

## BIOLOGICAL 791

### Chapter 791: Escape (5)

Erik burst out of the building, the chill of March and of the mountain air greeting him.

Before him lay an expansive clearing, a vast stretch of open space encircling the city.

Beyond this clearing, at the edge where the wilderness began, stood the dense forest he aimed to reach.

While heading there, he watched at his surroundings. Erik's eyes landed on a colossal bird perched at the forest's threshold.

The creature seemed to watch him intently.

<June, is that you? >

<Yes, Master! >

<Come here! >

The moment Erik gave his orders, June launched himself into the air, heading towards him with remarkable speed. Erik broke into a sprint.

The ground beneath the young man's feet was uneven, the terrain a mixture of grass and patches of mud, remnants of recent rains.

With each stride, he got closer to the bird, but the Blackguards were likely coming out at any moment. The distance between him and June wasn't small.

Behind him, the sounds of pursuit grew louder—the clattering of armor, the shouted commands, the occasional discharge of a weapon.

<Fuck! They are almost here! >

Erik's heart pounded, each beat echoing the tempo of his escape. His breath misted in the cold air as he raced towards the clone.

June drew closer. Its powerful wings beat the air, creating gusts that rustled the nearby foliage.

The clearing itself was a no-man's-land, offering no shelter or concealment, making Erik's dash across it a risky endeavor.

Every second in the open was a second too long, exposing him to the watchful eyes and weapons of the Blackguards.

As Erik closed in on his aim, he honed his focus to a single point. His mind harbored only one imperative: to escape danger and make his way to Liberty Watch's village.

There, he would regroup and plan his next steps against the Blackguards.

Yet, within this plan, there was another critical mission - rescuing his father. Erik knew that finding and freeing him was paramount.

Not only this was a personal quest driven by familial bonds, but his father might also possess information about the biological supercomputer.

Understanding this mysterious device now lodged in his brain was essential, especially given the Blackguards' relentless pursuit of it. That could be the only reason they were doing all of that.

Suddenly, a shot rang out, the sound slicing through the air. Erik instinctively ducked, narrowly avoiding the laser shot.

As June, in his Galewing form, neared the ground, Erik readied himself for the crucial moment when his master would jump on him and fly away.

Just then, the Blackguards, with Dreadnought at the forefront, burst out of the building.

"ERIK ROMANO!"

<Geez. That woman is really pissed off... Better leave. >

The woman and her fellow blackguards charged forward with speed, but Erik was quicker. Rage surged into their hearts, Shadowstalker's death recent.

In one fluid motion, he leaped onto the back of June, and with a powerful flap of his wings, they soared into the air.

Almost immediately, the city's defenses sprang to life. Of course, they sent someone to man the weapons.

Artillery cannons, hidden until now, activated and came out from the ground, unleashing a barrage of fire towards Erik and June.

<Fuck! June be careful! >

<Yes, Master! >

The sky was filled with the roar of cannons and the whistle of projectiles slicing through the air.

June maneuvered through the onslaught, each evasion a narrow breakout from the artillery's wrath.

Below them, the Blackguards watched. Their pursuit thwarted, their frustration palpable.

"I WILL KILL YOU!" Dreadnought said. But it wasn't possible for her to do anything. Erik was already too high in the sky.

June's masterful movements were akin to a soldier moving through a storm of flying arrows.

The artillery fire, though, was relentless, like a furious downpour of metal rain intent on finding its mark. Yet June evaded the barrage, but not without difficulties.

Each cannon shot traced a path towards them, but June expected and countered every move with acrobatic twists and turns through the sky.

Finally, they left the range of the city's defenses. The last of the cannon fire fell short as they made their way beyond the forest. From behind, they could hear the Blackguards' curses.

Erik's actions had inflicted significant damage on their ranks. He had killed Quakestrike, Shadowstalker, Flexblade, and Reflectra, leaving only a few of the original group.

This unprecedented situation stirred a deep well of hatred among the remaining members of this Blackguard team.

For the first time, this elite group, known for their unquestioned dominance, encountered someone who not only resisted their authority but also retaliated, taking the lives of their comrades.

The shock of this reality brought a mix of anger and disbelief, their expressions hardening as they grappled with this new threat to their order.

Momentum was particularly affected. His usually composed demeanor was replaced by a furrowed brow and a distant gaze as he observed the young man leave the city on top of a damn Thaid.

He knew the higher-ups would be displeased with how events had unfolded, and the emergence of Dark Tendril, a new member, added to his concerns.

Dark Tendril, though young and possessing less mana than most other Blackguards, had formidable and highly versatile brain crystal power.

His presence in the organization was like a rising storm, his abilities and potential danger causing unease among the ranks.

Momentum's eyes narrowed as he considered Dark Tendril's rapid ascent, aware of the disruption it could bring and how he would for sure take this chance to make him look bad in front of their superiors.

Dreadnought arrived in front of Momentum.

"Dark Tendril will for sure make a stir."

"Yes," Momentum said. However, he recalled something.

"Didn't he say Erik Romano wasn't that much?"

"He did. But his information was clearly wrong. He should be held accountable for that," Dreadnought said.

"I will make sure he will get punishment. But that won't be easy. However, the fact he was once one of the target's schoolmates will for sure serve to our cause."

#### Chapter 792: Amber's Questions

The underground city, Liberty Watch Village, echoed with construction and mining sounds.

Hammers clanked rhythmically, blending with pickaxes chipping at ore-rich veins.

Skyscrapers reached towards the cavern's ceiling, showcasing human ingenuity.

Amber got accustomed to such sounds. The sounds that people putting on effort made.

Those from Liberty Watch village were doing the best they could to make this place as habitable as possible, but that wasn't the only reason for the clinks and clanks the young woman heard.

Apparently, they were accommodating buildings for Erik's guild.

Workers, dwarfed by the magnitude of their surroundings, moved with purpose.

They constructed new edifices, their efforts contributing to the ever-expanding skyline.

Miners, their faces streaked with dirt, delved into the earth's bounty, extracting valuable ores that glinted in the dim light.

"When the hell is he coming?" Gwen asked. Amber and the others finally convinced Noah's entourage to give them an audience.

It has been difficult since the imposing man was always busy.

The mysterious man told them to meet at the top of the cavern. They didn't know, but it was the same place Erik had arrived from when he got into the ancient city.

"Being restless is useless," Amber said. "He will be here sooner or later."

"I wonder how Erik convinced this man to work for him," Floyd said. "He's not that strong, but I got the feeling he's pretty cunning. "

"I had the same feeling," Gwen said. In the past year, while Erik was in Etrium, the group did the best they could to train.

Of course, the result was that they quickly climbed the ranks inside the Red Palace, and they got plenty of resources.

But that wasn't all. Caiden helped with that, and the result was that the kids used a lot of stimulating serums.

Caiden had to sell a lot of his possessions to make that possible, but it didn't matter since the city got almost destroyed.

In Amber's father's mind, the best thing he could do was to preserve his daughter's and friends' futures.

