

## BIOLOGICAL 581

### Chapter 581: Verandors' quest (3)

Erik stood among the dead Verandors. After collecting his thoughts, he looked around. He muttered, "Such weak creatures, yet even they still offer a bit of experience points."

Erik looked at them with contempt. They had a lot of powers, yet their survival strategy made it so that their only response to danger was to flee.

Erik's disdain for the Verandors grew as he pondered their feeble existence. He couldn't fathom how such powerful beings could lack courage and resilience. It was clear to him that their survival strategy was a futile attempt to prolong their inevitable demise. Erik scoffed at their cowardice, realizing that true strength lies in facing challenges head-on, not running away from them.

His attention then shifted to one of the dead bodies. The creature's lifeless eyes gazing vacantly into the canopy above made him feel slightly sorry, but that was how life was. However, there was also eagerness in Erik's eyes; the power he would acquire wasn't great, but its utility was undeniable. "Now, for the real prize," he said with a slight smirk.

He quickly removed his Flyssa from its sheath and cut off the creature's head. The beast's brain crystal was spared any unnecessary damage thanks to the precise and speedy nature of the cut.

Erik skillfully carved an incision along the head's crown while he held the severed head in the other hand.

After removing several layers of tissue, including flesh, muscle, and bone, he finally reached the brain crystal. He removed it carefully, pausing momentarily to admire its intricate form, and then carefully tucked it away in a pouch attached to his belt. He needed his hands free for the next part of the process.

After that, Erik reached into his bag and pulled out a transparent plastic cup. Kneeling down next to the body of the Verandor, he cut a vein on the side of its neck, releasing the thick, dark blood and allowing it to flow into the cup.

As the container slowly filled, a rich and metallic aroma of blood filled the air, arousing an intense eagerness within him. Without hesitation, he dipped two fingers into the crimson liquid. He savored the taste as he licked it off his fingers.

[VERANDOR'S DNA ACQUIRED. STARTING THE ANALYSIS.]

[ANALYSIS COMPLETE.]

[100 DNA POINTS ARE REQUIRED TO EXTRACT THE DNA. 500 TO GET IT WITHOUT INCURRING PAIN AND LOSS OF CONSCIOUSNESS.]

[24450 DNA POINTS DETECTED. DO YOU WANT TO START?]

<Yes, use 500 DNA points, and I also want to absorb the DNA with Conal's power, so wait for the procedure to end and then absorb the DNA through your powers.>

[UNDERSTOOD. WAITING.]

[VERANDOR'S DNA HAS BEEN FOUND COMPATIBLE WITH THE BRAIN CRYSTAL POWER "ANIMAL SHAPE SHIFTING" TO STRENGTHEN THE POWER; THE HOST IS REQUIRED TO DRINK AT LEAST 20 CC OF BLOOD.]

After taking a few deep breaths and bringing the cup to his mouth, Erik quickly drank the blood in one swift motion. The Verandor's blood had an unexpected sweet taste; it had probably eaten something that increased the amount of sugar in its blood, but the young man had no idea what this could be. The blood still tasted metallic, but the sweetness made it easier to drink it.

[BLOOD ABSORBED. DNA STORING PROCEDURE STARTED. PLEASE WAIT.]

[PROCEDURE COMPLETE.]

[STARTING DNA ABSORPTION.]

Erik experienced a surge of energy and warmth that spread from his core to the ends of his fingers and toes.

He took a moment to enjoy the feeling before wiping his mouth with his hand and drinking a water bottle. However, it was now time to move on to the brain crystal.

The young man quickly retrieved it from the pouch he had stashed earlier. He removed any remaining brain matter and impurities by carefully wiping them away with a small cloth.

Then he placed the brain crystal in his mouth without a second thought. The crystal was still warm, but not as much to be uncomfortable. Then Erik swallowed it in a single gulp.

[VERANDOR'S BRAIN CRYSTAL ACQUIRED. STARTING THE ANALYSIS.]

[ANALYSIS COMPLETE.]

[100 DNA POINTS ARE REQUIRED TO EXTRACT THE POWER. 500 TO GET IT WITHOUT INCURRING PAIN AND LOSS OF CONSCIOUSNESS.]

[23950 DNA POINTS DETECTED. DNA EXTRACTION IN PROCESS. DO YOU WANT TO PAY THE DNA POINTS TO EXTRACT THE BRAIN CRYSTAL POWER ONCE THE PREVIOUS PROCESS ENDS?]

<Do it.>

[BRAIN CRYSTAL POWER EXTRACTION ON HOLD. WAITING FOR DNA EXTRACTION TO END.]

After the battle ended, Erik took his time to rest, drink something, and look around. It was just another Monday for him, but if anyone else saw him, they would be scared of him, who was standing amid a field of corpses as he was in a candy store.

Once he was ready to hunt again, Erik reached into his pocket, took out his phone, and dialed Thorne's number.

After a few rings, a familiar and gruff voice picked up and said, "Thorne here."

"It's Erik," he began, glancing back at the sprawled forms of the Verandors. "I've got twenty bodies for you to retrieve. I'm sending you the coordinates now. And, Thorne, as soon as the VANs are full, take them back immediately. We've barely scratched the surface of the day, and there's still much to do."

On the other side of the phone, there was a brief pause. Thorne was left shocked again by how fast Erik managed to find and hunt 20 Verandors. He knew these beasts started running away as soon as they sensed danger, which meant that Erik only had a small window of time to kill them all.

Yet, Thorne learned that being shocked by Erik's prowess was stupid, as it was clear that he was hiding his strength from the world and was more powerful than he made it appear. "Understood. We're on our way."

When Erik hung up, he immediately forwarded the coordinates to Thorne. Amid the natural world, the digital blip on his screen seemed oddly out of place.

He then quickly tucked away his phone and left without lingering. The young man paused momentarily to ensure he had not left any trace he would regret later. Then, once he had concealed the severed head, he began his journey and returned to the forest's innards.

Chapter 582: A great opportunity (1)

Erik glided silently through the dense forest, his invisible presence navigating the wilderness effortlessly. His boots made a faint, muffled crunch as they touched the forest floor blanketed in fallen leaves and debris, all under the enveloping chorus of nature's symphony.

The deeper he ventured into the wilderness, the more dense the environment became. The underbrush increased significantly, the canopy overhead seemed darker, and an alien yet familiar feeling hung in the air.

The air began to change, growing thick with humidity that coated his skin in a fine sheen of perspiration. The smell of damp earth and foliage grew more pronounced. The number of small, buzzing creatures increased with climate change. Mosquitoes swarmed around him, their tiny bodies a nuisance that Erik swatted away with mild annoyance.

Pushing past the dense vegetation, Erik suddenly found himself at the edge of a massive lake. It sprawled before him, its tranquil surface glistening under the filtered sunlight and rippling gently with the wind. The water was murky, as many plants and mosses were growing to the bottom.

