

Werewolf 691

Chapter 691 Thinking the same thing

Elijah brought out his little notebook and pulled the pencil from his ear. He started to write down notes immediately.

"Green-haired, possibly an Altered. Too confident. What are they doing in a Tier-4 area? Are they from another gang?"

These notes were added to what he had previously written down.

"From the looks of things, it's clear that he's not from this city. But then, why would a higher city Altered come down here? There is only one answer for that: he must be part of a gang!" Elijah smiled to himself, grinning from ear to ear.

But if he wanted to get more information, he would have to try another approach. So he started to walk up to the green-haired teenager. He quickly crossed the road and, to act natural, made his way as if nothing had happened. The teenager was far too focused on the phone in his hand anyway.

"Hey, is everything all right? It looks like you've got a problem there," Elijah asked.

Gary took one look at the stranger approaching him. Unlike the others he had seen so far, there was colour in his face and his clothes. Although they looked old, it was almost as if they didn't quite suit him. So far, while outside, not a single person had approached them, and from the look of the people in the city, he could somewhat understand.

So why was this person approaching him all of a sudden?

"If he's this confident to just approach a stranger like me... then it's quite possible that he could be in a gang!" Gary thought to himself. There was a good chance this was the one he was looking for.

"Ah, yeah, well, my phone kinda broke when I was trying to catch this thief. It looks like I might need to get a replacement," Gary said. It was true. He and Austin didn't know the city, so for the two of them to blindly search for each other, it was unlikely they would ever meet.

"Worst case, maybe I should just cause such a big commotion that Austin will know where I am," Gary thought.

"Argh, yeah, not only has the screen cracked, but it looks like the phone even got bent a bit. You must have hit him pretty hard for him to fall like that," Elijah laughed. "It looks like you're going to have to get a whole new phone altogether.

"You don't seem like you're from around here. Why don't I take you to a phone shop I know, and you can get a new one?" Elijah recommended.

In most cases, it wasn't as if someone could just buy a new phone out of the blue, but Gary did have the money. The other thing was that he noticed there was a lack of electronics shops in the first place, and he would have no idea where to go. Besides all of that, he thought he had the person he needed right in front of him.

"Sure... thanks for the help. My name's Ga... Gaba," Gary answered.

Gary was a common name, so he didn't think it was too much of a problem. But if there were those who thought they recognized him and then realised he had the same name as the Altered Star who had been gaining a lot of attention recently, they would put two and two together fairly quickly. In a rush, he had come up with a name a baby might have come up with.

"Alright, Gaba! Follow me," Elijah said.

Following Elijah for around ten minutes, they eventually came to one of the very few phone shops in the entire city. Unlike in Slough, where the latest handsets would be displayed at the front, there were several burner phones instead. Old phones that didn't even have a touch screen on them. Gary assumed it was because most of the people who lived here bought those phones.

"Oh, good sir!" The man behind the counter rubbed his hands together as he rushed over to them. "Are you looking to do business with us again?"

Seeing this interaction, Gary inwardly smiled. 'I knew it. He even knows the local workers here. He has to be someone big in this part of town,' Gary thought to himself.

"It's for my new friend here. He seems to have broken his phone. I don't suppose you can get one for him, can you?" Elijah asked.

"Certainly. What is your budget? What type of phone were you looking for?" The man asked.

Gary pulled out his phone and placed it on top of the glass counter. "If you can just get do so in this city was even rarer.

With these thoughts, Elijah's own phone started to ring. He checked who it was and me the exact replacement of this, please."

The worker looked at the phone. It was one of the latest models. It was his lucky day. He retrieved the phone immediately with a big grin on his face.

"And would you be looking to take out a contract with us?" The man asked.

"No, I'll just buy it outright. But can you try to move the contacts over for me? It's quite important," Gary asked.

"I can try my best," the man replied and got right to processing the whole transaction.

Watching all of this, Elijah felt like he was on the ball more and more. He was sure of it. Not just anyone could buy a phone outright that cost more than a thousand, and to do so in this city was even rarer.

With these thoughts, Elijah's own phone started to ring. He checked who it was and started to panic a little. "Sorry, I just need to take this call. I'll be back."

Elijah made sure to leave the store and close the door behind him, ensuring that no one was listening in on their conversation. He knew Gaba was an Altered, so there was a chance he had good hearing as well.

"Hello, sir. Yes, sir!" Elijah answered the call. "...I believe I am on a lead now. A gang member from another city has paid a visit. We will be close to getting a link from where the black liquid is coming from."

The call ended, and Elijah let out a big sigh. "It's tough work, working for White Rose."

Chapter 692 Austin's strength

Austin had always been considered a pretty wild child. His parents didn't mind what he did, nor did they care about his grades, as long as he was healthy. They saw other kids getting into fights and thought it was normal, so they didn't worry too much. Austin rarely returned badly beaten because most of the time, he was the one doing the beating. Even when he did come home with a few marks, he never needed to go hospital.

Given his disposition, it was no surprise that at some point he would join a gang to make some income. When the opportunity came up with Gary, everything fell into place for him. The excitement he felt was similar to when he rose to the top of his school, becoming the best among his peers. Now, as part of the Howlers, they were rising up, striving to be the best gang compared to all the others.

However, Austin was only seventeen years old. Although he looked older due to his frame and face, he would still be in school if he hadn't dropped out to join the Howlers. As he stood outside the gates of a school, he couldn't help but feel a strange mix of nostalgia and unfamiliarity. The rusty bars and slightly bent frame of the gate would be moved aside when school opened and closed.

The outer walls of the school were relatively dirty, and even the graffiti on the outside walls was visible. It reminded Austin of some strange memories. Back in school, when he fought for the top position, he had been ambushed on the rooftop by the current top dog and his crew. There were six of them in total.

It was one of Austin's toughest fights, but he emerged victorious, beating all of them. Blood trickled from the corner of his head as he stood there, huffing and panting.

