

A Bio 224

Chapter 224: Rhapsody's past

The video started simple enough, a small resume of how this villain had managed to infiltrate the hospital, it was... honestly quite stupid. He merely stated that he was a new worker who was going to HR for his badge, he went on about how he had killed the one that was actually going to get hired and whatnot.

Then once inside some misdirection and a simple virus in a data drive was all it took for him to delete the security footage.

Something like this wouldn't work nowadays of course, the Saintsworths had revamped most of their security and increased the amount of care they provided to their descendants.

But then again, this came mostly in the last decade... If this incident was almost two decades ago...

"Did they increase the security because of this?" Gabriel said aloud as he thought more about it, no one ever thought much when it happened. It was quite obvious that an ancestral clan would care about their kids, so why would anyone think too much of it?

But with this knowledge, it brought it all on a different light, had the bastard of Alexanders found about his sister? And how the Saintsworths didn't do anything? The previous head was one for Spartan education after all, he was the type of man who would throw his own people to the wolves if it meant that they would come stronger.

Of course he never actually went over the line, there was no evidence of him actively making life harder for those under him. But if they fell into a pinch? He would merely stand nearby and observe.

But that didn't matter, not right now, not at this moment.

"There is no evidence of an increase in security thanks to this event within the current database or anything within the current databases available." The necklace answered, Gabriel sighed at the answer, he wished this stupid thing was connected to Vulcanus, then they would get the answer faster.

"Show me the experiments, ignore anything that doesn't affect Rhapsody." Gabriel commanded and pulled his chair closer to the monitor, as if he was at risk of missing information if he didn't pay attention.

"Resuming data stream," the mechanical necklace's voice came from the computer.

"Now, you may be wondering... Who the hell are the Saintsworths and why is using one of them as a sample this important?" The madman in the video said as he paced from side to side shaking his head, "I know, a name isn't as impressive and if you are watching this, you must have lost your memory. The resumed version would be... They are a family with connections and a heritage that can be traced all the way back to the great library of Alexandria, the cradle of knowledge upon Terra Nova."

"So he is a believer of those rumors," Gabriel said, shaking his head, "No evidence to prove them and merely suspicious insinuations from the Saintsworths themselves."

"Some people may say these are rumors with no proof, and those are idiots. There is no way the Saintsworths climbed to the spot they are in only with luck and meritocracy." The man on the video

shook his head as if he speaking to a dumb person, "No, the might of them comes from something more innately tied to them, people called it [Fate], but I don't trust something as vague as that, instead I decided to attribute it to something that can be quantifiable, that is to say... Their genes, their bloodline, what is hidden within their genetic code."

The monitor started showing all types of data, lab results, studies done to other people, and the studies done to what was marked as P4.

"... The bastard only experimented on Rhapsody?" Gabriel grumbled as the data started to flash by the screen.

"There is data that the experiments were done to a great testing pool." The necklace spoke as other test results started showing, from P0 to P9. From M0 to M9.

"I get it, I get it." Gabriel said, shaking his hand in front of the device, "Carry on, what more do you have here?"

"As you can see I have dedicated a good chunk of my life to this, and in turn you have dedicated a good chunk to this," The madman spoke nodding to the camera, "What I learn is that... The Saintsworths have all the correct genetic markers to be called the true Kings and Queens of Zaanam. Their bodies don't get sick as easily as others, they don't tire as easily, they don't turn overweight or famelic as easily... And I have the proof to show for this statement."

Then there were photographs of a blonde teenager with tests and a weight measurement as well as a height measurement, the girl in the photos... didn't quite look as Rhapsody did whenever she was moving on her teenage form, but it wasn't that far away from it.

"I starved her for a week and even like that, she still looked as fresh as a model, and could probably earn a contract with a model agency." Gabriel wasn't sure if he would go as far as to claim that too, "Then as a way to test how far this would go. I forced her to eat three times the recommended food intake."

