

BIOLOGICAL 861

Chapter 861: Hunting for Shade (18)

In the week that followed their daring mission, life for Erik and his team slowed down considerably.

Everyone, except for June and Erik, visited a healer from the Band of Giants to tend to their wounds.

On the other side, Shade's side, the situation was anything but calm.

News of Gabriel's death spread like wildfire, and the subsequent attack on his villa didn't go unnoticed, either.

The aftermath stirred up tensions, leaving everyone on edge about the potential repercussions.

For a second, Erik thought that Shade had the means to find out who the onyx sculpture belonged to, making it so that their attack on the Villa had been for naught.

However, this concern was put to rest. After a careful check using his biological supercomputer and a detailed hand-eye examination, he concluded it was unlikely for Shade to trace the sculpture back to Gabriel, meaning they could still enter the meeting without problems. At least in theory.

There was also the chance that the guy might have changed the key, even if it wasn't easy to do. After all, it was Shade they were talking about, and nothing about him was simple.

This realization brought a sigh of relief to Erik and his team. Their operation, risky as it had been, wasn't for nothing, and for now, they could proceed.

"Well, at least we didn't mess up too badly."

Yes. But while their secret operation hadn't been linked back to them, Shade was now undoubtedly on high alert.

The infiltration and retrieval of the onyx sculpture meant that Shade was aware someone had inside information on his meeting.

This left Erik pondering a crucial question: Would Shade continue with his plans as if nothing had happened, or would he take precautionary measures like changing the location or delaying the meeting altogether?

Throughout his efforts to unravel the enigma that was Shade, Erik had gleaned some insights into the man lurking in the shadows.

Intelligence was a trait that stood out; Shade was no ordinary person. However, Erik couldn't find out his physical strength.

Not that it mattered much to Erik, confident as he was in his own abilities, but it was a piece of the puzzle.

Another characteristic of Shade became apparent to Erik during his investigation: his immense pride.

This trait might be Shade's weakness. Erik deduced that Shade's pride might prevent him from altering his plans too drastically for fear of appearing weak or intimidated.

"I don't think he will postpone the meeting."

"Why so?" June asked, as he was the one who made the question to Erik. "Because he doesn't like rats sniffing around. He likely increased the meeting's security."

"It won't be enough," June said.

"It might. What if there are a thousand people protecting him? Even I can do nothing about it."

Then Erik stood up. There were more pressing matters to think about. "Let's go. We have a meeting to attend to."

Erik and June navigated the intricate corridors of the Band of Giants' headquarters, their footsteps echoing softly against the stone floors.

They arrived at the small meeting room Rebecca had secured for their strategy session.

Erik pushed open the door, stepping into the space designated for plotting and planning.

Upon entering, he took stock of the room's occupants. Rebecca, Camille, and Ramon were around the table.

They were familiar faces, but Erik's eyes were drawn to an unfamiliar figure, a woman seated at the far end of the room. Her presence was unexpected.

Rebecca caught Erik's lingering gaze on the newcomer and sensed his curiosity.

The woman's appearance was striking, with keen eyes that seemed to miss nothing and an air of confidence that suggested she was no stranger to the dangerous world they all navigated.

Rebecca read the unspoken question in Erik's eyes and prepared to introduce the woman.

"This is Laria," She said. "She will help us through the next step."

"Help? Aren't we enough?"

The others looked at each other. By then Erik understood they talked among themselves when he and June were not there.

"You see..." Ramon said. "Our trip to the villa opened our eyes."

"In what way?" Erik asked.

"It's easy. Really, we are not nearly as strong as you guys."

An embarrassed silence ensued for a couple of seconds.

"While me and Camille can take care of ourselves, Rebecca here is still too weak to..."

He said nothing further, as Rebecca lowered her gaze in embarrassment.

"Anyway, since it's likely Shade is going to increase the security in tonight's meeting, we thought it would be good to go there with a squad."

Erik glanced at them. "We can't just charge in. If we slip up, Shade could escape, and tracking him down again would be a real headache. We only have that list of names, and working through it to find Shade will take time. Plus, we might not get another chance like this."

"We know that," Rebecca said.

"We don't plan on attacking them openly, but to at least have a backup in case something bad happens."

"And what can she do to help us?" Erik said, looking at Laria.

"I don't know if you are aware of this," the woman said, turning to Erik.

"But I was the one overseeing the operation in Frant. I obviously know how to command troops."

"How many troops are we talking about?" June asked.

"300."

Erik looked at the woman with skepticism. 300 people weren't easy to hide. How did she plan on making them approach the meeting location without Shade noticing? He voiced that concern.

Besides, what if there were more people as they were predicting? What if Shade had tens of thousands of people protecting him? Could these 300 be enough to complete the mission?

"Our troops are highly trained, and of course, we will only bring stealth specialists. Believe me, this guy, Shade, won't even understand what hit him."

Somehow, he wasn't keen on believing that, but if Rebecca and the others felt more at ease doing this, it's not like he could protest.

To kill Shade was important, but not at the cost of losing them. If Rebecca died, the Fierce Lioness would hunt him to the end of the earth.

Erik sighed. "If you say so."

Chapter 862: Hunting for Shade (19)

This place had likely been abandoned by the time the Thaidis arrived centuries ago. Yet its buildings remained, even if they were not in their prime condition.

The city wasn't even big; it was more like a small village, a forgotten cluster of structures that time had relinquished to the elements, and the monsters.

Encircling the ancient village lay a sprawling meadow, with Erik and his companions about 500 meters away amidst the greenery.

Erik, Ramon, Camille, Rebecca, June, Laria, and the 300 stealth specialists from the Band of Giants had positioned themselves around it, using the night as their ally.

Ahead lay the small, ancient city. Its vacant buildings and deserted streets had been devoid of life for centuries, yet tonight, it was clear this was no longer the case.

Faint lights punctuated the darkness. Shade's men were already there, preparing for the meeting.

Erik's gaze was fixed on those sporadic glimmers of light. He understood the need for those lights; in the darkness that enveloped the place, even Shade's men needed guidance to navigate the ruins.

The dim lights in the village revealed the presence of many people within the seemingly abandoned city.

<Is by moving outside the big cities that Shade avoided to be found? >

That could be a reason, after all, few people wandered outside the cities where Thaidis roamed.

While they reached the meeting place, Erik and his group had to kill many, which made it clear why the authorities were reluctant to pursue criminals beyond the city limits.

Rebecca turned to Erik. "What's the plan now?"

Erik considered their options for a moment, but there was nothing they could really do, at least not in huge numbers.

