

BIOLOGICAL 601

Chapter 601: The Hummingbird Pharmaceutical (1)

Erik and Rebecca were on their way to Hummingbird Pharmaceuticals, ensconced in the comfortable leather seats of Rebecca's sleek car. The mission ahead weighed heavily on their minds, and they took the time to review their plan, wanting to ensure they were perfectly in sync.

"Alright, Rebecca," Erik began, his voice measured, "we need to be absolutely clear on our roles here. You're representing your mother's interests and came here to buy a new potion the Hummingbird Pharmaceutical Company is producing. You'll engage them in the discussion and perhaps negotiate.

You'll be responsible for this aspect. I'll be your friend. I came with you just to keep you company. But when the moment is right, I'll make my move, separate from you with an excuse, and see what I can find. Sound good?"

Rebecca glanced over, her eyes serious but filled with determination. "It sounds perfect. But Erik, we need to be flawless. If there's even a hint that we're up to something, they could kick us out, if not worse."

"I know," Erik replied, his eyes meeting hers. "We'll play it cool and casual. They'll have no reason to suspect anything."

"Good," Rebecca said, her voice softening. "So, when I'm talking to whoever they send to assist us, what will be your excuse to leave?"

Erik thought for a moment, then said, "I'll say I want to inquire about some other product, something unrelated but that could be useful to me as a mercenary or for my guild. I'll act interested, even excited. That should give me the cover I need."

Rebecca's lips curled into a smile. "I like it. Just be careful and do not mess up, Erik."

"I always am," he responded, a smirk playing on his lips, though she couldn't see it.

They fell into a thoughtful silence as the car wound its way through the city streets, the gleaming façade of Hummingbird Pharmaceuticals growing closer with each passing moment.

Rebecca finally broke the silence, her voice tinged with concern. "Erik, what if they've already heard about the shop owner? What if they're on alert?"

Erik considered this. "We'll have to play it by ear. If something seems off, we'll abort the mission, regroup, and try something else later. I have other ways to get thin information aside from entering the building, but I wanted to see the place to get a feeling of these people's characters."

Rebecca nodded, clearly satisfied with his response. "Alright. Let's do this."

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As the car pulled up to the entrance of Hummingbird Pharmaceuticals, Erik and Rebecca shared one last look, a silent promise passing between them.

The two left the car after the driver left them in front of the entrance door. They stood for a moment, taking in the grandeur of the building. The glass windows shimmered in the sunlight, reflecting the pristine white exterior.

The exterior of Hummingbird Pharmaceuticals was a testament to modern architecture and corporate prestige. The building's façade was a dazzling display of white marble, meticulously maintained to maintain its pristine appearance. Tall, shimmering glass windows stretched from the ground floor to the upper levels, reflecting the sunlight and the surrounding cityscape.

A spacious courtyard adorned with meticulously manicured gardens greeted visitors at the entrance. Elegant topiaries shaped into the company's logo added a touch of artistry to the otherwise clinical setting.

A pristine fountain in the center of the courtyard sprayed a gentle mist into the air, creating a refreshing ambiance.

The entrance was opulent and commanding, with towering columns flanking it and decorated with intricate carvings of medicinal herbs and alchemical symbols.

The double doors were made of polished mahogany, engraved with the company's emblem on a gold leaf. As Erik and Rebecca approached the entrance, they could see their reflections in the spotless glass doors.

Security cameras discreetly placed around the entrance monitored every visitor, a reminder that this prestigious institution was not to be taken lightly. Uniformed security personnel, discreetly positioned, maintained a vigilant watch over the entrance, ready to intervene if any situation arose.

As Erik and Rebecca approached the entrance to Hummingbird Pharmaceuticals, a group of sharply dressed men suddenly rushed out to greet them. They wore tailored suits and exuded an air of professionalism and elegance. Among them was an old man with an aura of authority and wisdom.

"His name is Dr. Horace Wainwright, the Chief Scientific Officer of Hummingbird Pharmaceuticals, a man renowned for his groundbreaking work in the field of medicinal alchemy," Rebecca whispered to Erik, lest he said something that would embarrass her.

His appearance was dignified, with a shock of white hair meticulously combed back, deep-set eyes framed by wrinkles, and a tall, slender figure.

Though age had bent his posture slightly, his eyes sparkled with intelligence, and he carried himself with the grace of someone who had spent his life pursuing knowledge.

"Ms. Ravithier, Mr. Kay," he greeted them warmly, extending a hand to both but clearly focusing his attention on Rebecca. "Welcome to Hummingbird Pharmaceuticals. It is truly an honor to have you here."

Rebecca accepted his handshake, her expression gracious. "Thank you, Dr. Wainwright. It's a pleasure to be here."

The old scientist's eyes twinkled with curiosity as he asked, "I'm sorry if I may seem inappropriate, but may I inquire about the purpose of your visit?"

Rebecca's eyes met his, and she replied in a poised and confident tone, "I'm here on behalf of my mother, Dr. Wainwright, to discuss the new potion your company is producing. It has piqued her interest, and we would like to learn more."

Dr. Wainwright's face broke into a pleased smile, and he nodded understandingly. "Ah, business then. I should have known, considering your mother's reputation." His voice held a note of admiration mixed with caution, clearly aware of who Rebecca's mother was: the leader of the most important mercenary guild in the nation, a woman of uncanny power and infamous temper.

"Of course," he continued, gesturing for them to follow him, "we would be delighted to share our latest developments with you. Please come inside, and I will give you a tour of our facility."

As they followed Dr. Wainwright through the grand entrance, Erik and Rebecca exchanged a quick glance, both sensing that they had successfully cleared the first hurdle. The ornate architecture of the building surrounded them, a testament to the company's success and innovation. However, it was clear the building's level wasn't the same as the Haven's Market.

Dr. Wainwright led them down marbled hallways adorned with portraits of past luminaries in the field.

"I will bring you on a tour of the place; it may be interesting to see a pharmaceutical company at work. After that, we can talk about whatever you want. Oh, but of course, if you don't want to, or you have something else to do later, we can simply talk business," the man said.

"There is no need. I think it would be a fun experience, right, Erik?" Rebecca asked in a friendly tone.

"Yeah, I've never been in a place like this before. I'm curious how you make pills and potions."

"Glad to hear that, then, if you don't mind, come with me."

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The man's voice was filled with pride as he said that and started describing the various departments they would be visiting. His focus remained on Rebecca, treating her with respect and deference due

to someone of her mother's stature. But they clearly didn't overlook Erik's presence. He was a small celebrity, after all.

Erik kept a watchful eye on their surroundings, noting the security measures and the layout of the building.

The interior of the building exuded an aura of pristine professionalism, with polished marble floors that gleamed under the soft ambient lighting.

The walls were adorned with tastefully framed diplomas, certificates, and photographs of the company's founders and luminaries in the field of alchemical research.

The hallways were wide and lined with lush potted plants, adding a touch of nature to the otherwise sterile environment.

The air was scented with a faint hint of herbs and medicinal compounds, a reminder of the purpose of this establishment. Muted chatter from scientists in white lab coats and researchers in smart attire filled the air as they moved about their tasks, their focus unwavering.

