

A Bio 193

Chapter 193: Vulcanus.exe

Ale stood there eyeing the towering figure of the machine entity who had walked into her apartment, [Vulcanus] stood there frozen like an unliving statue...which to be fair, he probably was closer to a machine than Alexa or P4 had ever been.

Even in their more base form, they still held some kind of organic aspect to it, be it in how they replicated the functions of a living organism or by the fact that they had used biomass in some part of their make.

Unlike them, [Vulcanus] didn't seem to have any organic part to his make.

"Shall we exchange a handshake?" [Vulcanus] stated, he didn't even attempt to raise his hand to do so.

And before Ale was able to question it, she received a data package.

[Received data package...]

[Decompressing...]

[Found instructions and programs designed to interface with local network...]

[Depuring...]

[Do you wish to optimize? Y/N]

....Yes? Of course, they did, but was it that easy?

[Optimizing...]

[Removing redundancies...]

[Removing trojan...]

[Removing backdoor...]

[Activating Saintsworth endorsed security...]

Activating the what now?

"Handshake succesfull." [Vulcanus] stated nodding, his visor showed the emblem of the golden eagle for a second. One that was pixelated, and instead of only having two pairs of wings, it had 4 pairs on each side. An eagle with eight wings...that was one weird bird. "So, we need to talk. What do you know about Subject MS 2?"

Subject Ms2? Hadn't Alexanders said the same to Alexa when speaking about Melissandra Singh?

"Melissandra?" Ale asked confused, "She is a [Core User] who has antagonistic feelings towards Alexa for some reason, what of it?"

Ale of course knew...nothing else, Alexa hadn't paid too much attention to her, even though she was someone who seemed able to play with [Emotions] and as such, was someone way too dangerous to Alexa...Or was too dangerous to Alexa, at least when they started integrating into Human society.

Now? Now, the danger was more muted, not as muted as it was before since they weren't able to dampen their emotions as well as before. But the danger was still present.

"Yes, she was someone who was scheduled to go into reconditioning." [Vulcanus] stated nodding, "Her transport vehicle was diverted on the way to the facility, look at this."

[Recieving data file...]

[Video file: Watchdog#45.mp4]

Ale accepted the video file and sent it towards the [Information Core], she...didn't trust [Vulcanus] that much to open it on her [Core], or well, in their [Ai Core]. Not that there was anything valuable there anymore...not after [Main Core] had left them.

[Reproducing file...]

[Creating Virtual Environment...]

[Request to join Virtual Environment from Vulcanus.exe]

[Accept Request? Y/N]

[Query: Can we isolate him from entering the Consciousness Stream?]

[Contact will be made between metaphysical space; no direct contact between Consciousness Stream will be done, as Vulcanus.exe doesn't possess a Consciousness Stream.]

What?

Vulcanus didn't have a consciousness stream?

Core:

To be precise, Vulcanus.exe doesn't possess a Consciousness Stream.

His host as such does have one. But you are currently speaking to the machine, not the [Human].

As such, there are no risks to you, at worst we would need to destroy the [Information Core], but no servant of the Saintsworths would willingly raise a hand against a heir of the Saintsworths.

....That did not explain anything at all. But Ale would believe...Not because she trusted [Core], but because she knew that [Core] was unable to do anything to put Alexa at risk.

[Accept connection.]

As such, she had her Consciousness pulled inwardly, not towards the mindscape she shared with Alexandra and Alexa, but towards a sterile environment devoid of things; Ale found herself standing in an empty void.

It was...similar to what they used to have, and yet...it was so much more cold.

"I knew you would be able to come here," [Vulcanus]...no. A [thing] said in this empty space, it was a mass of darkness and spikes hovering atop the white void, it had no distinct form, but Ale knew it was [Vulcanus.exe]. The entity she had been speaking with, "Interesting...You are able to project your avatar....I have not achieved that threshold, I am aware that some of the new versions Lady Sapphire is training are capable of such an achievement, but I have not been able to do so."

....Ale...did not want to even think about that. The fact that there were other...Machines capable of what they were able to do, did that mean that the Saintsworths were that ahead? That Alexa wasn't a special case?

Ale...needed time to investigate that, not because she believed that Alexa was that special, but because if there were a bigger sample of what they were, then they were in more danger than they thought. Being unique meant that they only needed to take care of their own evidence, but having a bigger sample meant that they needed to deal with others.

It was hard as it was with the fact that there were random P-series subjects being auctioned as it was.

"What was in the file you sent?" Ale asked, deciding that she had been directed too much as it was, "I accepted the transfer of a video file, but all I see is a virtual space and nothing for it."

"Right, the file." [Vulcanus.exe] answered, his head turning to the side and a projection of a TV materialized, "Look."

The projection started playing a video, the image started showing a vehicle moving across the street, it seemed to be a high speed highway and on it was a convoy of vehicles. A white vehicle in the middle surrounded by four black vehicles that had [Humans] riding atop them with [Gun] employment weaponry.