An attack was simple to carry out, and Erik was sure that the Band of Giants's mighty members would win, but Shade would flee, and he couldn't allow that.

"We proceed as we planned. Only this time, June and I will go in, posing as Shade's men. There are too many of them for all of us to go unnoticed."

Rebecca's worry deepened. "Are you crazy? It's risky with just the two of you against so many."

Erik looked at Rebecca. "Tell me why I was renowned in Testrovsc's Rest?" he asked.

Rebecca knew it all too well. She had been with him on many missions, even if not as dangerous and daring as this one.

Erik was famous because of his skill in entering any place unnoticed.

Rebecca then recalled the first meeting they had at Nokisi Point. Erik had a completely different face than the one he had now.

He could shapeshift. The other didn't know this.

He was the one with the highest chances to enter there unnoticed, and they knew.

Besides, it wasn't like, after all they did at Gabriel's villa, they could simply throw the onyx sculpture and attack.

They needed someone inside that sea of people to prevent Shade from escaping, and Erik didn't want to leave the task to anyone.

The group fell silent when Erik asked that question, understanding the depth of Erik's skills but also the danger of the task.

Ramon broke the silence. "What will you do once you're inside?"

"We find Shade and deal with him."

"Are you sure about this?" Laria asked.

"I am."

For her, that was even better, as she would not put his soldiers in danger if things went well. However, she didn't want to stay idle either.

"If that's your plan, we'll provide support from the outside in case things go south. It might not be much, but it should help lighten your load."

Erik nodded in appreciation. Turning to June, he asked, "Ready?"

June's response was immediate and unwavering. "Yes, Master."

With a last nod to the group, Erik and June set off towards the village, their movements swift and silent, blending into the night as they made their way across the meadow.

Behind them, Laria took command, organizing the 300 stealth specialists.

"Move out," she said, her voice low but carrying the authority of someone used to leading.

Under her direction, the mercenaries began their own approach towards the city, ready to act as a backup should things go awry.

In the meantime, Erik and June ran, nearing the village. The lights were not much, and that would help them go there unnoticed.

Together, they reached the outskirts of the village, the dilapidated buildings looming like specters of a forgotten past.

Here, the real challenge began: entering the heart of Shade's operation and confronting the king of the underworld.

Erik was sure security was going to increase the more they went toward the meeting place.

<Not that it would stop me. >

Laria and her team, once they reached the city, moved with precision, leaping across rooftops to secure strategic vantage points.

From their elevated positions, they gained a clearer view of the scene below, and what they saw was daunting.

The dim light had masked the sheer number of Shade's men scattered throughout the area.

Groups of twenty to thirty guards were stationed around key locations and among the streets, clearly set up to thwart any approach to the meeting spot.

The problem was, these was not an amateurish move.

These clusters of guards weren't just patrolling; they were deliberately placed to protect and control access to the meeting place.

It looked like the guards were wandering aimlessly, but it wasn't true. They didn't leave a blind spot for even a second.

"Maybe we should have brought more soldiers," Laria said.

"Why?"

Laria was a well trained mercenary, with years of service, but that wasn't actually needed here. She easily saw it.

The sheer number of opponents was staggering, and it meant a direct confrontation was out of the question.

"Whoever organized the guard duties... these guys are smart."

The young woman turned to look at her. "So?"

"So?" Laria said with a pensive look. "So, I think we might start killing those guys before Erik starts his move."

Chapter 863: Hunting for Shade (20)

"This must have been the town hall," Erik said.

It made sense. The meeting was likely going to be huge, and they needed a space adequate enough to ensure everyone could listen to Shade talk.

"I see the main entrance there," June said.

"Do you see anything we could use to enter?"

"Nothing that isn't guarded."

If Erik could simply kill the guards, he would be thrilled about it. He wasn't willing to take the risk of dealing with these individuals and blow up his cover, despite the potential reduction in street criminals.

Until now, every time Erik went somewhere, there weren't as many people as now.

The risk of someone hearing the battle, or glimpsing at him and June scaling walls, was high right now.

"Then we go through the main door. Do you have the onyx sculpture?"

"I do, Master."

"Good, then follow me and act as my guard."

With that, Erik placed a mask on his face. Just to be sure, he morphed his face into that of an older man.

Erik was sure that those at the meeting were hiding their faces.

They were the kings and queens of the underworld, maybe even from other countries.

It was unlikely they were willing to let people see their faces. Rat could be everywhere, after all.

The duo then walked toward the entrance. There were at least 300 people just there guarding it.

A group of 30 guards rushed toward them, weapons poised.

"Let me enter," Erik said. Then June took the onyx sculpture to let the guards see it. Only those invited by Shade could have that sculpture, so after a couple of seconds, the guards let them pass.

They entered the town hall. The building, abandoned for centuries and patched up for this singular event, kept a ghostly charm.

Many lights had been placed all over the place, cutting through the all-encompassing darkness, guiding them along cracked marble floors.

The walls, though bearing scars of time, were adorned with drapes that fluttered in the draft, an attempt to bring life to a place long forgotten.

They were escorted through corridors by guards who seemed as out of place in the ancient hall as the modern lighting fixtures.

They led them to a large room repurposed for the meeting.

The chamber itself was a spectacle with old grandeur peeking through the temporary fixes.

The room was crowded, but not with the opulence of attire one might expect.

Instead, there was a practical uniformity, with attendees in simple, dark clothing, all hidden behind identical masks.

The masks served a dual purpose: anonymity for the wearers and an easy way to identify intruders.

Erik cursed. The conformity of the masks meant identifying anyone, let alone Shade, would be next to impossible.

It was clear now; the masks were a strategic choice, allowing Shade to blend among his followers or enemies alike, while being able to identify any outsider.

<Keep your head low. >

Remaining inconspicuous had become of utmost importance. In a room where everyone was made indistinguishable, letting people see their masks could be their downfall.

Just as they adjusted to the sea of masked faces, the throng of people shifted, creating a clearing in the center of the room.

All eyes, hidden though they were behind their masks, turned towards a singular figure entering.

This man, if he could indeed be called that given the enigmatic air he projected, was different from the rest.

Unlike the sea of expressive, smiley-faced masks surrounding them, he was a stark canvas of white.

The man's mask was a simple, oval shape devoid of any features—not even the slits for eyes that the others had, making it impossible to guess where his gaze might fall.

The mask gave away nothing of the individual it concealed.

In a room where faces were hidden and identities blurred, the absence of detail on this mask spoke volumes. It marked him as separate, perhaps above the surrounding masquerade.