In the botanical garden, lush greenery thrived under controlled conditions, housing rare and exotic plants known for their medicinal properties.

The scent of rare flowers and herbs mingled, creating a fragrant oasis of nature within the facility. Beakers filled with bubbling potions and elixirs stood on sturdy wooden tables, and researchers in white coats delicately tended to the plants, taking notes and harvesting leaves and petals.

Erik's mind was planning the next move, preparing for the moment he would slip away.

For now, they were guests, treated with the utmost hospitality, but both Erik and Rebecca knew that beneath the pleasantries lay secrets they were determined to uncover. The tour had only just begun, and the real game was about to unfold.

Chapter 602: The Hummingbird Pharmaceutical (2)

Dr. Wainwright led Erik and Rebecca through the shining corridors of Hummingbird Pharmaceuticals with an enthusiasm that belied his age. The building was a maze of innovation and scientific achievement, with each department a hub of activity and discovery.

First, they arrived at the Research and Development wing. Dr. Wainwright waved his hand expansively, showcasing the state-of-the-art laboratories filled with researchers in white coats, hunched over microscopes and beakers filled with colorful liquids.

"Here in R&D, our brilliant scientists work tirelessly to create new potions, pills, and elixirs," he explained, his voice filled with pride. "Our goal is to push the boundaries of medicinal alchemy, combining traditional techniques with modern technology."

Rebecca nodded, her eyes scanning the room, absorbing every detail. Erik's gaze lingered on the security measures, noting cameras and access points.

Next, they were guided to the Quality Control department. Rows of technicians were methodically testing the products, ensuring that they met the highest standards.

"Quality is paramount to us," Dr. Wainwright stated his voice firm. "Every potion must pass rigorous testing before it reaches the market. We leave nothing to chance."

Erik found the old man's passion for his work infectious, and even he was drawn into the intricate world of potion-making.

They continued on to the Manufacturing wing, where large vats bubbled with mystical concoctions, and assembly lines filled with mechanical precision.

"Mass production without losing the essence of craftsmanship," Dr. Wainwright declared, his eyes twinkling. "It's a delicate balance, but one we've mastered."

Rebecca asked thoughtful questions, engaging Dr. Wainwright in discussions about the ethics of alchemical practices and the sustainability of ingredients.

Erik noticed how she skillfully steered the conversation, keeping Dr. Wainwright focused on her while he continued to assess their surroundings.

The tour led them to the Distribution department, where crates were being prepared for shipping worldwide.

"Our reach extends far on the continent," Dr. Wainwright said, his voice tinged with satisfaction. "From humble roots, we've grown to become a leader in the pharmaceutical industry, and that from a border city like this."

Finally, they reached the Executive Suite, a place of polished wood and plush leather. Dr. Wainwright invited them into his office, offering them seats and refreshments.

"As you can see, Ms. Ravithier, Mr. Kay, we spare no effort in our pursuit of excellence," he said, settling into his chair. "I hope this tour has given you a glimpse of our commitment to innovation and quality and shed a light on how we operate."

Rebecca smiled, her eyes sharp and appreciative. "Indeed, Dr. Wainwright, your company's dedication is evident. I'm sure my mother will be most pleased with what I've seen today. As it is clear what kind of company we are going to deal with," Erik remained silent, his mind working on the next phase of their plan.

Dr. Wainwright seemed satisfied with her reaction; his face was relaxed and content. Little did he know that his guests were not there for business but were searching for information that went far beyond potions and alchemy.

"Dr. Wainwright," Erik said, his tone casual but his eyes sharp. "Would it be possible for someone to show me the other potions and pills you make here? I'm considering buying some batches for my guild, and I'd like to see what you have to offer."

The old man's eyes twinkled at the prospect of even more lucrative business.

"Certainly! I'm glad to hear about your interest in our products. You make us proud of what we are doing. I'll have someone from the crafting department guide you so that you can have the most comprehensive explanations about the products. It would be an honor to show you our range of potions and pills," he said, his voice tinged with excitement at the prospect of a potential sale.

He turned to an employee nearby, a middle-aged woman with a professional demeanor, whom he had previously contacted in case such a situation occurred. "Sara, would you please escort Mr. Kay to our sales department? Show him our range of products."

Sara acknowledged the request with a courteous smile. "Certainly, Dr. Wainwright. Please follow me, sir," she said with a polite tone.

Erik thanked Dr. Wainwright and followed Sara, casting a quick glance at Rebecca.

As they moved away, Dr. Wainwright turned his attention back to the Fierce Lioness's daughter. The woman's eyes met Dr. Wainwright's, a determined glint in her gaze. Now that Erik was free to use his biological supercomputer¹, it was up to her to keep Dr. Wainwright engaged and oblivious to their true intentions.

"So, Dr. Wainwright," she began, leaning forward slightly. "Tell me more about this new potion you're developing. My mother is particularly interested in its potential applications."

The doctor's face lit up, eager to discuss the company's latest creation. He leaned back in his chair, steepling his fingers, and began to expound on the virtues of the new concoction, its unique properties, and potential market.

Meanwhile, Erik's mind was racing as he followed Sara. He knew he had to act quickly.

Sara led Erik through a series of narrow hallways, filled with the gentle hum of machinery and the faint aroma of medicinal herbs. As they approached the division dedicated to selling the products, she turned to him, her eyes filled with professional curiosity.

"So, what are you particularly interested in?" Sara asked, her voice echoing slightly in the sterile corridor. "We have a wide range of products here, so I'd like to narrow down our options to suit your needs best."

Erik's gaze wandered over the spotless environment, and he paused for a moment, considering his reply.

"I'm interested in something that could fasten the healing process," he finally said, looking back at Sara with an expression of genuine concern. "In our line of work, injuries are a common occurrence."

Having access to a potion or pill that can accelerate recovery would be invaluable since finding a healer is not easy and the ones that are available cost a lot of money, especially if they have been trained to fight and have experience in the mercenary field."

Sara's eyes sparkled with understanding, and she nodded with a knowing smile. "I see. That's a common request from those in high-risk professions. We've spent years researching and developing products that aid in rapid healing. Let me show you what we have."

Chapter 603: The Hummingbird Pharmaceutical (3)

She led Erik into a brightly lit room filled with shelves neatly organized with various vials and containers. Sara began to explain the unique properties of each product, from elixirs that stimulated cell regeneration to pills that minimized scarring.

"You mentioned an interest in healing accelerants?" she asked, her eyes lighting up with genuine interest. "We pride ourselves on our selection of such potions and pills. Of course, it's a bit of a challenge to replicate the effects of a genuine healer, considering the complexities of mana manipulation. However, I must say, our products have proven to be quite effective."

Erik listened intently, his eyes taking in the meticulously organized displays of pharmaceutical wonders. He had to play his part convincingly, all while seeking a way to uncover the hidden information they were after.

"That sounds promising," he said, nodding thoughtfully. "In our line of work, anything that can give us an edge in life-and-death situations is invaluable. Do you mind showing me some of the specific products?"

Sara's eyes sparkled with enthusiasm. "Not at all; I'd be delighted to. Follow me, please."

Erik subtly shifted his attention inward, communicating silently with the biological supercomputer. He needed to use this time available to find what he needed.