Then two figures approached their resting spot. One was clearly Noah. He was too tall for him being mistaken.

The other was a shorter woman, one of those who protected Noah when he made his grand speech some days ago.

The two figures arrived. Amber and the others stood to greet the man. The woman behind Noah was guarded and alert.

"Greetings," Amber said. "Sorry for having asked you about this meeting, but I'm sure you know why we did."

Noah nodded. His mask didn't allow them to see his expression, but if they would, they could see there was a little longing in his weird eyes.

"You want to know what happened to Erik when he left the city..."

"Indeed."

Noah looked at the city. "Let's sit down then. Mira, stay at ease."

As soon as they did, Amber made the question everyone where eager to have answered.

"You seem to know a lot about Erik. You said he was your master, but what does that mean, exactly?"

Noah looked at Amber. "I guess hearing someone call another person 'Master' had to be weird for you."

"Yeah! You talk as if you are his slave!" Floyd said.

"Slave. That is not exactly the right word, but it's very close to the truth."

Mira's ears twitched. She, too, was interested in who Noah was.

This man appeared one day, and Erik entrusted a lot of responsibilities to him.

"Let's be straightforward," Noah said. "The day Nathaniel's father's men chased you, it was also the day you found out Erik had multiple power, right?"

To that, Mira made a shocked face. Not even she knew about that.

She got briefed about who Amber and the others were, but wasn't told that much.

Of course, it was clear Noah brought her here to listen to this conversation.

Amber and the others nodded. "Well, I'm the result of one of those powers." Noah took off his mask and showed his face to everyone for the first time.

The sight of the horrifying face, which they initially believed to be that of a man, left them completely shocked. Just like everyone else, Mira had a shocked expression on her face.

"During his travels, Erik got the power to... Let's say, make clones. I'm, in fact, a clone of Master Erik, and I have all his memories up to the point I was born."

That revelation was even more shocking to hear than seeing the monstrous face.

However, that was an opportunity for Amber and the others to know.

"If you have his knowledge, then you will know, for sure..." Amber had trouble saying those words. She was scared to hear something she didn't like.

"Why did Erik leave?"

"That is a very complex and difficult question," Noah said.

"But he did not do that because of you. Or better, you were part of the reason, but the most pressing matter was because you, his friends, weren't the only ones knowing about his powers."

That was true. Upon their return, Enya, Stella, and Jacob wasted no time in relaying the information to the military.

They could understand how Erik feared becoming a lab rat.



"To be honest, it's a long story. I can't tell you all the details. That is something that Master Erik must decide for himself, but here is the gist of it..."

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...

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Noah shared all he knew with Erik's friends and two lovers.

A tumult of emotions churned within their hearts as they tried to reconcile their feelings.

Mira and Amber, learning their significance to Erik, faced each other for the first time.

The air was thick with jealousy and even rage. Amber was hurt, believing Erik had forgotten about her.

Mira was consumed with questions about why Erik had kept this a secret, her jealousy more pronounced.

She grappled with the revelation that not only was Erik's name a facade, but he also shared a deep connection with a woman who, in her eyes, surpassed her in both strength and beauty.

This complex web of emotions made the situation delicate, requiring Noah to choose his words carefully.

He navigated the conversation with a mindful approach, aware that each word could either soothe or inflame the already heightened feelings between them.

It was a challenging task, balancing the need to be truthful with the necessity of maintaining harmony among those closest to Erik.

However, how they would react, and what they would do, depended on them.

## Chapter 793: Becker's rant

In a dimly lit room, two men approached each other.

Their eyes met, reflecting a deep sadness. They failed.

They knew, in the quiet of their hearts, that their efforts to defend their nation had fallen short.

They stood there, close yet divided by the weight of their disappointment.

The silence between them was laden with regret, each man lost in his own reflections of what could have been, what should have been.

"Richard, I did everything within my power," Becker said, his voice wavering as he fought back tears.

Becker struggled against the rampant corruption that plagued the nation.

He tried to eradicate the many criminal organizations tarnishing their land.

Yet, despite his best efforts, he found himself powerless against the Blackguards' overwhelming influence.

Becker clenched his fists in rage. "It is all his fault!"

Richard stone looked at his friend with sad eyes. He, as his right-hand man, knew how much he tried. He knew how much effort he put in.

"It's not your fault, Armand. Who could predict Volkov would join the Blackguards?"

"I should have." He threw a punch to the wall, shattering it into many pieces.

"Volkov has always been jealous. Since the day I got put as Frant's leader, he did everything he could to put me in a poor light. This time he succeeded."

Richard did his best to support his friend. "For all that matters, we know you didn't really do what he accused you of."

"That doesn't really make me feel better... Can you believe it? He unleashed a Heniate near New Alexandria just to get rid of me... Many people died because of him."

Silence ensued. There was no way to change the past.

"What did you do when you fled the city?" Richard asked.

"I went to the forest. I wandered for a little before Volkov's men found me. Luckily, Liberty Watch's village found me before they could kill me."

"If it wasn't for Noah, they would have killed you."

"Yeah. I guess, after all I've done to them, I can't blame them. But I had no choice, you know that, right? If I got that training technique, maybe our men would have been able to do more. To prevent the Blackguards' influence on the city."

"Yeah. But we wouldn't know that for certain. Maybe that would have led to nothing."

"What did Noah promise you?" Richard asked again.

"To help me get rid of the Blackguards. I had no reason to refuse cooperation. What really surprised me, though, was that he works for Erik Romano."

"Yeah," Richard said. "That was a surprise for me, too. I thought he was dead."

"That was what I believed. When he disappeared, I got really mad. I wanted him to help me get rid of the Blackguards. He had the power to do so, based on what some people said. But learning he was alive, and he was already working against them, was a genuine surprise. I guess it's ironic how Lucius's son is the one that is trying to end what his father started."

Richard had a sad and concerned look on his face.

"Is there any news about Lucius's location?"

"No. Becker said. The day we were supposed to meet, he disappeared. I guess the Blackguards got him before I could send men to help him."

A pensive look appeared on Richard's face. "Based on what Lucius said, he had solid proof the Blackguards are the ones behind the Sinister Cold. Do you think it's a coincidence that his son became so powerful?"

Becker was shrouded in uncertainty about many things, yet he harbored a strong conviction regarding Erik Romano's sudden rise in power.

It seemed far from a mere coincidence that the once-crippled son of one of his most formidable agents had undergone such a dramatic rise in power.

In Becker's eyes, this was no random twist of fate. He was convinced that Erik must have inherited something significant from his father, something that could explain his newfound strength.

That Erik's sudden transformation was merely a stroke of luck didn't sit right with him—it had to be more than that.

"When I got told he awakened I was doubtful, but now, based on what the Blackguards are doing, it is clear that is not the truth, or at least not the whole truth. They know something we are not aware of."

Richard maintained a stoic silence, his expression unreadable. He was aware of the secrets that Becker kept closely guarded, information shared only between Becker and Lucius.