The lake's perimeter was uneven, scattered with small pebble beaches and pockets of marshland, creating an irregular border that melded the water and forest into one harmonious scene. Large water plants of various hues of green bobbed in the shallows, their roots hidden in the muddy lake bed.

His keen eyes scanned the area for signs of Verandors, looking for tracks that would lead him to more of the beasts.

However, to his disappointment, there seemed to be no creatures near the lake, and the tranquility of the location remained undisturbed by any menacing presence. Erik couldn't help but be enamored with the strange beauty of the scene unfolding before him, something that made him not think about the absence of Verandors.

Erik's keen eyes swept the area, his mind locked in a vortex of intense focus and predatory instincts. While surveying his surroundings, he noted a cluster of indigenous ferns and trees draped in moss encircled the lake. However, these natural elements partially concealed an intriguing object that snagged his curiosity.

With his interest piqued, he advanced stealthily, taking silent steps toward the mysterious find.

Hidden amongst the dense vegetation was a rare and giant plant, a Florathyst Vine, standing out like a gem in a sea of green. It was a massive, spiraling vine that twisted upwards to a height of nearly 15 meters, its thick stem dotted with vibrant violet flowers, each the size of a human hand.

The flowers grew on the vine in a complicated pattern, and each petal displayed a shimmering glow that seemed otherworldly. The leaves were broad and glossy, with a deep emerald color. The veins in the leaves were silver, which made them look like they had precious metals running through them.

Erik's breath caught in his throat as he took in the splendor of the Florathyst Vine, a specimen of extraordinary rarity. But it was not just the plant that had him spellbound.

<This...>

Erik's eyes started darting left and right, for it wasn't the plant he was searching for, but what lived on it. A Mirror Centipede.

The Mirror Centipede wasn't a particularly strong Thaid. The elongated body usually stretched nearly a meter, coiling and uncoiling on the Florathyst Vine.

Though it lacked discernible eyes, the anterior end of the creature was adorned with a cluster of sensory organs, and its green skin helped it blend into the plant.

These delicate, almost mystical appendages could detect changes in light and movement with an uncanny precision that belied their fragile appearance.

It wasn't because the Thaid was particularly sought after that Erik was left speechless, but because of its brain crystal power. This creature had a permanent cloning ability. It had many drawbacks, but the fact that it was permanent meant that if Erik managed to get the power, he could make permanent copies of himself.

The Thaid used them for hunting, defending themselves, and preparing burrows during the winter. The main body was stronger than the copies. Still, they significantly increased the Mirror Centipedes' survival chances and bolstered their tactics.

Erik's eyes scanned the intricate foliage of the rare plant, and his senses heightened as he searched for any sign of the Mirror Centipede. The plant was a bewildering maze of vibrant leaves and twisting tendrils, providing numerous hiding spots for the elusive Thaid. The plant's uniqueness was not lost on Erik, but his focus was on his prey.

Erik's fingers lightly brushed against the foliage, feeling the texture and searching for any anomaly that might betray the creature's presence.

Minutes seemed to become agonizing hours as Erik painstakingly navigated the convoluted maze of vegetation. His mind whirled with thoughts and calculations, dissecting each potential hiding place, scrutinizing every shadow, and parsing every subtle hint of movement.

After what felt like an eternity of patient vigilance, Erik's unwavering persistence was finally rewarded. A subtle, almost imperceptible shift in the intricate pattern of the plant's leaves drew his keen eye, and he honed in on the elusive target.

There, nestled among the vibrant sea of green foliage, lay the sleek, emerald body of the Mirror Centipede, a master of disguise.

Erik's actions unfurled like a well-practiced dance, a performance that transcended the boundaries of ordinary perception. His movements were a mesmerizing blur as his blade descended upon the centipede.

The precision of his strike was nothing short of awe-inspiring, a testament to his honed skill, as it sliced through the creature's body with surgical accuracy, snuffing out its life in the blink of an eye.

Yet, even as the lifeless centipede lay before him, its vibrant camouflage now useless, Erik knew that his job had only started.

As Erik gazed upon his prey, a renewed sense of purpose coursed through him. The search was far from over, and he was resolved to pursue it relentlessly.

The young man's heart beat with anticipation, for he understood that if he found the beast, the sky would be his only limit, and making a powerful guild would be a matter of time.

With the skill of a seasoned expert, he delicately dissected the centipede's head. A thorough examination confirmed his suspicions: it was merely a clone, lacking the brain crystal that marked the original.

A fleeting shadow of disappointment crossed Erik's visage, but it swiftly yielded to a resolute determination.

The true Mirror Centipede still eluded him, lurking somewhere in the vicinity. Erik did not intend to leave this creature behind; he would not cease pursuing it until he uncovered the elusive original.

The relentless fire of determination burned in his eyes, propelling him forward on his quest.

Chapter 583: A great opportunity (2)

[MIRROR CENTIPEDE KILLED: MANA ABSORBING PROCESS STARTING.]

[0%...1%....5%...30%...70%...100%]

[MANA SUCCESSFULLY ABSORBED, STARTING CONVERTING PROCEDURE.]

[3...2...1...0]

[MANA SUCCESSFULLY CONVERTED INTO EXPERIENCE. 0 EXPERIENCE POINTS AWARDED TO THE HOST.]

After three relentless hours of searching and slaying fifteen Mirror Centipede clones, Erik's determination and persistence were finally rewarded.

Happyness filled Erik as he gazed upon the Mirror Centipede. Finding such a Thaid was nothing short of a miracle, but doing it here was even more remarkable. This was a discovery that made the search for Verandors seem ordinary.

Erik stumbled upon an extraordinary prize that would give him comrades he knew would never betray him. With the Biological supercomputer, this power would improve over time.

Erik was standing in a secluded corner of the forest, behind trees and bushes, while holding the Mirror Centipede's main body's severed head in his hands, his heart pounding with triumph and excitement.

Erik's fingers trembled slightly as he looked at it, knowing that the brain crystal within held a power he had sought with fervent anticipation. The forest around him seemed to hush momentarily. The young man was so focused on the beast's severed head that he stopped focusing on his surroundings.

Erik carefully began to open the head, his blade making precise incisions to expose the brain crystal. As the crystal came into view, its unique shape and glow caught his eye, hinting at its extraordinary abilities. He extracted it carefully, holding it to the dappled sunlight filtering through the dense canopy above.

Finding the beast had not been easy, but the effort paid off, and now, while he looked at the brain crystal, the struggles of the day seemed to fade away.

Erik's mind began to race with the possibilities this thing would open for him; he was eager to absorb the power within his hands. Erik was eager to understand how the enigmatic cloning ability of the Mirror Centipede worked, striving to comprehend its inner workings and explore potential applications.

He recognized that unveiling this capability had the potential to unlock fresh opportunities, expand his adaptability, and amplify his prowess in ways that remained uncharted in his mind.



With the severed head of the Mirror Centipede still in his grasp, Erik's focus shifted from triumph to the ritual that lay before him. He had to absorb the hemolymph dripping from the creature and then swallow its brain crystal.

