

BIOLOGICAL 57

Chapter 57: Fake Identity (2)

A crisp notification from the biological supercomputer flashed before Erik's eyes, delivering news that was as staggering as a bolt from the blue.

[PROCEDURE COMPLETE. FROM THIS OPERATION WE EARNED 100,000 NEW DOLLARS.]

Erik's eyes widened, his gaze locked on the screen as if it were a mirage in the desert.

The amount displayed seemed as surreal as a fabled treasure chest unearthed from the depths of an ancient, forgotten land. For a moment, he was frozen, his brain struggling to process the reality of the figures dancing before his eyes.

100,000 New Dollars was akin to a colossal wave, crashing over him with the force of its unexpected magnitude. It was as if he had stumbled upon a genie's lamp, and with a mere rub, unleashed a creature capable of turning the ordinary into the extraordinary.

The sheer enormity of the amount rendered him speechless, his mind racing with the possibilities that such a windfall could unlock.

<Are you joking with me? > He asked to the system.

The biological supercomputer didn't reply.

<100,000 New Dollars in an hour? > His eyes almost bulged out of his eye sockets.

<100,000 New Dollars that can't be traced back to me? > His hands trembled.

Erik's heart leapt into his throat as the unmistakable sound of Floyd's voice pierced the hum of the internet café. A spike of adrenaline coursed through him as he processed the situation.

"You had to see her face!" Floyd was saying, his voice animated with the thrill of storytelling.

"Weren't you too mean?" Gwen's voice followed.

Erik craned his neck, confirming his fears. There they were—Gwen, Amber, and Floyd—walking into the same internet café. A wave of urgency washed over him.

<Fantastic... if they see me here, they'll think I lied about having to go back home. >

With a blend of haste and caution, Erik slid his chair back, careful not to draw attention from anyone, especially his friends.

His eyes darted around, mapping a quick exit path. He closed the computer, his movements as soft as a whisper, and stood up, keeping his back turned to the trio.

He edged his way towards the exit, weaving between the clusters of computers and patrons, his gaze flickering back to ensure Gwen, Amber, and Floyd were still engrossed in their conversation. His steps were light, like a cat's paws on a silent hunt, ensuring minimal sound.

Erik's heart raced as he maneuvered towards the exit, each step measured and cautious. The café was a maze of computers and casual patrons, each one a potential obstacle in his stealthy retreat.

His eyes were sharp, flickering back and forth between the path ahead and the spot where Gwen, Amber, and Floyd were gathered.

They were chatting, absorbed in their world, which worked to his advantage. Erik timed his movements with the natural rhythm of the café—the clatter of a cup, the laughter from another table—using these sounds as a cover for his silent steps.

He glided past a group of teenagers engrossed in a heated gaming session, their shouts and cheers masking the soft sound of his movements.

He paused behind a tall potted plant, surveying the scene to ensure his friends' attention remained elsewhere. It felt like navigating a minefield where the mines were moments of recognition.

As he reached the halfway point to the door, Erik's senses heightened. He could feel the distance closing, freedom almost within grasp.

He ducked as he passed by a family engrossed in their laptops, their focus on the screens rather than the café around them.

Finally, he reached the door. With one last glance over his shoulder, confirming his friends were still unaware, he pushed it open.

The door's bell gave a soft jingle, lost in the café's cacophony's ambiance. Erik stepped out into the bustling street, the door whispering shut behind him, his exit as unobtrusive as a breeze.

He exhaled a sigh of relief, his escape successful, his presence undetected by the very people he sought to avoid.

<That was close...> Erik sighed.

<I should head home. I need to make more neural links. >

Erik thought, his gaze shifting towards the lights of the eastern district. He quickened his pace, his boots clicking on the cobblestone path.

The evening air was brisk, carrying the faint buzz of the city's nocturnal life. As he walked, the familiar silhouette of his home, nestled among a cluster of buildings, grew closer.

Shadows danced across his face, cast by the neon signs that lined his route, each step taking him closer to his house, his sanctuary, and the training that awaited him there.

Upon entering his house, Erik collapsed onto the couch, allowing himself a moment of rest. Time remained for him to increase the number of his neural links. But before starting, he needed some food. So, he grabbed a bite to eat before settling back onto the couch, adopting the lotus position.