Richard, often left in the dark about anything regarding Lucius, could only speculate about the depths of these undisclosed matters.

The realization that there were layers to Becker's plans and strategies, beyond his comprehension, lingered in his mind.

"Last time you sent him on a secret mission. Where did he go?"

"On the Mur continent," Becker said. As he heard those words, Richard got the shock of his life. That was the most dangerous place in the world.

"Why?"

"There is a reason the Blackguards made their base in Hin. That nation is linked to that continent, and besides, they are the only thing that prevents the Thaidis from invading the rest of the world, including Hin. To be honest, I think the Blackguards were the ones that formed the nation itself. That is why I attacked them. I needed to know what they were searching."

"Searching?" Richard asked.

"Yes. They made their base there to search for something, but I don't know what. Lucius said he had found out what it was in his last message, but couldn't share that information with me at the time, as the bastards were already on his tracks."

Memories started resurfacing inside Becker's mind. They were not pleasant.

"By stirring troubles in Hin, I gave Lucius the opportunity to sneak inside the country unobstructed. Based on what happened, I bet he found something, maybe the very same thing the Blackguards were so desperately searching for all those years. I bet that something ended up in his son's hands."

"That would explain why the Blackguards are going all out to capture him."

"Right."

#### Chapter 794: Liberty Watch's preparations

It's been a week since Amber and the others had that conversation with Noah. The clone's words haunted their thoughts, but Amber had something else on her mind.

Upon discovering that the woman accompanying the clone was Erik's current lover, Amber felt a wave of sadness wash over her, mingling with a tinge of anger.

The news cut deep, penetrating her heart like a blade. Amber struggled with feelings of betrayal and loss. Erik made her promises.

The revelation left her feeling adrift, as if a part of her connection with Erik had been irreparably altered.

Her mind raced with questions and doubts, each thought adding to the growing storm of melancholy and indignation within her.

She wanted to be alone for the following week, to think, to train. She did nothing else during the day, even the nights sometimes.

As she sat in the exact spot where she had met Noah, Amber watched the nearly finished buildings and the constant flow of people entering and leaving the structures below.

"Mind If I sit?"

Amber shifted her gaze. Mira, the woman who caused that mess, was standing behind her. A complex combination of emotions crossed Amber's face as she looked at her.

Her eyes, though filled with an unspoken rage and a flicker of hatred, betrayed a certain resignation.

Amber couldn't deny the request, despite feeling overwhelmed by negative emotions.

A subtle softening of her expression revealed an internal conflict as she wrestled with her emotions, ultimately opting for reluctant acceptance rather than outright hostility.

"Suit yourself."

Mira did just that, and for sometime, they were both silent. While looking below, where people from Erik's guild worked, built, crafted and carried, Mira took the strength given by her experience and finally said.

"What happened is neither mine nor your fault."

Amber didn't turn to look at her. She already knew that. It was Erik's fault. It was his choice to find a substitute for her.

She was unsure if he had ever loved her in the first place.

How could he forget her so quickly? She didn't forget him. Not even once had a thought crossed her of finding someone else. At least not for the foreseeable future.

"I know that."

Mira sighed. "Look. I know I'm the last person you would like to hear those words, but closing yourself won't bring you anywhere."

Amber didn't reply.

"I do not know how things will go down. Erik might choose you or me, I do not know. Frankly speaking, I'm scared."

Amber quickly glanced at the woman, trying to be discreet. She saw the woman without her armor for the first time. It became clear that she had a striking beauty.

Her long, dark hair, elegantly braided over one shoulder, created a dramatic contrast against the rich green of her attire.

Amber didn't know, but she always dressed green. Even her armor had green patches here and there.

That was Mira's way of keeping her family close. Even though they were in a faraway place, she wasn't sure she'd ever visit again.

The woman had two bright and piercing eyes which held a captivating depth, embodying a curiosity that Amber recognized as a trait Erik was drawn to.

Amber found her undeniably alluring, a captivating combination of grace and intensity that both intimidated and fascinated her. She could understand why Erik had chosen her.

To some extent, she looked like Emily. Mira's beauty didn't quite match that of her friend, but the similarity was unmistakable.

That intensified her negative emotions. Erik and Amber's relationship had a rocky start, as he was infatuated with the daughter of the Stone Family.

Apparently, Emily shared the same sentiment. It was bizarre knowing her personality and how she always refused pursuers.

Although Amber was initially hurt by that, she persevered and persuaded Erik to be with her. She knew Erik was torn between the two.

"I'm scared that he will choose you."

That surprised Amber. "Why so? It's clear you are a beautiful woman. Strong, smart. Why would he choose you over me?"

Mira looked at Amber in the eyes. Her gaze then went to her bright red hair. They reached her bottom now, but Mira had no way of knowing she used to wear them short.

"Back in Etrium, Erik was always full of work. When he wasn't in his office, he was out hunting thaids. I won't even tell you what he did hunt, but there was no one in Etrium, aside from the Fierce Lioness, that could do the same. Alone at that."

Now Amber had a look of curiosity on her face. Noah informed her about Erik's adventure, but she wasn't aware of the specifics.

"Whenever he swung by the guild, it was usually just him or with Noah and the crew. Now I get why, but... whenever he was alone, and I ran into him, he was always staring at the sky through some windows."

Amber didn't speak, but couldn't understand. "What does this have to do with me?" she asked.

Mira sighed. "You can't understand because you are young. I'm older than you. I went through yours and Erik's problems many times."



She stopped for a second. "Oh, I know that look. It was longing. No matter what happened in the past, or why he ended up with me, he never stopped thinking about you." A tint of sadness crossed Mira's face.

Amber intently looked at Mira. "I know that for certain, Amber."

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"How are the progresses going?" Noah asked Jabir.

"The blacksmith and mechanics department are complete. We are 95% done with the alchemy department."

"Good. What about the materials? Are they having trouble getting the Aclaitrum?"

"Not as I know. Tyree, that geezer, had a huge fucking smile when he entered the city. With that much ore, his production of weapons was going to be astronomical."

Noah didn't let his emotion transpire because of the mask, but it was clear he was glad. They needed to be prepared for when Erik came back. Ready to face the Blackguards.

"Glad to hear that."

Chapter 795: Erik's arrival (1)

Erik emerged from the depths of a dense jungle. The journey back to Frant was smooth as a significant portion of the road in Etrium was traversed by air.

Accompanied by his remaining clones, he had no difficulty in fighting the Thaid's that were flying in the vicinity.

However, everything changed when he reached the Eldraith mountain range. That was the wyverns' territory.

Since Erik wanted to fight them, sooner or later, he decided to try during his travel back. Of course, that had been a terrible idea.

As he and the clones were going to attack one, Erik analyzed the creature. He didn't know if that was true for all Wyverns, but was shocked by what he saw.

The beast had attributes over the 300. Its mana easily surpassing the 1800. Wyverns were X ranked Thaid's. It was the first time he saw something like that.