"I never knew you would try to play this dirty," Austin said. "Anyway, this school belongs to me now. If you try any crap like that again, I will make sure your life is hell."

After somewhat recovering, the others eventually left, and Austin stayed on the school rooftop, looking out at the rest of the school and the entire city. The sound of the door opening behind him made a creak. He turned his head, expecting more students, but to his surprise, it was a teacher.

"Oh, I guess you were the one who dealt with those boys before," the teacher said, reaching out for a cigarette from his jacket. Teachers weren't allowed to smoke on campus, which was why he had come to the roof, away from the prying eyes of the other teachers.

"What was that?" the teacher said, taking a puff from his cigarette. "The battle for who's the school's top? I mean, you must be pretty strong if you managed to take those guys down. What's your plan?"

"To take out the other schools next," Austin replied, not looking at the teacher.

"I see. Well, with your strength, you might be able to do that. But I think it's pretty pointless. You know, the schools in this city are nothing like the schools in Tier 4 cities" the teacher commented. "I used to be from there and managed to escape that hellhole."

"Let me tell you, if you fought for the top position at one of the schools in a Tier 4 city, then being the top in this no-name Tier 3 town is useless to have."

Austin didn't pay much attention to the teacher's words back then. He never thought he would leave a Tier 3 city, but now that he was here, his interest had certainly been piqued.

"I mean, if Gary is here for some training, then there's no harm in me doing the same thing," Austin thought. "Besides, they say the stronger you are in your human form, the stronger you are as an Altered, so this will go well."

Gary received his new phone from the shop worker, and everything seemed to be going well. However, a major issue soon arose. Gary hadn't saved his contacts to the SIM card but on the phone itself.

The shopkeeper logged into his accounts, hoping there would be some sort of backup, but Gary always skipped everything and disabled many of the phone's features.

"Maybe it came from my days when I was running away from the Underdogs. I would disable most things in case there was a way to find me," Gary thought. "So even though I now have a new phone, I still don't have Austin's number."

"Crap... at times like this, I wish I still had that burner phone," Gary muttered to himself.

During his time when he was being chased by the Underdogs, Kai had given him a separate phone to contact him on, but that was no longer needed. It looked like Gary would have to leave the shop and come up with another solution.

As he exited the shop, Elijah had just put his phone away.

"Oh, are you all done? Where are you planning on going now?" "I'm really not s-"

"Hey, you two!" A strange man covered in jewellery around his neck Elijah asked.

"I'm really not s-"

"Hey, you two!" A strange man covered in jewellery around his neck and some in his teeth approached them. "Wow, I've never seen two people look so strong before. I bet you guys are good at lifting things, right?"

"I guess," Gary answered the shady man who was even wearing sunglasses to cover his eyes.

"Well, I have a job offer for the two of you at one of the factories. They're looking for workers, and I think you two would be a perfect fit... and they pay a really good starting bonus, the best in the city!" the man excitedly said.

Chapter 693 The top dog

Walking onto the school grounds, Austin certainly did feel like there was a strange atmosphere. For one, there were no teachers, usually there would be teachers out front or walking around as they prepared for their lessons but he could see none.

Instead, a few times already, Austin had seen a group of kids wearing a black blazer. They would be smoking, or just chatting but when he looked at them, they would stare back at him, eyeing him up and rolling their eyes up and down.

'I don't think I'll be able to walk into the school so easily... actually with the way things are around here maybe I could, even without a school uniform.' Austin thought.

Walking up by the side of the school, Austin was taking a deeper look into the graffiti at the side, just above was a window into one of the school's classes, and he could see a shadow getting larger by the second.

"What the..."

A whole body smashed right through the class window. Just doing what was natural to him, Austin had caught the person in mid air. He looked down at the student and could see he had quite a badly beaten and bruised face, that was swelling up and getting bigger by the second.

"Yeah, haha look at that, I think that was my strongest punch yet."

Looking through the window, Austin was looking into a classroom. There was a student with a few marks on his face and blood on his clothes. The others around him were cheering out from their seats and the teacher in the back looked terrified and was just shaking his head.

"Who the f*ck is that!" The student with the blood on his clothes said. "A big tub of lard just caught my prey."

“Whoa, he's holding him up like he weighs nothing, he must be pretty strong, but I've never seen him before, does he go to our school?” Another student called out.

Hearing the word strong had piqued the first student's interest. Running forward he jumped through the window like a ball as he placed his hands and knees onto himself to avoid the glass.

Once passing the window he stretched his limbs out and landed perfectly on the ground, making it safely to the other side. His wild blonde hair that was flying about everywhere suited his wild personality.

“Hey you, new kid, or adult, or pig, whatever you, let go of that guy, he's my prey.”

The person who was in Austin's hand started to come to, and Austin gently put him down.

“What happened, my mouth, and head really hurts.” The kid said. He looked up at the shadow that was cast over him, and almost had a heart attack while scurrying away on the ground.

Looking in front of him, that's when the student saw Carvey, the person who had attacked him in the first place. He jumped back again and felt like he was in between a rock and a hard place.

His head fell to the ground and now he was just looking at the sky.

‘What did I do... to deserve all of this.’ Vlad thought to himself. ‘I just wanted to study, to get a good job and get me and my family out of this place. So then why does this keep happening, why am I the one that gets beaten every day.’

Clenching his fist, Vlad had taken some of the dirt off the ground.

‘This has been my life almost every day, for as long as I can remember. I even tried to fight back once... and everything, it just got worse... even for my family. Why, I should have never attempted to fight back that day, never!’

“Are you from another school?” Carvey asked.

Austin didn't know what to answer, if he said he was from another city, would it bring him even more attention. At first, Austin thought he might have to get into a fight discreetly, but there was nothing discrete about the current situation in front of him, and it looked like the teacher was going to do nothing.

Carvey eventually walked closer to take a look at Austin, he was interested to see what was under that mask, as he did, he didn't even step to the side, and walked completely over Vlad, his foot landing on his face, and when he got on his chest he stood there, staying on top of it.