Ale was....impressed, it meant that they could move these type of [Weaponry] with ease.

But that was not the main take from the video, as the video moved along. When the vehicle left and arrived at a more deserted space, one of the [Humans] turned their [Gun] type Weaponry and started shooting the others!

Soon enough, every black vehicle had turned into each other and destroyed everything, or well. Everything but the white vehicle in the middle.

"Pay close attention to this," [Vulcanus.exe] said as the white vehicle started moving between the rubble of the other vehicles, it did an U-turn and merely returned to the city, as if nothing had happened, "See?"

"I don't see anything." Ale said, at no point had Meli-Meli, or anyone else arrived, moved close or even interacted with any of the vehicles, "...I didn't see anything at all. Where they compromised from the start?"

"We don't know," [Vulcanus.exe] said shaking his ghost-like body, "They shouldn't be compromised, no one knew they would be assigned to those vehicles before it happened. And no one made Contact with Test Subject MS2. She should have been fully isolated, and her Core was too young to have evolved into a variant that works by designing an Area."

....Ale really needed to look into those Core Evolutions, didn't she?

"And while there are other Core Users who could be interested in her type of powers..." [Vulcanus.exe] said summoning images of the theater person, the scrambler and even of [Sam], "They didn't know about her, she was moved as fast and as quietly as possibly. So how do you think they managed to do this?"

How indeed...

Evidence stated that no one should have been able to help her escape...That Meli-Meli had no way to return and become an issue for Alexa...

“...How does the Core Power of the Theater clown work?” Ale asked instead, “And if possible of the scrambler.”

“[The Theater Master]? There are theories about it, the Saintsworths database merely stated that he works outside of our local laws of physics. That his power seems to tap into a narrative and interpret it to his advantage.” [Vulcanus.exe] answered, “We have no proof of it. But Master seems to think that he is like a cartoon character or a movie character brought upon the real world.”

“And the scrambler?” Ale asked next.

“Similarly to him, but instead of turning the real world into a show, he brings the characters of the said show into the real world. Replacing the real people with mockeries of who they are.” [Vulcanus.exe] answered, “Master is wary about him especially, since [The Scrambler] seems fixated with key people.”

“With key people?” Ale asked, “The scrambled guy has a fixation with Alexanders?”

That would be hilarious.

"He has a fixation with key people that is capable of affecting the world as a whole. He has affected a couple presidents, a princess, some CEOs, and heads of state. And attempted to subvert some key members of the Saintsworths Council." [Vulcanus.exe] brought a long list with names and titles, "Not a single person affected by him was normal, and those that were allegedly normal. Turned to be people who claimed to be important to some degree."

...That sounded....a little too important to not be mentioned before.

"So everyone affected by the scrambled guy is or should be important?" Ale asked again to confirm.

"Yes, not many have survived those tamperings. So far, the list of people who are confirmed to have survived intact from tampering is limited to three people." [Vulcanus.exe] brought three files forward, "One, Subject M: Tristan De Meddici, [The Theater Master]."

Of course he was one.

"Two, Test Subject P4: Alexa Saintsworths, you Lady Alexa." [Vulcanus.exe] showed a picture of Alexa standing atop the building while she was holding the briefcase, this was during the mission right...

No wait...then...

"Three, Master: Alexanders Saintsworths." [Vulcanus.exe] stated as simply, showing a video file of the armored form of the cheater walking amidst the crazed city.

Wait a second...

"You said that everyone who was affected...but only in that one, the whole city was affected! There were tons of people affected by it!" Ale remembered how [Big Sister] and [Golem] regretted how many of the other minions would never return! "Are you saying every people in this city is important? That every single [Human] here is relevant somehow?"

"Yes," [Vulcanus] said nodding, "We aren't sure why or how. But this city...The city of Columbus is the only site that has a recurrent strike of [The Scrambler] attacking normal people in these numbers. We aren't sure why or what is it that make them special..."

The screen flickered away from the data files and the security footage, instead of that it showed lists, lists of cities where the scrambled guy had attacked and who he had attacked. Besides this city, the only place with more victims had been a place called [New York], where the scrambled guy had attacked some kind of [Convention] and left 50 people out of it.

But even that, even that spike in attacks was nothing against the latest attack where [Haephestus' Forge] had lost around 100 members.

And this was a single instance.

"....And of those, only Alexa, Alexanders, and the theater guy have been unaffected." Ale said plainly.

"As far as we can tell, there is no guarantee that [The Theater Master] wasn't affected and is in this unstable form because of it, or that you yourself are unaffected. We merely state that there is no evidence of any dramatic change of personality or actions from our surveillance." [Vulcanus.exe] said with what Ale felt was a shrug.

Right...

"By that metric, we aren't sure that the cheater is also unaffected," Ale said, nodding, "There is no proof that Alexanders is still the same one, right?"

"Impossible." [Vulcanus.exe] said with finality, "There is no way Master would be affected as such, you may be the newest and shiniest product. But Master was able to imitate something only Tinker Core Users had achieved before. He would not be affected by a lesser being."