The last time Erik had the unfortunate experience of encountering one of those creatures in proximity, he was so terrified that he was scared out of his wits, and his sole instinct was to flee as quickly as possible. He didn't even consider the possibility of analyzing the monster.

However, now, because of his pride, not only him, but even his clones, came really close to dying.

<Let's get the hell out of here! > He said to the clones as they fled, overwhelmed by the monstrous stats. The wyvern luckily noticed nothing.

For that reason, scared of having to fight one of such colossus in the air, he and the clones agreed the best thing they could do was go back to Frant on foot, and that, of course, slowed them down considerably.

It took Erik more than 20 days to make it to the country. It goes without saying that he had increased his pace from the last time he traversed those forests.

In the meantime, he didn't stay idle, as he made 6 more neural links.

<Status. >

The system showed him his progresses. (A.N: Bottom of the page).

"Not bad." Erik almost reached 250 points in strength and was around 200 for dexterity, while his intelligence had surpassed that. However, his energy was still at the pitifully meagre amount of 597.

<Those with a C or D brain crystal are going to curse at me. > It was weird to think this amount was low, especially considering how much mana he had not even a year before.

That was not low by any means, but it was still nothing compared to power houses like the Blackguards or Becker, who he knew he was going to meet again soon.

Erik didn't forget how, despite having much more strength, speed, and intelligence than the Blackguards, they almost killed him.

If it wasn't for his instability power, and the aid he got from Hais's brain crystal power and the Xeridon Anteris', he would have been dead by now.

<Luckily I came out of that nasty situation. > Yes, but he still shuddered at the thought.

Erik had spent a significant amount of time walking before reaching his destination, which turned out to be an enormous door.

He knew the door well. In the past, he had lived here and assisted the local community in establishing their lives in this area. That was Liberty Watch's entrance.

Placed to be concealed, the door remained as impressive as he recalled, hidden among rocks and overgrown with dense vegetation.

Though, the meeting with the weird monstrosity living within the cave-city still made him shudder.

"So, this is the place," June said.

"Indeed. I have many friends here."

"I know... but, umm... master. Have you thought about what to say to them?" June was talking about Amber and Mira.

Erik and the clones have been discussing the two individuals, and the clones have been pressuring Erik to decide about whom he should be with.

While some of them supported Mira and argued that she did not deserve such treatment, others took Amber's side and presented the same argument.

Erik was left feeling confused by all of that, as he didn't really know what actions to take. Despite the doubts, he held onto one certainty.

The clone informed Erik he told both of them about everything, and they discussed it later.

In addition, Noah mentioned that there had been certain developments, as conveyed by the clone, yet Noah declined to provide further details. The situation was rather odd.

Erik acknowledged the extent of his wrongdoings with Amber, and he believed it was necessary to apologize to both her and Mira, regardless of what he did.

"No," Erik said. "I have no clue what to say, who to pick, or how to make things right with them."

"Well, that's not good. They're not gonna like it."

"I know. But what else can I do?"

June hesitated, an idea sprouting in his mind. Based on the clone's expression, Erik assumed it was a good one.

"You could toss a coin!"

Erik almost facepalmed. He already imagined himself saying he chose one of them by tossing a coin to Mira and Amber.

"Yeah, sorry X, I tossed the coin, and you were the unlucky one. See ya!"

Then a disappointed, almost comical, look appeared on his face. He brought his hands to his hips and looked at June with an incredulous look.

"Weren't you supposed to be smart?" Erik was having doubt, at this point, that June was sane.

"Just because I'm smart doesn't mean I can't be joking sometimes," June said.

His expression was a mix of seriousness and a light-hearted mischief. Then the clone went behind Erik, massaged his shoulders for a second, more for kinship than due to their relationship as master and follower, and then went to the door.

June grabbed the handle and started twisting it to open the door. No longer was the creaking sound of rusted metal disturbing the silence of the forest.

Once the handle had fully turned, June pulled the door towards himself and opened it.

With each tug on the door by June, a steady pull brought forth a soft, creeping light that danced with the shadows inside, lifting the veil of darkness.

As the light flowed down the cavernous corridor, its rays stretched and bent around every contour, uncovering the passageway ahead and its hidden depths.

It was then that Erik found himself with some spears aimed at his throat. Only this time, they were made of Aclaitrium.

#### SYSTEM INTERFACE:

[Host Information]

NAME: Erik Romano

AGE: 18

POWER LEVEL: 683

SYSTEM LEVEL: 131

EXPERIENCE: 144893/670531.6

DNA POINTS: 2850

HEALTH: 11840/11840

MANA: 11770/11770

{Attributes}

STRENGTH: 223

INTELLIGENCE: 265

DEXTERITY: 203

ENERGY: 592

Available Attributes points: 0

{Powers}

[Biological Super Computer Powers]

-Brain Crystal Manipulation

Brain Crystal Power Extraction (Allows the absorption of the brain crystal, making the host able to gain the power contained within. Notice: the DNA must be changed in order to allow the body to use the power. See DNA extraction.)

Brain Crystal Power Merging (Allows to merge two powers birthing a new one. It requires the merging of the DNA to work.)

Brain Crystal Power Analysis (Allows to analyze the target brain crystal without the need to know the creature.)

- (LOCKED)

- Brain Crystal Power Strengthening (Allows the gaining of the energy attribute points)

- (LOCKED)

- DNA Manipulation

DNA Extraction (Allows the absorption of foreign DNA, making the host able to replicate it inside his own body. Notice: Changing the DNA is a slow process, and it is required to use new brain crystal powers.)

DNA Merging (Allows to merge two DNAs, birthing a new one. Required to accommodate merged powers.)

DNA Analysis (Allows to analyze the enemy DNA from the distance for a better understanding of the target's stats.)

- (LOCKED)

DNA Strengthening (Allows the gaining of the Strength, Intelligence, and Dexterity attribute points)

- (LOCKED)

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

- Brain Information Injector (It allows the injection of information directly to the brain. Based on touch)

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

[Host's Powers]

**FORCE MANIPULATION: Bv1B-RANKED** (Manipulate a mana-driven force to produce powerful shockwaves that can change in intensity, radius, speed, and power. It is also possible to use the power differently as to generate force shields.)

**PARALLEL WILLS: Bv1C-RANKED** (Allows the user to passively increase intelligence based on the number of neural links. It also allows the construction of a mana brain that allows independent thoughts and can be used for multiple purposes.)

**STRENGTH ENHANCER: Bπ2D-RANKED** (Depending on the amount of mana used, the amount of strength increases)

**PLANT MASTER: Bv1B-RANKED** (Allows to grow and control plant based organism. The usage depends on the plant and the user's will.)

**CHAMELEON VEIL: Bπ2C-RANKED** (Allows to turn totally transparent and to project what is behind you, making it almost impossible to be seen. The user can move while using this Brain Crystal power. However, notice that the ripples in light the power creates while moving decrease the power's hiding abilities, increasing the chance of being seen.)