“I... I can't breathe!” Vlad was saying. He was a small person in the first place, with a weak body constitution, it didn't look like he was saying it just to get Carvey off him.

“Just stay still you stupid dog!” Carvey shouted at the individual beneath him.

Vlad could hardly take it and lifting his hands he grabbed Carvey's ankles, trying to push him away.

“Are you touching me right now? Who gave you permission to touch me!” Carvey shouted as he lifted his foot and stomped down hard on his chest. A big cough came out from Vlad.

“You're going to kill him.” Austin said.

“And, who cares? Who is going to stop me? Do you see anyone trying to stop me, no... because this entire city is like a jungle. Everyone's for themselves, and only listen to those who are stronger than them.”

Austin loved fighting, he loved proving his strength, but there was one thing he never did. He never got involved with those that didn't wish to get involved. The students who wanted to study, those that weren't part of the gang life.

There were many gangs and groups like this that never got involved with the public. Carvey, the person who was in front of him right now, he was the type of person Austin loved beating.

“Thank you, for showing me what type of person you are, because now, I don’t have to feel bad about beating you!”

Austin charged forward, and seeing this, Carvey was confident going in for a counter punch. When it was thrown out, it had hit nothing but the air, and Austin’s eyes could be seen right in front of his.

“Go back to class!” Austin’s fist landed cleanly in Carvey’s face, lifting his feet off from Vlad’s body. His whole body was sent flying back through the window he came through, until he had slid across the floor and his back had hit the wall. Blood could be dripping from his face.

“Now tell me.” Austin said, walking up to the window.

The students were stunned, they were no longer causing a commotion, laughing, or anything. They were shivering on the inside as they looked at Austin’s large figure.

“Which one of you guys is the top dog around here? I need to have a few words with him.” Austin asked.

At that moment, everyone had turned their heads to look at the passed out Carvey.

Chapter 694 The Phantom Brawl

After recalling the memories of what his teacher said, Austin truly thought he was going to have a tough time, but to find out he had just knocked out the top fighter of a school in a tier-4 city with a single blow, it was starting to seem extremely disappointing.

"Am I too strong... since I became an Altered? Can I really now just go against other Altered if I want to challenge myself? If I'm having a problem trying to find someone worthwhile to fight, then I wonder how Gary is going to be doing in this place."

Shaking his head, he could see the others starting to whisper, wondering who Austin was.

"Is it a new student, or a student from another school?"

"Since he took out Carvey, no doubt there are going to be others looking for him. What do we tell them? Some big guy with a mask took him out."

"Yeah, we'll just have to say Big Mask took him out. Sh*t, Carvey's going to kill us for not going after this guy when he wakes up, but I don't want to go up against Big Mask."

Austin, trying to calm the situation down, walked up to the broken window. Some thought he was going to jump in there and then start beating on the rest of the kids, so they flinched and moved back a bit, including the teacher.

"You guys suck at fighting," Austin suddenly said. "And I mean really suck at fighting. You won't get anywhere in life with your fighting skills. So you should drop all that crap and start listening to your teacher and studying; otherwise, you'll never get somewhere."

"Because if you guys just leave this school and go into some sort of gang, all that's going to happen to you guys is getting your ass beat every day, and that's the best-case scenario. Worst case, you end up dead. So study, unless you want to get beat up."

Those were the last words of Austin as he started to walk away, and the kids in the class were left confused. It was often that the strong kids beat up the ones who were trying to study, for whatever reason, but here they had the man they named 'Big Mask' telling them to study.

As Vlad was coming to a realisation of everything that had happened, he took in what Austin said.

"Someone strong... wants us to study..." Vlad thought.

Looking at Austin's back, he could see something. He felt something. Admiration for one of those who were strong.

Vlad shook his head, which still hurt somewhat.

"I have to warn him... he could be in serious trouble."

Vlad took off running straight after Austin. He hadn't gone far; Austin had just gone around the corner of the school, where there was a type of street filled with trees and benches.

It was just another side of the school, and just like the rest of it, there were crude words and drawings written on the side of the walls. His pacing was low, due to the disappointment he felt so far.

"Wait!" Vlad called out.

Austin turned around to see the bruised kid's face catching up to him. He stopped and was breathing heavily. It was clear he wanted to speak, but he was unable to until he got his breath back.

"Finally," Vlad said, taking in a deep breath. "I wanted to thank you for beating Carvey back there. I know you didn't hit him because of me, but still, it helped me regardless. You did what I wanted to do for so long, and it was so satisfying to see."

"Anyway, I know you're not from around here, so I wanted to warn you."

"Warn me?" Austin repeated back.

If he had just defeated the top school's fighter, then what did he have to worry about? I think you should take a look at

"Man, how long have you been in this city? Did you just come up from a tier-5 or something?" Vlad asked.

"Something like that," Austin mumbled.

"Anyway, there are two things that you need to worry about. The first one, although Carvey isn't that strong, he has connections to the local gangs. He is still the strongest in our school, but that's why even other schools don't decide to mess with him."

Inwardly, Austin was smiling. Without realising it, he was probably quickly now going the route of what Gary wished for.

"Not only that, but word around this city spreads fast. Since you beat the top guy, now all the other schools are going to know about you. They might start to come after you, trying to challenge you since you beat him. But there's also the fact that the Phantom Brawl is coming up."

"The Phantom Brawl?" Austin replied.

"It's this event that the gangs host. They pit the strongest against each other, and I have a feeling that Carvey was meant to enter, so the gang might definitely be looking for you. Because you beat up one guy, now there will be a whole heap of people after you."

This time, Austin was unable to hold the smile on his face. An underground fighting tournament, gangs after him, it was exactly what he was after. The excitement in a tier-4 town might be better than he originally thought.

"Thanks for the information and your concern. You're a good person caring for a stranger like me," Austin said, as he was ready to walk off again.

"If you need anything, let me know. I owe you!" Vlad shouted.

