

BIOLOGICAL 53

Chapter 53: Erik's anxiousness

"Erik!" Amber's voice broke through the hum of the gym as the training session wound down. Erik, his mind a maze of thoughts, wasn't quite ready to engage. Yet, he knew he had to mask his turmoil.

"Hey... Amber," he managed, forcing a smile that didn't quite reach his eyes. His voice, though gentle, carried an undercurrent of distraction.

Amber tilted her head, concern flickering in her eyes. "Something seems off. You rushed off this morning. What happened?"

Erik's mind raced for an excuse. "Ah, that? I had to speak with the teacher, so I was in a bit of a hurry," he said, his smile now tinged with feigned regret.

Her expression shifted to a playful pout. "All that rush just for a meeting? You could've at least said hi!"

Erik's smile wavered, sensing the genuine hurt in her tone. "Yeah... I'm really sorry about that," he said, his apology sincere yet still veiled by the need to hide his true feelings.

The others walked up to them at that point. As Gwen approached, her eyes narrowed with curiosity, Erik could feel her gaze probing for answers. He realized her suspicion.

<This isn't good...>

"Hey, Gwen! Floyd..." Erik greeted them, his voice trailing off slightly as he grappled internally for composure.

"Erik, you seemed in quite a hurry earlier. What was that about?" Floyd asked, joining the conversation with a casual interest.

Before Erik could respond, Amber interjected. "Oh, Erik just mentioned he had a meeting with a teacher. That's why he was rushing." Her smile seemed to ease the tension momentarily.

"Really? Which teacher was it?" Gwen pressed, her gaze still fixed on Erik.

Caught off guard by the direct question, Erik's eyes darted away briefly, a clear sign of his hesitation. He quickly gathered his thoughts, his expression shifting from uncertainty to a hastily constructed smile. "It was... um... Professor Barfield," he replied, hoping his response sounded convincing enough. "You know... I... hm... I'm... having some problems with math."

Gwen's gaze sharpened, a hint of suspicion creeping into her eyes as she observed Erik's uneasy demeanor. "I'm really sorry to hear about your struggles," she said, her tone firm, probing. "I'm actually quite good at math. How about I tutor you?"

Erik's discomfort was palpable. He shifted his weight from one foot to the other, avoiding eye contact. "Ah... no, no, that won't be necessary," he stammered, a strained smile crossing his face. "It's just work, you know? I just need a bit more time to study on my own."

Inside, Erik's mind was a whirl of tension, but he couldn't help a wry thought. <Guess I'm not winning any prize for this performance. I should work on it when I'm at home.> He could feel Gwen's piercing gaze attempting to unravel his hastily put together story, and he put on his best effort to appear nonchalant, despite the internal jest at his own expense.

"By the way, guys. I'm pretty tired. I came to school this morning, then to work and now i just ended our daily training with professor McAllister. Would you mind saying goodbye?"

"Don't worry, bro! We understand your struggles!"

"Thanks Floyd."

"All right. Try to get some rest once you are home, alright?" Amber sounded like his mom at that point.

"Yeah... Yeah. I will take care of myself. Probably order something to eat and then go to sleep." He smiled.

"Take care, Erik," Gwen said, staring at him.

"Yeah, bye..."

Then he left.

As Erik walked away, Gwen watched him intently, a thoughtful frown creasing her brow. She turned to Amber and Floyd, her voice low but firm. "I think Erik is hiding something."

Amber, ever the optimist, shook her head gently. "Why would you think that? What could he be hiding?"

Floyd, leaning against the wall, chimed in with a relaxed shrug. "Yeah. Gwen, we've got no reason to think that. he looked pretty normal to me. Besides, whatever it is, it's his business, not ours."

Gwen, however, remained unconvinced. Her eyes followed Erik's retreating figure towards the exit, her gaze deep and contemplative. There was something in Erik's manner, something beneath his hurried explanations and forced smiles that didn't sit right with her. She couldn't shake off the feeling that there was more to his story, a hidden layer.

Her stare lingered on the door long after Erik had disappeared through it, her mind racing with possibilities.

Upon stepping outside, Erik observed various students dispersing in different directions, none of whom he knew personally. His social circle was limited to Floyd, Gwen, and Amber. This stirred conflicting feelings within him.

On one hand, he found it somewhat disheartening that at sixteen, his list of friends was so short. Yet, on the other, he harbored a strong disdain for most of the people in Frant, nearly everyone, in fact, which made him indifferent to the idea of broadening his social network.

For most of his life, Erik had been accustomed to solitude, so the prospect of spending more time alone didn't particularly bother him.

Erik made his way to the train station, bound for the eastern district where his home was. As he traveled, a myriad of thoughts swirled in his mind. He knew he couldn't afford to waste time. There were pressing tasks at hand, primarily the absorption of the four brain crystal powers he had gained from his daily ordeal.

"System, how long will it take to absorb the four DNA samples and their powers?" Erik asked.

[INSUFFICIENT DNA POINTS TO EXTRACT ALL FOUR DNA SAMPLES AND POWERS HAVE BEEN DETECTED. PLEASE SELECT WHICH TO EXTRACT FIRST AND GAIN ADDITIONAL DNA POINTS FOR THE REMAINING.]

