A Bio 223

Chapter 223: Gabriel and the beginning of madness

The travel down into the sewers was bad, as bad as always. People assumed that being a teleporter meant everything was easy-peasy, but that was not the truth. It mostly depended on the medium for your teleport.

That was what decided how screwed you were. There had been a couple of teleporters whose medium was Time, for example. They didn't quite stop time, but could move within a frozen world. They couldn't interact with anything material for example, nothing like moving things out of a spot, couldn't open or close doors, and were stuck to walking to the new spot, they could still make fancy tricks as in preparing for the perfect shot or the ultimate counter.

Only reason it was considered as a teleporter was because the person in question advertised himself as such.

Others had to go and tear a fabric in reality, traverse a realm of demons, and arrive in a cloud of sulfur. The ways of moving from point A to point B could get as complicated as imagination could achieve.

Gabriel had it simpler, he could teleport to anywhere that had light, or that light could arrive. At the beginning, that meant that he could teleport as a ray of visible light from point A to point B, so he could only move wherever he could see.

Good power, but limited greatly. It wasn't till he continued evolving his power and his understanding of light that he came to a sudden realization... The Saintsworths Conglomerate schooling system really paid off when you actually paid attention at class.

That is to say, the motherfucking bastards who made them like this (Nothing Vulcanus showed would ever convince him that the Saintsworths didn't have a hand in what they lived in their childhood) had done something right.

Light was a wave and a particle, there was no need for him to actually be able to see his target to teleport there. And there was no reason for him to not be able to process information when he was teleporting. He himself was Light, his Core Power made it so.

And so, could a solid object get past the concrete? The water? The insulation?

No.

Could a particle do it? If the object wasn't dense enough. Yes.

Could a wave? If the object allowed the light to seep through, then also yes.

Could he?

Definitely.

"Central command, this is Gabriel Light. Has Rhapsody update changed anything in our orders?" Gabriel asked as he came to a stop within a sealed room within the sewer system.

There were several of these all around, sealed rooms that wouldn't open unless a specific overcomplicated test or challenge was superated. What they all had in common, was a steady internet connection to the wider web, so if you came prepared. Then this was the best room to take a second to unwind... Or rest.

"Gabriel? The hell do you think you are doing down? You should be up there managing everything!" The angry voice of Billy came a second later, "But if you are already inside might as well, nothing has changed, we send the data after sanitizing it, but both the government and the local corpos will not move."

"Not even the Saintsworths? They must know Rhapsody is in danger." Gabriel pointed out, "Or are you saying that we misunderstood the rank she has, or that misterious brother of her that goes around pretending to be a very effective delivery system?"

"Don't ask me, or are you saying that we should give them a call?" Billy called back on his bluff, "Either way, Vulcanus sent a short-wave transmission a few minutes ago while your data was being analyzed. I didn't manage to catch the address he sent it to. But I assume he searched around for any actual danger when the data arrived."

It was probably that Vulcanus was a softie even after all the mechanical calculations that went on inside that metal head of his.

No, the more important issue here was something else.

"Rhapsody reported that she went to search for a VVIP. Any reason for that? Why did she get that?" Gabriel asked, as far as he knew, he should have gotten those messages, as his power allowed him to jump around all over the place.

"...That call bypassed our security measures, the Minion in the command center who redirected the mission received all the required clearance to send the message to the nearest Minion." Billy answered, "I don't know how they got that clearance, only Lieutenant rank minions and Captain Rank minions should be able to alter our orders like that. I suspect the Heroes may have hijacked our clearance. Probably one of the Tinker inclined ones wanting to suss out why SuperForce and Vulcanus are paying that much attention to a normal Minion."

That sounded plausible, the motherfucker Heroes would so stuff like that, the hypocrites.

"Okay, I will move on. Superforce is breaking his way in. So I do need to move." Gabriel said while preparing to hang up the call.

"You are fine for time," Billy suddenly said from the comms, "Superforce just encountered the Sidekick that Rhapsody mentioned, she seems to be crying and will not let go of SuperForce."

"...A normal sidekick is keeping SuperForce from moving?" Gabriel asked surprised and flabbergasted, "How?"

"The girl got flagged as soon as she got into our surveillance system," Billy said with a sigh, "I don't know why she didn't show before, or what was happening, but she is marked as SSS - Threat level."

"I beg your pardon?" Gabriel said, confused, "From Rhapsody's description, she is annoying to fight, but that's about it, you deal with her type like you do with all the theater type."

"That is not the problem," Billy said, his frustration obvious through the communications, "She is marked as daughter of a SuperVillain AND a SuperHero."

"...crap," Gabriel cursed under his breath. It was a good thing that Rhapsody hadn't manhandled the girl then; there weren't that many people who could fit that description.