Erik looked at the newcomer, but he wasn't the only one doing so. Something within him told him that was Shade.

The crowd's deference, the way the space was given, suggested reverence or fear, maybe both.

But there was also something weird. Erik and June exchanged a glance.

"Ladies and gentlemen, welcome," Shade said.

Everyone and everything was silent. They were giving the man time to talk, listening to him, almost as if he was the messiah.

"I apologize for having called you here, but this meeting will be important."

Erik scrutinized Shade closely as he addressed the crowd.

Shade's towering figure and broad shoulders commanded attention, yet there was an oddity about him that Erik couldn't pinpoint.

It was as if a subtle discord lingered beneath Shade's composed exterior, an anomaly in his presence that tugged at Erik's senses.

This perplexing detail nagged at Erik. Something was not right with the man in front of him.

<Is this really Shade? >

June telepathically asked Erik, who was using his instability brain crystal power to glimpse at the man's mind.

However, he found nothing. There wasn't a shred of emotion, not a single thought, in the man's mind.

<I'm not sure...> Erik said, observing the man who kept talking. But then Shade said something the young man half expected at that point.

The masks, the clothes. Erik and June were sticking out as sore thumbs in a sea of elegantly disguised attendees.

Their attire, chosen for stealth and combat readiness, clashed with the refined elegance that draped the bodies of everyone else present.

The masks they wore, functional and devoid of the decorations that seemed almost compulsory here, marked them as outsiders.

"But, before continuing, I must tell you that someone sneaked inside this sanctuary. These people are those who killed Gabriel, our loved friend."

Shade turned to gaze in the direction of Erik and June. The others followed suit, parting ways to grant Shade a clear view, just as they all had.

Chapter 864: Hunting for Shade (21)

The tension in the room spiked. Erik faced the figure everyone called Shade, the supposed architect of the underworld's machinations.

Shade's gaze, obscured by the featureless white mask, seemed to bore into Erik. They couldn't see each other's eyes, but it was clear the two were having a silent duel.

"You have the audacity to step into our midst, bearing the guilt of Gabriel's blood," Shade said.

The crowd's murmur fell away, leaving only Shade's voice to fill the space.

"Gabriel's death resulted from his own actions. We're not here to discuss the past but to address the future," Erik said, his voice firm.

These guys killed millions of people, tortured, enslaved and even 'harvested'. And he dared to talk about Gabriel?

Shade laughed. He found Erik's words amusing.

"The future, you say? You've boldly infiltrated this gathering, disrupting the order we've built. Tell me, what do you hope to achieve? What is the future you are seeking?"

"We seek revenge, and the future I'm talking about starts with your death."

The room erupted in murmurs and laughter. This man, whoever he was, thought he could kill Shade among thousands of guards and a crowd of gangs' leaders?

Shade, however, seemed even more amused by Erik's words.

"Revenge? And tell me, what did we do so hateful that prompted you to seek this revenge and, huhu, wish my death?" Shade was laughing as he spoke.

For a second, Erik's face darkened. No one could see it, of course, but if they did, they would have understood something wasn't right.

"Oh... It's very simple," Erik said. "You controlled the Crystal Cross Gang, and well... They did a lot, to me especially. That's why I killed them all."

Shade paused, the room's attention fixed on the words Erik just said.

"Ha! And I should believe that you alone destroyed them? How arrogant do you think you are? Do you truly believe you can stand against the might assembled here?"

However, the murmurs increased. Few of the gang leaders here knew the Crystal Crystal Cross Gang had been destroyed.

Volkov and the Blackguards did the best they could to keep that information within Frant, but it wasn't like that was something that could be easily be kept hidden.

Shade was aware of that fact, yet he couldn't say it. The destruction of the Crystal Cross Gang was an event Shade hadn't foreseen, which implied, even slightly, that he was losing his grip on control.

"Well, you could ask Howell." Then Erik took off his mask, but the face under it was exactly that of the old leader of the Crystal Cross Gang. That surprised Shade.

Everyone thought the man under the mask was Howell. Even Shade did. He was surprised, and he felt... betrayed? No. There wasn't such a relationship between the two. And yet...

"Did you betray me?" he asked.

"Oh! Nono! You are mistaken. I wasn't never one of you." He said that, morphing his face to that of Gabriel. That, of course, shook those who knew him personally. Who the hell was this guy?

Was that his brain crystal power?

Shade, though, didn't reply. He was starting to understand the situation wasn't normal.

This man, whoever he was, showed an abnormally collected behavior.

He also said he killed Howell, and he wasn't that weak to allow that.

He also killed Gabriel, who was not weak either. One by one, Erik changed his face to that of the guards he killed at Gabriel's villa, plus that of other people Shade and the gang leaders knew.

Realization started settling in, and some of the gang leaders took a few steps back.

But that wasn't a harmonious reaction. Despite some fearing the figure that was shifting face after face, few thought he could kill them all and survive the ordeal.

However, as Erik changed faces, Shade stiffened for a second. Erik saw it, and then he realized Shade's real identity.

"Ah... that explains a lot," he said. "What could have been the chances?" It was then that Erik shifted to his actual face, but then there weren't more changes.

"HA, HAHAAH, HAHAAHAHAHAHAHA. ERIK ROMANO! That's who you are! Frant's awakener."

"Nice to meet you, Norman." Erik gestured to take off an imaginary hat. "Your brother would be very disappointed in you, knowing what you did all those years."

"My brother was a fool," Shade said. He then looked around.

Erik Romano had just found out who he was and said his name for all to hear.

But that didn't matter, knowing his name didn't make easier for those treacherous guys to kill, or even find him.

Shade's posture shifted, an unseen smile beneath the mask.

"KILL THIS MAN!" With a wave of his hand, Shade signaled to the gathered crowd.

The crowd, previously tense and uncertain, now seemed energized by the prospect of a fight.

Those guys were rabid criminals, murderers of the worst species.

Figures began to move, encircling Erik with a predatory anticipation.

As the first of Shade's followers stepped forward, weapon in hand, Erik met their advance with a calm look.

A woman dashed and used a flaming whip to attack Erik, who simply sidestepped.

However, that wasn't the only thing he did. With a move that no one saw, he decapitated the woman.

Her head tumbled to the ground. The event left everyone baffled, including Shade, who was taken aback by the sudden turn of events.

[HUMAN KILLED: MANA ABSORBING PROCESS STARTING.]

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

[MANA SUCCESSFULLY ABSORBED, STARTING CONVERTING PROCEDURE.]

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

[MANA SUCCESSFULLY CONVERTED INTO EXPERIENCE. 6080 EXPERIENCE POINTS AWARDED TO THE HOST.]

