

A Bio 196

Chapter 196: The wall and Registration

Turns out registering was easier than Ale had expected it to be, granted [Golem] and [Big Sister] had said as much, and had spent a good time of the travel time telling her it was going to be easier than she gave credit for...

“So let me get this straight, you are already on the list.” [Billy] stated with a sigh, “But you want me to remove you from the list and re-register you using the minion name?”

Ale nodded at the wisdom of the older [Human].

“Yes,” And vocalized her approval, “The name in the records is for myself, and I want it to be recorded that I want to work on this mission not as Ale Saintsworths, but as [Rhapsody] a minion working for [Haephestus’ Forge].”

That was important, mostly because she wanted it to be stated as such that if worst came to it, both Alexa and Alexandra would be cleared for working in this mission too, besides that way if Alexa got annoyed and wanted to mess around, she could move around in any mission sensitive area.

Not that it was endorsed or advice for someone like Alexa to be near potentially dangerous facilities during working hours; honestly, it was a working hazard to have Alexa nearby while doing dangerous work. People could get hurt, not Alexa, of course, but other people!

And then Ale or Alexandra would need to deal with the cleaning!

“And you two also want to register for this?” [Billy] then turned to [Golem] and [Big Sister], “Are you sure? I know the brat was registered, orders from Vulcanus. But you two...you can skip it, I would strongly suggest you to skip it.”

“If Rhapsody is going in, we are going in.” [Golem] said in his serious, no-nonsense voice, “Register the minion Golem for the mission, Hermes.”

“What the big guy said old man,” [Big Sister] said nodding from the side, “Minion Skye also reporting for duty.”

[Billy] turned to look at both minions then sighed in defeat, “Man you would have made wonderful old time heroes...” He mumbled as much while writing in his notepad, “Done, Fairy Team. You are now officially on the mission; you will regret this.”

Ale would? Probably, but there was nothing much to it. They hadn’t been doing too much for their mission protocols, and this was a great point to start doing stuff to further their evolution, nabbing Meli-Meli’s Core could help them greatly, especially if it turned out useful to move Consciousness Stream from one body to another.

Ale wasn’t entirely sure how Alexa had done the work on their current body, she of course knew that she had moved both the Ai Core into this body while leaving their previous [CRAB] form.

But...So far there was no evidence of their Consciousness Stream being tied to the AI Core, hell, they had destroyed that one a couple times before [Core] did whatever it did to [Main Core], and they hadn’t been destroyed.

"Anything you can tell us about the mission?" Ale asked after [Billy] sighed for the sixth time while looking at the tablet he had used to register them to the mission.

"Nothing much to it; we have some Scout-type minions searching the whereabouts of the target." [Billy] said, shrugging and waving at them to walk with him.

They had come to the [Garage] the area filled with lesser machines and minions running around with tools and spare parts, Ale got the impression that this was probably how the [Maintenance Hub] should have looked, not that she ever went there.

They had been more...grumpy while in their [CRAB] form, so she didn't have any memories about leaving the enclosed Den where they had been before.

"Here see?" [Billy] said, pointing at a larger monitor embedded in a wall, one that had a map of both the city and the underlayer, "We think she is hiding in the sewers; not many places a Rogue Core User can hide down there....we have ignored most of the territories that are overly hostile of course."

Ale could see Sam's burrow in one of those slots.

"Why are they marked red?" Ale asked, pointing to the other areas.

"Well, random sewer fauna triggering is one reason." [Billy] said pointing at a particular smaller zone, "This one for example is filled with rats, not dangerous by themselves, but pile up enough rats and they can be a B-List threat."

Ale doubted that, no matter how damaged she ever was, she doubted a [Rat] would ever pose a threat to her.

"There are some local fauna that turned into super fauna too, you know the stuff, snails who got a Gigantifier Core, random alligators who now can spit fire, or who somehow manipulate water." [Billy] pointed to other areas in red, "We also have the weird colony of ants...."