**CHIMERIC BIOMETAL SOLDIER: Bo2A-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 to make them, a lot of mana is necessary; they can't use brain crystal powers. The clone is born from an egg, and it takes a month for them to reach maturity after having hatched two weeks after the eggs were made.

Before that, their physical stats are lower than 50% of the original's body. The clones are half as intelligent as the main body, but know everything the main body knows when he created them. They also have several biological abilities.)

**EXOSHIELD: Bσ1C-RANKED** (Allow creating a mana exoskeleton.)

**SOLID FROSTWIND: Bp2A-RANKED** (Allow to imbue an item with wind and frost elements. The Wind element is stronger than the frost one and allows control over the element itself. The power allows to create solidified slime weapons.)

**INSTABILITY: Bp3A-RANKED** (Allows to perceive, understand and mess with the emotions of the surrounding targets and to read their minds.)



ASTRAL WOLF: Bπ1B-RANKED (Create A full-bodied mana wolf with venomous fangs [the venom has various effects.])

BEAST SHAPESHIFTING: Bσ3C-RANKED (Allows to partially or totally shapeshift into an animal and humanized versions.)

HUMAN SHAPESHIFTING: Bσ3C-RANKED (Allows to shapeshift into a person. Based on sight.)

VIBRATION BURST: Bσ3A-RANKED (Create vibrations capable of killing.)

{Skills}

Kyokar hand-to-hand style (MASTER) (A military fighting style developed in Frant)

Crypt of the Desert Style (ADVANCED) (Flyssa fighting style developed by Master Nieminen)

Etrium's sword style (ADVANCED) (Basic Sword Style developed in Etrium.)

Chapter 796: Erik's arrival (2)

"Hi," Erik said, keeping his cool. After a quick scan with the biological supercomputer, he determined these guys couldn't do much against him.

However, the clones didn't like that move at all.

"Take away those weapons if you don't want to die," June said. There was a glint in his eyes Erik had never seen.

June killed a lot of Thaidis in the past, but he never showed that much bloodlust.

The guards must have not liked those words. They were getting angry as much as the clones.

"Who the fuck are you?" A guard asked.

"It's not something that a lowly guard like you should know."

The guards raised their weapons. It was clear they would not lower their weapons.

The tension was increasing visibly. A scuffle was going to break at any moment, and it would not end well for Liberty Watch's guards.

"What is happening?"

A silhouette appeared behind the guards, partially obscured by the cave's shadows.

The sun outside was unable to show his visage. However, everyone recognized that voice: Erik, the clones, the guards.

Then the silhouette became clear, the face of a young man appeared. He put his hand on one of the guards' shoulders and nodded at them to lower their weapons.

Erik had a huge grin on his face.

"Long time no see." Ethan smiled.

"Not that much," Erik said. Then the two hugged.

"How are you?"

"Eh... the travel was rough. I had to scale that damn mountain again."

Immediately, the guards and Ethan turned to look. The only mountain Erik could refer to was the Eldraith mountain range.

Their faces got ashen. If these men were able to pass safely thorough that infernal place, it meant they could have easily killed them.

Of course, if they were telling the truth, and they were inclined to believe they weren't.

Ethan was ashen for another reason, related to it, but not the same.

"You went through that wyvern infested mountain?" Shock was clear on his face. He believed him.

"What should have I done? To travel on foot was safer than traveling through the sky."

"Sky?" Ethan was confused. "Yeah. I will show you sometimes. It's not that there is a point in hiding it anymore."

Erik then went forward. The guards let him walk past them with no hindrance, but as they did, they wondered who these guys were, and why Ethan was so friendly with them.

"We know the way," June said as he and the other clones followed their creator.

The guards looked at each other with confused looks. Ethan shrugged.

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The subterranean city was vastly different from how Erik remembered. Most of the buildings, despite being tall and huge, had been renovated.

Many of the pillars making up the buildings supporting the ceilings had been replaced with stronger materials.

The exterior of the buildings had transformed, as they had been repainted, and the cracks fixed.

The vines climbing onto them cleaned, giving the buildings a new and lustrous shine.

It gave the city a fresh look, one Erik didn't even think was possible to get given how old these buildings were.

It didn't look anymore like something that had been abandoned centuries before.

The citizens also brought personal touches to the area. Aside from the green surrounding the place, the once stark and utilitarian spaces were now vibrant with color and life, showcasing artistic murals and hanging gardens that brought a touch of the surface world below ground.

Erik also noticed how the plants spread. The place had many trees, much more than those he planted.

The air was fresh and warm despite being in a cave, and a lot of lights had been added all over the place. There wasn't a single shadowed place.

Ethan reached Erik. He noticed his friend gazing around.

"Impressive, uh? Without having to worry about constant Thaid and human attacks, we had a lot of time to spare. Lots of people started studying the city's old books and the ones you brought, and we made a ton of stuff with no one's help."

"Yea, it is. I bet it took you a lot of work."

"Yeah," he then shuddered. It was clear Samuel, Amos, and Vanessa worked him to the bone.

"I'll bring you to Amos."

"Does he know I'm here?"

"I sent one of my men to announce you. There might be a little to wait, though. Sometime ago, someone saying he works for you came, and since he and his people did, the situation here became... tense."

Erik was intrigued and a little worried about Ethan's words.

"Tense? Why?"

"Well..." Ethan paused a second to find the right words to use.

"Initially, they asked us for a place to stay, but then they explained what was happening and why they came here. They said you had been accused of killing innocents. Of course, we all knew it couldn't be true."

"It isn't true, in fact."

"So, just to understand, are you confirming they work for you?"

"Is the guy who leads them called Noah?" Erik asked.

"Yeah."

"Then they do. But all of this doesn't explain the tense situation you were referring to."

"Yeah. Well, Amos agreed cooperating with them," Ethan said.

"They started hunting Thaidis and securing the area around the cave. But then they started making proposals, telling this was going to be a great way to repay the favors you did to the village and stuff like that." Ethan turned to look at some building still under construction.

"They started building stuff, collecting ores. It's not like we don't need all that stuff, but things got complicated once they brought... him... here."

"Him?" Erik now was intrigued. Who could be the person Ethan was referring to?

"Becker."

"General Becker is here?" That too shocked Erik. He talked with Noah several times during his travel back to Liberty Watch's village, but he told nothing about the man.

"Yeah. That fucker is here. He told a lot of interesting stuff, but I guess Amos will be the one to explain the situation to you. In the meantime, if you could... uh... tell your people to be more respectful toward us... it would be... good."

Erik nodded. It was clear Noah and the other clones had created a lot of trouble for the villagers.

The last thing he wanted to do was for bad blood to sprout between them.

So he planned to make a long talk with Noah.

Chapter 797: Erik's arrival (3)

Then they arrived in front of a building. The same building where Erik found the humanoid beast that almost killed him, and that later he went to subjugate with Samuel and the others.

This was also the place where he found some disturbing information about the human experiments that were conducted here by the Silver Line Corporation.

Erik hadn't been able to find information about this mysterious organization, or company, or whatever it was.