<System, I want you to hack into the company's network.>

[UNDERSTOOD. CONNECTING TO HUMMINGBIRD PHARMACEUTICALS' NETWORK. PLEASE PROVIDE SEARCH PARAMETERS.] The supercomputer's voice resonated in Erik's mind, clear and unemotional.

<Search for any information related to Lumina or Catrina. Check employee records, projects, research notes, and any other relevant data that may shed light on our investigation.> Erik mentally instructed, keeping his expression neutral as Sara continued her presentation.

[UNDERSTOOD. INITIATING SEARCH. I WILL NOTIFY YOU ONCE THE RESULTS ARE AVAILABLE.] The supercomputer responded, its virtual presence fading as it focused on the task at hand.

Erik's mind returned to the room, and he resumed his conversation with Sara, grateful for the advanced technology that allowed him to multitask in such a manner. The search for Lumina was now underway, and he could only hope that the information he sought was hidden somewhere within the vast digital landscape of the pharmaceutical company.

"These are our top-selling healing potions," Sara began, her voice filled with pride. "They've been formulated to promote rapid cell regeneration, reduce inflammation, and enhance the body's natural healing capabilities. As I've already explained, they're not quite a substitute for a real healer's touch, but they can certainly make a significant difference in critical situations."

Erik feigned casual interest, asking insightful questions and expressing approval. All the while, he was waiting for the biological supercomputer to give him some good news.

As Sara began listing the prices of the top-rated healing potions, Erik paid close attention, feigning interest in the details.

"The Aegis Elixir, one of our premium products, starts at 500 Eurems for a single bottle," Sara explained, her eyes gleaming with pride. "It has been carefully formulated to accelerate wound healing and alleviate pain. Many of our clients find it particularly useful in emergency situations."

Erik nodded, expressing his approval. "That's quite reasonable for a high-quality product like that. What about the other options in this line?"

Sara continued, warming to the subject. "Well, we have the Phoenix Serum, which is a bit more potent, priced at 700 Eurems. It's known to not only heal physical injuries but also to boost the overall vitality of the user temporarily."

She then went on to describe several other potions, ranging in price and effectiveness. Each had unique properties tailored to different medical needs and levels of urgency. Erik kept up with her explanations, asking occasional questions to keep up the pretense of interest.

All the while, he was waiting for the response from the biological supercomputer. The information about Lumina might be just within his grasp, hidden among the countless files and records of the company.

He maintained his facade of interest, knowing that he was on the brink of uncovering a vital piece of the puzzle. Every detail, every price, and every feature of the potions served as a distraction from the real purpose of his visit to Hummingbird Pharmaceuticals. The connection to Lumina, whoever she might be, was a mystery that he was determined to solve.

Dr. Wainwright's eyes twinkled with excitement as he detailed the remarkable properties of their newly developed potion. Standing in a well-lit office, he and Rebecca were talking business. If the Band of Giants really ended up buying the potions, they would profit a lot due to the sheer size of the organization.

"You see, Miss Ravithier, this potion is unlike anything we've produced before," he said, his voice filled with pride. "Once consumed, it can triple the user's strength for a full thirty minutes. Imagine the applications in battle! A mercenary could carry more equipment, and wield a heavier weapon. It would make a difference in life and death situations, allowing people to escape more easily."

Rebecca listened intently, her eyes fixed on the vial as she considered the potential uses. The potion indeed sounded promising, but it wasn't possible it didn't have any negative effect.

"What about the after-effects, are there any?" she inquired, her tone thoughtful.

Dr. Wainwright's face faltered for a moment but quickly regained its enthusiasm. "Ah, yes, the aftereffect. There is one, to be honest, the user will experience considerable exhaustion following the potency period. But we believe that the benefits during the heat of battle would far outweigh the temporary fatigue. Proper planning and timing could minimize the drawbacks."

Rebecca nodded, appreciating the doctor's candor. The potion's battle applications were indeed appealing, but she also sensed that Dr. Wainwright was hiding something. She filed away the information, keeping her focus on the broader purpose of their visit.

"Thank you, Dr. Wainwright," she said politely. "This is indeed an impressive potion. I'll be sure to discuss it with my mother. I'm sure she'll be very interested."

The old man beamed, pleased with her response, and they continued their discussion. But Rebecca's mind was elsewhere, as she was thinking about Erik and what he was doing. Did he manage to find something? Was the time she provided him enough to do so?

Chapter 604: Lumina

Sara led Erik through a series of shelves, each one laden with a variety of gleaming vials and intricately designed bottles. Her voice carried a soothing tone as she continued to detail the prices and discounts, her fingers brushing against the glass containers with practiced ease.

"If you're planning to purchase in bulk, we offer a discount of 10% for orders over fifty crates, and 15% for a hundred or more," she explained, her eyes lighting up at the mention of the sale. "And should you need something more unique, we have a special selection aside from our healing potions."

Erik's interest was piqued, and he turned to face her, his curiosity evident. "Something different, you say? What kind of potions are we talking about?"

Sara's lips curved into a knowing smile as she led him to a different section of the room, filled with an array of less conventional concoctions.

"Well, we have this Night Vision Elixir," she began, picking up a dark blue vial. "It allows the user to see better in the dark for about an hour. It doesn't grant absolute night vision, mind you, but it significantly enhances one's ability to navigate in low-light conditions."

Erik examined the vial, his mind already running through potential applications. It could prove useful for stealth missions or nighttime exploration.

"What else do you have?" he asked, his voice tinged with excitement.

Sara continued, her hands moving gracefully among the shelves. "We also have the Memory Enhancer, a potion that mildly improves recall and concentration for a short time. Scholars and students favor it but could be applied in various fields."

She then pointed to a greenish liquid in a spherical container. "This one's called Fleetfoot Serum. It grants a slight increase in agility and speed but lasts only about fifteen minutes. It's not as potent as some other potions, but it has its uses."

Erik listened attentively, absorbing the information as Sara described more potions, each with its own unique properties and limitations. There were potions to dull pain, enhance hearing, suppress hunger, and even mildly camouflage the user's scent, making them less detectable to Thaid's.

As she spoke, Erik could not help but compare these potions to the powers granted by brain crystals. The effects were indeed milder, but he recognized the creativity and innovation behind each creation. It was clear they were trying to replicate brain crystal powers' effects through potions. They were not mere substitutes for one's birth abilities but they helped.

Sara concluded her presentation with a warm smile. "These are just a few examples of what we offer. We're constantly experimenting and coming up with new solutions to suit various needs. Of course, nothing can fully replicate the raw power of brain crystals, but these potions provide a range of support for those who may not have access to some abilities."

Erik nodded, appreciating the honesty in her explanation. "Thank you, Sara. These are indeed fascinating. I'll have to consider which ones would be most beneficial for my guild."

Sara was in the midst of describing another potion when a sudden intrusion in Erik's mind caught him off guard. His eyes widened as the biological supercomputer communicated directly to his consciousness.