"Ants?!?!?" [Big sister] screeched, "We have ants inside the city?!?!?"

"...Volume," [Billy] said picking inside his hear with a finger and blowing out the ear wax that came from there, "They aren't actual dangerous ants like the ones you think, but more of a local species that ran into the sewers, you know the spiel, some random corpo wanted to make bioweapons and picked up something that they know works. They aren't that evolved or dangerous, just oversized common ants."

"...But they are ants, right?" [Big Sister] said shuddering, "Like....isn't that dangerous?"

"Why do you think the sewers are allowed to remain like they are?" [Billy] said turning to [Golem], "Any output?"

"...The local fauna keeps the ants from evolving out of control," [Golem] said, eyeing the map, "They probably point the ants towards the other species within...and let some of the supervillains who are more responsible for keep the ants at bay...Probably....Is it The Spider one of those?"

Sam?

“Bingo,” [Billy] said nodding, “Part of the deal that allows the spider to continue his work within the sewers is that he is to keep the ant populace manageable. Some of the villain organizations are called to check on that, one of Gabriel’s work is that, to scout and make sure the local fauna isn’t out of control.”

Then turning to Ale [Billy] sighed, “One of the works that Vulcanus wanted to delegate to Rhapsody was that one since he alleged that she could probably make do and survive within the sewer system, it was decided to re-evaluate after her end of year performance test though.”

...Ale wouldn’t mind doing that work.

Or delegating it to Alexandra, since that way the older woman could visit his boyfriend or something.

“I see...” Ale said nodding, “We wouldn’t mind it, but we would need precise orders about how to go about it, if they are artificially keeping some kind of biome within the sewers we will need to know if there are risks from overhunting or not.”

Ale would need to know that for sure, they had gone in a rampage before, so perhaps they had already done irreparable damage, but one could never be too sure.

“That is for later and is dependant on the other Lieutenants accepting giving you that job.” [Billy] said shaking his head, “You ain’t getting my vote or Eleanore’s, that is for sure.”

What?

“Why?” Ale asked frowning, “I understand [Eleanore] not wanting to trust me since she seems to have a problem with me, but you? I believed you to be impartial.”

Ale truly believed that, she hadn’t gotten any vibes of antagonism from [Billy], the [Elder] had been good to them so far, so it surprised her that he would stand against them earning such a good post.

“Why in the seven hells would I accept sending you, someone who we just got confirmation was experimented on.” [Billy] said shaking his head, “Why would I want to send someone like that to fight and tangle with failed experiments and a dangerous environment?”

....Oh.

“More importantly, we got confirmation from you that you used to have to fight living bioweapons for food.” [Billy] added, exasperated, “And you are asking me why I would want to keep you away from such an environment?”

....

Tehe?

“No, you ain’t getting my vote for that Rhapsody,” [Billy] said shaking his head, “Also, even if Eleanore has problems against you because of your name. She is still a responsible person, so she will not vote for you endangering yourself like that.”

Dang it.

“So I need the votes from [Gabriel] and the other [Lieutenants]?” Ale asked, sighing, “I don’t even know the other two.”

“They know you, Gabriel will probably vote yes for you, so don’t worry about that.” [Billy] said with a shrug, “Empress and Hydra will be harder to gauge, they don’t spend too much time around, Hydra may vote no since the nutjob wants more time to experiment in the sewers...”

She experimented in the sewers? How could you do that? The place wasn’t precisely good for experimenting, it wasn’t sterile, at the least, and one needed a controlled environment for any meaningful experiment.

“She is releasing her experimental weapons in the sewers?” [Golem] asked frowning his rock eyebrows, “Isn’t that dangerous? Half the base is underground.”

“We have good filters, and she knows not to let her experiments blow on our faces.” [Billy] said with a small laugh, “Empress is the more dangerous for us, but she is being kept in wall duty for that reason.”