As Erik gazed at the lifeless body before him, the creature's verdant skin appeared to shimmer, and his unwavering gaze remained fixed upon the once elusive Thaid, anticipating what was to come.

Holding the head firmly, he carefully positioned it over his mouth, allowing the hemolymph to flow like a fountain from the open wound.

As the fluid flowed, his heart pounding with anticipation and reverence for the act he was about to commit. The taste of the hemolymph was unlike anything he had ever experienced, a mixture of the forest's wild essence and the Mirror Centipede's unique energy.

<SYSTEM! ABSORB EVERYTHING FROM THIS CREATURE, AND MAKE IT SO THAT THE ABSORPTION IS AS FAST AS POSSIBLE!> Erik shouted in his head.

[THIS WOULD REQUIRE SPENDING 2000 DNA POINTS TOTAL FOR THE DNA AND THE BRAIN CRYSTAL POWER ABSORPTION. ARE YOU SURE?]

<YES!>

[MIRROR CENTIPEDE'S DNA ACQUIRED. STARTING THE ANALYSIS.]

[ANALYSIS COMPLETE.]

[1000 DNA POINTS USED TO ABSORB INSTANTLY THE THAID'S DNA. PROCEDURE COMPLETE.]

[20 CC OF HEMOLYMPH ABSORBED. DNA STORING PROCEDURE STARTED. PLEASE WAIT.]

[PROCEDURE COMPLETE.]

With a sense of satisfaction, he set the body aside and turned his attention to the brain crystal. He cleaned it meticulously, his fingers deftly removing any impurities, and his eyes took in its unique form.

Finally, with purpose and resolve, he raised the crystal and swallowed it whole. The feeling he had once he did that was thrilling. It was something he hadn't felt since last year when he got his first brain crystal powers.

[MIRROR CENTIPEDE'S BRAIN CRYSTAL ACQUIRED. STARTING THE ANALYSIS.]

[ANALYSIS COMPLETE.]

[1000 DNA POINTS USED. BRAIN CRYSTAL POWER ABSORPTION COMPLETE.]

With the usual ritual done and everything being absorbed, Erik stood for a moment in silent contemplation, the forest around him apparently in contrast to his mood, but that was not really true since there were many sounds in the forest; it was just that Erik was too happy to notice.

Then Erik asked something about the System. He couldn't wait anymore to see what this power truly gifted him and couldn't wait to learn what it did.

<System, show me the status screen.>

[Host Information]

NAME: Erik Romano

AGE: 17

POWER LEVEL: 271

SYSTEM LEVEL: 36

EXPERIENCE: 50882/57600

DNA POINTS: 21450

HEALTH: 2440/2440

MANA: 2370/2370

{Attributes}

STRENGTH: 131

INTELLIGENCE: 183

DEXTERITY: 111

ENERGY: 117

Available Attributes points: 0

{Powers}

[Biological Super Computer Powers]

-Brain Crystal Manipulation

(...)

-DNA Manipulation

(...)

- Analysis

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

-Brain Information Injector

(It allows the injection of information directly into the brain. Based on touch)

-Device Manipulation

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

[Host's Powers]

(...)

-WORM SLAVES Dσ1B RANKED

(This power allows the user to create a human-worms hybrid with 50% of the user's physical stats. The clones are permanent, but a lot of mana is required to make them. They can't use brain crystal powers. The clones are born from eggs, which hatch after two weeks. After being born, the clones need a month to reach maturity.

Before that, their physical stats will be lower than 50% of the original's body. This means the clones are half as intelligent as the main body but know everything the main body knew when he created them.)

{Skills}

-Kyokar hand-to-hand style (ADVANCED)

(A military fighting style developed in Frant)

-Crypt of the Desert Style (ADVANCED)

(Flyssa fighting style developed by Master Nieminen)

-Etrium's sword style (INTERMEDIATE)

(Basic Sword Style developed in Etrium.)

Erik was used to seeing the status screen, and there was nothing new but a single thing: the so-called Worm Slave brain crystal power.

"Worm Slaves? What the fuck? System, what does it mean?"

[ANSWER: SINCE THE MIRROR CENTIPEDE COULD CLONE ITSELF, THE POWER GOT ABSORBED THIS WAY. HOWEVER, BASED ON MY COMPUTATION, IT IS HIGHLY LIKELY THAT THE RESULT OF THE CLONING WOULD BE A SORT OF HUMAN-WORM HYBRID.]

"A hybrid? What the hell? This is not useful at all!" Erik did expect the other limitations but believed he could clone himself. Even if he had to wait, he would still have a clone with 66 strength points, meaning it would be strong. But a hybrid would be a problem since they may have no hands.

[THE ONLY WAY FOR THE HOST TO SEE IF THE POWER WOULD BE USEFUL IS TO TRY IT AND SEE WHAT WILL COME OUT OF IT. HOWEVER, BASED ON MY ESTIMATIONS, THE AMOUNT OF TIME REQUIRED FOR THE CLONE TO HATCH FROM ITS EGG IS TWO WEEKS, AS EXPLAINED IN THE REPORT.]

"FUCK!"

Chapter 584: Back at the hotel

Exhausted but happy for the day's results, Erik returned to the hotel after his fruitful day of hunting. The day turned out to go better than he had anticipated.

Eighty Verandors had fallen to his might, their bodies transported back to Lysa's shop by Thorne's team. The reward from both Lysa and the guild was substantial, totaling 495,000 Eurems, which would undoubtedly be useful in the future.

But any amount of money paled compared to the treasures he'd gained that day thanks to the biological supercomputer: two magnificent brain crystal powers.

The Verandor's power would be a good asset for his feature hunts, as he could track any target without seeing them.

However, he had to wait until the following day for it to be absorbed, as its utility would only repay the cost he would pay in terms of DNA points if he decided to absorb it later.

However, the real treasure was the Mirror Centipede's power. Erik still hoped it would be helpful, but he had to test it to see if that was true.

He couldn't help but feel excited. If he could use the clones, then things would become exponentially easier. This power held a lot of potential.

As he approached the hotel, the grand front welcomed him back, its elegant architecture and warm lighting a pleasing sight after the wild intensity of the forest.

He entered the lavish lobby, his boots slightly muddied from the hunt, and went to the elevator.

The hotel staff greeted him with respectful nods, accustomed to his comings and goings due to the peculiarities of his profession. He then entered the elevator.

The ride to his floor was smooth and swift, but that only made it more urgent for him to jump on the bed and sleep.

He exited the elevator and walked down the plushly carpeted corridor with soft lighting and tasteful decor.

He unlocked the door to his room and entered, taking in the familiar surroundings with a contented sigh.

The spacious room was tastefully furnished, the king-size bed invited him to rest his weary body, and the elegant bathroom promised a hot, rejuvenating bath.

He dropped his gear by the door and collapsed into a plush armchair, allowing himself to reflect on the day's achievements.

<Let's see what this new power can do.>

With that, Erik began channeling mana through his new neural link. The process was relatively smooth, as he instinctively knew what to do.