Later that day, Austin tried to text Gary a few times. He thought the two could meet up again and go over what they thought. Besides, Gary was the one with all the money and would be paying for everything. Eventually, he had a reply.

"Sorry, I'm busy working tonight. I'm guessing this is Austin. I think it's best if we don't stay together tonight. Will explain later!"

In some ways, Austin felt like he had just been abandoned. With no money, he would have to ask Kai to cover him, send him some cash over. But Kai always seemed to keep a tab on these things and would ask for big favours in return, which was something he didn't want hanging over him.

Austin waited outside the school gate that he was at before, and as expected, when classes ended, one of the first people out of the doors was Vlad. He stepped in front of him, blocking his path, and startled Vlad a bit, but it soon turned into a smile when he saw who it was.

"I think I'm going to have to ask for that favour. Do you have a place I can stay?" Austin asked.

Chapter 695 Working In The Factory

Strangely Vlad had happily accepted Austin's request and he didn't ask too many questions either. Which was strange, if Vlad was Austin's kid, he definitely would have taught him that it was wrong to just trust strangers so much.

In the first place, Vlad knew nothing about Austin or why he had next to no money on him. Of course, he had enough money for food, but the business card, as Kai described it, was left with Gary.

Vlad lived on his own, in a two story flat. There was a row of rooms on the bottom floor and then a row on top. It was extremely basic, and the outside was somewhat falling apart. The wall looked to be covered partially with mold, while the stairs creaked so much Austin wouldn't have been surprised if his foot fell right through.

When they got to the room though, it was in better condition than he thought. A clean living room with a desk. There was a double bed and enough space for a small table in the centre. There was then a table in the corner with a desk and books.

Lastly, there was a toilet off to the side. It wasn't the biggest space, and there seemed to be no kitchen. Just a sink on the outside near the bed.

"I have an extra blanket, for when my family stays over, I'll sleep on the floor and you can take the bed." Vlad smiled.

Austin felt bad, after all, he was the one that was intruding on the kids personal space, and to then make him sleep on the floor. However, the floor space wasn't large enough for his broad shoulders, and he could tell that Vlad still wanted to repay him for what he had done.

As Austin was setting up, and getting on the bed, he couldn't help but have a few questions for Vlad.

"So where are your parents, aren't you still in school, shouldn't they be looking after you?" Austin asked.

"My parents work in one of the factories. I'm sure you've noticed them, they're spewing out all that crap over the city the whole time." Vlad conveniently coughed, as if the thought was making his throat tickle.

"The factories... are where most of the kids' parents work, maybe that's why the situation is how it is now. You see, the workers are forced to live in the factory, on site. They are allowed to come home on their holidays of course, but there's a big check to make sure they don't take anything with them.

pandasnovel.com "So my parents tend to visit around once a month, and I imagine it's the same with most of the kids."

Austin couldn't believe it, how could one be forced to live where they worked. If this was the case with all of the kids, were they then raised with practically no parents. If it really was the case for most of the city, then it was no wonder the kids acted like they did.

There was essentially no one to discipline them. If they did badly in school, they would get horrible grades, and then those in the tier-4 cities only had two routes. Work for the gangs, or work for the factories that were controlled by the gangs.

Before the two were to get some sleep, there was one more question on Austin's mind.

"Now tell me about this Phantom Brawl again, because I want to take part."

Both Gary and Elijah had been offered a job from a random stranger on the street. What took Elijah by surprise was the fact that Gary had agreed to doing the job, and in the moment, he had gone along with him.

Now the two of them were taking a tour of the place, while Elijah was wondering how he had gotten into this situation.

'I don't understand, I thought I was following some big wig from another city?' Elijah thought. 'So, why is he just taking a normal job in the factory... unless, is he here to spy on his potential partners? That might make sense.' I think you should take a look at pandasnovel.com

Apparently, there were many different types of factories, but the one that they worked at felt more like a mine. It was built into the side of a mountain and it was incredibly hot inside with people working away. Lugging large wheelbarrows full of dirt.

They would then get smashed to pieces, sorted and placed on a conveyor belt, where there would be a group of people sorting them out into different piles. It was unclear what these items would be used for, but they imagined that they contained some special metals that others might need.

Both of them were handed a pickaxe and soon after were handed off to an old man wearing a hard hat. The old man was quite thin but he had well defined muscles all over his body. His name was Earny.

"The job is quite simple, we take turns switching roles every hour or so, that way our muscles get some rest doing the different jobs, you two just get swinging, and load the chunks of rock into the wheelbarrows.

Earny walked them into a large tunnel and it was even hotter inside than it was outside in the main factory.

"Alright you two get to work!" Earny said.

Looking at the others, they were swinging the pickaxe several times into a particular spot of the rock, they would then continue down the same line making a crack. They would then do the same at another point, and when the two cracks reached, they would have one solid piece of rock.

Gary lifted up the pickaxe and swung it down, hitting the piece of rock. It created a large crack going through straight to the bottom. Swinging the pickaxe again in one strike Gary had knocked out a large chunk from the stone wall.

"This is perfect!" Gary said to himself proudly.

Elijah just slapped his head, still wondering what on earth was he and this man doing here. He had followed him out of interest but was starting to think that he could just be an idiot.

Gary went ahead to lift the large piece and put it into the wheelbarrow but when he did, the system's screen had popped up.

[The material in your hands has been analysed.]

[A beast crystal has been detected]

Chapter 696 A System Upgrade?

Before placing the large piece of rock that Gary had in his hands, he turned it on all sides, examining it closely. Despite its size, he handled it with ease, rotating it effortlessly.

Observing this, Elijah began to wonder if Gaba was even trying to hide the fact that he was an Altered. Did he believe that the other members wouldn't take any action if they found out? Elijah started to consider the possibility that this encounter might just be with a random Altered who had somehow ended up in the city by accident, unrelated to the local gangs.

Regardless, Elijah was in the right place to gather the information he needed.