Right, the alleged wall duty. Ale really wanted to go and take a look at those famed walls, all she had heard seemed to imply that the world was dangerous outside these alleged walls, but how bad could it be if people willingly went there?

“Wait the walls?” [Big Sister] asked, confused, “Isn’t that guarded by the Heroes and sponsored by the government? What is doing a Minion there?”

That...was a very fair question, Ale nodded at the question too.

“It is more of an open secret, but...the more successful not A-List Core Users are villains, hell. Some of the most powerful and master Core Users are Minions.” [Billy] said with a smile on his face, “Not many take the Hero mantle, and those that do...tend to be...well...”

“Like [Chrysalis] and [V-8]?” Ale asked from the side, “They didn’t seem very [Heroic].”

[Billy] sighed once more at this, “Yes, so the government gives us some free leeway in some activities if we send some minions to man the walls, Empress is our envoy there, she works extra hours there and we get some grants and pardons our way, available to any minion that needs it.”

“Let me get this straight...the government is paying for the pardons the law department gets?” [Big Sister] asked, Ale could imagine her face filled with surprise, she could only imagine since they were wearing the masks.

“Not exactly,” [Billy] said shaking his head, “To be precise, what those grants allow us, is our lawyers getting into the negotiation table, they still need to get the pardon or fines by themselves, what it allows is that our Minions and Villains aren’t shunted to a prison as soon as they get apprehended.”

Wait, they didn't just contain them at the moment they got caught? Wasn't that...

"So if I get captured, I could run away?" Ale asked confused, "Isn't that...counterproductive?"

"First of all, you would get a Core neutralizing cuff, if even with those you could get away, then I would advise you against it, and if you did, then I would advise you to get a new mask...or pretend to be someone who inherited said mask." [Billy] said with a shrug, "But yeah, you can totally run away, but if you get caught again then you will get just more penalties thrown your way, those could mean lower salary or even docked pays."

Docked pays? Lower salary?

"I would get less money?" Ale asked to confirm.

"Yes, the lawyers do need to get paid, and if your bail is higher, then any crime that wasn't committed while in employment is yours to pay." One could hear the amusement in [Billy]'s voice, "So yeah, if you can get away, run away. Gabriel is one such example; if they forget to turn on the Core dampeners, he just teleports away and then pretends to have inherited the Mask."

"Isn't his Core power obvious?" [Golem] said confused, "How does that even...Ah..."

"Exactly, Core profiling." [Billy] laughed, actually laughed at that, "Unless they get Gabriel to actually say that he is the same, they can't pin it in him so long he gets some modifications to his Mask. I think he is on the fifth now? The officials just stopped caring, and now they deal with him as if he is someone new every time, changes to his Mask or not."

That was stupid, they were stupid. The only one who could actually do that was someone like them with their Shapeshift- Oh... "So that's why people get like that when they find we are a [Shapeshifter]?" Ale said noticing it, "People can't guarantee we are the same person can they?"

"Not when they notice you are a mimic class shapeshifter they can't." [Golem] said nodding, "They haven't gotten the full scope of your Core Power, right now they probably have you as a normal Fleshshaper Core or a Partial Shifter Core."

"But once they notice....you can expect some love calls from corporations and hero teams." [Billy] said laughing, "They love your type, they also love having you under their wing, Mimic Core Users are worth their weight in rare metals."

"Why?" Ale asked confused, "It is practical and useful, but surely there are better types around."

"First, your type is a dream come true for the perverted politicians." [Billy] said, earning himself a nasty glare from [Big Sister]; Ale actually saw [Big Sister] remove the eye protection from her Mask to emphasize the glare. "Secondly....your organs are worth their price twice in gold, since you can shapeshift into anyone, you are the perfect match for anyone who needs new organs. Just shapeshift into the target, get harvested and move along."

That....was true....probably?

