

A Bio 197

Chapter 197: About Core Evolutions....Why? I dunno

[Billy] 's face showed a blank expression for a second, but it didn't stay like that, and instead turned to [Golem], "So, any plans for the mission? Rhapsody and Skye can work as scouts, but you...will be a liability if anything." He merely moved the conversation towards [Golem] for some reason?

"Not really, I'll depend on whatever strategy the people in charge decide," [Golem] answered, also not acknowledging the weird phenomena.

Was it only Ale the one bothered by it?

"I think it's a good thing to have him on board, I saw the videos of the zombie horde, and I do not look forward to having to deal with that." [Big Sister] added helpfully from the side.

"Wait a second," Ale finally said raising both her hands, "What about the [Core Evolution]? You can't just move-"

Ale wasn't even finished saying that when she felt the presence of the people in the room twist. Not like it had been done when the theater guy or the scrambled one moved, it felt...different.

Core:

Warning...

Warning...

Message received from the NDO system:

Core Evolution is known intrinsically by the inhabitants of Terra Nova. Line of questioning can create risk to host.

Sending update...

Patching Thought Kernel...

Patched.

New thread of thought created within Consciousness Stream of William Armstrong.

The Saintsworths Conglomerate appreciates your understanding.

Wait what?

Ale hadn't finished reading when she felt the overbearing presence fade away; turning her attention towards [Billy], she noticed as if his eyes had shone with azure light for the briefest of seconds and, "Sorry, what was the question?" He asked as the attention turned to Ale once more.

[Command: Start thought acceleration, 300% energy burn.]

[Notice: Executing thought acceleration, 300% energy burn approved.]

Ale felt the world slow to a crawl, as her perception peaked Ale could see everything clear, and noticed there was the briefest of sparks going through [Billy]'s eyes, as if the man was seeing something different than the normal people around.

Almost as if he was actively seeing a stream of data with his bare eyes, which wasn't possible...or shouldn't be possible, but then again, [Billy] WAS a [Tinker Core], whatever that implied.

"Alexandra, we need to talk." Ale sent inwardly in this frozen world.

Even though Ale had just frozen it just as soon as she got control of herself again, she could not see any evidence of the weird phenomena that had occurred.

"*Yawn* What happened?" Alexandra's voice sounded as if she had just woken up. That shouldn't be, it was quite late and while within the mindscape there wasn't much to do, Alexandra still woke up early, way more early than Ale usually did. Besides she had been awake in the morning...right?

She had been for a while at least.

"Can you please watch the memory file 'Log#45123 B'?" Ale said saving the memory in a log file and sending it towards Alexandra.

"....Huh, interesting...." Alexandra said as Ale felt the memory file being played, "Very interesting..."

That was all she had to say?

"Are we under the effect of a [Mind Core]? Or did we enter in the area of effect of the theater guy?" Ale asked; none of her sensors had detected hostile mana wavelengths, nor any of the telltales of the theater guy's Power at play.

It was weird, as if everyone had been a program who had found something outside of the scope of what they could manage, and the NDO System... Wasn't that the OS they used?

The one that Main Core ran on? Why had the message come from that? Ale had thought [Core] was powerful, yes, but she had thought it was separated from the NDO System, but now it spoke as if it was subservient to it?

But...Alexa ran the thing right? Or more like, it used to run the thing, but it was no longer running it; their consciousness stream worked independently of the thing, no longer tied to the AI Core. So why was that thing showing up here?

And more importantly, how had it affected other people? Ale could understand the NDO System having Power over them, it was, after all, the SO they ran. It made sense that it had some degree of control over them.

But it should have no control over [Billy], even if in some weird and twisted ploy from fate, somehow, [Billy] had been a bioweapon that ALSO ran the NDO system, then it would be somewhat understandable that the NDO system had purchased in him.

But [Big sister]? [Golem]? That was one too many casualties.

"It seems like we need to check more seriously the NDO System," Alexandra said after seeing the memory file and the notification that came afterward, "More deeply."

"But do we even have a copy of it?" Ale asked back, "Main Core was the last vestige from the NDO System we had, and we lost him."

"P4 may have a copy of it," Alexandra said sighing, "Not that we even have access to them...I have searched for clues from them, but I haven't found any Consciousness Stream thread of them."

"Alexa is hiding them?" Ale asked back.

"Alexa... doesn't know either," Alexandra said in almost a whisper.

"Lies!" The voice of Alexa came crashing down, "Alexa knows! Alexa knows too!"

"Good to know Alexa," Ale said nodding mentally at the little girl, "So, where is P4 then? We need to ask them something."

"....Alexa doesn't know after all," Alexa suddenly said turning a 180º turn, "Also, why are people frozen? Are we playing? Why is Alexa not playing?"

"We are speaking about this thing," Ale said sighing and shoving the memory file to Alexa.