But that didn't deter the others. Many people rushed toward Erik, weapons in hand, and attacked.

The man avoided a sword by bending and decapitating another. Blood rushed out like a fountain from the bloodied stump.

Four more people rushed in, but Erik, this time, didn't move.

Instead, he started channeling mana from his Brain Crystal.

Everyone sensed that shift, but only Shade seemed to have understood what Erik was going to do.

"RAISE A BARRIER!" with that, he noticed a man leaving the room from a side door, unnoticed by all but him and, of course, June, who followed him.

<Gotcha! >

Some people did as Shade said. For them, he was still inside the room, giving them strength and courage, but the truth was, he wasn't really there. What they had in front of them was a fake.

There was something else, though. It was clear this Erik Romano had a power that allowed him to change faces. Not everyone knew who the man was, some knew he was Frant awakener's and found it weird for him to have this power and not the sharpening one that made him famous.

Though some had contacts with the blackguards, and they knew Erik could do much more than just shapeshifting his face.

"Not having to restrain myself is very liberating."

A torrent of flames burst forth from Erik's body, but those weren't normal flames. They were those of a wyvern.

Chapter 865: Hunting for Shade (22)

Bright, consuming flames soared upwards, painting everything in a vivid orange glow.

The shockwave rippled through the air, sending a wave of heat across every surface.

Despite the intensity of the fire, it was contained, not reaching beyond the immediate area of its origin.

Amid the chaos, some individuals reacted swiftly, erecting barriers of shimmering energy.

They must have been scared by Shade's words, and did as instructed. If their leader was worried, so they were too.

These protective domes stood resilient against the inferno, their surfaces reflecting the fiery dance but not allowing the heat to penetrate.

The room, for a moment, became a spectacle of light and shadow, where the power of the explosion was met with equal force by those prepared to defend against it.

[MULTIPLE HUMANS KILLED: MANA ABSORBING PROCESS STARTING.]

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

[MANA SUCCESSFULLY ABSORBED, STARTING CONVERTING PROCEDURE.]

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

[MANA SUCCESSFULLY CONVERTED INTO EXPERIENCE. 291840 EXPERIENCE POINTS AWARDED TO THE HOST.]

[LEVEL UP!]

With those words, Erik felt a surge of energy rush through him. The biological supercomputer replenished his mana after the level up, and he found himself back at full strength.

From the outside, Rebecca and the others saw the spectacle.

The town hall illuminated the surroundings, lightening the sky with blinding light and making tall, gigantic pillars of smoke rise in the tranquil night.

"Well. That's our cue," Laria said, looking at Rebecca.

Then she picked up her communicator. "Kill them all," she said in an apathetic and cold voice.

With that, the Band of Giants members moved through the shadows and attacked the guards stationed around the city.

Many of them were going toward Erik's position, and it was the Mercenary Guild's job to prevent that from happening.

Meanwhile, June kept following the man who escaped, but more times than not, something weird happened.

Right when June almost got him, the man vanished without leaving even a faint trace of mana. That happened three times, sending June into a panic.

<Master, I can't find him! >

—

Erik was walking through the inferno he unleashed, walking toward the remaining gang leaders, around fifty, standing behind the barriers that some of them erected at the last moment.

All around him fire blazed, corpses had been made of ash and the few weapons not made of mana were glowing with an intense heat.

Erik's flames had been strong enough to make them reach the melting point.

Very few brain crystal powers could do so in a short amount of time without using large quantities of mana.

Erik used vast quantities, but that only to cover more ground as possible. The wyvern's flames were very strong, even if they weren't imbued with that much mana.

As June's words reached his mind, he gave the clone an answer.

<Shade is likely using his Brain Crystal Power. There was something weird when I saw him in the middle of the room. It looked... fake. As if that wasn't his real body. That guy is likely using illusions, and that would explain how he stayed hidden until now. You can't use your sight, June, turn into something!

>

Illusions, that really explained how Shade could be able to take control of the underworld.

He had only to create an illusion of a loved one to kill a target. He only had to create the shape of a monster to let people outside a house and then steal whatever he was targeting.

He needed to create the visage of business partners or friends to influence companies and organizations.

June pondered Erik's words. He had a multitude of options at his disposal.

For a moment, he considered transforming into the black wyvern, but that would only make it easier for his enemies to spot him.

He needed to convince Shade that he had eluded him.

"A cat it is then!" With that, he ripped his clothes off and twisted into a cat.

He sniffed the air and caught a scent. Someone had passed from here a couple of seconds ago, and by the looks of it, it was the same man he was chasing.

<He went that way... that mother fucking cunning bastard! >

Erik was getting surrounded by more than 50 powerful people.

They weren't as strong as the Blackguards, and not nearly trained to use their brain crystal powers, and to fight, as the black nights were.

But he couldn't underestimate them.

A quick glance at their statistics with his analysis power made him learn those guys weren't weak.

Their statistics were high, and some very nasty brain crystal powers.

"I will need some help."

With that, Erik channeled a little of his mana. A monstrous figure began to materialize, its form a shimmering, semi-transparent blue that hinted at its otherworldly origins.

It slowly took the shape of a Leylarhad. For those in Erik's sight, that would have appeared like a majestic yet terrifying sight, with silvery-white fur that should have shimmered under the light.

However, its beauty was marred by the artificiality of its creation, its essence not entirely of this world, and all of that instead scared the gang leaders.

Dominating its fearsome visage were two golden tails, adding a regal yet ominous touch to its appearance.

From the depths of its wide, snarling mouth protruded two long, almost vampiric tusks, curving inwardly.

From its maw dripped venomous drool, each drop sizzling as it fell to the ground, hinting at the lethal nature of that drool.

The very air around the creature seemed charged with a malevolent energy, as if its presence alone was a threat to all who dared to stand against it.

But Erik wasn't done. He knew he needed a lot this time, or he wouldn't get out of that situation unscathed.

There were simply too many powerful people in that room.

Erik channeled more mana, the instability brain crystal power activated, helping him understand his opponents' intentions, at the same time he channeled mana through Hais' brain crystal power.

His eyes started noticing subtle hints in the posture of his opponents, the small beads of sweat running down the heads of these ruthless murderers, and at the same time, it allowed him to be much more attentive to his surroundings.

And last, Erik activated the Xeridon Anteris' brain crystal power.

He channeled a lot of mana into hit, much more he had even done, and his strength and speed increased by at least 35%, but he wasn't exactly sure of the numbers.

With that, he should have been able to kill these guys.