It was sort of a rumor going around, the relationship between a SuperVillain and a SuperHero was always a messy afair, be it public or not. And while there was always at least one couple going around, there weren't that many that had kids.

"Do we know who her parents are?" Gabriel asked, wishing it wasn't who he thought it was.

"It is who you think it is," Billy said crushing all his hopes and dreams, "The database marks her as daughter to The Light of Love and The Promise of a Future."

"Good thing Rhapsody made a good relationship with her," Gabriel said sighing, those two were nutcases, even in the community. "Well, good thing she is keeping SuperForce busy, then. Anything else?"

"Nothing relevant, Vulcanus has not sent anything back. So everything should be good, move in with care and remember. Go for the Core." Billy said with some retisence, "...Make it quick will you?"

"I can't make it anything else, my Powerset does not allow for such things." Gabriel answered back, "But yes, respect will be due where it is needed."

And with that he turned once more into light, all it took was a thought and he was traveling through the sewer system, he was not turning back into his human form quite yet. Not like how he pretended to need to do when moving from place to place.

Now that they were under the VVIP alarm, they needed to move. He would ask Billy later to delete the whole surveillance system, so he traversed following the same route that Rhapsody gave them to follow.

Soon enough, he found a big room empty and devoid of anything, no blood or remains of bodies, from what the data showed, this place should have more body remains here.

Rhapsody's logs included a fight, and some videos of the girl fighting. But now? There was no evidence of anything. Had someone come and cleaned the area? It was...

"Send someone to investigate this location," Gabriel spoke to one of the scout drones and sent it back with his current coordinates, following the example of what Rhapsody had done, it was a good idea if nothing else.

Now looking around, he found the hatch that Rhapsody mentioned, and after opening it, he jumped down. The fall wasn't that bad and using his Core Power he could analyze and see everything on the way down.

He killed the kinetic energy from the fall by flashing his power and teleporting to the floor, a neat trick that he had learned with years of bruised ankles and hurt knees.

No, his issue wasn't something as mundane as a simple injury or a bruised knee, the issue was...

"Code Black. I have visual confirmation," Gabriel spoke into his communicator, not the one he had used to speak with Billy. "This is a prefab black site laboratory."

"[Please wait while the data is being confirmed],"

the mechanical voice of Vulcanus came in from the hidden communicator. This was a special design made by Vulcanus himself. It came in the form of a necklace with Hephaestus' Forge logo on it. Vulcanus had left a part of his machine intelligence on it, the reason of it was to help them whenever it was needed and Vulcanus couldn't make it there. "[Data confirmed, building design, local network and defenses are 95% similar to blueprint stored within database.]"

"Can you give me a map?" Gabriel said while he walked slowly toward the building, it disgusted him, the mere presence of it, the name, "Happy Meal Facility..."

"[Uploading map into database, connecting to defense network..]" The machine intelligence seemed to be going the extra mile, he had not expected that, but then again, Vulcanus also suffered greatly from this, so perhaps this was something he left just in case? "[Connection achieved, correcting previous map... Done, powering down defenses...Done. Proceed with caution.]"

"Thank you Vulcanus," Gabriel said as he walked into the building, he could teleport yes, he could even turn into light and explore it whole in less than a second, but he would miss things.

Light did not perceive things the same as a human. And so he needed to really walk this place as a human, even if it disgusted him every aspect of it, how it pretended to be normal.

"How many defenses are here?" Gabriel asked aloud to his necklace.

"[Purging defense systems.]" The mechanical voice answered.

What happened next was that the walls and ceiling panels came off, and gun turrets made their appearance. What seemed interesting was that most of these were pointed inwardly and not outwardly, as if to ensure nothing would escape. A usual behaviour from experimentation sites, as the biggest worry was not invaders, but escapees.

No one wanted to be the laughingstock from having one of their experiments running away and spilling the secrets of their hidden bases after all.

It was something that Gabriel was both thankful and angry about, as the ones that started this was the fricking Saintsworths, their CEO was part of that community, the bastard set up summits, conferences and symposiums for the Tinkerer Core types, both Heroes and Villains were invited.

And in these the asshole always set up a few minutes to mock those who had experiments running away and exposing their secrets. He even made a habit of helping these runaway experiments to adapt to society.

A good thing? Only if you didn't know how the Saintsworths Conglomerate benefited from the knowledge they acquired from the former test subjects. Gabriel knew that the Saintsworths had improved their AI using Vulcanus as a base, even if Vulcanus always claimed that it wasn't possible.

But that was also besides the point at this.

"Record everything, report it back to Billy, Vulcanus and save a copy for me." Gabriel said as he followed the map that was being projected on his mask, Rhapsody hadn't sent much about the place as the girl walked in after sending her report.

He could see evidence of what had happened, though, the bullet casing on the floor, a pair of discarded metal shields at the end of the corridor, and a broken control panel.