[MASTER, I HAVE COMPLETED MY SEARCH. THE INDIVIDUAL GOING UNDER THE PSEUDONYM OF LUMINA HAS BEEN IDENTIFIED AS SARA NORTH. THERE ARE MANY THINGS I FOUND SUSPICIOUS; FOR EXAMPLE, MOST HIGHER-UPS TREAT HER WITH UNUSUAL POLITENESS DESPITE HER LOW-RANKING POSITION INSIDE THE COMPANY. NO PREVIOUS INFORMATION ON HER CURRICULUM WAS FOUND, AND SHE WAS HIRED WITHOUT PRIOR VETTING.

ONLY A COMPANY ID AND ONE DOCUMENT LISTING HER NAME AND BIRTH DATE WERE DISCOVERED. THIS IS HIGHLY IRREGULAR. THERE IS NO PROOF FOR THIS CLAIM, BUT SHE IS LIKELY THE PERSON YOU ARE SEARCHING FOR BASED ON MY CALCULATION.]

Erik's breath caught in his throat as an image appeared in his mind's eye, a snapshot from the CCTV footage showing Sara entering and exiting a lab. The woman in the image was the very one standing before him, still speaking, unaware of the revelation that had just unfolded within Erik's mind.

His heart pounded in his chest, and he struggled to maintain his composure.

The room seemed to spin, and the sound of Sara's voice became a distant murmur. He stared at her, seeing her now not just as a friendly person but as Lumina, a mysterious alchemist dealing with criminal organizations.

"What do you think, Mr. Kay?" Sara's voice broke through his daze, and he realized she was waiting for his response.

He blinked, scrambling to recall what she had been saying. "I, uh, think it's quite impressive," he stammered, forcing a smile. "You have a wide variety of products."

Sara smiled back, but Erik could see something different now, a hidden layer behind her eyes, a secret concealed beneath her welcoming demeanor.

Erik's mind raced, the supercomputer's revelation echoing in his head. He needed to play it cool, to continue as if nothing had changed, all while knowing that Sara was not who she claimed to be.

The tour continued, but Erik's mind was elsewhere, constantly analyzing Sara's words and movements, looking for clues to her true identity. Each smile, each gesture, took on new significance, and he found himself caught between fascination and alarm.

He questioned everything now, wondering how deep the deception went, what her true role was within the company, and what she might be hiding. The common details of potions and prices seemed trivial in comparison to the enigma that was Sara North, a.k.a. Lumina. Erik still had to confirm this, but he had no reason to doubt the biological supercomputer.

As they wrapped up the tour, Erik's thoughts were a whirlwind of questions and uncertainties. He knew he had to tread carefully to gather more information without arousing suspicion. The stakes had just become much higher, and the game far more complex.

Sara's voice pulled him back to the present as she handed him a brochure. "Feel free to contact us if you have any questions or need further information," she said, her eyes twinkling with genuine warmth.

Erik took the brochure and thanked her, his voice betraying nothing of the shock that still coursed through him.

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As he rejoined Rebecca, he knew that the puzzle had just gained a new piece, one that changed the entire picture.

He glanced back at Sara one last time, her smile lingering in his mind, a riddle wrapped in an enigma, a face that now held a secret that could unravel everything.

Chapter 605: Things to do

Erik and Rebecca made their way to the sleek black car that awaited them outside the pharmaceutical company.

The air was thick with tension as they settled into the seats, both aware that their visit had unearthed something significant. The car hummed to life, and they were soon gliding through the busy streets, the cityscape blurring past them.

Rebecca broke the silence, her voice laced with curiosity. "So, did you find something?"

Erik glanced at her, his eyes still reflecting the discovery. "Yes, I did," he said, his voice measured. "The woman likely to be Lumina is the same one who showed me around the company's products. Her name's Sara North."

Rebecca's eyebrows shot up, and she turned to face him fully. "How did you manage to find that out?"

He hesitated for a moment before answering, choosing his words carefully. "I asked a friend of mine to hack into a computer with a device help."

She looked impressed, her eyes widening. "Your friend must be incredibly skilled to break into the security system of such a massive company and not be found out."

Erik's expression remained impassive as the friend he was referring to was the biological supercomputer, though his mind was still whirring with the implications of what he had discovered.

He chose not to respond to her compliment but instead focused on the task at hand. "We need to concentrate on verifying whether this Sara North is really Lumina. We found out that she's working with the drug producer in the slums, and he's working with Catrina. But I can't shake the feeling that Lumina is doing much more than just producing drugs for her.

Her skills are too high, based on what you said, for her to simply make low-quality products."

Rebecca's face grew serious as she absorbed his words, her mind racing to connect the dots. "Yeah. Those mind-numbing drugs were weird, to be honest. It is clear they used them on someone, but for what purpose?" She said slowly, her eyes narrowing.

"To be honest, I know something else, but I should not really talk about this, as I shouldn't have found out about it in the first place," Erik said.

"I won't tell anyone I swear."

Erik internally debated what to do. Should he tell her what he found about Doran?

"Let's just say that in a previous investigation, I found out that Catrina and some associates of her were experimenting on people."

"Human experiments?" Rebecca replied shocked.

"Indeed."

"That explains the mind-numbing potions. They likely used them to keep people calm, but I refuse to think that someone of Lumina's caliber is only making these cheap drugs."

Erik nodded, his gaze fixed on the passing scenery. "Exactly. There's something else going on here, something bigger. Lumina's role in this is more complex than we initially believed."

They fell into a thoughtful silence, each lost in their thoughts as they tried to unravel the tangled web they ended up in. The connection between Sara North, Catrina, and the drug producer was a complicated one, fraught with intrigue and hidden agendas.

Rebecca finally spoke, her voice determined. "We need to investigate this woman further and see what else we can find. If she's indeed Lumina, we need to uncover her true intentions and her connection to Catrina."

"I agree," Erik replied, his tone resolute. "But again, if we directly confront her this would only further complicate things. The ideal solution would be to capture her, but I don't think she doesn't have hidden guards at every corner. That is a problem we should deal with regardless, but following her is different than fighting her."

"So? What do we do?" Rebecca asked.

"I think that she probably has some secret lab of the sort, of course, this is purely speculation. Besides, if she really has it, this could be at her home, in a secret location or could be at the company itself. We need to find this information and then raid the place. We may not be lucky, but at least we can try."

"All right then."

The rest of the drive passed in contemplative silence, the weight of their discovery hanging heavily in the air. The complexity of the situation was daunting, and the stakes were high. But they were committed to unraveling the mystery and exposing the truth behind Lumina's identity and her connection to the dark underworld of drugs and power.

Erik and Rebecca's car glided to a smooth halt outside the intimidating exterior of Erik's guild's headquarters. Rebecca's driver parked the car, leaving the two to enter the building. They made their way through the entrance of the guild building and then parted ways.

The headquarters was a maze of hallways and chambers, filled with the hustle and bustle of guild members going about their daily tasks. Erik navigated the familiar corridors, his steps quick and showing how urgent the situation really was.

Finally, he reached his room, the heavy wooden door creaking open to reveal the familiar sight of Noah, hunched over the computer. But something was different. Erik's eyes widened as he took in Noah's appearance, his clone now at least 20 centimeters taller than before.

Noah swiveled in his chair, his face breaking into a broad smile. "Master!" he greeted Erik, his eyes twinkling with excitement. "How did your day go?"