"Well, my friend," he said to his astral wolf, "Should we wreak havoc?"

Chapter 866: Hunting for Shade (23)

Criminal guards and patrols, previously stationed at strategic points throughout the ruins, began converging towards the source of the disturbance, eager to understand what was happening.

"Things shouldn't go like this," Ramon said.

"When did things go according to plans for us?"

Ramon's mind, however, was already elsewhere. "Let's take care of those patrols. Erik can't fight against so many people at once, even with his strength."

The two then jumped off their building and descended to the streets.

Amid this chaos, the other Band of Giants' special agents sprang into action.

Their mission was clear: to kill the patrols approaching the town hall and ensure Erik and June had the best chance of getting Shade without external interruptions.

The agents moved with stealth, their footsteps barely making a sound. They moved like phantoms, their presence known only by the faintest rustle of their footsteps.

The ruins, with their broken walls and overgrown pathways, offered many hiding spots and vantage points, which the agents exploited to their advantage.

One group of guards had been killed.

Without a single word exchanged, the agents had descended upon them, their swift and precise strikes leaving the guards dead before they could raise an alarm.

Without leaving a single trace, the bodies were brought into the shadows, ensuring their disappearance from both the physical realm and the collective memory of all who bore witness.

Further ahead, another patrol scanned their surroundings with drawn weapons.

They heard something. When the explosion occurred at the town hall, they knew someone was present in the deserted city. Someone followed or found them all the way here.

However, their vigilance was no match for the agents' cunning.

Minor distractions—a stone thrown against a wall here, a faint sound of movement there—lured the guards away from their path, splitting their formation and making them easy targets for silent assassins.

In one particularly tense encounter, a duo of agents faced a larger group of guards, more seasoned and better armed than the others.

As the agents advanced, the air around the town hall slowly cleared of the tension and fear that had previously hung in the atmosphere.

Each takedown was executed with a precision that minimized noise and avoided detection, ensuring that the focus remained on the events occurring within the meeting place.

But as the guards rushed toward the town hall, more got killed. The number of people decreased, but nowhere near the desired numbers, 0.

According to Laria's calculations, the enemy forces numbered around 2000, and that was without even considering the additional personnel stationed within the town hall.

Also, these were not your average foot soldiers; they were an elite group of fighters.

Despite their ties to a criminal organization, they had undergone extensive training.

The way they moved showed high skill and readiness that should not be underestimated.

The Band of Giants' special agents found themselves up against adversaries who knew how to hold their ground in a fight, complicating the mission further.

Laria's face was full of concern as she scrutinized the unfolding scene before them. The corners of her mouth were down turned.

"This isn't looking good," she said, her gaze fixed on the distant movements.

Rebecca, puzzled, furrowed her brow in confusion. "What? Why?" she asked, her eyes searching the area Laria was observing.

Laria took a moment, her expression solemn. "See those gang members? They are taking an alley to reach the town hall."

Rebecca narrowed her eyes, straining to make out the slight movement in the far-off distance.

"So? I see one of our teams moving toward them," she said, a note of optimism in her voice.

Laria's expression didn't change; if anything, her worry seemed to deepen.

"Yes. The problem is that we are 300. How do you think our troops can prevent all these guys from reaching the town hall?" Her question was rhetorical.

"Besides, it is clear these guys thought well what to do in case something happened. They are not simply rushing to the town hall, they are moving as if they have a plan in mind. Not that I didn't expect that, but..."

Rebecca's optimism waned. The slight dip of her shoulders and the slight bite of her lower lip conveyed her growing concern.

"But what?"

"But I didn't think they would... Tsk..."

Rebecca nodded in acknowledgement, fully aware of the seriousness and importance of the decision that needed to be made.

Laria then reached into her pocket and pulled out her communicator. Her nimble fingers dialed the numbers, contacting a group of agents.

Once the connection was established, she confidently began giving out a series of detailed orders.

"Move team 1 to sector 12, team 2, provide cover for team 3 as they retreat to sector 7. We're going to regroup and fortify our position around the town hall."

As Laria's orders echoed through the communicator, a sense of urgency swept through the assembled mercenaries.

Each member of the group was highly trained and possessed the skill to adapt to any changing circumstances.

The mention of a new tactic, especially one as bold as creating a barrier around the town hall, sparked a renewed focus among them, but also worry.

Laria shifted her gaze towards Rebecca, her previously indifferent expression now transformed into one filled with resolute determination.

"We're going to create a barrier around the town hall. It's a risky move, but it's the best chance we have to control the flow of these criminals and protect Erik and June."

Rebecca was taken aback by the audacity of the plan, but she had complete faith in Laria's decision-making abilities.

As the chaos unfolded around them, she observed Laria's unwavering confidence and steady voice as she continued to command her troops.

"Team 5 and 6 prepare to clear the northern entrance. Team 7, you're on sniper duty. Take position on the rooftops surrounding the square and take down as many fuckers as possible. We need eyes on every approach," Laria said, her strategy taking shape with every command.

Chapter 867: Hunting for Shade (24)

With a sense of urgency, June darted through the town hall, his footsteps echoing through the empty hallways.

He detected the lingering smell of his target in the air and tracked it.

Outside of the town hall, a deafening commotion erupted, cutting through the stillness of the air.

June realized the Band of Giants had forsaken the veil of shadows and subtlety, choosing instead to fight the gang members in a blatant clash.

<This will at least give us time to capture the mother fucker. >

His incredible speed allowed him to navigate the building with ease.

Yet, time was of the essence.

As time went on, the probability of Shade escaping increased.

June was determined to prevent that from happening. He looked in a bunch of rooms, moving fast, but wasted time and found nothing.

The clone picked up the scent trail he had been searching for once more, after having briefly lost it.

Up ahead, by an exit, was the person he was following until he lost sight of him.

<Found you, little rat. >

This had to be Shade, or at least the person they believed to be Shade.

The figure was mere steps away from a waiting flying car, its engines humming in anticipation of departure.

Positioned around the vehicle were ten guards, each one committed to protecting their leader at all costs, and they stood there, ready and watchful.

June wasted no time and reverted to being a human with no hesitation. He picked up his pace and ran faster than before.

The guards hadn't noticed him yet, their focus on their task of ensuring a safe escape for Shade.

The clone didn't waste time. He sprinted towards the group with unmatched velocity, his feet barely touching the ground as he closed the distance.

As he reached the guards, chaos erupted. The sudden appearance of June, out of nowhere, caught the guards off guard, but they recovered, drawing their weapons to confront the threat.

June dodged the first few attempts to subdue him. His hands moved fast, killing one guard and using the stolen weapon to fend off another.