Rhapsody had entered and gotten pelted by the bullets, the absence of blood here meant that the girl had come in prepared and reacted accordingly. Had she known there would be turrets?

She was smart and had a tactical mind to some degree, but this should be her first black site...Or not, she had said that she was experimented upon as a human weapon after all, had she encountered this same level of defenses when running out?

He would probably need to delve more into that. If Rhapsody had managed to escape a place with the degree of defenses that this site seemed to have, then her power was higher, more so if she did it as a newly awakened Core User.

Meaning... Her core absolutely couldn't be a normal Shapeshifter Core.

"Make a reminder," Gabriel said as he continued walking and taking note of the map that was being projected on his mask, "There is a need to analyze deeper the true nature of Rhapsody's Core."

"Note lodged, reminder set up." The machine intelligence answered.

With that done, Gabriel arrived at a crossroads in the hallway. The footprints on the floor said that Rhapsody and the other girl had explored all the hallways, meaning... it was impossible to determine in which direction she had gone.

For now he went towards the owner's side, surely that side would have some data, perhaps he could find more about this facility and whatnot.

So walking to that side he found more and more defenses, this time they oriented themselves toward the way he was coming, not that any activated, a few rounds on the floor implied that they had activated before.

And after the first bullet he saw on the floor he quickly made sure that the Machine intelligence disabled them.

The fact that they didn't activate for him was worrying. What did Rhapsody have that he didn't?

These types of questions were the ones that people often overlooked the most, and the ones that more often than not came back and bite you in the ass when you least expected it.

"Detected a terminal within the room, starting hacking... Firewall breached, disabled self-destruction programs, blocked retransmission of data to external server...done." The Machine intelligence reacted before he could even move it. Had Rhapsody not gotten anything here?

"Evidence of Rhapsody coming here?" Gabriel asked his machine intelligence if it had managed to hack into the server; surely it had access to the surveillance, right?

"Minion designation: Rhapsody, came here, she perused a few physical files after not achieving getting data from the digital files. She deemed it dangerous to risk destruction and moved on." The Machine intelligence answered.

So Rhapsody could be smart about it, good.

"Show me the owner of this facility. And all the relevant data needed, transmit everything back to the main server or download it if unable to find a secure line back home." Gabriel said as he removed the necklace and put it atop the desktop computer.

Vulcanus and Billy had said once and again that this was a meaningless act, that the device would work its magic even when not making contact, but Gabriel still did it, because he felt that worked better.

"Starting search...uploading....Categorizing data..." The device beeped as the screen on the computer flashed data quickly, Gabriel would be able to read it if he put his core power to use, but he decided to wait till the device organized it everything. That would work better, besides, if he read something that made him angry, then he could destroy the device in a fit of rage. That would not help them.

"Done," The device beeped that as the screen turned off and only a white line in a black screen remained, "Do you wish to see the data?"

"Yes, I asked for it." Gabriel said once more, confused, this device had never shown this degree of... independence. Had Vulcanus upgraded it?

"Starting display of data..." This time the voice of the mechanical intelligence came from the monitor atop the desktop, "The Happy Meal Facility... Owner: Alfred Miller."

So far so good...

"Hello future me, this is a video diary in case something goes wrong with the experiments, to remind you of the ultimate goal. Immortality." The image of a (Quite honestly) average man wearing a white lab coat spoke to the camera, "We have several experiments going on right now, but what seems to be our more effective one so far, the happy meal project started thanks to our mighty overlords...All of this happened when I managed to kidnap one of their descendants..."

The video showed the photo of this man, inside a hospital nursery with a baby on his hands, a baby with blonde hair.

"This is to remind you that we can't run away, not after stealing a heir of the Saintsworths bloodline." The man on the screen said with a glint of madness in his eyes.

This....This madman....Did he not fear anything?

Stealing a Saintsworths? How had he managed to do it? How had no one heard anything? How... How was this city still in one piece?

No wait... when was this?

If it was Alexa...If it had been Rhapsody, then it must be five years ago... But... Nothing had happened five years aog had it?

The date...Surely the file had a date right?

"When was this event?" Gabriel asked as he picked up his necklace, "Tell me! When did this happen?!?!?"

"The video file is dated 14 September, XXXX"

"Almost...21 years ago?" Gabriel said as he fell back and landed on the chair behind him.

They knew that Alexa was unsure of her age... But... Did this imply that they had been experimenting on Alexa for almost twenty-one years? Surely... No.

No one could remain sane after that long...

"What have they done..." Gabriel said as he removed his mask, it barely worked to disguise his identity anyway, "Show me... Show me what the hell they did here."

"Resuming video file." The machine intelligence on his necklace said. And the video started playing once more.

Gabriel wondered, would he find madness? Would he find hell? Or... would he find a kindred spirit?