He then took a knife, since his body urged him to do so, and made a small cut on his index finger, as the biological supercomputer explained.

A solitary droplet of blood emerged from the wound, carrying a stream of mana that transitioned from an ethereal essence to a corporeal form. The mingling of the mana with the flowing blood gave rise to a remarkable transformation—a magnificent crimson sphere.

This crimson orb was nothing short of astonishing, boasting a depth of red that transcended the ordinary. Its appearance, reminiscent of a chicken egg in size, possessed an enigmatic allure that beckoned for closer examination. Erik felt a weird attraction to it; no, talking about a connection was better.

Upon touch, the sphere's surface felt smooth. Yet, an unusual warmth emanated, hinting at a life force pulsating within. Its coloration wasn't uniform; instead, it displayed a captivating blend of various red shades, creating a mesmerizing marble effect that appeared alive, swirling, and dancing when bathed in light.

Despite its modest size, the egg possessed a surprising weight, granting it a substantial presence when held. This enigmatic egg's presence sparked the young man's profound sense of wonder and curiosity.

He was curious to see what this creature would look like. He knew it would possess human intelligence, but would it be a monster? Would it at least appear human if clothed? What abilities would the creature possess?

The system had suggested that it would take two weeks for the egg to hatch and an additional month for the creature to mature and gain half the stats he had.

An aura of otherworldliness enveloped the egg, casting an undeniable impression of rareness and preciousness.

However, despite his curiosity, Erik wasn't really pleased by what he saw. "What the fuck is this?! What the hell can I do with something this small?! I even need to wait two weeks for the egg to hatch!"

Erik sighed. Things weren't going well. Then, the young man settled back into the comfortable chair in his hotel room, his mind buzzing with possibilities and questions.

Erik delved into the intriguing notion of power amalgamation as he contemplated the possibilities.

What if the creature that would hatch from this egg was indeed an abomination?

What would be the result if he merged Conal's and the Mirror Centipede's brain crystal powers?

This thought unfurled an exhilarating tapestry of potential outcomes. Could the being hatched from this egg, or the others Erik would birth, wield the ability to shapeshift into animals, Thaid's, or even humans? The prospect was electrifying, brimming with promise yet shrouded in a veil of uncertainty.

His thoughts then shifted to the Biomantic Armor, a power he had acquired but had yet to fully explore.

Thus far, Most of his adversaries had proven to be of lesser strength, meaning he didn't have the chance to test this ability well.

Could he fuse it with the Mirror Centipede's brain crystal power, giving the creatures that hatch from it the ability to create a biological armor? This possibility really piqued his interest, but he had to test it, and the uncertainty was killing him.

But he knew that experimentation required caution. The wrong fusion might lead to bad results, not only making it so that he would lose a brain crystal power but also potentially making a mess with the Mirror Centipede's one.



Erik was willing to research, but he was not reckless. The first thing he would do was try merging the power with something expendable, a lesser ability he wouldn't mind losing if things went awry. Luckily, he had three such powers to test his idea.

#### Chapter 585: Searching for a place to stay (1)

Two days had slipped away since Erik had obtained the power, and the passage of time had been filled with training, observations, and contemplation.

The mysterious crimson sphere, now simply called "the egg," continued to fascinate him. Of course, Erik's curiosity would be satisfied only once it hatched, but the feeling was intense.

During these days, Erik earned a lot of money. At the same time, his guild members were out hunting, adding to their earnings without him lifting a finger. Leadership benefits began manifesting, and Erik's ambitions grew like his bank account.

However, there was a problem. Until now, Erik didn't offer a place to stay to the guild members, who each slept in their homes or places. Though he realized the guild needed a headquarters and someone to handle administrative matters, Erik's thoughts turned to Lucas's Trades. It was known for its wide array of goods and services, a melting pot of commerce where one could find anything.

It was the direct competitor of the Haven Market that, due to what happened with Doran, was currently under investigation and could not sell or buy anything.

Erik's exit from the hotel room was swift and decisive, his mind set on the tasks ahead. A quick call to a local cab service had a vehicle waiting for him in mere moments, and he found himself en route to Lucas's Trades.

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Erik's arrival did not go unnoticed as the cab pulled into the market parking lot. A group of well-dressed individuals emerged to greet him, their faces lighting up with recognition as they spotted his iconic mask.

Their uniform blended formality and sophistication, designed to reflect the upscale nature of Lucas's Trades. Each member of the greeting party wore a tailored black suit, crisply ironed and free of any wrinkles.

The jackets were adorned with subtle gold piping along the edges, adding a touch of elegance without being ostentatious.

Underneath the jackets, they wore pristine white dress shirts complemented by black silk ties that bore the Lucas's Trades emblem.

This intricate golden design symbolized luxury and quality service. The emblem was replicated on a discreet lapel pin adorning their jackets' left side.

Their shoes were polished to a high shine, reflecting the care and attention to detail in their overall appearance.

Matching black leather gloves completed the ensemble, underscoring the level of professionalism expected from the staff.

The establishment was indeed at the same level as Haven Market. Now that it had taken its share, they were doing even better.

Even if they were curious about the young masked man who had just stepped into their establishment. They didn't let it see. Their demeanor was calm and professional.

"Good morning, Mister Kay," one of the waiters intoned, his voice filled with deference. Erik's reputation had clearly preceded him.

"Good morning," he replied, his tone courteous but focused. "I need someone to assist me in finding some buildings suitable for my guild's main quarters."

The waiters were eager to comply, guiding him inside with hospitality. The entrance to the shop was an architectural marvel, exuding luxury and sophistication from every angle.

Framed by towering marble columns, the gateway featured elaborate wrought-iron gates gracefully intertwined with gold leaf accents. Above the entrance, a grand arch bore intricate carvings depicting scenes of trade and wealth.

The pathway to the gates was lined with impeccably manicured hedges and exotic flowers, creating a welcoming aura. Elegant lanterns on either side cast a warm, golden glow, enhancing the opulent atmosphere.

As visitors approached, uniformed attendants stood at the ready, their polished appearance reflecting the market's commitment to providing their customers with the best service possible.

Erik's presence seemed to stir the building into action, and it wasn't long before a well-groomed man in a sharply tailored suit hurried out to meet him.

"Mister Kay, it's a pleasure to meet you," the man said, extending a hand with a warm smile. "My colleagues informed me of your needs. I specialize in property sales and believe I have just the selections you might be interested in."

"That's good to hear," Erik replied, accepting the handshake. His eyes scanned the man, taking in his confident stance and professional demeanor. "Shall we proceed then? Time is of the essence."

"Certainly, Mister Kay," the man acquiesced, his eagerness to assist evident in his swift response. He quickly summoned a sleek limousine, and the two of them were soon comfortably seated in the luxurious vehicle, gliding through the city streets.

As they traveled, the property specialist engaged Erik in conversation, inquiring about his needs and preferences.