Whomever they may have been, their existence has been erased from historical records. He didn't know, though, if that was exactly what these guys wanted.

Regardless, whoever they were, it was clear they knew about thaidis much more than the average person of their time, and based on the experiments they did, those who resulted in creating that abomination, he suspected their role in the story was more important than it appeared.

But these were all speculations for now, and there was no way for him to find out the truth.

Ethan led Erik and the clones into the building. The place had been cleaned and restored.

There wasn't a single room that hadn't been used. The place was used as a warehouse, but most of the rooms had offices.

Erik wondered what they had to write about as to require these many spaces to be used as offices.

During their walk, Erik recognized some of the faces. Most of the people from Liberty Watch's village knew who he was and gave radiant smiles to the not so young anymore man.

Some even hugged him, and often they stopped to talk. Though there wasn't a single trace of the people from Erik's guild.

Erik inquired about it with Ethan, and he told Erik they had been busy with some vast projects on the other side of the cave.

Besides, they were currently busy with killing all the Thaid in the cave's many tunnels.

The Acidspitter arthropods were just some of the ones they eradicated.

"They even found the corpse of a gigantic worm-like thaid in one of the tunnels. When I went there, I almost crapped myself."

"Gigantic worm?"

"Yeah, it was at least 100 meters long and 15 meters tall. You know, the stuff of nightmares."

"If it was that big, it must have been really powerful when alive. I wonder how could have such a Thaid escaped humans for so long, unless they couldn't hunt it and just abandoned the idea of killing it."

Erik knew well that the bigger the Thaid, the stronger they were.

A beast like this must have been a calamity, but why it hadn't destroyed the city, and why it died, were a mystery.

"Bring me there when you have some time. I want to take a look at this titan."

Ethan Nodded, but their conversation was cut short when they arrived in front of a door.

He had been there before, so he recognized the place where he found the map of the city.

The door had been replaced with one made of Aclaitrium, so it released a light of its own and illuminated its surroundings.

Then Ethan pushed it, and they entered. There, Erik saw familiar faces.

Amos was looking at some documents and turned to look at Erik with weirdly watered eyes.

Vanessa was there. Despite wearing the same impassive expression, it was clear she was happy upon seeing the savior of their village.

Then Erik's eyes turned to the left. There, he saw a gigantic old man running toward him.

"Samuel!"

The older man raised Erik as if he was a toddler, and then gave him a hug that could rival that of a boa constrictor.

"Erik!" the old man said. "How are you?"

"That's what I should ask you, old geezer!"

"AHAHAHAHAHA I see that your past year made you bolder! Should I teach you a lesson?" he said with a wide grin.

"I would pin you to the ground with my left hand!"

"Ah, it also made you stupid!"

Both started laughing out loud. Samuel had almost been a fatherly figure for Erik during his stay at Liberty Watch's village.

He was the man he trusted above all others, and the one who made the greatest effort to make him feel at home.



He proved to be a sincere friend, regardless of the age gap between them.

"I know you are happy to see each other, but there is something we have to talk with Erik," Amos said, breaking the reunion.

"Erik, I'm glad to see you," he said while Samuel put him on the ground. "Me too, Amos. How have you been?"

"You know that. Once you left, we still had many things to do. I didn't rest for even a second."

"Glad to know you have been well."

Amos gave Erik a look, but then resumed his speech.

"Erik, you must tell us what the hell is happening. Who are those people? They told they were your people, but they are acting arrogantly. They behave as if they own the place, especially that Noah."

"Sorry, Amos. It looks like during my absence, Noah had to shoulder a lot. I imagine that what he did appeared overbearing at times, but he did what he did with the best intentions. You have to believe me about this."

"I know that. We were the ones who benefited the most from their presence, but based on what they told us, we are putting ourselves in a lot of danger. We need a clear picture of the situation and I bet Noah didn't tell us everything, that's why—"

"That's why you called me here without telling Noah, right?" Erik didn't see his clone around. It meant they didn't tell him he was here.

"Indeed."

Erik knew that if Noah and the rest knew he was in the city, they would have organized some kind of celebration or similar event. Noah idolized Erik to an almost fanatical extent.

"I know little myself. Only that I'm being chased by some guys everyone thought to be the good ones."

"Do you have an idea why?"

"Yes." Then a colossal blue wolfish Thaid, a Leylarhad, appeared behind Erik.

"That's the reason," he said, with the others inside the room looking shocked and scared. This time, Ethan really crapped himself.

Chapter 798: Erik's arrival (4)

Fear etched deep into Vanessa's features, her eyes wide and trembling.

Beside her, Amos's expression was tense, a furrowed brow revealing his deep apprehension.

Samuel, meanwhile, wore a look of utter shock, his mouth agape and eyes staring in disbelief.

"What is... that?" Amos asked.

"That is my Astral Wolf. A gift from some Leylarhads I killed when I still lived in New Alexandria."

"Yes, but... how?"

The question that everyone was eagerly awaiting an answer to was that. How could Erik, who had a power capable of making plants grow faster, and one that could allow him to make a weird energy, have another ability that allowed him to make that monstrosity behind him and barely fitting the room?

Humans had a limited understanding of awakeners, and even Liberty Watch's Village knew very little about them, but these three powers were completely unprecedented for everyone.

"I can't tell you how, just that I can get more brain crystal powers. I have not only two or three." Erik paused, then he turned to look at one of his clones. "June."

As if already knowing what the young man wanted to do, June stepped forward.

Immediately, he undid his shapeshifted form, his visages changed from that of a handsome young man resembling Erik to that of a weird humanoid resembling a worm with two legs and two arms.

The presents were even more frightened by that than they were by the Astral Wolf.

"A Thaid?!" Vanessa said. It was better to say that she yelled.

"Not at all." Erik turned to look at June and raised his hand as if he was presenting a product.

"This is June. He is a clone of mine I made with the Mirror Centipede's brain crystal power. No matter what, June is just like the rest of us, a human. It's just that his birth is a bit odd. Oh, by the way, Noah is one of my clones, too."

The room fell into a momentary silence as everyone held their breath.

Amos, Samuel, Ethan, and Vanessa were all in disbelief as they witnessed and heard what was happening. That explained everything.

Those responsible for targeting Erik was eager to find out the method behind his impressive capabilities.

They all understood that was likely the reason for pushing those guys to chase him. The greed for power.

It was truly incredible and nothing short of a miracle how Erik could gain powers from fallen beasts.

In a hypothetical scenario where everyone possessed such a capability, humanity would no longer feel the need to hide within cities due to the fear of Thaid's.

They would be able to reclaim their planet, to even reclaim the Mur continent.

"Of course, this means I'm not an awakener. That is just something I came up with to justify my powers. Back in New Alexandria, I told everyone I had a sharpening power."

Amos, aware of the potential risks of disclosing such information, posed a question that was on everyone's mind, including his own.

"Why are you telling us this? You could have kept silent and said you didn't know."