Gary placed the large rock on the ground and picked up his pickaxe. The rock was too large to fit in the wheelbarrow, so breaking it into smaller pieces would not raise suspicion. As he swung the pickaxe, he split the big rock into four smaller pieces. The inside of the rock sparkled with different colours, and Gary's eyes focused on a large crystal protruding from one area.

"That's it... it looks the same, the same as the crystal I had last time. That's a beast crystal!"

As soon as Gary laid eyes on the crystal, something strange happened with the system as well.

[Ancient knowledge is being unlocked.]

[The system has access to new information received from ancient knowledge.]

[Beast tiers unlocked.]

[Would you like to learn about beast crystals?]

From an outside perspective, Gary appeared to be standing there, staring at the pieces of the large rock. But in reality, he was absorbing all the information the system was presenting to him.

[Yes]

[Beast crystals are crystals from ancient beasts that can be found across the universe, but were once creatures on Earth as well. Beast crystals have different tiers depending on the amount of energy contained within them. Higher-tier crystals tend to come from stronger and more powerful beasts, as they possess more energy to draw from.]

[The following are the tiers:]

[Basic tier]

[Intermediate tier]

[Advanced tier]

[King tier]

[Emperor tier]

[Legendary tier]

[Demi-god tier]

[Demon tier]

'I remember, those people at NIRV, were explaining how they knew a certain beast's strength was equal to the crystal they produced, and that would also determine how good of an Altered solution they made.

'However, they said it was quite difficult for them to pinpoint what was what. With the system, do I have the ability to do that now?' Gary thought.

He touched the crystal coming out from the rock, and sure enough another screen had popped up.

[Intermediate tier beast crystal] I think you should take a look at pantheonnovel.com

'This is amazing, it makes me wonder, if I was to see Altered solutions, could I tell what tier they are at. It would make sense since Altered solutions are made from crystals. Wouldn't this also help out at the auction.

'We could know which Altered solutions are better than others, and it wouldn't just be a shot in the dark.' Gary was already getting excited at all of the possibilities.

Still, it did make him wonder, just what was this place? Turning his head he looked at the sorting group. After the large rocks were broken down on the conveyor belt there were several parts going through being sorted into different large buckets.

They would then be loaded up onto lorries that were driven off. When looking closely at the buckets, that's when Gary could see it. Some of them did have minerals and materials for electronic components, but there was also a container for beast crystals.

'Is that what this place really is, is it just a disguise to get beast crystals? But how are beast crystals even in this place?' Gary thought.

'If I remember from what Tom told me. NIRV has a special crystal that they use on the old fossils that they find. Then that creates a beast, after they kill the beast like we did in the special classes, they drop a crystal that allows Altered solution to be made.

'But then, if there is a mine with crystals in it, maybe that has been lost for years. Is this another way to get crystals as well? A secret that they have been hiding from everyone. I guess most people have never even seen a beast crystal before, and I doubt anyone in a tier 4 will have ever seen one.'

"What have you been staring at for so long?" Elijah eventually asked.

"Ahm, I was just looking at the rocks, they're kind of shiny." Gary replied. "Do you think they're worth a lot?"

Elijah looked at the crystal that Gary was talking about, but as he looked at it more, there was nothing out of the ordinary about it. He had never seen anything like it, and wondered why the green haired was so curious about it.

"I wouldn't try and steal it if I was you." Elijah said.

Gary's hand was already on the crystal, he had gripped hard and just after Elijah had finished his sentence he had pulled it out of the rock with his bare hands.

"They check us every night, in case someone steals those things. I'm not sure if they're worth a lot, or worth the trouble of angering the gang in the area."

Gary somewhat agreed, because right now, he felt like he was in a gold mine. He was able to get beast crystals, without the need to risk his life. At first he had come to the city, expecting to fight to gain exp, in order to best Midwak.

Now though, was that really needed, with the crystals here, he could gain strength bit by bit.

“Don’t worry.” Gary said as he stood up with his back facing away from Elijah, and took a big bite out of the crystal with his teeth. ‘They’ll never find the crystal.’

[Intermediate Beast crystal consumed]

Chapter 697 A Growing Strength

Gary continued his mining work, and if he wasn’t working hard before, he definitely was working super hard now. He was crushing large pieces, taking chunks out with just a couple of swings and then would place his hands on them for a few moments.

Depending on whether the system screen would pop up or not would depend on whether Gary would break it down into smaller pieces, before secretly pulling out what he needed from it. He continued this, looking for specific types of crystals, and of course, he wouldn't take every crystal.

The actions looked a bit strange, as they couldn't comprehend why he would break some pieces down and not the others. Besides, there was a machine that would crumble the larger pieces into smaller pieces.

It was just their job to get it off this piece of rock, or mountain, whatever it was.

Gary wiped the sweat from his forehead as it was hot inside, but he still didn’t slow down. He had great endurance, one of the best after all.

"If you're so hot, why don't you take off that mask?" Elijah asked, who was casually working next to him. He was keeping a pace that was the same as the other workers.

"It's dusty in here, you know, really dusty," Gary answered, as he picked up the piece he had just broken off.

[Beast crystal has been found]

[Basic tier beast crystal]

"The intermediate crystals give me one stat point, in fact, sometimes it hasn't even done that. I guess it has something to do with my stats being too high, or my level being too high in the first place. So I doubt the basic tier crystal will do anything. Besides, I can't take every crystal I find."

"Hey kid, you've made this barrel too heavy, I can't move it!" One of the older men shouted. He too, was covered in sweat and mud. His body was relatively thin. All of these guys in here were hard workers, mostly men.

While they allowed the women to work on the assembly line sorting out the crystals.

"It's okay, I'll take it," Gary said, grabbing hold of the two iron bars and rushing off to the sorter machine.

The old man who had shown them the ropes and what to do, couldn't help but smile as he saw Gary.

"Ah, when I was his age I was just as strong," Earny said. "Your friend, if he carries on like that he might get noticed by the higher-ups. They like to bring the stronger ones into their group."

