

BIOLOGICAL 52

Chapter 52: Realization

"Sir, this isn't right," Erik said in protest. He restrained himself, knowing too well that raising his voice against his employer might cost him his job, but inside he was seething.

<This motherfucker! Thanks to my work, he earns a ton of money! >

"Don't act as though I haven't given you enough chances, Erik. This isn't your first time being late."

Erik fell silent, acknowledging the truth in Mister Fox's words. However, that wasn't easy. He had just killed three people and was still on edge, adrenaline coursing through his veins.

"Now, let's get to work, shall we?" Mister Fox said. His thoughts were interrupted.

"Yes, sir," Erik said.

He then proceeded to the fields Mister Fox had prepared the day before, lost in his thoughts during the entire journey. The events in the forest replayed in his mind. He had indeed taken three lives. His emotions were a tangled web - relief at the demise of the bullies mixed with a sense of unease. He would not say he regretted doing what he did, but killing three people wasn't something light.

Besides, it was the first time he did something like that, and it felt weird.

More than anything, he hoped there was no way they could link the murders to him.

Mister Fox, observing Erik's unusual demeanor, sensed something amiss. He knew Erik wasn't particularly talkative, but today's silence was too much, even for him.

"Is something bothering you, Erik?" Mister Fox believed the pay cut was the issue.

"Nothing, sir," Erik said.

The realization that he had ended three lives in a cold, calculated manner was dawning on him now that the adrenaline was waning. He felt as if he was losing a part of himself, straying from the person he once was.

Erik's turmoil was not limited to a single emotion; he also grappled with a sense of loss, as if Logan and the others had stripped him of his innocence.

<There is no point in thinking about this. I did what I had to do. Let's just hope these things won't happen again. >

Upon reaching the fields, Erik channeled mana through his body almost mechanically. This action electric feeling through him, making the hairs on his neck bristle.

The pressure he usually felt while channeling mana now intensified, a change Erik attributed to his increased energy points. That was probably the result of his larger mana pool, a welcomed change.

The performance of brain crystal powers were closely linked to the amount of mana an individual could control. The greater the mana, the greater the effects, but it was the number of neural links that allowed a finer control. He still had a few of them, and in fact, he couldn't do much. However, he was surprised how greater the effects of mana on his body were.

Erik continued to channel an unprecedented amount of mana, more than he had ever handled before. When he could no longer maintain the flow, he directed it towards the ground, releasing the pent-up energy within.

A familiar wave of heat enveloped him, the air growing warm and moist, filling his senses with the earthy aroma of vegetation. He couldn't control plants, but seeing them grow was great. Erik also noticed his range increased because of the greater amount of mana he could push out of his brain crystal.

However, Erik had gravely misjudged his newfound strength. In mere seconds, he stimulated significant growth in Mister Fox's fields for a 30 meters radius, a feat that previously he could achieve only in different attempts.

As Erik's power took effect, a dense growth of vegetation sprouted before him, transforming the area into a miniature jungle. He stood there, marveling at the extent of his newfound abilities.

Mister Fox, observing from a distance, wore an expression of utter astonishment. He had never seen Erik do what he just did. The scale of the plant growth was unprecedented; what used to reach a maximum of a couple of meters now towered several meters high, bearing fruits of extraordinary size.

While Approaching a tree influenced by Erik's power, Mister Fox plucked a fruit and took a bite.

"What the hell?"

The sweetness of the fruit was overwhelming, far surpassing that of the normal harvest or even the produce Erik had cultivated before. Its size dwarfed any fruit Erik had previously grown.

Soon, another tree rose, followed by more, until the field was dotted with dozens of new trees as Erik roamed around. The young man continued. Other elements of flora, such as flowers and bushes, flourished, thriving with no sunlight or water.

"Erik..." Mister Fox said, still processing the sheer magnitude of Erik's enhanced abilities.

"We're going to be rich..." His tone was laced with greed.

"We?" Confusion etched on Erik's face at Mister Fox's out of character words.

It was at that moment Mister Fox realized the importance of keeping Erik close. His abilities were too valuable. He knew he had to provide compelling reasons for Erik to remain employed under him.

"From today, I'll need you to focus only on using your power. I'll bring in more workers to harvest the crops," Mister Fox said. "And your pay will be fifty new dollars a day."

"Fifty new dollars?" Erik echoed, incredulous. He was aware of Mister Fox's opportunistic tendencies but had limited options, especially with school concluding in a few weeks and his upcoming military service after the summer.

His job with Mister Fox was almost like a part-time arrangement. It allowed him the freedom to train, attend school without issues, and didn't demand excessive hours.

If he started earning fifty dollars daily, it would equate to a full-time wage without the corresponding workload.

"Well, I mean, if you can grow this many things in so little time, you are making a huge contribution to the farm. It would be unfair to pay you less," Mister Fox said with a sheepish look.

Erik was staggered by what the older man was doing. That was not like him at all. 50 new dollars a day was a lot. It was the average salary for a worker. If that happened, he could afford a comfortable living without excessive effort. The only downside was his impending enrollment in military school post-summer.

<But these are still crumbs considering what he is already earning thanks to me. I should really start robbing ATMs. It would be more productive. >

For the next few hours, Erik assisted Mister Fox, moving soil, clearing rocks, and gathering vegetables.

"Ah, Mister Fox, once school's out, I'll start working early in the morning. Would that be alright with you?"

"That's fine, kid," Mister Fox responded, grinning. He was determined not to lose this unexpectedly lucrative asset.

With their tasks complete on the farm, Erik made his way back to the train station. On his journey, he passed the spot where Logan, Conal, and Orson had once pursued him.

Memories of the earlier events flooded Erik's mind. He recalled the terror in the eyes of the three men as he ended their lives. There was a fleeting sense of triumph in remembering their agonizing demise. Yet, this feeling was overshadowed by frustration. None of this was part of his original plans on how to live his life.

Erik shook his head, striving to banish these intrusive thoughts. He rationalized they had earned their fate, especially Logan, with his relentless bullying. Conal and Orson, while not as assholes like Logan, were no saints, either.

He knew it wasn't entirely justifiable to take a life in such a manner, but he also understood they would have never ceased their harassment, even with his awakening abilities.

The right and best thing to do would have been to send them to juvenile jail, but that was just a dream. Bullying was systemic, often overlooked by the authorities. People always brushed it off as "kids being kids."

In the past, he even told what happened to his teachers the previous years and nothing happened. He was unsure they didn't believe him or didn't care because of his poor status.

One thing was obvious, though: only when they had a fight in front of everyone did something happen, and only when there could be the chance he was an awakener. That wasn't right.

<Maybe, despite everything, this was the right decision... > he thought.

Upon reaching the train station, Erik stood near the tracks rather than sit on a bench. While Observing the crowd, he noticed several people waiting for the train and a few police officers on patrol.

The commotion he and the bullies had caused on the train, especially Logan shoving passengers aside in pursuit of him, seemed to have heightened security.

While boarding the train, Erik found his usual seat by the window, observing the scenery change along the way.

After having arrived at the western district's station, Erik exited and headed towards the school. Once there, he made his way to the gym where he encountered Gwen, Floyd, and Amber.

"Hi, Erik," Amber greeted cheerfully.

Preoccupied, Erik managed only a faint "Hi..." before moving to speak with Professor McAllister.

"Do you think something happened to him?" Floyd wondered aloud.

"I'm not sure," Gwen said, puzzled.

"Maybe he fought someone..." Amber said, brushing against the truth.

Erik's training session under Professor McAllister started, but even the notification of his completed quest did little to calm his mind.