The old man's eyes were filled with curiosity, as if he was eager to uncover something unknown. He was curious about the reason behind it, but he was also interested in finding out if he could gain that power for himself. Maybe Erik had a way.

Erik's eyes were filled with a flame of fierce determination that was underscored by an icy resolve, a sight that had never been witnessed by none of them on Erik's face before.

Samuel and Ethan, who had already witnessed Erik's resilience during their encounter with the human-like Thaid and the Acidspitter Arthropods, were taken aback by the intense look on his face.

There was a certain expression in his eyes, a look that insinuated something sinister.

"Two reasons," Erik said. "The first is that I'm sick of hiding. The second is that none of you can kill me, or capture me, for all that matters."

Erik made a simple statement that left no room for misunderstanding. There was nothing they could do to oppose him. It was clear to both Vanessa and Ethan that, although they were stronger than the average child from Frant or Etrium, they were still much weaker compared to Amos and Samuel.

However, the two individuals in question were perplexed by how the younger man had become stronger than both of them.

"I know what you are thinking. Let me give you an answer to those silent questions I see in your eyes. June," Erik said.

"You see, my friend here is as strong as Samuel, at least in terms of physical strength, but that's not all, he can shapeshift even into Thaid, he can make armor made of bones and many other stuff I'm not keen on revealing."

The young man had a group of 21 clones standing behind him, and it did not go unnoticed by the others.

If his statements held truth, it would show that Erik possessed an astonishing level of power.

Not a single soul could be found in this place, or in the entire village for that matter, or even outside of it, who could even come close to challenging him.

All he had to do was dispatch one of the clones to handle anyone he encountered along the way.

However, this also implied that Erik possessed the ability to control every single one of them and make them submit to his will.

"Don't worry, I'm not Becker. I don't plan on asking you anything. If you want to work with me, I will make sure that will benefit us both. If instead you don't even want, just tell me and we will leave the city regardless of what my people had built here. You can take whatever we leave."

Erik then dismissed the Astral Wolf. The present breathed a sigh of relief when it vanished, yet the feeling of apprehension remained.

After all, there were 21 other monsters in that room, and they weren't even sure Erik wasn't one of them.

"I have to think about it," Amos said.

It was certainly not a straightforward decision to make, that's was sure. Despite the potential benefits that the village would receive from Erik's help, they were still going to confront the Blackguards, who were the most powerful organization on the entire planet.

Even Amos, who was born in a village inside the forest, knew who they were.

Should even a fraction of the tales regarding their strength hold any truth, the village would soon encounter an opponent whom they may not have the ability to defeat.

"Let me just tell you this. If you accept in joining me, you will become my people. I will treat you like everyone else. That may change the dynamics between us, but it will also come with many perks."

"For example?" Vanessa asked. It were the first words she said since Erik and the clones entered the room.

"For example, a new and better neural link training technique."

Chapter 799: Erik and Noah (1)

Erik walked through the streets of Liberty Watch Village. No, it was better to call it Liberty Watch city now. The place was massive after all, and all the work the residents made transformed the place from a village to a city.

With Samuel's information in mind, the man walked towards a building in search of Noah.

However, the old man was unaware of Noah's activities, but he informed Erik that Noah spent a significant amount of time in a certain building.

Due to the constant flow of people going in and out, everyone was convinced that whatever Noah was engaged in must have held significant importance.

Upon his arrival, Erik noticed that several members from his guild were present. They were bringing crates inside the building.

Erik was unsure about the contents of the items, but based on their size and the amount of effort being exerted to carry them, it seemed likely that they were a large quantity of items or something significantly heavy.

The moment he came near, several guild members realized his presence. However, the absence of a mask on Erik's face left them unaware of his true identity.

"Excuse me! Who are you?"

Erik looked confused for a second. Then June approached. "Master, you are not wearing your mask."

"Ah right, thanks June."

He reached into his backpack and retrieved an item, revealing a white mask adorned with intricate designs. With a swift movement, he placed it on his face.

"Do you recognize me now?"

When the man laid eyes on the mask, he made the connection.

That physical build, the mask, the voice. It was his boss. His face paled.

As the crate slipped from his grasp and descended to the ground, he raised his hand in a salute, paying homage to his employer.

"Sorry, sir! I didn't recognize you!"

"It doesn't matter," Erik said. "Bring us somewhere we can rest, and call Noah. I need to talk to him."

"Yes, Sir!"

Erik removed the mask from his face and then handed it over to June, who placed it in his backpack.

Due to all the fuss that was made, it caught the attention of many, but not everyone witnessed Erik wearing the mask, resulting in confusion among the onlookers.

However, judged by how hastily their comrade entered inside, the person who came to the door was very important. What made it even more puzzling was the fact that he was young.

Who could that man be? What could be the reason behind their guild member's reaction?

Just a few minutes later, a group of impeccably dressed butlers emerged from the building, their uniforms pressed and tailored to perfection, emitting an undeniable sense of professionalism.

In a display of respect, they gathered in front of Erik, ensuring their postures were upright and their faces reflected a mix efficiency and a warm welcome.

"Welcome back, Master Kay," they said in unison, voices harmonious and well-rehearsed.

"If you would follow us, we will escort you to a place where you can rest."

Erik entered the building, a wide smile adorning his face, and the group was ushered into a room that had been reserved for esteemed guests.

Despite the seemingly solid construction of the place, the absence of skilled artisans led to a rough and unrefined finish, with little regard for intricate details.

Wood, stone, and Aclatrium were the primary materials employed in creating most of these items.

However, when it came to the seating arrangements, they went with simple wooden chairs that were complemented by cushions filled with a mix feathers, straws, and leaves.

This option might not have been the most comfortable choice. Erik had expected a similar scenario upon learning from Noah about his plan on moving the guild to Liberty Watch Village.

Although the location offered a chance for them to begin anew and reorganize, it was clear to Noah and Erik that they would encounter challenges in fine-tuning everything without help from external sources and artisans.

There was a limit to what the crafting department could do alone.

Most of the guild members were required to lend their help with various tasks and chores in order to restore productivity. In order to assist the guild, they were even taking the time to learn how to sew.

It took some time, but Noah arrived in the room. In a rush, he made his way there, with barely any time to spare for putting on his hood and mask.



There were others present at the scene alongside him. Luke, Ari, Yori, Nick, Damon and Swaran were there.

"We greet you, Master," they said in unison.

"Did you practice that when I was away?" The clones didn't reply, visibly embarrassed.

Then Swaran perched his neck and said, not without palpable embarrassment, "It was Noah's idea."

"Of course." Erik turned to look at his clone. "Well, you can take your masks off."

Noah stepped forward, "But sir, you told us no one have to see our faces. The butlers are coming here to bring refreshments." Noah glanced back at the men behind Erik. It was clear they were his other clones.

"It doesn't matter anymore. I told Amos everything. I even showed him June's true aspect," he said while pointing at June, which Noah had never seen.

The clone took a step forward, approaching the group. With a smile on his face, he enthusiastically grabbed Noah's hands and shook them.