Erik's surprise quickly gave way to a weary smile, the events of the day catching up to him. "It went well," he replied, shrugging off his coat and sinking into a nearby chair. "But I'm tired."

Noah's smile faltered, concern flickering in his eyes. "You look like you've been through a lot," he said, studying Erik's drawn face. "Anything I can do to help?" The clone asked with a concerned tone.

Erik shook his head, his gaze distant as he replayed the day's events in his mind. "No, it's just been a long day. We found some information about a person we are searching for, but it is a complicated situation."

Noah's eyes widened, and he leaned forward, eager for details. "Tell me! Tell me!"

Erik recounted the day's discoveries, his voice steady as he laid out the intricate web of connections between Sara North, Lumina, Catrina, and the drug producer. Noah listened intently, his face a mask of concentration as he absorbed the information.

Chapter 606: Following Sara

The morning sun cast a golden glow over the city as Erik and Rebecca settled into their car, parked inconspicuously across the street from Hummingbird Pharmaceutical.

Their eyes were fixed on the modern building, waiting for any sign of Sara, the mysterious woman at the center of their investigation.

Erik adjusted his binoculars, his heart pounding with anticipation. He had spent countless hours analyzing every detail of their plan, ensuring that they were prepared for any unexpected turn of events. Rebecca, on the other hand, couldn't help but feel a mixture of excitement and anxiety, her fingers nervously tapping against the side of the car.

"I've got some sandwiches here," Rebecca said. "I sent the driver to buy them," she added. "Want some?"

"Not now, but thanks for asking."

Rebecca started munching on her sandwich; it had chicken, tomatoes, and lettuce, and she seemed to enjoy it.

"I was wondering," she said with her mouth full. It was clear she didn't care about appearances anymore with Erik. "Why did you leave Nokisi Point, Erik?" she asked, her eyes searching his face.

"What brought you to this remote border city?"

Erik's eyes flickered, a distant look in his eyes as he thought back to his past. Of course, Erik never went to Nokisi Point; that was something that the biological supercomputer made up to give him a background inside Etrium.

"I wanted more opportunities," he began, his voice soft and reflective. "Nokisi Point was home, but it was also limiting. The Band of Giants had their own way of doing things, and I felt like I was stuck in a rut, unable to grow or get new opportunities. The Band of Giants' presence there is too much. "

Rebecca listened intently, her gaze unwavering, as Erik continued. She knew how much her mother's guild could be oppressive sometimes. They had rights to every good hunting spot, monopolized a lot of the guild quests, and had many deals with merchants and companies.

Rebecca was aware of situations in which minor guilds had protested about the actions of the Band of Giants, only to have their operations shut down by the Mercenary Guild as a result of such complaints. A gang of hunters once openly accused the Band of Giants of monopolizing both the quests and the hunting grounds.

The mercenaries had sent a complaint to the mercenary guild; however, shortly after doing so, the small group received an email from the mercenary guild instructing them not to meddle with the Band of Giants' business. The hunters were helpless and had no choice but to leave their hunting grounds because they had no other options.

"Coming to this city, I knew I would have the chance to carve my own path and be part of something bigger and more dynamic. There's a sense of freedom here, a sense that anything is possible if you're willing to take the risk."

He looked at Rebecca, hidden by his mask. "And you know what? It's been worth it. I've found friends, purpose, and challenges that have pushed me to grow in ways I never thought possible. Damn, I earn millions in a month, something I thought wasn't possible in the past."

Rebecca's eyes softened, and there was warmth in her smile as she reached out to touch Erik's arm. "I'm glad you found what you were looking for," she said sincerely.

Erik smiled behind the mask. "Thank you," he said to the young woman.

They fell into a companionable silence, their attention returning to the Hummingbird Pharmaceutical building, but the atmosphere in the car had shifted. There was no longer any tension, just a sense of friendship and understanding.

As the hours ticked by, they continued to watch and wait, their eyes never straying from the building. The Hummingbird Pharmaceutical building stood tall and imposing, its sleek glass exterior reflecting the surrounding city lights. Its modern design exuded a sense of sophistication and innovation.

The building's entrance was adorned with a large sign displaying the company's logo and a stylized hummingbird in vibrant colors. The entrance appeared to be almost impenetrable because of the security personnel surrounding it.

They exchanged occasional comments, speculating on Sara's role in the conspiracy and discussing their next moves, but the conversation always circled back to their common mission.

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Finally, as the afternoon wore on, they caught sight of Sara, her familiar figure emerging from the building, her movements purposeful and deliberate.

"There she is," Erik whispered, his eyes narrowing as he watched her. "What do you think she's up to?"

Rebecca's brow furrowed, her mind working quickly as she considered the possibilities. "I'm not sure, but we need to find out. We should follow her."

Erik nodded with steely determination in his eyes. "Yes, but how? It depends on how she is going to move from here."

They continued to watch Sara while she went to her car; it wasn't much, and if she really was Lumina, that choice was probably made not to arouse suspiciousness or gazes on her.

As Rebecca gave the driver the instruction to follow Sara's flying car, her pulse quickened in anticipation of the increasing excitement that would come as the pursuit got underway. They watched as Sara's spacecraft rose into the air, its streamlined design effortlessly slicing through the air with grace and accuracy.

"Stay as far away as possible, but keep her in sight," Rebecca ordered the driver, her eyes fixed on the distant car.

They were racing after Sara's car through the busy streets of the city. The clamor of beeping cars and hustling pedestrians gave way to a more affluent and silent neighborhood, with towering buildings crowned by reflective glass windows. Lush landscaping, beautiful fountains, and meticulously maintained lawns could be found all around the area.

Flowers perfumed the air, and in the distance, the sound of birds singing could be heard.

They were soon standing in the shadow of a large structure that had been constructed specifically for the purpose of storing automobiles. The whirring of Sara's car's motor stopped as it rolled into the designated parking space on the top floor.

Rebecca's driver maneuvered their car into the same building, finding a parking spot not too far from Sara's. As they left the car, Erik and Rebecca's eyes were drawn to the elevator, where they caught a glimpse of Sara disappearing behind its closing doors.

"Erik, look," Rebecca whispered, pointing to the small screen beside the elevator. It displayed the floors as the elevator descended.

The young man's mind was racing, his instincts kicking in as he assessed the situation. "Rebecca, take the other elevator and go to the ground floor. Just in case she tries to leave through the exit."

Rebecca's eyes widened, understanding dawning as she nodded. "Good thinking. What about you?"

"I'll stay here and tell you where she is going to stop, but I guess she is going to the ground floor," Erik replied, determination in his voice. "I'll let you know where she's headed. Stay alert and be ready to move quickly if needed."

"All right," the woman replied.

With a last lingering glance, Rebecca headed for the other elevator, her steps purposeful and determined.

Turning his attention back to the screen, Erik watched as the elevator's progress halted, its doors opening to reveal the chosen floor. It was the ground floor, as he predicted.

Without wasting a moment, he pulled out his communication device and called Rebecca.

"She's on the ground floor, Rebecca. She's leaving the building!" he said urgently.

"I'm on it," Rebecca replied, her voice laced with determination. "I'll follow her. Get down here as fast as you can."