Deep breaths filled the room as he concentrated on his breathing pattern, plotting his next steps.

<Focus on your breathing and relax, > he said to himself.

<Close your eyes, feel the mana swirling within. >

With intense focus, Erik closed his eyes, guiding his mana to flow through his body.

This task proved simpler than expected, especially compared to before he fixed his deformity problem. Hours flew by without major hitches, and Erik noted with satisfaction the smooth progress of the process.

Though he felt like it was too slow, and having multiple brain crystal powers and many neural links to establish, Erik realized the need to speed up the process.

<System, is there any method to quicken the link-establishment procedure? > He asked the biological supercomputer.

[ANSWER: MULTIPLE FLAWS EXIST IN YOUR CURRENT LINK-ESTABLISHMENT METHOD. I CAN TRY TO FIX THESE ISSUES. THOUGH ENERGY IS REQUIRED TO START THE PROCEDURE.]

<So, can you do it?> He asked.

[ANSWER: AFFIRMATIVE. 200 DNA POINTS NEEDED TO BEGIN. 40 DNA POINTS AVAILABLE. NOT ENOUGH DNA POINTS.]

<Fuck...>

He wanted so badly to get this new technique, but he could only absorb the Lomalin's brain crystal power, and for that, he needed to make another daily quest.

A thought then struck him. <Is there a quicker way to earn DNA points? >

He clung to the hope of gathering enough points for both tasks.

[YOU CAN BY CONVERTING HIDDEN STAT POINTS.]

<What? HIDDEN STAT POINTS? WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT? >

[I'M NOT REFERRING TO THE ONES YOU GET FROM LEVELING UP, BUT THOSE YOU GET WHEN YOU MAKE NEURAL LINKS. TO ENSURE NO UNEXPECTED MUTATION OCCURS, I CONVERT SOME STAT POINTS INTO ENERGY TO BE USED LATER.]

<So, you're saying I earn more stats with each neural link? >

[CORRECT. HUMANS NORMALLY RECEIVE UP TO 9 STAT POINTS PER NEWLY ESTABLISHED NEURAL LINK, BUT YOU GET LESS. I TRANSFORM THE EXCESS INTO MANA I SAVE FOR LATER. ALLOWING 9 STAT POINTS PER NEURAL LINK, ON TOP OF LEVEL-UP GAINS, COULD RESULT IN MUTATIONS, POSSIBLY TURNING YOU INTO A MINDLESS BEAST.]

<Why wasn't I informed sooner? >

The system remained silent, then continued.

[PRESENTLY, YOU CAN CONVERT UP TO 6 STAT POINTS INTO ENERGY, WHICH THEN ARE TURNED INTO DNA POINTS. BUT REMEMBER, ONE STAT POINT IS RESERVED AS A WEEKLY QUEST REWARD. I ADVISE CONVERTING JUST ONE DNA POINT.]

<What's the conversion rate? > Erik asked.

[200 DNA POINTS.]

<So, I could gain both the Lomalin's brain crystal power and the new technique if I convert more points. >

[TRUE. BUT PROCEED WITH CAUTION. EXCESSIVE POWER GAIN MIGHT AROUSE SUSPICION.]

<Okay. Convert one hidden stat point into DNA points and start the procedure to make the new technique. >

Erik heard the system's warning. That was one of the reasons he decided not to convert more points, but that wasn't all. If what the system said was true, he could use these hidden stat points 'for free' if he completed quests.

The thought of using them for DNA points struck him as wasteful. He preferred to reserve these bonus DNA points for future needs. With his current tally nearly sufficient for the Lomalin's brain crystal power, and the conversion of just one hidden stat point bringing him enough to develop the new technique, Erik saw no reason to convert additional points.

[CONVERSION INITIATED. 1 HIDDEN STAT POINT UTILIZED. 5 HIDDEN STAT POINTS REMAIN, WITH 1 RESERVED FOR THE WEEKLY QUEST. 200 DNA POINTS ADDED.]

<Good. Then start the new technique development. >

[ACKNOWLEDGED. COMPLETION TIME: 2 MONTHS, 4 DAYS. TECHNIQUE AVAILABLE ON AUGUST 20, 3040.]

<WHAT?! >