"Mister Kay, I'm happy to assist you in finding the perfect location for your guild's headquarters. To begin, may I know some of your specific requirements? The more details you can provide, the better I can tailor my search to meet your needs," the man said, his tone professional.

"Certainly. We need a comprehensive facility, as our guild is still young and requires setting everything up. The place must have an armory, secure and well-designed to house our weapons and equipment," Erik answered.

"Understood. Security for the armory is paramount. What else can I include in the search criteria?" the man inquired.

"We have several vehicles, so ample parking space is a must. In addition, storage rooms are necessary for various materials and offices for administrative functions," Erik explained.

"That makes sense. I assume you'll also need areas for training?" the man asked, taking notes.

"Exactly. Training areas are vital for our guild's development, both indoors and outdoors, if possible. We also need resting areas where our members can relax and unwind," Erik affirmed.

"Resting areas are indeed important for a balanced environment. What about accommodations? Will you require dormitories or separate living quarters?" The man continued.

"Dorms will be essential. We'll need enough space to house our members comfortably. The headquarters should feel like a second home to our guild, providing everything from work to relaxation under one roof," Erik stated, emphasizing the importance of the guild's comfort.

"I see, Mister Kay. Your requirements are clear, and you're envisioning a fully integrated headquarters. Rest assured, I have a few properties that might meet these needs. Do you want to see them?" the man assured, appearing confident.

"Yes, let's move forward. I'm eager to see what you have to offer. Thank you for understanding our guild's requirements," Erik said, expressing his gratitude.

"It's my pleasure, Mister Kay. I'm confident that we'll find a place that incorporates your vision for the guild's headquarters," the man replied with a smile.

The man presented a portfolio of potential locations he sent to the holographic device inside the car, each highlighted with detailed descriptions, photographs, and floor plans.

Erik's discerning eye roved over the material, asking pointed questions and providing clear feedback. The man was attentive and responsive, adjusting his recommendations based on Erik's input.

The limousine's smooth ride allowed for productive discussion, and by the time they reached their first destination, a clear understanding had been established between buyer and seller.

#### Chapter 586: Searching for a place to stay (2)

Even from a greater distance, the imposing building's clean contours and cutting-edge design stood out as immediately noticeable features. The limousine came to a smooth stop in front of the building.

The edifice, a magnificent and massive structure, simultaneously exuded a sense of elegance and functionality. It was also conveniently located close to high-end facilities and high-class shops.

The man representing Lucas's Trade went past Erik and opened the door for him, pointing toward the inside. The man's eyes betrayed a hint of pride. "Here we are, Mister Kay," the man said. "This particular building has been meticulously selected to fulfill all of the prerequisites that you have outlined. Please allow me to serve as your guide."

Erik nodded, his eyes moving around the outside of the structure. They passed through an enormous parking lot large enough to accommodate many vehicles. The place was entirely made of reinforced concrete and then covered in asphalt.

Erik's gaze swept over the imposing structure, a sense of cautious curiosity pervading his thoughts. He couldn't help but think about the security measures here—surveillance cameras, alarms. He doubted a place this big didn't have any.

"Can you give me information regarding the safety measures put in place here?" Erik asked vigilantly, his emotions oscillating between curiosity and a subtle hint of wariness.

The Lucas's Trade man smiled reassuringly and replied assuredly. "That is an excellent question. The security system is highly advanced, featuring biometric access controls, surveillance cameras operating around the clock, and a security team solely responsible for protecting the premises.

In addition, the structure has been equipped with fire prevention precautions and secure data protection protocols. You can rest easy knowing that everything has been designed with the protection of your guild in mind."

Erik nodded; despite the place not having everything, most of what he wanted was there.

The man gestured for Erik to follow him, and they went toward the building's entrance.

A grand foyer that exuded sophistication welcomed them inside as soon as they entered. There were many rooms there, mostly thought to be for administrative and social purposes.

However, the man told him that after a long corridor, there was a common storage area. According to him, the constructor had reinforced and outfitted the building with lockable storage spaces, making it ideal for meeting the storage requirements of a guild. The safety precautions were impressive, and Erik could see his team use the space well.

They then went further inside the building. They saw many rooms on the way, but Erik asked another question as they went in.

"Is there a place where we can fix our vehicles in case they get broken or damaged?"

"Indeed, we've thought of that too," the man said with pride. "There is a big area thought for that sole purpose. It is outfitted with the equipment and amenities required to handle the routine maintenance and repairs of various vehicles. If required, we can also connect with specialists in the field of mechanics, so you won't have to look for them alone."

"I will think about it."

After that, the man brought him to what he assumed was the building area dedicated to storing goods the guild would need during its activities. Erik saw several different compartments, ranging from cold storage to general warehousing.

"The key to our setup lies in a modular shelving system. Each shelf unit can be easily moved and adjusted to accommodate various item sizes. We've also integrated a sliding rail mechanism, allowing swift access to stored items," the man said, his tone measured and informative.

Erik nodded, absorbing the details as he thoughtfully processed the information. "And what about security measures here?" he inquired. "How do you ensure the safety of the stored items?"

The man's response was equally thorough. He described the state-of-the-art surveillance cameras, the robust alarm system, and the meticulous inventory tracking that left no room for ambiguity. Erik listened intently, his emotions now a blend of intrigue and satisfaction, reassured by the careful consideration of access and security in the facility's design.

The office spaces were similarly well-planned and designed. The atmosphere was conducive to productive work, thanks to open areas, private cubicles, and elegant meeting rooms. From the ergonomically designed furniture to the strategically placed lighting, it appeared that every detail had been noticed.

They continued on their way until they reached the training areas. The indoor locations featured state-of-the-art fitness centers, combat training zones, and even virtual reality setups to simulate different quests. The outside area included challenging obstacle courses, practice shooting ranges, and wide open spaces for more extensive workouts.

Erik could perceive these areas' potential for strenuous training and personal development.

"Can we customize the rooms however we see fit, particularly the training areas?"

The man exclaimed, "Of course!" while his eyes lit up excitedly. The building was designed with flexibility in mind to accommodate a variety of uses. You can easily adjust the layout of the office spaces, training areas, and any other sections to meet your organization's specific requirements. Should it be necessary, our architects are also available to assist with the redesign."

As Erik continued his investigation of the building, he maintained his thoughtful expression, asking questions about the building's energy efficiency, the capacity of its storage rooms, and even the neighborhood. The man responded with knowledgeable and satisfying answers each time, mirroring Erik's enthusiasm and taking the conversation very seriously.

When the tour ended, Erik found himself highly satisfied. The structure had been able to comprise all of the elements he had envisioned for the main building of his guild.

The man from Lucas's Trade turned to Erik, his expression revealing his eagerness for Erik's response. "Does this property align with your broader plan?" the man politely asked.

Erik paused, his thoughts reviewing everything he had just seen. "It's impressive," he said with a note of delight. "You understand our requirements well; however, I would like to look at a few other listings before making a purchase decision."