Erik's heart raced as he ended the call and darted for the nearest elevator. He pressed the button for the ground floor, the tension building within him as the elevator began its descent. His mind was ablaze with possibilities and concerns, his instincts on high alert as he prepared to rejoin Rebecca in the chase.

The elevator's doors opened with a soft ding, and Erik rushed out onto the bustling ground floor. People milled about, going about their business, oblivious to the urgency of his mission. He wove through the crowd, his eyes scanning for Rebecca, his thoughts consumed with catching up to Sara.

Just then, his communication device rang, and he answered it, recognizing Rebecca's number.

"Sara's left the building," Rebecca reported, her voice tense. "She's headed to the red building across the street. Hurry, Erik!"

"I'm on my way," Erik replied, his voice filled with resolve. He ended the call and broke into a run, the adrenaline pumping through his veins as he dashed for the exit.

The cool air hit him as he burst through the doors, his eyes immediately locking onto the red building that Rebecca had mentioned.

He crossed the street in a blur, his body fueled by a mixture of excitement and fear, his mind focused and determined. He knew that Rebecca was nearby, following Sara, keeping her in sight, ready to act when the time came.

Chapter 607: Spying inside

Erik rushed into the red building, his chest tight from the strain, and his eyes went straight to Rebecca as soon as he entered. He found her in the elevator, still wearing her mask; her eyes widened with eagerness as she watched the movement of the elevator on the small display.

"She just took the elevator," Rebecca said, her voice barely above a whisper as she turned to Erik.

"Check what floor she goes to; I'll take the stairs!" Erik instructed, his voice filled with urgency.

As Erik whirled around and dashed for the stairway, Rebecca gave Erik a nod and immediately began working the controls on the device. As he sprinted up the stairs, two at a time, his heart was thumping furiously in his chest. His thoughts were entirely focused on achieving one goal: catching up to Sara.

The floors passed in a blur, each step bringing him closer to his target. Sweat poured down his face, but he pushed on, driven by the knowledge that every second counted.

Then, his phone rang, and he answered it without slowing down, recognizing Rebecca's number.

"She's on the 7th floor, Erik." Rebecca's voice came through, filled with a mixture of excitement and concern.

"I'm almost there."

He reached the 7th floor, and he did it just in time to see Sara entering a door at the far end of the hallway.

Erik's heart was still pounding as he remained on the phone with Rebecca, his voice low and hushed. "I know her door. Get here quickly."

"On my way," Rebecca replied, her voice equally tense.

After hanging up, Erik continued to stare fixedly at the entrance door through which Sara had just passed. He was aware that he was on the cusp of something major, but he did not know what lay in store for them. As a result, he experienced an odd combination of excitement and anxiety.

Minutes later, Rebecca arrived, her eyes wide as she looked at Erik. "What now?" she asked, her voice filled with anticipation.

"We wait," Erik said simply, his eyes still fixed on Sara's door. "We need to see what she does if she leaves and take our chance to get inside."

Rebecca nodded, indicating that she was aware of the importance of exhibiting patience in this situation. The two of them made their way up to the stairs and took a seat there, where they were concealed from view yet had an unobstructed view of Sara's front door. The anticipation made the wait an anxious experience, with each passing second seeming to drag on interminably.

It was clear to Erik that Rebecca was looking at him intently, and he could almost hear her queries lingering in the background. He was aware that she had the same amount of devotion in this as he had and that she was prepared to move, act, and strike. But he was also aware that they needed to be cautious and patient and wait for the appropriate time to act before taking any action.

As the minutes ticked by, Erik's mind began to wander, thoughts swirling and colliding as he considered what they might find, what Sara might be hiding, and what secrets lay behind that door. He knew that they were close.

He glanced at Rebecca, seeing the determination in her eyes and feeling the connection between them, knowing they were together. They were a team, united by a common goal and driven by a shared desire to uncover the truth.

The wait continued, the silence growing heavy, and the tension mounting. Erik's eyes never left the door; his body was poised and his senses alert. As the seconds ticked by, Erik couldn't help but wonder what awaited them on the other side. His mind raced with possibilities, imagining a hidden room filled with clues and evidence.

He couldn't shake the feeling that Sara had been hiding something—something that could potentially blow this case wide open. With each passing moment, the anticipation grew, and Erik couldn't help but wonder what secrets lay behind that door.

And as they sat there, on the stairs, hidden from view but watching and waiting, Erik knew that all they had to do was wait, watch, and be ready to act when the time was right.

Turning his attention inward, Erik spoke to the biological supercomputer inside his brain. <Check for cameras inside the apartment,> he instructed.

[SEARCHING FOR CAMERAS. PLEASE WAIT.]

Erik's heart beat a little faster as he waited, his gaze still fixed on Sara's door, his body coiled and ready to act.

[NO CAMERAS DETECTED INSIDE THE APARTMENT.]

<Fuck...>

A slight sigh of relief escaped Erik's lips, but he also got disappointed since he could simply see what the woman was doing. He turned his thoughts to the next step. <Connect to the computers inside, if there are any. Check for anything that could be useful for our investigation.>

[SEARCHING FOR DEVICES. INITIATING SEARCH.]

The minutes stretched out as Erik waited, the silence filled with anticipation and tension. Erik's mind was racing, considering possibilities, analyzing scenarios, and preparing for whatever might come next.

[SEARCH COMPLETED. ONE DEVICE FOUND. NO USEFUL INFORMATION WAS LOCATED ON THE COMPUTER.]

Erik's heart sank for a moment, but he knew he had to keep going, to keep digging, to keep searching.

<Is there anything else? Any other leads? Is there anything unusual?>

[THE SYSTEM DETECTED A SINGLE ELECTRONIC DOOR SECURE BY A PASSWORD.]

Erik's pulse quickened, and he felt a surge of excitement. This was something—a clue, a lead, something to follow. <Find the password. We need to know what's behind that door.>

[ATTEMPTING TO CRACK PASSWORD. PLEASE WAIT.]

The minutes ticked by, each second laden with anticipation and uncertainty.

[PASSWORD FOUND.]

Erik's breath caught in his throat, and he felt a thrill of triumph. He had done it; he had found something and now had the means to access it.

Then Rebecca broke the silence. "Are all these jobs so boring?"

"They are, but you will get used to it," Erik replied.

"Hell no, this is the first and last quest of this kind I'm going to take."

Chapter 608: Going on

The hours dragged on as Erik and Rebecca sat on the stairs, hidden from view but keeping a vigilant watch on Sara's door. The earlier excitement had given way to a monotonous waiting game, with only the occasional creak of the building or distant sound of traffic as interruptions.

"It's getting late," Rebecca finally said, breaking the silence. Her voice was soft and weary. "Do you really think she's going to come out tonight?"

Erik's eyes never left the door; his body was tense and his mind alert. "I don't know," he admitted, his voice equally tired. "But we can't take the risk of leaving. She might still leave in the middle of the night."

Rebecca sighed, her shoulders slumping slightly. "So that means we're staying here until the morning?"

Erik nodded, his mind already considering other options and possibilities. If Sara wasn't there, he could enter the apartment through a window using the Chameleon Veil. But with Rebecca's presence, that wasn't an option. He could only wait, watch, and hope.