"Oh, really," Elijah said, as he held the handle of the pickaxe more firmly, he lifted it above his head and swung it down. When it hit the rock, it was cutting through it like butter. It wasn't a single crack that went to the bottom, almost the whole pickaxe touched the floor, cutting a large piece of it off.

"I guess I should work a bit harder then," Elijah said.

When Gary returned, he could see Elijah working away, and at a speed that nearly matched his.

"Oh, did something light a fire in your belly?" Gary commented.

"I'm just trying not to fall behind," Elijah said, with a big smile on his face.

The rest of the workers continued to watch the two at work, and due to them being so impressive, they could relax a bit. They weren't directly being supervised in the mine. The owners of the factory would only come in once in a while to make sure everyone was doing what they needed.

However, they did have a quota of weight that the group had to meet each day. Some days it was harder to reach that quota than others, due to lack of energy or just hitting a rough patch in the mine, but with this, they felt like they might get to relax a little.

Most of the crystals that Gary had found were intermediate crystals, but he did find one advanced-tier crystal. If he was honest, he would have liked to have taken this back. Maybe someone, even Tom, could have turned it into Altered solution for the gang, or he was sure it could sell for a high price on the market. But it was too risky, causing trouble this early on, because Gary had another idea, an even better idea. I think you should take a look at pandasnovel.com

'These basic-tier crystals, although they might not help me anymore, what about the others? They're werewolves as well, so their bodies should have the same effect. Each one of them can get stronger... but I can't take the crystals out of here. Still, there is something I can do.' Gary was smiling due to how much of a genius he felt he was right now.

Gary

Grade: Rook

Class: Dark Warrior

Level 28

pandasNovel.com [Health 300]

[Energy 500]

[Strength 67]

[Dexterity 53]

[Endurance 57]

Gary's stats were improving. Consuming the crystals didn't give him exp, so his level stayed the same, but he only wished to increase his level in the first place to improve his stats.

Continuing like this, he wondered how far he could go. How many crystals could he eat until his stats stopped improving? There was also another factor; surely his stats weren't limitless either, so at some point, his strength would have to stop.

His werewolf body already felt strong, but what about those that were beyond Midwak? So far on his journey, he had been just trying to get stronger than Midwak, but there was an even bigger goal beyond him. The other werewolves and the vampires.

'I'm going to continue to get stronger, not just stronger than Midwak, but strong enough to stop anyone from hurting my family again. And then, Mum, when you wake up, you can live the peaceful life you always wanted!'

Picking up another crystal, Gary crunched down, thinking about the future.

Chapter 698 Gary's Plan

The day had come to an end, but he had already gained over 5 stat points in total. He imagined that after staying here for a while, he would be ready to face Midwak again.

The workers were to stay on-site in the factory. There was a dorm building that was built onto the side of the factory, and it could only be accessed from the inside. There were even strict guards standing on the outside.

Before they were allowed to enter the dorms, everyone was searched to see if they had anything else on them other than their personal belongings. Then they were finally let into their rooms.

pandasNovel.com The rooms were shared by six people. There were mattresses laid out on the floor with all the basic necessities, and then there were toilets at the end of the hallway, including the showers. In each of the rooms, there was one cooking area that they were all to share, but no place to eat other than the floor.

The older men immediately started cooking, and the smell wafted into Gary's nose, making his stomach rumble loudly.

"It looks like someone is hungry," Earny said. "Did you forget to bring some food?"

"I worked harder than I thought," Gary answered. Although the rocks gave him strength and a rise in energy, they still weren't a replacement for real food.

"I'll share some of mine with you," Earny said.

"Hey, hey, are you sure you're going to be okay?" another man said. "You have your own family to pay for as well. You can't keep helping out strangers."

"It's okay. I have a son who is probably only a little younger than them," Earny said, and everyone had a look on their face as if they had heard this story before. "We know how much you love your son, Earny, which is why we're telling you that you should eat as well."

Earny was busy cooking away, and it looked like he was making some type of noodles. Both Elijah and Gary were at the back of the room, staying out of the way, as it looked like they had it sorted and under control.

"You better pay that man back tenfold for giving you some of his food," Elijah said.

"What do you mean?" Gary replied.

"Can't you tell by their conversations? They're giving you part of what little they have," Elijah explained. "This isn't like other cities where maybe you can order food and it will get delivered to you. Next to no one can offer that here.

"So they have to buy and cook all the ingredients themselves, but even then, working in this factory, most likely the pay they get will only be enough to cover one person. But as you heard, they all have families, so the money they get goes to raising others. Which is why they barely have enough food for themselves. Did you not wonder why, when they work so hard in this type of job, their body frames are so small, unlike yours?

"This is life for the average person in a Tier-4. I don't know what you're doing here, but the one thing I want you to be is thankful for those who help you out."

Elijah had given up on finding out who Gary was. It seemed like in this city, he was a nobody, so perhaps he was just trying to see what a Tier-4 city was like.

The food was set out on the table, and the old man from his large bowl had poured the noodles into two separate bowls, making his size extremely small. When Gary looked at his bowl, Earny had clearly given him even more than he had, and Elijah's words were starting to hit him somewhat.

"Earny," Gary said, looking at the bowl of soup with his head down. "Why, when you guys don't have much food, why are you giving me some? We've only known each other for one day?"

Earny smiled as he looked at everyone else at the table.

"Isn't it natural to help each other out? We are all in the same situation, and we should at least be able to eat together. For me, because you are here, I will treat you no less than like family, so how could I let a family member go hungry on the first day?"

Gary's heart sank at the old man's kindness, but he didn't want to show it as he pulled his face away and gulped down the lump that was in his throat.

“Well said, Earny! We won't let you go hungry either!”

The other men eating their meals each went ahead and put part of their food in Earny's, Gary's, and Elijah's bowls, filling them up as they ate a little less for themselves that day. I think you should take a look at paπdasnovel.com

Gary ate the meal as slowly as he had ever done before. It hadn't filled his stomach, but for some reason, it felt very fulfilling.