"FUCK! KILL THIS GUY!" Shade said. In the meantime, he jumped in the car, while June killed four more guards.

"GO! GO! GO!"

The clone looked at the car ascending into the sky. He couldn't allow it.

He shapeshifted. If before there was a human in front of the guards, now there was a gigantic black wyvern.

The guards trembled before June squashed them under the mighty weight of his feet.

He also used his long scaly tail against a group of approaching guards, and all that remained of them was a bloody pulp on a wall.

"A WYVERN!" There was fear in Shade's voice this time.

Right at that precise moment, June clamped down on the flying car using his powerful jaws.

His hold tightened, his immense strength causing the car's engine to sputter and die amidst a shower of sparks and a billow of smoke.

With a powerful heave, June hurled the now useless vehicle towards the town hall's wall, turning it into a twisted wreck against the aged stone.

Shade found himself cornered as June reverted to his human form, towering with an air of inevitability.

Shade's brain crystal power was revealed: the ability to create illusions, intricately designed but limited in quantity.

<Ah... That's why. > June's realization clicked. The uniformity was Shade's fail-safe, meticulously planned for situations exactly like this.

The use of masks and uniforms was not just to preserve the anonymity of his clandestine group or to detect infiltrators.

It was a strategic choice designed to safeguard his own survival in critical situations by merging into a multitude of duplicates.

From the wreckage of the flying car, a bewildering scene unfolded: twenty Shades burst forth, scattering in a desperate bid for freedom.

<This guy is not prideful, he is not strong. He is a coward who used his illusions to wreak havoc in the world. >

"So, this is the depth of your courage," June said, contempt painting his face.

Transforming back into a feline form, June's heightened senses of smell cut through the charade.

A single scent directed him. Within moments, the clone pinpointed the true Shade among his doppelgangers.

June had the advantage. The real Shade couldn't hide his smell. The clone charged ahead, muscles ready to catch.

He transformed back into a human and smoothly grabbed Shade's shoulder. The unexpected touch stopped the man in his tracks.

"AAAAH you motherfucker!"

Shade couldn't break free. The guy in front of him was way too strong. The grip on his shoulder was like a vice, making escape impossible.

Shade's freaking out and cussing became background noise while June stayed focused on his captive.

Shade suddenly realized he was screwed, his body tensing up as he tried to figure out what to do.

June had had it and slammed Shade to the ground.

"UGH!"

He writhed and twisted, desperate to break free from the iron grip, but it was futile; the strength that June possessed was overwhelming.

"Do you even know who I am? I am Shade, and I work for the Blackguards!"

Shade said, venom dripping from every word, his face contorting in anger and defiance.

June gave Shade a dirty look, not impressed by the threats or name-dropping. June didn't care at all when the Blackguards were mentioned. If anything, it just made him more determined to see this through.

"They won't let you get away with this," he said.

But before they could say anything else, there was another explosion, letting everyone know Erik was finished.

June's expression remained unchanged, a visage of icy determination. He held Shade's shoulder tighter so that the criminal mastermind couldn't escape.

"Blackguards or not, you die tonight," June said, his voice steady and resolute.

But Shade wasn't finished yet. All around the building, countless of his men and women were fighting. They saw him being held down and lost their minds. There was still hope for Shade to make a run for it.

Chapter 868: Hunting for Shade (25)

Smoke billowed into the night sky, forming a dark cloud that could be seen from miles away.

The fire illuminated the surrounding ruins, casting long, ominous shadows across the debris-strewn ground and showing the faces of Shade's gang members trying to rescue him, only to be blocked by Laria's men.

It was a scene of chaos.

Despite the inferno, a figure emerged from the burning building at a calm pace.

Unhurried, the person walked through the main entrance, which was now a gaping maw framed by fire.

The flames seemed to part ways for him.

As he stepped into the cool night air, the firelight danced across his features, revealing a composed expression that betrayed no sign of panic or distress.

This figure moved with an eerie serenity, as if the inferno consuming the town hall was nothing more than a minor inconvenience.

It was Erik. Immediately, he spotted June keeping Shade pinned to the ground with his foot.

The man was struggling to break free, but there was nothing he could do to escape the clone.

Erik walked toward them. There was a chilling glint in his eyes.

"Well, well, well... I came out of that situation pretty easily, am I right? Matter of fact, the only one who fled it is you," Erik said to Shade.

"You will pay for this, Erik Romano. The Blackguards will not stay idle!"

Erik laughed. "The Blackguards already tried to kill me in the past. What difference will it make?"

"HA! You feel confident in your abilities, uh? And you think that just because you escaped them two times, you are the big deal?!"

"I'm not so arrogant to think I'm that much stronger than them. But I can assure you they can't kill me. Did you forget I found even you? To have the skill to find people, or things, means also being able to avoid being found."

Shade's reaction, though hidden behind the mask, was palpable in the slight tilt of his head and the stiffening of his posture.

The confidence in his voice didn't waver, yet there was a perceptible shift in his demeanor—a momentary silence that spoke volumes. Even through the mask, it was clear the remark had struck a chord.

He stood still for a moment, as if weighing his next words, the subtle movements of his shoulders betraying a deep breath taken in response.

"You may have a point. But do not mistake evasion and invincibility. There are many ways to trap a man, regardless of how elusive he may be."

"Like I did with you?" Erik grinned.

"Taunt as much as you want. You may have been lucky this time, but things won't stay like this for long, anyway. I doubt you will be lucky then."

"What do you mean by that? Are you implying something's about to change?"

The masked figure before him, Shade, paused, his posture unchanged yet emanating a sense of calculated contemplation.

"Change," he said, the word hanging in the air like a prelude to an unseen storm.

"Change is the only constant, isn't it? And in our line of work, anticipating change keeps us ahead of the curve."

Shade was not merely speaking in generalities; there was a specific implication to his statement. Erik kicked Shade in the stomach.

"Don't be vague, you idiot!"

"Agh! Agh! Hahahaha. What, are you mad?"

Erik didn't listen to him and asked again.

"What changes are you talking about that should concern me, or anyone else for that matter?"

Shade's response was slow, deliberate. "Let's just say they got their hands on something that's going to bring in a lot of noise. And where you stand when the dust settles... well, that remains to be seen."

The ambiguity of Shade's statement did little to quell Erik's curiosity, but pressing further would yield no more clarity.

Shade was a master at controlling information, revealing only what he wished to be known.

Those words didn't scare him. Erik was no fool and wasn't easily intimidated.