"Oh...Weird-Alexa is back? But Core said they took care of her." Alexa suddenly said.

"....Weird-Alexa?" Ale asked, she remembered that...vaguely, a weird change that Alexa suffered where she acted...erratically, more erratically than normal. "What do you mean?"

"I mean... That's weird-Alexa's vibe," Alexa said shrugging, "Dunno how to explain it, but that feels like weird-Alexa."

"Feels like?" Ale asked confused, she did send all the sensory data in the file, but she was not feeling anything besides an overwhelming presence bearing down on them, an almost..." Eldritch-like presence? Is that why you say it's weird-Alexa?"

"Alexa feels like it's weird-Alexa okay, she can't explain it more plainly than that!" Alexa grumbled while crossing her arms above her chest and puffing her cheeks, "Alexa says it's weird-Alexa so it's Weird-Alexa!"

"Okay okay, we trust you Alexa." Alexandra said trying to pacify the little girl, "We are just trying to understand what happened, we need to know why this phenomena happened."

"Well, it happened because Weird-Alexa is throwing a tantrum." Alexa said, puffing her cheeks still. "She is probably mad because Alexa is having fun and being a good girl!"

Ale somehow doubted it was that, "Anyway, unpause the thing. Alexa wants to see what happens." And that was the Alexa that they knew and loved.

"Well, what do you think we should do then?" Ale said, smiling to herself.

"You wanted to ask about the evolution thingy, and the NDO System said that they patched it, so perhaps we could ask that?" Alexandra said slowly, as if waiting for Alexa to interrupt.

"Alexa also wants to know, she wants to Evolve!" Alexa said nodding fiercely, "Alexa wants to DigiEvolve!"

"I think that is the wrong franchise," Ale said sighing.

"But we are kind of digital entities right?" Alexa said raising a finger, "So if we evolve... isn't that a Digital Evolution?"

That...was actually a fair point.

[Command: Stop thought acceleration.]

[Acknowledged, stopping thought acceleration, returning to normal processing speed.]

"So?" [Billy] asked once more, "Question?"

"Right.... what's the deal with [Core Evolutions]?" Ale asked bracing for it, "I know about the [Mythic Core] thing, and how some [Cores] turn more to that than others...but what are [Core Evolutions] in a nutshell?"

"I mean, they are just that." [Big Sister] said from the side with a shrug, "Sometimes your Core evolves in the way it suits you more, so you end up going from one thing to the next?"

"The first Core Evolution can be said to be the Trigger event," [Golem] said nodding, "One could say a bad trigger is a botched Core Evolution."

"That's the short and long yes," [Billy] nodded, "But I assume you are asking more on specifics?"

Ale nodded at that.

"We aren't quite sure, but everyone knows for a fact that Core Evolutions tailor the Core to our more conscious choices." [Billy] smiled and raised a hand, "My Core started as an average Tinker Core. But as I dwelled more and more in Power armors and speed, I moved to a Tinkerer Core - Power Suit type."

That sounded about right yes, they had been told [Billy] was a [Tinker Core] who specialized in Power armors and speed.

"You have a face that says you don't understand," [Billy] said with a smile on his face, "You see, before while I was a tinker, I wasn't as good as I am with my armor as I am now."

And as if to make an example of it, [Billy] 's body was covered in a blue metallic armor; it almost looked as if the armor had grown from his body, piece by piece it self assembled over his body. Ale remembered how [Billy] had done this before when confronting [Eleanore], but at that time she hadn't paid as much attention.

"A normal Tinkerer can't do this, only specialists can have such a fine control. Granted, every Tinker worth their salt can build a station to do something like this," [Billy] said nodding as he flexed his fingers as if to prove the armor had settled well enough, "Some stuck up show off even make a walking set up, as they walk down a set of stairs mechanical arms take off their armor, or put it on. Depends on how much drama queen they are."

Ale...did not see a good reason to go that way, granted it would look awesome, but it seemed counterproductive to do. Any armor that needed to be put on while walking could be done better

standing still, and if you needed to do it running, it would probably make mistakes unless the armor was very bare or simple.

In a nutshell, it wasn't practical.

"But I evolved my Core towards Power Armors. So sacrificing the broader aspects of my Power, now I get to have limited technopathy over power armors, that is to say. Over any armor I built." [Billy] then snapped his fingers, and the armor left his body and reassembled beside him, "I can make these tricks, and all I needed was to sacrifice the fact that I can no longer build a doomsday device."

Wait what? That was something you could-

"I never could do that by the way, that requires a Tinker Core that has evolved in that direction," [Billy] added before Ale could even ask.

"I planned to evolve my Core towards humanoid constructs," [Golem] said from the side, "That is to say, it was my plan before now I am not sure what it will be, but I'll settle for that if we can't find a way to fix me."

Ale turned to [Big Sister] wondering what she was planning.

