

BIOLOGICAL 59

Chapter 59: Questioning (2)

"Do you know a boy named Logan Reid?" The officer asked.

"Yes, I know of him, sir," Erik said.

"Have you ever encountered him outside of school or elsewhere in the city?" The officer probed further.

Erik glanced downward and offered a slight shake of his head. "No." A pause lingered before he added, "We weren't close..."

The officer continued with a barrage of questions for a good ten minutes, studying Erik's composed demeanor. Then he posed a deliberate question, aiming to gauge Erik's reaction.

"Are you aware that he, along with his two friends, Conal Price and Orson Smyth, has gone missing?"

The young man knew they came to him because of the cafeteria incident. He would have been nervous in every other circumstance, but thanks to the system's intervention, he was able to keep his composure as he answered.

"No, sir, I did not know of that..." he said. The police officers didn't let their thoughts transpire from their expressions.

"Did you see them on Thursday at around 14:00? That was when they were last reported seen," the officer said.

"No, sir. As I mentioned earlier, we weren't close..."

The policeman took out some papers from a folder brimming with details about the three missing boys. Erik briefly glanced at it, but the system injected the content by using the data it got from Erik's sight.

However, he remained poised. His heartbeat remained steady, his skin free of sweat. The observing officer noted Erik's calm.

"We have reports of an altercation involving you and the three students in the cafeteria. Many students have recounted the event. We're interested in your version of that day's happenings."

"The details are hazy now... I recall they became hostile without provocation, simply because I was there." Erik tried to play the victim's card and make them appear bad. Not that it was false. "They wanted me to leave, and what followed..."

well, it escalated without my control," Erik said with an even and assured tone, save for the occasional pauses he strategically placed here and there to make it look like he was thinking about the event.

Once the officer had reviewed the file once more, he stored the documents back in the folder and passed it to his partner.

"Do you have any insight into their whereabouts?" Erik asked. He faked curiosity for the sake of appearing less suspicious, or so he thought.

"The specifics can't be disclosed, young man... What I can say is that we're searching and intend to locate them," the officer said. However, there was a weird, almost bored look on his face.

Afterward, they continued to question him about the frequent harassment he endured at the hands of the three boys. To be honest, that didn't play in his favour, as it would make the police suspect about him since he had a reason to kill them.

However, it wasn't like he could hide this when the entire school knew about it. The teachers faked not knowing it because they didn't bother to help someone like Erik prior to his 'awakening', and dismissed everything as mere rumors.

As the officers were done, they readied themselves to leave the secluded place. One paused, turning to Erik, "Should you wish to aid in our search, feel free to reach out; any detail you recall might prove crucial. Don't hesitate if you remember something."

"Okay... I will," Erik assured him.

The officer lingered on campus to gather more testimony from other students. The consensus painted a grim picture of the trio's behavior.

Reports flooded in about their intimidation tactics; Erik was far from their only target. Over a dozen other teens recounted similar ordeals, detailing beatings, thefts, and threats that spanned several years, some leading to hospital stays. They also threatened repercussions if they told anyone.

The revelations regarding the trio were extraordinary, revealing a widespread disdain for them within the weaker members of the school community. Yet, the officers knew well that such incidents were hardly isolated to this school alone.

Called frequently to address similar cases, the officers noted that often such acts went without serious consequence, deemed minor by many and sometimes even encouraged by parents who believed it prepared their children for military service.

From the narrative pieced together by the officers, it appeared Conal, Orson, and Logan relished the dominion and dread they held over their less powerful peers.

Yet, their perspective on the issue diverged from that of the bullied students and their parents. They belonged to an earlier era, predating Becker's rise to power and his attempts at reform. New Alexandria was a nation burdened and commanded by criminal elements. To secure his position, Becker had started a purge.

Despite these endeavors, the criminal syndicates persisted, as if shielded by an unseen yet potent ally.

"Look at these kids; they seem unable to handle even minor scuffles. Do you think they'll fare well in the military?" one officer said aloud.

"I doubt it," his partner said. "If they struggle to stand up to mere bullies, it's hard to imagine them thriving in the army. They might just meet a grim end upon enlistment. Thaidis are far worse than people, and I can't get how complaining about bullying would solve the issue. They are just a bunch of spineless cowards from a young age."

"Yeah, kids these days need to toughen up. Back in my school days, this was a daily occurrence, and no one made a fuss," the first officer said. If Erik could hear them, he would be disgusted. In his eyes, the police, much like many other aspects of this nation, were corrupted.

"You're right..."

The two continued to discuss the students as they exited the campus. Once outside, they made their way to meet with other detectives at a different location.

Upon parting from the officers, Erik headed straight to his class. Today's schedule included a neural link establishment session with Professor O'Leary.

Arriving in the classroom, Erik noticed the curious glances from his peers. In just two weeks, his life had transformed a lot, and everyone realized. His recent confrontation with Logan and his newfound assertiveness during class discussions marked a significant departure from his usual demeanor.

Erik's physical transformation was equally apparent. He now sported a more muscular build, exuding an aura that was noticeably colder. His newfound assertiveness, a stark contrast to his previous behavior, left many of his classmates taken aback.

"Morning, everyone," greeted Mr. O'Leary.

"Hello, sir."

The professor settled in, and after a brief pause, started the class. "Let's begin our practice lesson today, shall we?"

"Yes, sir," came the unified answer from the class as they began channeling mana into their brain crystals.

For the next hour, Erik concentrated on the challenging task of manipulating mana to form a neural link. Without resting, he channeled mana from the crystal to his brain, gradually sensing a familiar yet growing feeling reminiscent of his previous experience with neural link formation.

As this sensation climaxed, Erik felt a powerful surge of mana coursing throughout his body. After a few moments, the intense feeling waned, replaced by a sense of new connectivity within him.

<I made another one... a new neural link...> he realized. He remained cautious, not revealing this development to the others, uncertain of the new link's associated power and wary of potential risks.

The predicament lied in the possibility of his teacher requesting him to showcase the potency of the new neural link, which ought to have been associated with its sharpening prowess. This meant that there had to be some changes inside the power that could be easily seen.

<System, show me the new stats! >

[Host Information]

NAME: Erik Romano

AGE: 16

POWER LEVEL: 37

SYSTEM LEVEL: 9

EXPERIENCE:

1269/2116

DNA POINTS: 50

HEALTH: 540/540

MANA: 470/470

{Attributes}

STRENGTH: 17

INTELLIGENCE: 15

DEXTERITY: 14

ENERGY: 22

Available Attributes points: 0

<Great! >

While Erik appreciated the gains from this new link, the excitement was more subdued compared to his first experience. He acknowledged the valuable addition of an attribute point in dexterity, intelligence, and strength.

After a short time of channeling mana, Erik found out that the new neural link was related to Logan's power. Surprisingly, he had developed it already, but he wasn't sure how these things worked, so he thought nothing about it.