After eating the meal, joking and laughing, listening to others telling stories, and Earny talking about his son all night, it was time to go to bed. They were exhausted from working all day, meanwhile, Gary was still up next to Elijah in the corner.

He was on his phone. He wanted to check if Austin was okay, and he had a few texts from others as well during the meal.

[Hey, I heard you lost or broke your phone, you idiot. So here's my number, it's Kai. Contact me if you need anything, and update me on the situation if it gets a bit hairy.]

Thankfully, although Gary didn't know their numbers, they all still had his, so now he could at least contact Austin and Kai when needed.

“Hey, Elijah,” Gary whispered. “Do you think this place could change?”

“What do you mean? Anything can change. It's just that people have to take action rather than just saying things,” Elijah commented.

“Well, do you think these guys, do you think this city could change to the point where they no longer have to worry about food?” Gary asked.

Elijah nearly laughed out loud hearing that.

“I'm sorry, I didn't realize you were thinking like that. This city, and the people inside it, have been abandoned by everyone. The White Rose has other matters and cares more about the bigger cities where the bigwigs are. They won't get involved in this.

“The local government here, they might as well not exist as everything is controlled by the gangs. So, who is going to help them? The people, will they rise and try to revolt? The gangs who have the power and those behind them will just knock them back down.

“Do you think they don't have the food to feed the people? Do you know how much money is being made from these minerals we are mining? The reason why they do this is because they want to keep them alive but not strong enough for them to fight back. So who's going to help them, another gang? They will just do the same.”

From the few conversations Gary had with Elijah, he could tell that he was a smart person, which is why he had asked him that question, and from it, he had gotten the answer he needed.

He had already thought about doing this before, as the crystals would be beneficial to their group, but now that he could help out a bunch of people as well, that would just be a bonus.

Gary started to write away on his phone, sending out a message.

[Kai, I need your help. I wanted to know if we have enough funds to buy a factory in this city I'm in.]

Chapter 699 A Big Backer

No one quite knew how long Gary would be away for, but it was presumed that he might take at least a week to cause some trouble. Some of the others predicted that it might even be sooner than that.

Either way, he wouldn't be back in time for the Dark Guild Auction, which was what Kai was currently making preparations for. He was pulling out a lot of the profits from every corner they had, and they had quite a few revenue streams now.

Their portfolio included businesses in Slough, such as restaurants, nightclubs, construction, hotels, and more. They also had business partners in several other cities. Harry Cardnez dealt with most of these, as he was still expanding Cardnez Electronics and knew how to navigate the business world well.

There was also AJ Entertainment, run by Ash, which dealt with the latest and newest upcoming stars.

Finally, they had Nottsburg, which was already running on high profit as a well-known gambling establishment filled with different venues and top hotels where people from all over came.

It was a diverse portfolio where all the businesses were seeing great success, so it was safe to say that the income the Howlers were getting wasn't small by any means. They had money that could possibly compete with that of tier 1 cities.

Especially if they didn't spend too much on redevelopment and improvement in Slough, but in turn, that was an investment in itself. Kai was already a step ahead, buying a lot of land and buildings in Slough.

As more people moved to Slough, the apartments, houses, and the land itself would rise in value due to all the developments they were doing. That's why when Gary surprisingly asked him to buy the factory, he thought it would be no problem at all.

"I wonder what's got him so excited. He's never asked us to make a move before," Kai said to himself at his desk. He was looking at the numbers and wondering how much money they should set aside or how much would be enough to buy the factory in the first place.

There were a few more texts sent by Gary after.

[You have to trust me, getting this factory is quite important.]

Although Gary was never the one to be the smartest when it came to financial decisions, he was hardly involved in any of it at all. Seeing him this passionate, Kai crossed out the original number he had put down.

"I should listen to the boss and try to get this, no matter what."

Research was done on the Tier-4 city that Gary had gone to, a city called Crustpool. It was close to the coast, where there were multiple large hills and mountains. That's why several mining factories had been set up in the area.

Obtaining information about the factory was relatively easy, and making a phone call as well, but Kai knew that it would get harder.

"Look, I am very sorry, but I don't wish to waste any more of both our time," the man on the other end of the phone said.

Kai had managed to reach a lawyer who represented all the factories in the city.

"We don't plan on selling up at all," the man said.

"Really? What if I was to give you a bid right now and let you know that the ones interested are the Howlers?" Kai said, and soon after, he gave a number that was in the seven figures.

For the first time, Kai had decided to use the Howlers' name. Their reputation should have grown, and other places should at least know who ran Nottsburg now.

"I will get back in touch with you," the man said, ending the call there. I think you should take a look at pandasnovel.com

Kai waited a few moments. He imagined he would soon be getting a call, but it was unlikely to be the people he wanted. It would be the middleman in this whole situation.

"I've revealed my cards about who we are, but will the real ones behind all of this do the same?"

A vibrating noise on the table could be heard, and Kai let it ring a few times before answering. He couldn't make it seem like they were too desperate.

"Hey, hey, hey, so is this the fool who thinks he can use their name to buy us?" the voice on the other side immediately said.

Kai thought it was quite brave for someone from a Tier-4 to act like this suddenly on the phone.

"That's right, I am a representative from the Howlers, and we are interested in buying out one of your factories."

Sometimes they were looking for partnerships, but in this case, Kai wanted to buy them out, not partner. It would allow him to understand the situation a bit more. If they were happy to just get a lump sum of cash, then the gang in Crustpool was just working for other gangs and not directly under them. Depending on how the rest of the call went, he would switch tactics as he went.

"Hahaha, that makes me laugh," the man said. "Look, I came to warn you that you shouldn't be going around trying to throw your weight around like that. Otherwise, you're going to end up stepping on the toes of someone far bigger than you can handle."

"I've come to reject your offer, and before you even think about making any other offer, consider them rejected as well. Trust me, whatever you offered won't be enough. I know who you guys are, just stay in your lane. Otherwise, the gang known as the Howlers will cease to exist."