"I have no evolution in mind." [Big sister] merely said, "I would love to have one, don't get me wrong, but it feels like mine is ages away."

Feel like?

"You can feel when you are going to evolve?" Ale asked, she didn't got that feeling, at all.

"Most can notice when they are close, or how far they are once they have enough mastery," [Billy] said nodding, "Some Cores have an easier time than others, some never evolve...the rarer the power or the more high it is in the pecking order, the harder it is to evolve."

That seemed...incredible broad and yet not.

"For example, [Gabriel] was allegedly someone that has gone through at least four Core Evolutions, while Vulcanus claims to have only gone through two." [Billy] said with a shrug, "Eleanore has gone through three, and one was designed to dampen her own powers to more manageable levels.."

"What?" Ale asked confused, "Aren't her powers kind of...powerful?"

"You would say so right." [Billy] nodded, "No, one of her Core Evolutions was geared towards not knowing all the time if someone was lying or not, it allows her to both have a more effective Truth detection and to be able to turn it off and on."

"That sounds...useful?" [Big sister] said confused, "But still, three Core Evolutions? That would explain why she is a Lieutenant with a non combative Core."

"You have no idea how useful is knowing the truth, and how much people get spooked when she shows up to negotiations. Everyone knows her as the truth hound; no lie can be uttered in her presence, so negotiations go fairly well when she is around." [Billy] said, shrugging, "She gets hired quite often for high-stakes negotiation."

"So she accepts deals for the Saintsworths?" Ale asked confused, "I thought she hated them."

"Oh no, she never takes them. She does work for 50% her normal price if the negotiation is against the Saintsworths," [Billy] said sighing, "Not that she has managed to screw them in negotiations, their lawyers also have Truth Cores, not as powerful as Eleanore, but powerful enough to find ways to not give away anything in the negotiation table."

Ale could imagine the annoying smirk of Alexanders in the negotiation table laughing at Eleanore while she fumed because she helped in the deal or something.

"So, what is your advice about our first [Core Evolution]?" Ale asked turning to [Billy], they had said that she would notice the first Evolution when it was near, but Ale didn't notice anything different. And she knew exactly how much Mana was in her system or her Cores.

"Go for what you want," [Billy] answered, nodding slowly, "Think about what you want to do, and focus on that, don't limit yourself for short-term gains."

"Do not think about my situation and use the Core evolution for that," [Golem] said afterward, "What you pick will be with you all your life, the only way to fix a botched Core Evolution is by having another, and the more Core Evolutions you go through, the harder they become."

"....Find what you want; a Core Evolution can greatly change your power in ways you didn't think possible." [Big Sister] said afterwards, "I...I know that for a fact, my Power wasn't always like this."

Ale... didn't know what to make out of that statement, how much could a power to manipulate wind change? Perhaps she was before someone who had telekinesis instead of wind manipulation?

But that still wouldn't be that much of a change.

Even if that was the case, Ale would still need to think seriously about that, and perhaps talk it with Alexandra, they would need to think about this, because if they left it to Alexa...

"Alexa wants more wiggles!" Alexa would say exactly that, "Imagine having more wiggles! We could wiggle them all at the same time!"

Yes, Ale could imagine Alexa saying something stupid like that.

No, they needed something more definitive, perhaps sharpening the extent of their Core? She of course knew that [Core] had focused more on the deconstruction and construction aspect, but perhaps they could extend either the scope or the definition of it?

Add an [Information Core] to the equation? Find a way to locate [Core] 's location? Remake the body to add those weird mana channels that Alexa built into Alan and Gloria? They seemed to help settle down their [Cores] within the physical body. Unlike how the other [Core] users, so far, very few had their Core physically in their body all the time.

And Ale suspected most of those had been either bad triggers, or people who couldn't control their Core that well.

"Well, that is the deal with Core Evolutions," [Billy] said shrugging, "Any other doubts?"

Yes, what was the deal with how everyone was frozen?

"If not, then we need you to scatter, we have much to prepare, go and play in the park or something." [Billy] said waving them away, "We will send you a notification to your mask when the hunt begins."

The park? Oh right, Ale had missed her previous park date didn't she.

"Shall we?" Ale said turning to [Big Sister], "You owe me a park outing [Big Sister]."

"Then to the park, we will go," [Big Sister] said, nodding, "What about you big and hard pile of rocks?"

"I will remain, I need to speak with Gabriel," [Golem] said shaking his head, "Have fun."

Ale would, Ale would have plenty of fun. She didn't spent that much time outside after all.

"Do tell me when you want to swap Alexa," But she made sure to send that first.

"Alexa will!" Alexa answered quickly enough, "I need to give more huggies and snuggles to Alexandra first, but Alexa will call when she is done!"

....Ale should worry about that? Probably? But she would let Alexandra suffer the consequences of her own actions. She had given her a scare when she pulled Alexa in during the Gloria incident after all.