"Of course, Mr. Kay, I understand. Would you like to see them today?" The man asked. "I can bring you to a restaurant if you don't want to return home."

"Yes, as long as it isn't too much trouble," Erik said.

"Of course, it won't. Don't worry, Mr. Kay. Let's go back to the limousine then," the man said with a smile.

Chapter 587: Searching for a place to stay (3)

As it got darker outside, the city's lights started to twinkle, and the limousine engine could be heard filling the air with its low rumble as it drove back.

The man from Lucas's Trade, whose dress had remained immaculate and fragrant despite what they did during the day. He smiled expectantly at Erik, as it was clear he hoped he would buy something to get his fee.

"So, Mr. Kay, did you find something you liked among the options we explored today?" He asked with a tone that was equal parts curiosity and optimism.

Erik leaned back in his comfy Thaid's leather seat, his eyes gleaming with determination but hidden behind a mask. "Yes, the first building was a very nice-looking one. I think that it satisfies all of our requirements admirably. But what is the price?"

The gentleman's grin grew wider as he removed a tablet from his pocket to verify the information.

"The building is for sale for 6 million Eurems," he said while attempting to pry into Erik's thoughts.

At the mere mention of the amount, Erik felt his heartbeat quicken. It was an incredible amount of money and almost everything he held. However, he quickly overcame his initial shock.

<This shouldn't be a problem at all. It's easy for me to make money, and I only need a little of it to get by anyway. This is an investment in the continued success of the guild. As I am currently paying with my own money, I can get my money back once the guild has enough to cover its expenses.>

He nodded thoughtfully without revealing any sign of inner turmoil.

"It's a significant sum, but I think it's a reasonable price for what the building offers," he said to the agent. "I will accept the offer."



The man's ears immediately perked up, and he went for a handshake. "Fantastic! This is the right choice for you. The administrative work will be started as soon as possible."

Erik firmly shook his hand and said, "Thank you for your help today. Let's make sure everything goes off without a hitch, shall we?"

Excited gleams could be seen dancing in the man's eyes as he gave him his word that Lucas's Trade would handle everything with the utmost care.

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The limousine continued on its journey without incident, and the lights and shadows of the city continued to pass by smoothly. The future of Erik's guild was suddenly looking brighter and more concrete, and Erik's mind was racing with ideas and possibilities for the future.

Although it was a sizeable investment, he undoubtedly thought this was the best way to move his career forward. He had found the opportunity within the structure; now, it was time to bring his vision to fruition.

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The limousine stopped in front of Lucas's Trade's building. After disembarking, Erik and the man from Lucas's Trade entered the wealthy interior, where helpful staff members welcomed them and directed them to a meeting room with leather-bound chairs and a polished mahogany table.

The paperwork was laid out, and the man painstakingly explained each document to Erik, ensuring he grasped every facet of the situation. There were lengthy discussions about the agreement's terms, conditions, and future plans in addition to the signing process.

The agreement was finalized with Erik's signature, and the building will now serve as the guild master's administrative headquarters.

After finishing the necessary paperwork, Erik was overcome with a feeling of fulfillment and triumph. Once more, the man extended his hand and smiled at him in a friendly and sincere way. "You should be very proud, Mr. Kay. We can't wait to see how things will unfold for you and what you will achieve."

"Thank you so much for everything you've done for me today," Erik said in response, his tone resonating with appreciation.

When Erik finally found privacy, he reached for his phone and dialed Lysa's number.

Erik knew his expenses would rise following this acquisition. After all, he needed to find people to take care of the building and realized he needed to talk to her to clear up some issues.

The woman picked up the phone, "This is Lysa," she said.

"Lysa, I need your help," Erik said, but despite the words, his tone was confident.

"Erik? What is the problem?" she asked. Lysa knew that when Erik said those words, she would usually earn a lot of money.

"I just bought a building, which I plan to turn into the guild's main headquarters."

"Wow, that's awesome! But why do you need my help?" The gears in Erik's mind shifted, and he focused on the matter at hand.

"I'm looking for a few people to help me with the everyday tasks and the administration," the young man said.

"Can you help me find competent individuals to manage funds, supervise the building, and handle quests for our members? I want our associates to put all of their attention and concern into completing the quests and nothing else."

"Of course, Erik. I'll get started looking as soon as I can." Lysa responded, her voice brimming with determination. She could almost taste the revenue Erik would bring her for completing the task.

"I trust you to find the best and have complete confidence in your abilities." Erik's expression was one of unwavering trust and deep emotional connection as he uttered those words.

After assuring him, Lysa said, "I'll keep you updated on the progress," then they hung up the phone.

Erik found the activity outside Lucas's Trade's building fascinating as he looked out the window.

The place was a hustle and bustle, with many influential people coming and going.

Then he thought of his guild's headquarters. Aside from everything else, Erik was sure this had been a good investment.

The structure was more than just a piece of real estate; it represented their aspiration and was the basis for his dreams. As soon as possible, he would move there instead of paying for the hotel room. Not that he couldn't afford it.

Now more than ever, he needed his privacy, especially considering that he would test the Worm Slave's brain crystal power.

#### Chapter 588: The Egg's Creature (1)

Erik's next two weeks were a whirlwind of activity. The newly purchased building quickly became a hive of activity, transforming into the hub of his burgeoning guild. The once lifeless and empty structure was now brimming with energy and ambition.

The first item on Erik's to-do list was to move into the building. He chose a room on the highest floor with a panoramic view of the city. The space was tailored to his preferences—a private sanctuary that reflected his preferences and needs.

The gleaming new vehicles were brought in, parked in a specially designated area, and were immediately ready for deployment.

Some mercenaries from Erik's guild decided to make the building their permanent residence.

They moved in, bringing their belongings and their laughter with them. The once-silent corridors now echoed with the sounds of life, conversations, and footsteps, creating a symphony that represented this new community.

Lysa was crucial in locating the right people to maintain the building. Gardeners, cleaners, and administrators were hired, and each played an important role in the day-to-day operations. Still, Erik intended to replace them with people he could rely on.

Erik's days were jam-packed with meetings, decisions, and tasks. He was in charge of the training areas, the armory, and making sure the resting areas were comfortable.

The money started flowing in almost immediately, replenishing his coffers as guild members contributed their earnings.

Despite his numerous accomplishments and successes, Erik's attention was drawn to something hidden in his room.

A sphere lived in a secluded corner of a closet, safe and hidden from prying eyes. Erik's new ability had brought it to life, and it had grown in size, until it was the size of a baby.

Erik was intrigued by the sphere, which he watched with bated breath while waiting for it to hatch.

Erik would take it out and examine it in the middle of the night, his eyes tracing the curves and textures.

Unanswered but tantalizing questions flooded his mind. What would it turn into? What could it possibly do?

Then came the big day—the day the egg was supposed to hatch. Erik had cleared his schedule to ensure that he would be present for this momentous occasion. The rest of the guild's activities continued, but Erik reserved the day for the sphere alone.

