied.

"Are you kidding me? YOU, an awakener?"

"Is it so hard to believe it?" Erik asked. Erik bristled with irritation at the persistent underestimation from those around him.

It grated on him, this notion that he was unworthy of improvement, of fortune's favor. Why was it so inconceivable that he, too, might one day catch a lucky break? He didn't voice his frustration.

Mister Fox's eyebrows lifted, his stance softened. "I didn't mean it that way," he offered, his voice warmer, a rare note of concern threading through.

Mister Fox shifted his weight, curiosity in his gaze. "Have the military scouts approached you already?"

"Just yesterday, they tested my power," Erik confessed, his fingers drumming a nervous rhythm against his arm.

"And the result?" Mister Fox leaned in, interest piquing.

"Eσ1D."

Mister Fox's expression tightened, his concern etching deeper lines across his forehead. "An E on the Ferebitz scale? For an awakened, that's... unusual."

Erik's posture stiffened, his chin lifting ever so slightly. The unspoken disappointment hung heavy between them.

He let out a slow breath, trying to mask his frustration. "True, it's not ideal, but my power ranks D on the Jorm scale. It's decent at least. With more neural links, mana won't be an issue for me anymore."

Mister Fox's frown eased into a thoughtful look, the corners of his mouth relaxing as he considered Erik's words.

"Yeah. Always better than growing plants. You know, your power would have been desirable 300 years ago, but now... with our technology..."

"Despite everything, I'm happy," Erik said.

"If you say so. What is your power, anyway?" He asked.

Erik's lips curved into a half-smile, a hint of pride flickering across his face. "I can sharpen anything."

The farmer's eyes widened slightly, interest piqued. "Useful skill. Care to show?"

Erik nodded. "Sure, let's find something suitable."

Erik reached for a branch, remnants of yesterday's conjuring, and focused. The branch honed to a fine edge under his touch. With a swift motion, he tested it against the fence, leaving a clear mark.

"Looks like you've got a knack for this, kiddo. Now, put it to good use."

The words landed heavily, dimming the light in Erik's eyes. He had hoped for a glimmer of pride, not practicality from a man he knew for a lot.

"Sure," Erik's response came out flat, his excitement now a wisp of smoke.

Mister Fox peered at him, changing tack. "You're due back at school soon, aren't you?"

"Yes, back to school at eighteen," Erik confirmed, his voice steady but distant.

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Erik and Mister Fox toiled in the fields, the sun charting their progress. When school beckoned, the old man handed Erik his earnings, and with a nod, the young man departed from the farm.

At the train station, Erik claimed his usual spot by the window, watching as rolling fields surrendered to the encroaching cityscape.

Returning to the western district, he stepped onto familiar school grounds. Around him, students honed their strength, others melded minds with their brain crystals, while laughter echoed from club gatherings.

Erik made his way to the gym, crossing paths with Nathaniel and his entourage. He kept to himself as his past experiences with Nathaniel's unpleasant demeanor were enough to steer clear of him and avoid unnecessary confrontations he had had enough of.

Their eyes met briefly as they brushed past one another, yet Nathaniel continued on, silent as Erik.

In the gym's changing room, Erik swapped his attire for workout gear. Entering the hall, he spotted Floyd, Amber, and Gwen. Amber caught his eye, smiling and gesturing for him to join them.

Amber's eyes lit up as Erik approached. "Hi, Erik!"

He managed a small smile in return. "Hey, Amber."

Erik shifted on his feet. Her warm greeting stirred a subtle unease within him because of his unfamiliarity with these feelings.

The respite of friendly banter with Amber was a rare treat for Erik. He offered her a genuine smile, maintaining a courteous demeanor as they spoke.

Their conversation, light and tentative, was cut short by Professor McAllister's brisk approach.

"Finished?" His voice was firm, expectation clear in his stance. "Time to begin. Erik, you're with me for training. The rest of you proceed as usual. And Amber, remember to spar after your drills."

"Yes, sir," they responded together, a chorus of readiness.

With that, the gym erupted into a symphony of movement, each student diving into their regimen. Erik joined the flow, his focus undisturbed until the mental chime of the hour pulled him back to the present.

[QUEST COMPLETE.]