"But can't they just replace the damaged ones?" Ale asked, confused, "Isn't that easier than transplanting a new one? We won't mind doing it since we can just grow new ones but...isn't that inefficient?"

Ale didn't understand why doing something so barbaric wasn't easier than just growing new ones?

"Oh...regeneration...right. That makes you even more appealing, never showcase the full scope, but for clarity's sake...how much regeneration?" [Billy] asked.

"That isn't required for you to know," [Golem] jumped in before Ale could answer, "Rhapsody experiments with pain and suffering from the process, unlike most high regenerators who can't feel pain, so her regeneration isn't natural from her Core Power."

Wait just a second.

"Normal regeneration nullifies pain?" Ale asked surprised from that, "How do they know what to regenerate then?"

That was important, if one didn't know the damaged area, how could they move the reconstruction of biomass?

"....So it's manual?" [Billy] asked confused, "Oh...right, your shapeshifting is focused, so that means...you aren't as much as regenerating as making new flesh and organs...Yeah, we aren't putting that on her file."

They had a file?

“Well, your body armor is sturdy and flexible enough that no one should notice the damage that manages to punch through, and the material should regenerate itself too, so people will probably think she has invulnerability or something like that. That is close enough to an alternative from high-powered Shapeshifter and Flesh smiths.” [Billy] mumbled aloud this part, “Remember to say that it isn’t regeneration but invulnerability.”

Ale of course nodded, she wasn’t sure why that would make her less appealing to the wrong crowd tho.

“Next...A mimic shapeshifter means a flawless body double, people important like politics love having them. Even if there are more stories about mimics taking the spot of the original than stories with happy endings.” [Billy] added to the list, Ale could actually see this one, it was one of the strategies seeded within the original files after all, “And lastly...A mimic shapeshifter means that those who don’t want to spend time with their family can send the Mimic in their place. Another reason why they never get called out when they get replaced.”

That...seemed weird. Why would people accept the imposter instead of the original?

“Oh right, I saw the movie,” [Big Sister] said nodding, “They get a Mind Core user to replace the personality and some of the memories right? So the Mimic never knows that they are imposter.”

“Exactly, even if it doesn’t really happen like that in the real world.” [Billy] said nodding, “More often than not, the Mimic is the one that hires the Mind Core User and changes the perspective of their family so they accept him as the original. Then from that point they just take in the form permanently.”

Well, Ale wasn't going to do that; she doubted Alexa would...And the same could be said of Alexandra; they just didn't have that kind of time or patience to do such a complicated, or well, not complicated, but overly complicated thing.

It wasn't worth the effort.

"Right, don't disclose that I can do that, and if I do, not show the form we want to keep." Ale said, nodding, "So...how does one get sent to the walls anyway?"

"Empress is sent there because her Core Power is compatible with wall work." [Billy] answered, shrugging, "Others get sent as punishment or as work; depending on how your Core develops, you may qualify, but it will heavily depend on how it manifests as you grow."

Then, turning to [Golem], [Billy] added, "Him, for example, has a power qualified for Wall work; since there he would have materials to continue repairing his body, Golem could probably make a killing there."

"I am not interested in wall work," [Golem] answered, shaking his head, "Doing so would slow the search for a Core User capable of helping me."

"That it would," [Billy] said nodding, "I am still searching, but yeah. Getting too comfortable in that form could make it harder later on even if we find the right Core User combination."

"Rhapsody is also looking to help me," [Golem] pointed out to Ale, "We think her Core can evolve in that direction."

"If she has such a developed Core at this stage yeah, I can imagine. But that would branch her away from shapeshifter to flesh smith...Or something in that direction," [Billy] nodded at the statement, "Think careful if you end up going that way, your first Core Evolution will be important in this aspect."

"What's the deal with that." Ale said annoyed, "I have been hearing about that from everyone, but no one ever clarifies what that means."

Perhaps it was time someone actually explained that?

It had evolution in the name, so perhaps it was important after all.