

## BIOLOGICAL 55

Chapter 55: Going back to the crime scene

Once his classes concluded, Erik left the school and made his way to the train station. His mind was set on verifying whether the thaids had eaten the bodies of the three pricks.

As he traveled, a knot of nervousness sat in his stomach, the fear of being recognized gnawing at him, but his journey passed without incident.

<I shouldn't really go back to the crime scene, but either today or a month later, I still need to go there to hunt Thaids...>

Upon his arrival at the city's northern outskirts, Erik glanced around to ensure no one was observing him. Once confident of his privacy, he slipped into the wheat fields. He bent low and crouched among the tall stalks of wheat that swayed in the breeze.

As he navigated through the fields, Erik surveyed his surroundings, ensuring he remained unnoticed. His eyes darted to any nearby house, vigilant against the possibility of curious onlookers. The dense wheat provided ample cover, its height concealing his figure as he maneuvered through the field, but he couldn't be certain.

Every so often, he would lower his body even closer to the ground, especially when he neared any openings or clearings that might expose him to view. This way, Erik maintained a low profile, aware of the importance of reaching his destination undetected.

After a ten-minute trek through the expansive fields, he reached the breach, finding it unchanged since his last visit.

He moved through the breach, navigating past trees and bushes towards where he had left the bodies. Upon arriving, he discovered the bodies were gone.

The ground was littered with footprints, showing multiple thaids had been there. The remnants of bloodstains, particularly in the areas where the young men had met their end, had already been absorbed by the ground, and only some hardened clots appeared here and there.

Erik meticulously combed the area for any remnants or overlooked evidence left by the creatures.

<Judging by the situation, everything should be ok...>

He observed many tracks crisscrossing the area, showing that creatures other than Lomalins had been active here. This realization spurred Erik to prioritize his safety and hasten his return.

<Hopefully, I have overlooked nothing, > he contemplated, quickening his pace back towards the breach.

Having found no remnants of the bodies, Erik's investigation brought some relief, but the discomfort of revisiting the site of his crime, especially in a thaid infested forest, was unnerving.

The place felt foreboding that day. Its tranquil atmosphere was replaced by an eerie, somber mood. The wind, more biting than usual, swept through the trees, bringing a surprising chill from the north, contrasting with the city's scorching heat.

<It's so much colder here. In the city, the sun is blazing! >

Absence of bird songs added to the forest's unsettling aura. Every sound seemed to resonate in the dense woods. The young man didn't know, but something was happening just a couple of kilometers from his position.

While wondering how it was possible that New Alexandria's security couldn't find the breach, Erik entered the city. His mind was a whirlwind of emotions—fear of discovery by the police, who were evidently investigating the case, dominated his thoughts.

<Let's calm down... I made no mistakes... The bodies are not there anymore. Everything is in order. >

The young man tried to think about something else. He thought about his new powers, how he could use them to fight the thaids and grow even stronger. He wondered what he could hunt to get decent brain crystal powers, tried to come up with a training schedule so that he could maximize his neural link training.

Erik's mornings were dedicated to school, followed by work, and then more school for training with Professor McAllister. On a good day, he hoped to be home by 07:00 PM. Factoring in the time for a shower and preparations for bed, starting around 11:00 PM, he estimated about four hours available for neural link training before midnight.

While this might not catch up with his peers, it was certainly better than doing nothing.

Fortuitously, Erik had an advantage: creating neural links was easier in the early stages. With multiple powers at his disposal, he could focus on initial-level training for each, potentially speeding up his progress to match that of other students with more advanced brain crystals. This strategy offered a glimmer of hope in his rigorous and tightly packed schedule.

<I can't even stop working at Mister Fox's farm and rob ATMs since I couldn't justify from where this money come from. > But reality was weirder than one could think of. <I couldn't justify it, but somehow, working as a minor is ok... This nation is really fucked up...>

Erik stood just outside Mister Fox's farm, deep in thought. As he drew nearer, a chorus of voices reached his ears from the back of the property.

<Seems like the old man has already found some help, > Erik said. He made his way past the fence and around the house, where he spotted at least five people, Mister Fox among them, working the fields.

Alerted by the sound of Erik's approach, Mister Fox turned. His face lit up with a warm smile upon seeing Erik.

"Ah, Erik, you're here!"

"Yes, sir, I'm ready to work..."

"Great, just hold on until we're done clearing the fields. Then you can work your magic."

Erik waited for the others to finish their tasks. Once they were done, he used his power to grow the crops. The newcomers watched in awe as the plants flourished before their eyes. To them, such an ability was a marvel on a farm, though they knew it was less valued in military settings.