His room, which was normally a place of rest and contemplation, had been transformed into a surveillance chamber. Erik sat in a chair, his gaze fixed on the closet, where the sphere remained hidden but not forgotten. The wall clock ticked away the seconds, its monotonous rhythm making the young man even more nervous than he was before.

The system had given a time limit—a couple of minutes during which the sphere would break open, revealing what was inside.

He looked at the clock, watching the hands move closer to the hour. The minutes seemed to stretch, each second a slow crawl toward the time when he would know whether or not this new power he had acquired would be useful. He could feel a knot of excitement and trepidation in his stomach, an unfathomable mix of emotions.

The moment had finally arrived. Erik's breath caught in his throat as he approached the closet, his hands slightly trembling with emotion.

When he opened the closet door, there it was—the sphere pulsing with its own life. Its surface glistened, a dance of light and shadow hinting at the transformation within.

He reached out, his fingers barely touching the surface, and felt a new warmth, a sign that something was stirring. The sphere began to tremble, a subtle vibration that grew stronger. Erik took a step back, his eyes wide and his heart racing.

A crack appeared, a thin line that spread and branched into a network of fissures that consumed the surface of the sphere. A soft creaking filled the room, a whisper of life breaking free. Then something happened.

The orb shattered open, fragments falling away to reveal what was inside. Erik's eyes widened, his breath escaping in a stunned gasp, but he wasn't pleased with what he saw.

The creature that emerged from the shattered sphere was an incredible cross between a human and a worm. This synthesis was both captivating and disturbing.

While it had a general human shape, its body was elongated and sinuous, with the flexibility and smoothness of a worm.

Its skin was pale, grayish, and rough, like that of an elderly man. It was hairless and slightly damp, like a worm's body after a rain shower.

The creature's face was the most human, with two clear, expressive eyes that glowed with intelligence.

Even so, the worm's influence was visible in the slightly flattened shape of the head and the lack of a discernible nose or ears. The mouth was a thin horizontal line that could stretch wide but was otherwise unremarkable.

Its limbs were slender and elongated, the arms and legs bending and twisting with an unnatural grace despite the presence of bones.

The fingers and toes were slightly webbed, and the hands ended in delicate yet powerful hand-like appendages capable of fine manipulation and a strong grip.

The most obvious worm-like feature was the spine. Erik assumed that the creature's flexible and muscular structure allowed it to bend and contort its body in ways that no human could. It moved with a gliding, flowing motion, a graceful yet slightly eerie dance.

The creature had no discernible gender; its form was sleek and ambiguous, a fusion of lines and curves that defied easy categorization. However, because they were Erik's clones, it was obvious that it should have been male.

The clone made a strange chirp, and Erik wondered if it wasn't as intelligent as it should have been. Its voice was cute, but it didn't have a male or female timbre.

Erik felt a mixture of awe and curiosity, fascination, and a touch of fear as he looked at the creature. It was a being beyond comprehension, a living testament to the potential of the abilities he had stolen from the Mirror's Centipede.

Erik noticed that the creature returned Erik's gaze, its eyes filled with a calm gaze.

"Because my intelligence points are high, this thing is smarter than the average child, even if it is an infant." "I'm overthinking things."

Chapter 589: The Egg's Creature (2)

Erik stood before the creature, his mind awash with emotions and considerations. He had created this thing but wasn't sure if he could keep it alive.

One thing was sure: if he decided to keep it alive, Erik wouldn't treat it like a tool or an asset; it was a living entity that bore some part of him within it, and for sure, he wasn't going to treat him like others made with him.

As he examined the creature's shape, he could not help but assess its potential utility. Despite his distaste for such a cold analysis, this world demanded it.

The hybrid's appearance was undeniably alien, and Erik knew it needed to conceal itself among the humans. It wasn't a scary creature, but its Thaid's origins were clear. The last thing Erik wanted was for it to be chased like a monster.

The immediate concern was clothing. Erik's eyes traced the lines and curves of its body. The main problem was that its growth was an unknown variable.

If it grew too tall or weird, clothing alone would not hide its true nature. However, beyond the superficial concerns lay deeper, more practical questions. What could he make the creature do? Since it had no brain crystal power, it meant it was at a disadvantage. It could hunt weaker monsters, sure; it was intelligent, but it was clear he couldn't bring it with him on dangerous quests.

The system had promised that the hybrid would possess all of Erik's knowledge and skills and half his physical statistics upon reaching maturity.

There would be no need to teach it to fight or to teach it about Thaid's and the world they lived in.

That alone was a great advantage and would save Erik a lot of time.

However, as the young man noticed he was thinking of it as disposable, he stopped what he was doing. Then he looked at it. Its curious gaze made his heart soften as the creature looked at him like a kid would look at the world.

<I only hope it won't be a problem.>

While at the same time feeling excited but worried about the hybrid. Erik moved closer, reaching out to touch the creature's arm's smooth skin. The hybrid looked up at him, its eyes reflecting a calm intelligence, an awareness that seemed to echo his thoughts but simultaneously exuded innocence.

"We will figure this out together, right, little one?" Erik said it with an affectionate tone.

The creature's mouth curled into a slight smile, indicating it clearly understood what it said. However, this human gesture seemed perfectly natural despite the creature's weird facial characteristics. Then the hybrid reached out, its weird hands closing around Erik's face in a firm, encouraging grip. The young man smiled at it.

As soon as he saw this, Erik started to grow restless. He paced back and forth, his mind whirling with thoughts and possibilities.

The Worm Slave brain crystal power was unique and opened the door to many possibilities. However, despite being destined to be strong enough to protect itself from ordinary people, the hybrid would be a cripple in a world where Brain Crystal Powers gave someone their status.

In his heart, Erik knew that birthing more hybrids in his first one condition was cruel. Merging the power with others was possible, but what about the outcome? What would happen if he did?

"What do you think about merging this brain crystal power with others? What might happen?" He asked the biological supercomputer.

[ANSWER: BASED ON MY ESTIMATIONS, WHILE MERGING THE POWERS, YOU COULD EITHER GAIN A DIFFERENT POWER WITH SOME SIMILARITIES BETWEEN THE TWO, OR YOU COULD GIVE THE CLONES THE ABILITIES FROM THE BRAIN CRYSTAL POWERS. HOWEVER, BASED ON HOW THE WORM SLAVE WORKS, THIS WOULD BECOME A SORT OF BIOLOGICAL WEAPON RATHER THAN SOMETHING BASED ON MANA, WHICH THEY DO NOT POSSESS DUE TO THE LACK OF BRAIN CRYSTALS.

I SUGGEST TO THE USER TO BE CAREFUL IN WHAT YOU MERGE, AS YOU COULD ALTER THE WORM SLAVES' BRAIN CRYSTAL POWER IN A WAY THAT WOULD NOT WORK AS IT DOES NOW.]

Erik's heart pounded as he listened to the information. The possibilities were captivating, but the risks were real. The merging could alter the very nature of the Worm Slave power, transforming it into something entirely different.