Rebecca seemed to sense his thoughts; her eyes were studying him closely. "You're thinking of something else, aren't you?" she asked, her voice tinged with curiosity.

Erik shook his head, not wanting to reveal too much. "Just considering our options."

Rebecca's eyes narrowed slightly, but she didn't press further. Instead, she reached into the bag and pulled out a sandwich. Rebecca had briefly ventured out to grab some, returning with a tired smile and a bag of food. "Here," she said, handing Erik his. "You might as well eat. We're going to be here for a while."

Erik took the sandwich, standing up to move away from her. "Thanks," he said, his voice subdued.

Rebecca watched him, her eyes thoughtful; she knew he was going somewhere where she couldn't see him. "You could eat with me, you know," she said softly. "I won't pry."

Erik's hand froze for a moment, his body tensing. Then he shook his head, his voice firm. "No one must see my face."

Rebecca's eyes became a bit wider, but she did not speak on the matter. She did not question, she did not investigate, and she did not insist. She did nothing more than nod, showing that she accepted what he said and respected his bounds.

They ate in quiet, the strain of their mission hanging heavy in the air and the weight of the night settling about them as it did so. As the hours passed, each second, minute, and moment served as a test of their patience and resolution, respectively. The stakes became increasingly clearer as time went on.

And as the night drew on, as the city slept, and as the world spun, Erik and Rebecca sat and waited, watching and listening, hoping and praying, knowing that they were on the brink of something significant, something vital.

But for the time being, all that was left for them to do was wait, hope, and have faith that their diligence would pay off, that their patience would be rewarded, and that their dedication would get them closer to their target. They continued to wait as the hours of the night passed by.

When Erik saw movement at Sara's door, the building's windows had just begun to let in the earliest traces of morning light. His body, albeit stiff from spending the night in the same position, sprung into action as soon as he recognized that Sara was finally leaving.

Rebecca had dozed out next to him, her head leaning against the wall behind her as she maintained a regular and slow breathing pattern. Erik reached over and gave her a light shake to wake her up. It was time to work.

"Rebecca," he whispered, his voice urgent. "Wake up. She's leaving."

Rebecca's eyes snapped open, confusion and disorientation in her gaze as she took in Erik's mask.

"What? What's happening?" she asked, her voice thick with sleep.

"Sara's leaving," Erik whispered, his eyes never leaving the door. "Probably going to work. You need to follow her."

"Me?"

Rebecca was on her feet in an instant, her body moving with a grace and efficiency that spoke of years of training. "And what are you going to do meanwhile?" she asked, her eyes sharp and focused.

"I'm going inside her apartment. You follow her; see where she goes and what she does."

Rebecca's eyes widened slightly. "But there could be alarms inside. How will you get in without setting them off?"

"Don't worry about that," he said, his voice calm and steady. "I've got it covered."

Rebecca focused her attention on him for a while, searching for a reassuring cue in the manner in which he spoke or carried himself. She had finally realized that she could rely on Erik in these situations, that she could have faith in his abilities, and that she could have confidence in his judgment.

But despite this, she couldn't shake the nagging feeling that she needed to know how he was going to pull off this practically unattainable feat.

She was about to ask, but she quickly changed her mind and decided not to. Time was of the essence, and there were more important things that needed to be attended to right now. She signaled with a nod that she would be leaving, and as she did so, her body moved with purpose as her mind concentrated on what was to come.

"Be careful," Erik called after her, his voice low and filled with concern.

Rebecca glanced back, her eyes meeting his mask, understanding what was passing between them. "You too," she said, her voice soft but firm. Then she was gone, disappearing down the stairs, leaving Erik alone in the dimly lit hallway.

The young man's heart was pounding in his chest, adrenaline coursing through his veins as he approached Sara's door. He knew that he was on the brink of something big—something that could change everything, something that could bring them closer to the truth and let him understand what Uncle Ben was doing here in Etrium.

But he also knew that he was taking a risk, that he was venturing into the unknown, and that he was stepping into potentially dangerous territory.

And yet, he felt no fear, no doubt, no hesitation. Only determination, only resolve, only a burning desire to see this through, and of course, to earn money.

Chapter 609: Sara's Apartment

Erik stood before Sara's apartment door, his mind focused and ready for the task ahead. He reached out to the biological supercomputer, his thoughts clear and decisive.

<Turn off the security system inside the house>, he instructed.

The reply from the biological supercomputer was immediate [SECURITY SYSTEM DEACTIVATED. YOU MAY PROCEED.]

A surge of confidence flowed through Erik as he reached for the electronic lock. Thanks to the biological supercomputer, he could bypass the lock with ease, but he still activated the Chameleon Veil to stay hidden from any prying eyes. He wanted to leave no room for error and no chance of being detected.

He opened the door and stepped into the apartment, his senses alert and his eyes taking in every detail.

The living room had tasteful decoration, with a plush sofa, an elegant coffee table, and a few pieces of abstract art adorning the walls. The kitchen was sleek and modern, its appliances gleaming in the soft morning light.

Despite the peaceful and disciplined atmosphere, Erik had a nagging feeling that something was amiss. There wasn't a single item out of place in the room, giving the impression that the woman had barely spent any time there.

<Where does the password need to be inserted?> Erik asked the biological supercomputer, his mind already racing ahead.

[THE BEDROOM HAS A HIDDEN SPOT BEHIND THE WARDROBE.] That was the quick reply.

Erik's heart quickened as he made his way toward the bedroom. His mind was sharp and ready for whatever he was going to find here, but something was clear: the chances that the woman was Lumina were high.

The bedroom was simple and simple, with a large bed, a bedside table, and a spacious wardrobe. But as Erik approached the wardrobe, he noticed something unusual: wheels underneath it.

He moved the wardrobe across the floor with ease, revealing a metallic door that had been cleverly hidden behind it. The door almost blended into the wall, making it almost impossible to notice at first glance.

There was no doubt anymore that Sara was really hiding something.

Erik confidently entered the password that the biological supercomputer had provided, giving him access to the room beyond the door. The numerical code acted as a key, unlocking a path to the unknown and revealing the truth.

As Erik pushed open the heavy wooden door, a sense of anticipation filled the air. Before him lay a meticulously organized chemist's laboratory, where every shelf was adorned with rows of neatly arranged beakers, flasks, and vials, each containing a different colored liquid.

The workbenches, cluttered with handwritten notes, intricate diagrams, and an assortment of scientific instruments, spoke of the countless hours of research and experimentation that had taken place within these walls.

As Erik surveyed the scientific equipment, his eyes landed on a computer that piqued his interest. With a sense of purpose, he strode towards it and quickly powered it on, recognizing the potential value of the information it could contain.

<Download everything noteworthy from this computer,> he commanded the biological supercomputer as soon as the computer turned on.

[DOWNLOADING NOW. PLEASE STAND BY.] came the robotic response, and Erik waited, feeling his heart pounding in his chest.

The download was completed swiftly, and a rush of information flooded Erik's brain as the biological supercomputer injected the data into his brain. It was a peculiar phenomenon, like a torrent of knowledge pouring through his consciousness—a wave of understanding that washed over him.