"A pleasure to meet you, big bro."

The entire situation left Noah feeling confused and unsure. To tell the truth, he felt more comfortable when he had the mask on.

He was filled with fear at the thought of how people would treat him if they saw his face.

Out of all the clones, Noah was the only one who lacked the ability to shapeshift. In addition to being the weakest member, he was also the only one who lacked any biological powers.

Despite his intelligence being the only thing Noah possessed, he still couldn't match up to the other clones, who were smarter than him.

Noah could only work harder than any of them if he wanted to please Erik.

"Sir, I prefer not taking the mask off."

"Are you sure? It's not like you are forced to do it anymore."

"Yes, sir."

Erik understood the problem at the bottom of Noah's refusal. "Well, at least sit."

"That I can do."

Noah, along with the rest of the group, followed the instructions. The clones who accompanied Erik gave up their seats for them.

Even though Noah's group was considered weaker, everyone recognized the immense effort they put into their work for their creator. The level of respect they had for that was undeniable.

"You created a lot of problems for Amos and the others," Erik said.

"I Apologize, sir, but I needed to convince them to join our cause."

"You almost forced them, though."

"Again, sorry sir, but I did what I had to."

Erik let out a deep sigh. Noah seemed determined to portray himself as a diligent ant.

"Just try to not be overbearing, and tell the guild members to do the same. We are here to collaborate, not ruling."

"Yes, sir, I will keep this in mind."

## Chapter 800: Erik and Noah (2)

Noah and Erik spent considerable time discussing the recent events in Testrovsc's Rest.

Noah, Erik's clone, detailed how problems originated with the Border Wolves, a rival group, instigating issues with their members.

These confrontations weren't limited to external hunts.

They spilled into the city streets, escalating tension within the two organizations.

The situation deteriorated when several brawls erupted, leaving many individuals with severe injuries.

In an unexpected twist, a formal investigation was launched, placing Erik's guild under intense scrutiny.

This was not just a simple inquiry; the guild found itself being closely watched by the Band of Giants, explaining why they rushed toward Testrovsc's Rest when Erik left the city.

The premeditated nature of the events was apparent from Noah's account.

The band of giants had already arrived at Testrovsc's Rest, while the guild wasn't under investigation yet.

The guild faced a sudden restriction on their quest-taking activities, further hampering their operations.

Amidst this, the mercenary guild publicly accused Erik of the murder of civilians in the city's slums.

This accusation, baseless as it was, stirred a wave of disbelief and shock within the city.

Erik's fellow guild members stood by him, confident in his innocence, but the rumor mill of Testrovsc's Rest churned, with many residents swayed by the allegations.

The Border Wolves capitalized on this atmosphere, fanning the flames of discontent among the population.

Their manipulations exacerbated the divide, turning citizens against Erik's guild.

Rumors and false accusations intertwined with the truth, creating a tangled web of suspicion and hostility.

This campaign by the Border Wolves not only ruined Erik's reputation, but also threatened the stability and unity of the entire guild.

Members found themselves navigating an increasingly hostile environment outside their ranks.

As Erik listened to Noah's story, he felt a surge of anger. Things had spiraled out of control in Testrovs's Rest.

In an unexpected move, the mercenary guild did not halt Erik's guild from producing their signature stimulating serums.

Instead, they urged an increase in production.

Shortly afterward, they demanded the serum's formula. They argued it would prove Erik's willingness to cooperate and possibly compensate the affected families, clearing his name.

Noah declined to disclose the formula. That wasn't meant for someone outside the guild, and definitely not for them.

The refusal intensified the pressure on the guild. With tension building, Noah made the choice to relocate the guild.

Two primary factors played a crucial role in driving this decision.

First, relocation offered a chance for reorganization and regrouping.

While some members departed because of their ties to Testrovsc's Rest were too strong to sever, a significant number remained committed to Erik's guild.

Their loyalty and resilience provided a solid foundation for rebuilding in a new location.

Second, the move opened up new opportunities.

Frant officially lacked a mercenary guild, mostly because of Becker's policy against 'self-armed' citizen groups.

Its purpose was obvious - to prevent more people from joining the Blackguards indirectly.

However, Noah saw potential advantages in this void. Their presence in Frant could prove beneficial to the nation, and would ease the pressure on the guild.

While Noah oversaw the transfer of personnel, equipment, and resources to Liberty Watch, he received troubling news from Frant.

There was a notable change in the political landscape.

Not only was Becker removed from his position, but he was also charged with bringing the Heniate to the country, along with other allegations.

In the wake of this upheaval, Sinisa Volkov rose to power as the new general.

He showed no mercy towards Becker's loyalists, displaying ruthless and vengeful behavior.

The purge spared only a handful, including Caiden Joyce and Richard Stone, who were protected by their physical strength and influential position in society.

Noah then resolved to find Becker, convinced the man held crucial information.

Noah thought that since Volkov was working with the Blackguards, Becker, who had been his and their enemy for years, might know something useful they didn't.

In order to enhance their efforts, Noah contacted Richard Stone.

The collaboration with Stone had a double advantage: it increased their resources and manpower while guaranteeing the safety of Amber and the others.

Noah then detailed his initiatives in Liberty Watch.

He had established many facilities for producing weapons, armors, and potions, aiming to strengthen both their guild and the community.

His methods, while controversial, were driven by a desire to protect and empower those around him. Erik already knew that Noah had all of Erik's memories up to a certain point. The clone loved them as much as he did.

Despite recognizing his methods could be seen as questionable, he knew his intentions were for the greater good.

However, amid these revelations, a more pressing problem emerged.

Noah switched gears and emphasized the importance of taking immediate action on this urgent matter.

"Have you decided what to do? "

"Not yet," Erik said. "I tried to push him, but he hasn't made his mind up," June said.

They were talking about Amber and Mira.

"You gotta decide. Plus, everyone was devastated when they thought you were dead. You're in debt to everyone."

"I know that," Erik said. "I will talk to them. As for the other matter, I don't know what to do."

"I already explained much of the situation to them, Mira included."

Erik grimaced. "Now you have to do what is right, but also what will make you happier."

"You are right."

Erik pondered for a moment. He had powerful feelings for both women and struggled with the decision to choose between them.

The best thing Erik could do was to apologize to all of them.

To his friends for having abandoned them. To Amber for having put her through loss, and to Mira for not having told her the whole truth.

"I ensured they were informed of your presence."

His complexion turned a ghastly shade of pale when his clone mentioned his friend's awareness of his presence.

He wasn't prepared for this confrontation this soon, the weight of his actions bearing on him.

His eyes flickered with a mix of regret and apprehension.

A visible tremor passed through him, a physical manifestation of the turmoil churning inside.

He took a hesitant step back, his gaze dropping as he grappled with the reality of facing those he had let down.

"They should be in the next room."

As a result, Noah placed a stone on the matter. The issue could no longer be ignored.

With a countenance resembling that of a mournful pup, Erik made his way towards the exit.

He had to be careful and pick his words wisely.