It could become a weapon, a tool of destruction, or something completely useless. Was he willing to take that risk?



He looked at the creature, its eyes meeting his with an understanding that transcended words. It was more than just a product of the brain crystal power; it was a being with its own existence and identity.

A spark of inspiration ignited in Erik's mind.

"The Retractable Enhancement Brain Crystal Power," he said to himself. It was a power that, at best, would have minimal impact on the Worm Slave, or so Erik assumed, and it was not conceptually heavily reliant on mana, like a power that allowed the user to control and make fire.

The young man sat at his desk, contemplating what to do. The uncertainty weighed on him, a nagging doubt that filled his thoughts.

He could enhance the Worm Slaves with the ability to elongate their nails, using them as weapons as the Mistlynx did. Or not.

He looked at the newly hatched creature, a strange amalgamation of human and worm.

With a deep breath, Erik made his decision. "Let's try merging the Worm Slaves brain crystal power with the Retractable Enhancement. It could be beneficial if it allows the clones to have this ability. Otherwise, I must find another Mirror Centipede and absorb the power again. System, how much does it cost to merge the two powers?"

The computer's response was swift.

[ANSWER: 500 DNA POINTS DUE TO THE POWERS' RANKS]

"And the time required to complete the process?" He asked.

[ANSWER: 4 HOURS.] The biological supercomputer replied.

Erik sighed. He did not know what would happen once he merged them. Would the merge affect the already hatched egg?

"Start the process," He said.

[UNDERSTOOD 22850 DNA POINTS DETECTED. 500 DNA POINTS USED. DNA MERGING PROCEDURE BEGINNING. THE USER IS RECOMMENDED TO LAY ON A BED.]

Erik quickly went to bed and let the biological supercomputer do its job.

#### Chapter 590: An unexpected Call (1)

Erik sat on a chair in his room, a sense of satisfaction settling in his chest as he observed his status screen.

Last night, he initiated the merging process between the Mistlynx power and the Mirror Centipede one, birthing the new "Feral Worm Soldier" brain crystal power.

The supercomputer's prediction had been correct, and Erik had been lucky enough to achieve the desired outcome.

The Mistlynx's power had been integrated into the Mirror Centipede's, albeit in a different form from what Erik wielded. It was a purely biological feature now, devoid of any association with mana.

Moreover, the future clones would have the ability to elongate their nails as weapons, an adaptation that could prove useful to fight, but that wasn't true for Noah, the clone that hatched the previous day, since it was evident that only the ones that he gave birth to after he merged the powers got the new feature.

However, he couldn't ignore the inherent weakness in this newly formed power—the absence of mana—that made it somewhat less potent than its mana-powered counterpart.

Erik sighed, acknowledging the limitation. <It's not perfect, but it's a step in the right direction. The future clones won't rely on mana, and that could be an advantage in certain situations.>

He looked over at the creature hatched just the previous day, watching it move around the room, its human-like features mingling with worm-like characteristics. It was both fascinating and strange, a living testament to the power he now wielded.

The clones he would create would be unique, much stronger than this, and unlike anything the world had seen before. He was bound to make an army of compelling individuals in a very short time, and once he reached his peak, he would create the strongest of them all.

Yet, as he contemplated the future, Erik felt a sense of responsibility settling on his shoulders. These creatures were not mere tools to be used and discarded. They were living beings, born of his power and blood, and he had a duty to treat them with respect and compassion.

However, it was clear it was better not to make other clones before he merged the power with the ones he didn't need. Erik planned to first merge Conal's power with it since it would allow the Worms the ability to shapeshift, in theory.

If that was true, he could make them shapeshift into a Thaid he could mount on, getting a vehicle for every situation and terrain.

He knew the clones wouldn't be faster than him, but he was glad he wouldn't have to tire himself out. He planned to ask them to carry backpacks, Thaid bodies, and anything else he needed. However, their primary purpose was fighting.

The clones would also be smart enough to work with him at the guild.

Fighting wasn't their only option, despite being the primary one. Erik didn't know if the shapeshifting only worked on Thaid and Animals, but that was enough; since humans were, in fact, animals, it was possible they would be able to shapeshift into one if they absorbed human blood. Otherwise, they could turn into cats and dogs, essentially becoming his spies in any city.

However, it would be best to turn them into birds, maybe Ravens, as Erik thought they were cool.

"Kid," Erik said.

"Yes, Master?"

"From today, your name is going to be Noah," Erik said solemnly.

"Yes. Master."

Erik stood in the room, his eyes fixed on the little creature as he explored his surroundings.

Noah's features were curious, mixing human-like expressions with worm-like characteristics. His eyes held a remarkable intelligence, yet there was an innocence in his movements, a childlike wonder as he adjusted to being alive.

Feeling a connection to this being he had brought into the world, Erik approached him, concern in his voice. "Do you feel okay?" he asked, watching Noah's reactions closely.

Noah faced Erik, his eyes meeting his parent's. "Yes, master," he replied with a clear voice that hinted at his unique nature.

The response warmed Erik's heart, yet he also felt a sense of responsibility that he couldn't neglect. He asked with a serious yet gentle tone, "Once you are fully mature, can you assist me? I need your help. Are you up for the task?"

Noah's eyes lit up with excitement and admiration as he gazed at his master. His heart brimming with loyalty and devotion, he eagerly nodded in agreement. "Whatever it is that you require, I am at your service and will do everything in my power to assist you," he declared with unwavering sincerity.

The room was quiet for a moment, filled only with the soft sounds of Noah's movements and the distant hum of the building. Erik looked at his clone, seeing not just a creature but a being with potential, thoughts, and feelings.

It was a moment of understanding, a connection between master and creation that transcended mere power and control. Erik knew that he had not just created a servant but a companion, a living being who would stand by his side until it breathed.

The sudden ringing of Erik's phone cut through the reflective silence of the room, startling both him and Noah. Erik glanced at the screen, noting the call from the mercenary guild. His eyebrows furrowed in curiosity as the phone didn't provide any further information about the caller.

Excusing himself from Noah with a reassuring smile, Erik answered the call, hearing the clear voice of Lyria Bannon on the other end. He recognized her as the Deputy Chief Administrator of the guild's operations, yet her call was unexpected.

"Good day, Mr. Kay," Lyria greeted, her tone professional but warm. "I hope I'm not interrupting anything."

Erik's mind raced with thoughts of why she might be calling; someone of her stature didn't do it for no reason; she wanted something. Erik, though, despite the suspicions, kept his voice calm. "Not at all, Ms. Bannon. What can I do for you?" he asked, his eyes still on Noah, who was watching him with interest.

There was a brief pause on the other end, and Erik could sense something significant in Lyria's tone when she spoke again.

"Erik, I've called to discuss a matter of importance with you. It's something that requires your attention and expertise."

The young man's interest was piqued, and he could feel the importance of her words. He was right; this was not a casual call; something serious was afoot.

"I'm listening," he replied, his voice steady. "What's going on?"