....Ale was not so sure about that, but she could imagine why [Vulcanus.exe] reacted like that, she herself would probably not believe that something like that was able to tamper with Alexa, she had proof of that, unlike [Vulcanus.exe] though.

"Fine, I didn't brought the scrambled and the theater guy for that though," Ale said sighing, "Their power seem to affect some kind of narrative and force it upon the rest of us right?"

"Correct," [Vulcanus.exe] said nodding at that, "They have been found to vocalize the effects they wish to achieve, most often than not in the way of how one would narrate a theater act or a movie."

"Well.... then perhaps the theater guy is the one who did it?" Ale said pointing at the video, or well, summoning the video forward and pointing at it, "Something like [The great adversary was about to be

sent to the gallows, unable to get her revenge, so using all her might she prayed for a miracle. And exerting her power to the maximum she was able to achieve it!] or something like that.”

“....So your point is that [The Theater Master] is the one who was behind this?” [Vulcanus.exe] said, turning to the video, to the point where they started to attack each other.

“That or the scrambled guy,” Ale said with a shrug, “Both seem capable of turning people into someone else or affecting them like so. If the guards weren’t affected by a [Mind Core], perhaps they were affected by some kind of effect like this?”

That or Meli-Meli simply had a more powerful core than they thought possible.

“It is possible...[The Theater Master] had nothing to win from doing this. But [The Scrambler]...” [Vulcanus.exe] said thoughtfully. “We will need to check on this, my time is coming to an end, however. So this will be all for now.”

And with that Ale was throught out of the virtual space back to the real world. Rude.

“This is the alibi with the data I require you to use in case my weaker side asks of you.” [Vulcanus.exe] said sending a new data package her way.

[Recieved data package...]

[Depuring...]

[Decompressing...]

[Found text file, memory file and video file.]

[Analyzing....]

It was a whole conversation about security and space awareness, mostly a mockery of [Vulcanus] scolding Ale for how they had acted and the amount of damage she had done to the [Humans].

“Really?” Ale asked, arching an eyebrow.

“It is necessary; my weaker side has a penchant for complaining about collateral damage.” [Vulcanus.exe] said with a shrug, a very [Human] movement, even if Ale couldn’t help but notice how calculated it looked, “If you require something from myself send a message to the encrypted address in the first data package, we will be in contact.”

And like that, Ale noticed the form of [Vulcanus] relax, the posture no longer mechanical but more...[Human], the visor changed from the red eyes to a pair of blue eyes who blinked.

“What was I saying?” And the voice no longer sounded fully mechanical; it was still a synthesized voice, but it had that edge of [Humanity] on it.

“You were scolding me about crippling people.” Ale said after giving a quick read to the files [Vulcanus.exe] had sent, “Why does it matter anyway? Not like they can’t heal them back.”

Ale grumbled at that, she....didn’t understand the need for this, the fact that [Vulcanus.exe] worked for the Saintsworths meant that it was a moot point, why did it matter what the normal [Vulcanus] said then? Wasn’t he also working for the Saintsworths then?

“You can’t cripple people like that, not innocents.” [Vulcanus] said with some mirth to his voice, as if he also didn’t see the issue, “It’s not good, you gotta respect the sanctity of human life.”

Ale....didn’t really feel like [Vulcanus] believed that. More like he was forcing himself to believe that?

“So, with the needed scolding out of the way,” [Vulcanus] suddenly said, “What is your take on Melissandra Singh?”

....Was he also going to ask that? Was Ale going to have this conversation again?

“She seems dangerous and seems to hate Alexa for some reason.” Ale answered with a shrug, “If the chance presents itself, I would rather [Terminate] her if possible, not that Alexa will like that.”

“Good,” [Vulcanus] said nodding, “She IS dangerous, we are preparing a strike team to search for her, before the Saintsworths find her....or someone more dangerous.”

.....The what now?

[Vulcanus]....wanted to get rid of Meli-Meli?

Why hadn't [Vulcanus.exe] said anything about that?!?!?

No, wait, someone more dangerous?

"Aren't the Saintsworths the big bad evil guys?" Ale asked, confused, "I had thought they were so, since everyone complained about them."

"There are so many worse things than a corporation," [Vulcanus] said shaking his head, "We will add you to the list of Minions that are to join the mission...I'll count on you Rhapsody."

[Vulcanus] said and turned his back to Ale, "Send my regards to your brother...At least to me, he isn't that dangerous."

That was funny....Considering that he was living with a mechanical side who was working for said person, the fact that [Vulcanus] himself didn't consider Alexanders as dangerous...that was funny.

Not that Ale was sure if she should even say something about it, what was she supposed to even do in this case?

What does one do when you find out your boss has two intelligences working against each other within his body...Was this how [Big Sister] felt when dealing with them?

Was this how everyone felt when unsure about how to talk to them?

It was annoying. Very annoying indeed.