"Okay, then absorb all the DNA samples and the powers, except for the Lomalin's. How long will that take?" Erik asked again.

[NINE HOURS REQUIRED TO ABSORB THE SELECTED POWERS. WOULD YOU LIKE TO START THE PROCESS?]

"Yes, begin with the DNA extraction," Erik instructed. He braced himself for the pain he knew would accompany the procedure, but his resolve remained firm.

Before activating the AI powered device, Erik secured the door, switched off the lights, and reclined on his couch. He lay there, gazing at the ceiling. After ten minutes of waiting, impatience took over.

"Proceed." The extraction process and DNA change began ushering in the familiar onslaught of pain.

[INITIATING EXTRACTION OF LOGAN'S, CONAL'S, ORSON'S, AND THE LOMALIN'S DNA. 200 DNA POINTS DEBITED. EXTRACTION UNDERWAY. PLEASE LIE ON A BED FOR COMFORT.]

A sharp gasp escaped Erik's lips as he stifled his cries. To suppress his agony was a challenge. Each new DNA sample introduced an acute pain that pierced his brain before radiating throughout his body.

His ability to think dwindled, the room spinning around him. At the same time, a strange feeling emerged in his ears, adding to the overwhelming sensory experience.

Erik's hearing diminished, replaced by a ringing in his ears that developed within seconds, an unsettling sensation.

The pain, as was typical in such procedures, intensified, feeling akin to being engulfed in flames and enduring a pain similar to that of his organs being extracted from his body.

Tears streamed down his face, and Erik suppressed his screams, reducing them to hoarse, raspy whispers. After enduring some agonizing minutes, his body shook violently, signaling the gradual retreat of the pain as the process neared its end.

[PROCEDURE COMPLETE. HOST DNA NOW COMPATIBLE WITH LOGAN'S, CONAL'S, ORSON'S, AND THE LOMALIN'S BRAIN CRYSTAL POWERS.]

[SYSTEM READY. STARTING EXTRACTION OF LOGAN'S, CONAL'S, AND ORSON'S BRAIN CRYSTAL POWERS. 150 DNA POINTS DEBITED. 9 HOURS NEEDED FOR EXTRACTION COMPLETION. BEGINNING PROCEDURE. THE HOST IS ADVISED TO LAY ON A BED.]

As the system's announcement echoed in his mind, Erik struggled to regain his composure. A moment of confusion washed over him before he felt his consciousness slipping away. His eyelids grew heavy, closing under the system's influence.

For nine continuous hours, the extraction process unfolded. Throughout this time, Erik remained unconscious, oblivious to the transformative changes happening within his body.

When Erik came to, it was the morning of the following day. Opening his eyes, he was greeted by the familiar sight of his ceiling. Despite the extensive procedure, he felt no different, as if the extraction had never occurred. Then a new notification materialized before his eyes, drawing his attention.

[ALERT: FULL ACTIVATION OF CONAL'S POWER IN 10 DAYS.]¹

"Why? What's the delay for?" Erik queried, puzzled by the notification.

[CONAL'S POWER ENABLES THE USER TO ABSORB BEAST DNA. ITS COMPLEX NATURE REQUIRES EXTENDED TIME FOR COMPLETE ASSIMILATION.]

Realizing there was no immediate solution, Erik resigned himself to the waiting period necessary for the full integration of Conal's power.

"Well, the extraction must have been successful, despite this minor hiccup." While Erik felt no discernible change within, he was aware of the significant addition of three new abilities, with the fourth soon to follow. Yet, he sought confirmation.

"System, display my current status." In response, a blue and white translucent window materialized before his eyes.¹

[Host Information]

NAME: Erik Romano

AGE: 16

POWER LEVEL: 33

SYSTEM LEVEL: 9

EXPERIENCE: 1239/2116

DNA POINTS: 20

HEALTH: 540/540

MANA: 470/470

{Attributes}

STRENGTH: 15

INTELLIGENCE: 13

DEXTERITY: 12

ENERGY: 22

Available Attributes points: 0

{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 in order 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 unless more DNA points are provided, and it is required to use of 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 electrical and mana-driven devices. Based on touch)

[Host's Powers]

PLANT GROWING: 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)

POISONOUS MANA QUILLS: Eσ1E-RANKED (Create Ethereal Poisonous quills from the user's back. The amount of toxicity and the quill's length depends on the amount of mana used.)

VENOMOUS MANA DARTS: Eσ1E-RANKED (This ability enables the user to create and project mana darts infused with potent toxins. The effectiveness and lethality of these darts are directly proportional to the amount of mana channeled into their creation.)

SHAPESHIFTING: Eσ1A-RANKED (This skill allows the user to transform their physical form into that of other creatures. The prerequisite for each transformation is the prior absorption of its specific DNA, unlocking the ability to assume its form.)

BONE MANIPULATION: Eσ1E-RANKED (This power grants the user the capacity to control and change their skeletal structure. It includes the ability to enhance the density, size, and form of the bones, as well as to sharpen them for defensive or offensive purposes.)

{Skills}

Kyokar hand-to-hand style (BEGINNER) (A military fighting style developed in Frant.)