Time passed, and soon Erik had to head back to school for his training. He didn't take long to arrive at the gym, where several students, including Amber, Gwen, and Floyd, were already training.

Erik approached them, hoping his behavior had not been that weird so that they would choose to ignore him. He approached Amber, who was engaged in conversation with her friends.

As Amber noticed Erik coming towards them, a smile blossomed on her face. She watched as Erik neared, and he spoke with a hint of sheepishness, "Hi guys... How are you...?"

Erik couldn't help but notice Amber's appearance as he approached her. Even in her training gear, there was an undeniable beauty about her.

Her short, straight red hair swayed gently with each movement, and her smile, warm and inviting, captured his attention. He appreciated her attractiveness in a detached way, his thoughts drifting from the task at hand to the striking figure she cut. However, his admiration was more of an acknowledgment of her beauty rather than a sign of romantic interest.

It was not he didn't like her, but he would never try a romantic approach with her. He didn't even know how to start one.

"Hi, Erik!"

"Hey, Amb—!"

Before Erik could finish his greeting, Gwen took hold of his arm and led him a few meters away. Her gaze was intense as she locked eyes with him, an unexpected seriousness in her demeanor. Erik was taken aback. While he acknowledged his behavior might have seemed odd the day before, it wasn't anything that, in his mind, warranted such a reaction.

"Erik, I'm not sure what's going on with you, but if you're aiming to be friends with Amber, you need to stop hiding things," Gwen said.

Erik's confusion deepened. "Hiding things? Like what?"

"I'm not talking about anything specific." Gwen's voice lowered. "Look, Amber is Caiden Joyce's daughter. Caiden is Richard Stone's right-hand man. You're know of Richard Stone, do you?"

Richard Stone was the richest man of the country. Not only that, but he was a close friend and advisor for General Becker. He basically controlled the nation alongside his friend.

However, most attributed his success to his daughter, Emily, a young girl so beautiful as to be compared to a gem. But that wasn't the reason she was considered his father's lucky charm.

No, it was her brain crystal power. Not much was known about it, but apparently, it was so powerful as to give her father the standing to be alongside General Becker.

Erik responded, "I know who he is, but I don't see how that's relevant here."

"It's very relevant," Gwen said. "Your actions impact Amber, and in turn, they reflect on her father. Do you understand the gravity of that?"

"I do," he said, realizing the truth in her words. Yet, unless Gwen knew about the recent incident, he couldn't fathom what could have elicited such a firm response from her.

"Gwen?!" Amber called out. "What are you two talking about?"

"Nothing Amber," she said with a smile that weirded Erik. "You better explain why you were that weird yesterday, and you better say the truth."

<What is this psycho bitch talking about? Geez, I was just in a hurry for all she knows! >

That may have been true, but Gwen was smart, and she had a knack for seeing details others didn't. For her, Erik was hiding something. She didn't know what or why, but based on his reactions the previous day, it was something big. The two joined Amber and Floyd again, who were waiting for them.

"Erik, I meant to ask yesterday," Amber began, casting a wary glance at Gwen. "Did something happen with the teacher?"

"About that..." Erik said, trying to come up with a plausible explanation to give. Then he had an idea.

"The truth is, I ended up in the hospital the other day."

"You what?" Floyd said, surprised.

"Yeah, I was found unconscious and bleeding in the middle of the street." Erik then turned to look at Gwen in the eyes, hoping his acting was going to be good.

"I only have vague memories, but I think I was mugged by two people."

"That's terrible, Erik." Amber had a very sad look on her face. Gwen's expression was a mix of guilt and sympathy.

"The real problem was that I ended up being questioned by the police and had to explain my tardiness to the teacher that morning."

"But why didn't you mention this yesterday?" Floyd asked. "We might have been able to help."

Erik sighed. "You know, Floyd, it's hard to open up about being attacked and risking abduction by the Crystal Cross Gang. After being assaulted so many times over the past couple of years in this school and seldom getting help, I didn't think there was much you could do. Plus, I was embarrassed. We're not that close yet. How could I comfortably share something like that?"

<I swear, if they buy this I will go dance naked around the streets, > Erik wryly thought.

"I see..." Since the conversation was embarrassing enough, Floyd steered it to something else. "Training is going to start soon. Let's go."

"Right," Gwen agreed, while Amber cast a sympathetic glance at Erik, who pretended not to notice.

They soon arrived at the gym, where Professor McAllister was already waiting. He launched into his routine instructions without delay.

"Today, we'll start with fifty laps around the room. After that, you'll have a two-minute break, then we'll move on to the first exercise of the day," said the professor.