Erik already had his suspicions on the why this meeting had to be held, but also knew Shade would not talk, and that's why the young man was reading his mind. Though a playful smirk played on his lips.

With a quick move, Erik took off Shade's mask. He already found out who the man was back in the town hall and thanks to his Instability brain crystal power.

"Nice to meet you, Norman Hais," Erik said. "You look like Martin. Has someone told you that?"

Underneath the mask, Norman Hais's face was revealed, bearing a striking resemblance to someone Erik knew all too well, Martin Hais, the private investigator that almost arrested him back in New Alexandria.

Not that he needed to connect the dots, since he was reading the man's mind but, Norman Hais, N.H, Shade. Everything was pretty clear.

His features were sharp, with angular cheekbones that complemented his firm jawline.

His eyes, a deep shade of green, were the most telling trait, mirroring those of Martin in a way that was uncanny.

The resemblance didn't stop there; even the set of his mouth and the way his brows furrowed in irritation at being unmasked reminded Erik of Martin.

Norman's skin was slightly tanned, suggesting he spent time outdoors, and his hair, a dark shade similar to Martin's, was cut short, adding to the overall similarity between the two men.

However, there were also differences. Shade was wealthy, while Martin wasn't, and that meant the private investigator's appearance was well kept.

Shade didn't have a beard, he wasn't overly hairy, he likely even cut his eyebrows.

Martin, instead, looked like a vagabond.

"So, tell me, did the Blackguards complete Doran's research?"

He knew that already, but Erik wanted to see the face of the man in front of him, who was slightly shocked to hear those words. But the criminal lord quickly regained his composure.

"If you know about that, then you know that escaping the Blackguards won't be easy anymore."

"I doubt they can do better than I can. After all, why would they desperately try to capture me? It's clear Doran's research is no better than what I can do."

Chapter 869: Hunting for Shade (25)

The town hall, now a towering inferno, painted the night with its furious blaze.

Flames licked the sky while thick, acrid smoke billowed upwards, choking the air and obscuring the stars.

The intense heat radiating from the conflagration was almost tangible, creating a suffocating atmosphere that made it hard to breathe.

Around them, the situation was no less tumultuous. The Band of Giants' 300 soldiers were locked in fierce combat with the remaining 1500 members of Shade's gang.

The sounds of battle—clashing metal, shouts of defiance, and the cries of the wounded—filled the air, creating a cacophony of violence that mirrored the chaos of the flames.

Despite the odds, Laria's troops fought with unmatched ability, employing both skill and strategy to hold back the tide of criminals desperate to rescue their captured lord.

Now and then, the clash of brain crystal powers sparked in the darkness, casting brief lights on desperate faces and determined eyes.

Amid this pandemonium, June's restlessness grew.

The band of giants, while insanely more skilled than their enemies, couldn't stop the criminal from gaining ground, and more and more mercenaries were getting wounded, some even killed.

The problem was that he couldn't stop Erik.

Even if the conversation between him and Shade seemed unimportant, Erik was getting a lot of information from the criminal lord, thanks to his Brain Crystal Powers.

The more he glimpsed at Shade's thoughts, the more they would know about the Blackguards.

"Do you perhaps know where the Blackguards's headquarters are? You know, I would like to pay them a visit."

Here, Norman was weirdly honest. "I don't, and if I did, I swear I would tell you. Nothing would bring me more joy than knowing you will go kill yourself there."

"Weird. I thought that Shade, the mighty lord of the world's underground, knew everything."

"Having extensive knowledge does not equate to knowing everything, and I would not have sought that information, even under torture."

"Fair enough. Do you know something then?"

A stream of information rushed through Shade's brain as he thought about what he knew about the Blackguards.

Of course, he had no intention of telling Erik, but he didn't know that the young man was already learning about them.

Despite not knowing where the base was, Shade knew something.

For starters, the Blackguards weren't a unified group. There were three branches of the colossal organization, which acted independently but sharing the same goal, which Shade didn't know about.

The Blackguards branch, though, had different tasks to complete.

The first branch dealt with thaids, and it was perhaps the most famous branch of the lot.

It was this branch that spread the Blackguards' name as the saviors of humanity.

It had its own commander, but Shade had been careful enough not to learn about that person's name.

The second branch, instead, dealt with criminals. That was exactly the branch Erik was currently fighting against, but again, Shade didn't know who commanded it, and why they were so fixated on him.

At least partially, there was one thing Shade knew, but that it was pretty clear for Erik. They wanted him for his ability to wield multiple brain crystal powers.

Again, Erik knew that, but Shade's confirmation erased any shroud of doubt he had. <Could this be this what their goal is? >

It made sense. After all, why would the blackguards found research that gave people multiple brain crystal powers? It couldn't be a coincidence that they were searching for him, who could effortlessly do that.

Erik knew little about this organization to infer their true goal.

The last and most mysterious branch dealt with internal matters.

This was also the branch to which all the organization's leaders belonged to, but no one, not even Shade, knew what they really did.

"Master," June said. "Things are getting ugly."

The Band of Giants was staring having problems. The criminals were pushing, and now the fight came awfully close to Erik's position.

As the criminals grew more emboldened and relentless, the tide of battle appeared to shift, becoming desperate for the mercenaries.

The Band of Giants found themselves hard-pressed to hold the line.

The clash of battle, once scattered around the whole abandoned city, now converged dangerously close to where Erik, June, and their prisoner stood.

With each passing moment, the ferocity of the criminals intensified.

Their shouts and cries grew louder, almost drowning out the crackling of the flames consuming the town hall.

Erik could see the frontline of the fight inching closer, the shifting shadows illuminated intermittently by flashes of brain crystal-powered weaponry and the fire's glow.

The desperate faces of the Band of Giants' soldiers became visible, their expressions etched with fatigue and resolve as they fought to stem the advancing tide of criminals.

June's restlessness turned into a palpable tension, his body coiled like a spring, ready to leap into action at a moment's notice.

The situation was precarious, with their small group becoming a target for the criminals seeking to rescue Shade.

Erik was struggling. Shade knew a great deal about the Blackguards, but not much about their plans, bases, and powers. He was just a pawn, after all.

Besides, since the battle now wasn't scattered anymore around the city, Erik was receiving a large influx of mana, or better, experience.

He leveled up to level 153 and had 30 attribute points available.

The problem was that the more he lost time, the more Band of Giants members died, but the longer he stayed, the greater the influx of mana his biological supercomputer absorbed from the surroundings and the more information he got from Shade.

"I just want to ask you a question," Erik said, looking at Shade.

"Why did you do all this? Why did you join the Blackguards and became their lap dog?"