The call abruptly hung up, without Kai being able to say anything else. Placing the phone on the table, he shook his head.

"I guess it's impossible to buy that factory. A regular person in charge of a Tier-4 would never act like that, especially if they knew our name. Which means they have a strong backing, maybe one of the kings or someone with a boatload of money."

With that, Kai had to deliver the bad news to Gary.

"I was unable to purchase the factory. It seems these guys have a pretty big backing. My advice would be not to cause trouble and definitely make sure they don't find out you're from the Howlers."

Chapter 700 The Shadow Fighter (Part 1)

Austin had slept better than he originally thought he would have, he was after all in a stranger's place, yet for some reason he felt safe around Vlad. If it wasn't the fact that Vlad had to get up to go back to school, maybe he would have slept in for even longer.

He took a quick peek at his phone, and saw there were practically no messages from Gary. Whatever he was doing, he had to be quite absorbed in it all.

"Hey, let me walk with you to school." Austin stated.

While walking down the streets, Austin continued to wear the mask on his face. Vlad did find it a bit strange since he had seen Austin without it when they were in his home. He thought maybe he was some type of secret celebrity from the city, but when looking at his face, it was completely normal.

Austin was thinking back to the conversation the two of them had last night.

"So, about this Phantom Brawl, how exactly do I take part in it?" Austin asked.

"I... I don't actually know the location of it. Only those that are participants, or the local gang members, know about it. There are two ways I can think of though, one, is going back to Carvey. I doubt he would have openly told his gang, the one that was looking out for him, about his defeat.

"But you could always ask him for more information, or the news will eventually reach them. The second way is to make a name for yourself, like you have been doing. Go around taking out the top of the other schools.

"At the end of the day, they are meant to be participating in the Phantom Brawl, so if you take them out before the big tournament, a gang has to approach you, right?"

What Vlad said made a lot of sense, but Austin wasn't from around here, and he doubted that they would all be as easy as Carvey.

“With the second option, there is another problem though. If you become a name among the schools, then that will bring in the attention of the shadow fighter.”

“The shadow fighter?” Austin raised an eyebrow. He was starting to wonder what comic book city he had entered, and who was coming up with these names. Shadow fighter, and Phantom Brawl?

Austin would have said something, but he didn't want to dampen the excitement in Vlad's voice as he was explaining who the Shadow fighter was.

“You see, the shadow fighter is rumoured to be the strongest fighter in this city!” Vlad continued to explain.

“So is he going to be at the Phantom Brawl, and why should I worry about him?”

Vlad cleared his throat before he started to explain.

“The shadow fighter is a person that tries to clear up all the bad kids from school. If someone starts to make a name for themselves or a new top dog appears, he appears, disguised as a type of ninja and beats them up!

“That's why it's clear that he is the strongest, I don't think he has lost a single fight. But the identity is a secret due to the clothes they wear, and they have never bothered with entering the Phantom Brawl.”

“A vigilante?” Austin wondered. “So has this shadow fighter even beaten up Carvey before?”

Vlad nodded enthusiastically, with stars in his eyes.

“I actually thought that you might have been the shadow fighter at one point, but then I realised... I realised...” Vlad looked Austin up and down. “That you are far too big. I'm not calling you fat, it's just the Shadow fighter has a small frame.”

—

Vald went into a bit more detail after that, about how the shadow fighter would only beat up those that were wreaking havoc on those in the schools, which made sense as to why he idolised him.

However, whatever they were doing, it was quite clear that it wasn't working, because none of the schools changed. In a way, because this person remained secret and would only beat up the top dog once, nothing would change.

Vlad did have his own theory as to why this was, most likely the shadow fighter was a high school student as well. Someone who wanted to act, but didn't want to catch the attention of the gangs. I think you should take a look at pandasnovel.com

Anyone strong, would be forced into a gang, so this was the only thing they could do.

pandasnovel.com "Oh crap!" Vlad was heard saying out loud.

Getting out of the thoughts in his head, he looked up to see just what Vlad was reacting to.

There was a group of kids, with multi coloured hair and piercings, heading toward them. A group of five.

"It's... it's the Punks!" Vlad said.

Once again, it seemed like Austin was stuck in some sort of comic book.

"Hey, so this is the infamous Big Mask people have been talking about." The man in the centre asked, putting out his tongue, revealing that it was split in two parts. "I heard you took down Carvey, which means you have to be somewhat strong right?"

Vlad was ready to move, so he was out of the way of what was going to happen next, but as he went he was grabbed by the scruff of his neck, by the split tongue man.

“Hey you little sh*t we need a witness, a witness to show that Killer was the one that took out Big Mask!” The leader, the top dog of another school, named Killer, was laughing.

What Vlad had warned Austin about was starting to happen, as others were interested in him.

“Hey, so if I beat these guys up, that’s going to increase my chance into this Phantom Brawl thing right? Then let’s take these guys out.” Austin said as he moved forward.

Those by Killer’s side were the first to move in, and before one could reach him, Austin threw out his leg kicking him with his heel, in his stomach. The food he ate for breakfast came out from his mouth and he felt like he was suffocating when falling to the floor, he had never felt such pain in his life before.

As another came forward, swinging his hand, Austin went from a fist to a slap. He knew the unnatural strength he carried, and he didn’t want to kill them. As his hand hit the person's face, their whole body lifted off the ground before they were sent to the floor.

One of the students managed to get close and threw a punch to the side, aiming for Austin’s ribs, but when his hand hit, he felt like his knuckles and bones were broken. Austin just turned to look at him, and that caused the kid to fall over on his backside, hurting himself again.

“This guy... his body is made out of rocks or something!”

The confident Killer wasn't so confident anymore, but he still had one more trick up his sleeve as he pulled out a knife from behind his back.

“There’s a reason for my name!” killer said, as he spun the knife around his fingers and caught it by the handle.

“Oh?” Austin said, as he moved forward. “Let me ask you, Killer, have you ever killed someone before?”