In an instant, he knew everything.

He saw the connections—the web of intrigue and deceit that lay behind the scenes. After Doran's capture, Catrina kept pushing forward the man's research, but she needed more people, and they had to be skilled. So, she searched for Lumina and recruited her on the promise of money.

Lumina, or Sara North, had to produce drugs and potions and also collaborate with the man who owned the shop in the slums, then deliver to a specific address: 27 West Gallon Street.

It all fit together, like pieces of a puzzle falling into place.

Erik's breath caught in his throat as he realized the magnitude of what he had discovered. The scope of the operation, the depth of Catrina's involvement, and the extent of Lumina's work. It was all there, laid bare before him, a map of the truth.

He knew what he had to do. He knew where he had to go. He knew that he had found the key to finding Catrina.

Now he only needed to call Rebecca and then go to the address. He had to see if Catrina was there, and if she was, he had to call Lyria.

His job was almost done, but there was still work to be done.

Erik calmly shut down the computer and left the concealed laboratory, his mind still engrossed with the information he had just uncovered.

He closed the metal door behind him with a soft click and then turned his attention to the wardrobe. With careful movements, he restored it to its original position, ensuring that every item was exactly where it had been before.

The wheels beneath the wardrobe made the task effortless, but he took his time to guarantee that every aspect was just as he had found it when he arrived. Finally, satisfied that everything was in order, he left the room with a composed gait.

Approaching the entrance to the apartment, Erik calmly surveyed his surroundings, ensuring that there were no signs of his presence and that everything was in order.

With a last look, he opened the front door and stepped out of the apartment, closing it smoothly and carefully behind him while still by the Chameleon Veil.

Erik was contemplating his next move with great focus. His plan was to locate Rebecca by heading to the address he had acquired and to apprehend Catrina.

While he couldn't be certain of Catrina's presence, the probability of her being there was significant. Erik showed a strong determination to complete his task and to find out what was really going on around him.

Chapter 610: 27 West Gallon Street (1)

Erik stepped out of the building, the weight of new information settling in his mind. He pulled his phone from his pocket, his fingers swiftly dialing Rebecca's number.

As he heard the phone ring, apprehension buzzed within him. When her voice answered, he couldn't help but let a triumphant smile cross his face, even though she couldn't see it.

"Rebecca, I have great news," he announced, his voice filled with satisfaction and urgency. "I've got an address. I'm going to check it out."

Rebecca's voice, tinged with excitement, replied, "All right. I'm on my way. Send me your coordinates."

Erik paused for a moment, choosing his words carefully. "Actually, Rebecca, I need you to stay where you are."

He could almost hear the change in her tone—a subtle shift from excitement to confusion. "Eh? Why?!" she asked, her voice filled with surprise and bewilderment.

"There are two reasons. The first is that we need to keep an eye on Sara. Watch where she goes, see if she seems alarmed or in a hurry, and let me know. Her movements might give us more clues," Erik explained, his voice steady.

Then he chose to spin a small lie—something to protect her feelings but also to make his point clear. "The second reason is that I need to be incredibly stealthy now. I trained for this kind of thing," he lied, "and this time, it's not about going into apartments or posing as customers in public corporations. It's different, and I need to handle this part alone."

There was a pause on the other end, a silence that spoke volumes of the woman's feelings. When Rebecca finally spoke, her voice was calm but tinged with a hint of indignation. "All right, Erik. I understand. I'll stay here and keep an eye on Sara."

Erik's heart ached a little due to the feelings he recognized in her voice. He knew that she had become devoted to their mission and that she had grown to trust him and their partnership. To ask her to step back now was painful for her. However, while he could understand, it doesn't mean he could simply put the mission at risk to make her happy.

Though it was clear, he had to say something to calm her down, at least a little bit.

"Rebecca," he said gently, "I want you to know that I appreciate everything you've done. You've been a valuable partner in this, and I couldn't have gotten this far without you. But this next part... I need to do it on my own."

The woman sighed. There wasn't anything she could say to make Erik change his mind. "I get it, Erik. Really," she replied, her voice still carrying that hint of disappointment. "Just be careful, okay? And keep me updated."

"I will," he promised, feeling a mixture of relief and guilt. "Thank you, Rebecca. Stay safe."

He ended the call, staring at the phone for a moment, a myriad of emotions swirling within him. He knew he had made the right choice, but it didn't make it any easier to tell her.

With a deep breath, he refocused on his mission, knowing that there was still much to do. The address he had uncovered was a lead—a path that could bring him closer to Catrina. He couldn't afford to lose this opportunity.

Erik stood on the bustling city street, his eyes trained on the distant skyline where the address he was heading to was located. He knew he needed to act with both caution and swiftness, so he pulled out his phone and called a cab. The flying vehicle arrived minutes later, landing smoothly in front of him.

The driver glanced at Erik as he entered the vehicle, his eyes briefly flicking to the mask concealing Erik's face. However, there was no hint of recognition in those eyes. Erik understood that in a city teeming with mercenaries and operatives, masks were a common sight.

His choice of a rather nondescript one for this mission helped him blend in seamlessly, a necessary precaution in a city rife with secrets and concealed motives.

"Where to?" the driver asked, his voice casual.

"Bring me here," Erik replied, showing him the location on his phone.

The driver nodded and took off, the cityscape passing by in a blur as they made their way to the destination. Erik's mind was abuzz with thoughts, plans, and calculations.

He looked out the window, watching the buildings and streets glide by, lost in thought. The world outside seemed almost surreal. The knowledge of just one of the many inhuman things that happened in the shadows changed completely his perspective of this nation.

He thought this place was better than Frant, but in the end, both places were shitholes where the ones in charge played with other people's lives.

Finally, the cab began to descend, landing on a street that was close to the address but not directly in front of it. Erik paid the fare and stepped out, feeling a rush of hot air in the air as he pulled his hood tighter around his head. The temperature was high, but he couldn't take off the hood.

"Have a nice day," the driver said.

"Thanks," Erik replied with a nod, watching as the cab lifted off again and vanished into the traffic above.

He turned and began to walk toward the address, his steps firm and determined. The mask hid his face, but his eyes were focused, and his mind was clear. He knew what he had to do, and he was ready.

As he moved through the streets, his senses were on high alert, taking in every detail, every sound, and every movement. He knew that the smallest mistake could cost him dearly, and he was not about to let that happen.

The address grew closer, the building taking shape in the distance. It looked ordinary enough, but Erik knew that appearances could be deceiving. What lay inside was a mystery, one he was determined to unravel.

With a final glance around, he approached the building. It was ten stories high, and his eyes narrowed as he circled it. The exterior gave no hint of the secrets that might be hidden within. It looked perfectly ordinary, blending seamlessly with the other structures in the area. But Erik knew better; there was always more than met the eye.

He reached into his mind, calling upon the biological supercomputer and asking it to scan for any hidden cameras inside the building. To his surprise, it came back with nothing.

No cameras, no obvious surveillance. This was highly unusual, given this target's personality. However, he knew this was a smart move. Yes, it was harder to coordinate the patrols and guards or to find intruders, but this also meant that the level of privacy was much higher. Catrina was a different beast compared to Doran.