Shade looked at Erik with a confused look. "Shouldn't you know? Didn't you live in New Alexandria? No. In this godforsaken world?"

"Are you telling me you did all of this because of hate?" Erik asked.

"Didn't you do the same when you destroyed the Crystal Cross Gang? You were the one who admitted to that. Besides, aren't you here for the same reason?"

"I didn't kill million of people, I didn't kidnap kids and gave them to Doran."

"No," Shade said. "But your actions, we know it well, are going to bring war to the world. If humanity is going to survive this, nothing says we will survive the thaids that will come later. You must have seen one already."

"What are you talking about?" Erik asked in confusion, then he peered into Shade's thoughts. He was talking about the Cerulean bird. Shock spread across Erik's face.

"It looks like you understood."

"What the fuck are those guys doing on the Mur continent?" Erik asked.

"I would like to know that, unfortunately, I'm just a lap dog, right?"

"Mother fucker!"

Erik stomped on Shade's face. It was ironic, years ago, he killed his brother, Martin, and now, he killed Norman. The brother who should have been dead.

[NORMAN HAIK KILLED: MANA ABSORBING PROCESS STARTING.]

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

[MANA SUCCESSFULLY ABSORBED, STARTING CONVERTING PROCEDURE.]

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

[MANA SUCCESSFULLY CONVERTED INTO EXPERIENCE. 9475 EXPERIENCE POINTS AWARDED TO THE HOST.]

Chapter 870: Burning fires, burning stones (1)

After he was done, Erik and June stood over Shade's body.

Erik looked at Shade's... no Norman Hais's dead body. He bore a deep resemblance to his brother, Martin.

It was ironic, some years ago, he killed the private investigator, who threatened to reveal to the world he had multiple Brain Crystal Powers.

Now, years after, he killed his brother, to whom Erik didn't make any mystery about his abilities.

What was also surprising was that both of them were smart, to a frightening level even.

But while Martin's intelligence was boosted by his brain crystal power, Norman was purely his.

"What a pity."

Erik imagined what could he and his brother have done to society, if only they chose the right path.

Martin was wasted as a private investigator, while Norman used his skills to make havoc.

"Master..." June called for him, and Erik turned, he looked at the surrounding situation, and wasn't pleased.

The Band of Giants was suffering heavy casualties. There were too many gang members around who, for some weird reason, kept fighting as if their lives depended on that.

Their boss was dead. No, it wasn't just that. Their entire network had been destroyed.

Erik made sure that no one survived inside the town hall. There was not a single gang leader still alive.

Those guys came not only from Frant, or Etrium, but from Hin, Prare, Reraiph, Khunelerp and Miciselen.

What Erik did wasn't just killing Shade. He cut the head of the whole underworld around the world in one fell swoop.

Naturally, new lords of the underworld would emerge. The blackguards were poised to fill the void left by their predecessors swiftly. Yet, the spectacle of the gang members in combat struck him as quite peculiar, since they had nothing to fight for anymore.

Rebecca and Laria arrived in front of him. They were battered and tired.

There was a huge cut on Rebecca's shoulder, while Laria was tired and had some cuts on her chest.

"Are you done?" Laria asked.

"All done."

"Then I will give the order to retreat. You should start heading back. You fought a lot today."

However, Erik looked at Rebecca. She was worried about her mother's mercenaries. She didn't know all of them, but she knew most.

The two looked each other in the eyes. Erik wanted to take on Laria's suggestion, but... he didn't.

"No," he said. "I will stall these guys until all your soldiers retreat."

Rebecca said nothing. There was a mix of emotions in her eyes, from relief to worry.

"Are you crazy?" Rebecca said.

"I'm hearing this a lot lately." He turned to Laria. "Just do as I say."

He then turned to look at his clone. "June, can you do this?"

June didn't fight that much, and he had enough energy to spare.

Though these guys were not weak, they were almost at his level.

June had been created when Erik had around 220 strength points, meaning he was reaching his limit.

Or better, he was reaching the point where he was not overwhelmingly strong anymore.

"I will do what I can, Master."

Laria listened to the exchange while the circle around the town hall was shrinking, with more and more band of giant members dying, albeit killing five or four people each in the process.

Something in Erik's confident demeanor must have convinced her, because she agreed.

"All right. I will give you thirty seconds. Then you are on your own."

Erik nodded.

<June, prepare to defend me. System, show me how much Mana I have left. >

MANA: 5049/13470

<That's roughly 37% of my total amount of mana. This will be hard. >

The thirty seconds Laria talked about were already ticking, but Erik didn't waste any time. He started channeling mana, while June turned into a Wyvern.

The sight of the gigantic creature scared some of the gang members, but most were unfazed.

They were like in a frenzy, maybe under the effect of some brain crystal power. That would have made sense.

Since some of the gang members started fleeing, the pressure on the band of giants eased.

Some of the members already lost the scene, most of them had been already wounded too much to be useful in a fight. Some remained, though.

"5."

"4."

"3 seconds Erik!"

"2."

"1. RETREAT!" Laria said. His soldiers had heard her shout, because immediately, the band of giants started leaving the area.

Some turning invisible, some even flying, most simply running.

It was a chaotic scene, and it would have been scary for some in June's and Erik's situation.

In fact, since the band of giants was leaving, the focus of the remaining gang members turned all to Erik.

They rushed toward him with murderous looks. There was only one goal in their mind: to kill.

Not even June's wyvern look was enough to scare all of them.

Maybe these guys were desperate, maybe something affected their minds, maybe they thought that with their numbers, they could kill a wyvern. Still thousands of people rushed at him.

June swung his tail, killing some of the gang members, but that form didn't increase his base strength a lot. It increased his weight, and the strength he exerted was amplified, but it was all because of mass.

But June wasn't facing normal people, he was facing men and women with a level of strength comparable to his.

He didn't have wyvern's flames; he didn't have fancy brain crystal powers that allowed him to use mana to create devastating effects.

June was a powerful beast, and his powers came from his body, but he wasn't more than that, a beast who didn't possess a brain crystal.

Blood spilled around him. He crushed, bit and clawed, but the sea of people didn't decrease.

June turned on his biological armor, a gift he got when Erik merged the biomantic armor into the power that gave him life.

The armor was sturdy and very resistant, but there wasn't much it could do to prevent damage from accumulating on his body.

However, it could also be used to create spikes, which the clone employed to impale the enemy.

Though Erik couldn't see it, but June was in trouble, and the sea of people was coming closer to him.

Now, the clone was struggling, was full of wounds, and wasn't able to contain the gang members anymore.