And sure enough, a video of the blonde girl crying and pleading came next, a video where this same madman ignored her cry for help and shoved a tube into her mouth and force-fed her a green paste... Was that...?

"For safety reasons we started using Nutrient paste, a personal formula of course. Twice the calory intake needed, and we can tweek the fat amount too." The man seemed quite proud at his mention of what was obviously torture, "And once we confirmed that, we started to wonder... What was the limit of what this weird attribute of the Saintsworths could affect? Thanks to the advent of the Core Powers we have found that there are things that are affected not from logic and physics, but from a more complex set of rules that we don't quite understand yet."

No...

"So we did the logical thing," The madman said as his smile turned more derranged and derranged by the second. "We removed her arms and replaced them with mechanical ones wired to her brain, honestly, it is quite the advancement in artificial prosthetics, I could even run for the Nobel Prize with this research if I say so myself."

"Madness... complete madness..." Gabriel couldn't help but say so as he stood and took a few steps backwards, these experiments... they were the same ones that they made Vulcanus go through, or well, the idea behind them it was the same. How much of a human needed to remain for a Core to manifest?

In this case however, the experiment was how much of Rhapsody needed to remain for this alleged Bloodline power to take effect. It was utter madness.

"The results were... inconclusive. Test Subject P4 seemed to adapt faster to the prosthesis we gave her, compared to other P-series subjects who seemed to adapt more slowly. It was around this time that we wound up learning that there was another laboratory that was also using our nomenclature... Only those seemed more focused on weapons than the betterment of humanity." The madman said shaking his head, as if his experiments would serve such thing, "We exchanged some test subjects with them. Of course I didn't give them P4, I did give them P9 and advertised it as a human weapon. It was something like that, among the P series this one was the second one in power. It was also the second one in Saintsworths bloodline too."

The madman kidnapped a second Saintsworths?!?!?!?

"Why? Simple, all the pieces P4 gave us got grafted into P9. It had the arms, the legs, a kidney, part of the intestines one lung and some of her skin." The video showed the image of a weird patchwork woman, it was... closer to what one would see in a sci-fi movie of monsters if Gabriel was honest, and besides it, it was the photo of a blonde young woman... Or what remained of it.

The eyes were devoid of light, and tears flowed from them, the eyes of a young woman in absolute despair. Now, it looked closer to what the third and last form Rhapsody had shown them.

"At this point the utility of this test subject was coming close to an end, honestly... We thought about using it to get new test subjects..."

"THE BASTARDS!" Gabriel screamed as his fist came crashing down and almost broke the desktop; it was a testament to his self-control that he hadn't blasted the goddamned thing into pieces already.

"But the uterus and ovaries were among the first things we removed to see if they were special, a bad move on our part, I admit. We could have gotten a steady stream of high-quality test subjects. But we can't dwell in the errors of the past." The madman seemed actually sad of this. He was not aware of how close he had come from his demise. "Also there has been an upstart that has set up shop nearby, a Machine Core that claims all life is important. A laughable effort, but my experiments seems to be at risk of exposure so I will refrain from doing more of this type, and you should too."

Vulcanus?

"When was this?" Gabriel asked the necklace, and the date was highlighted a second after, it was... roughly when they started making a name for themselves, just when they went around destroying the hideouts of villains who went into human experimentation.

"They came close to this base so I had to destroy one of our entries, so now we only have one entry and one exit. Take that into consideration," The madman said on the video, "As for samples... Well, we have enough, especially if this next experiment is viable."

The video started to move forward. Gabriel saw as more and more parts of what made the blonde woman human started to be carved away. The thighs got removed, and instead, a pair of tank treads were installed. Her abdomen was soon replaced by a metal box, her chest, her arms...

Slowly all that made her human was being taken away, till they finally removed her head.

"We didn't think it would ever work, all the other test subjects whose heads were removed turned mad, self-destroyed, or straight-up didn't wake up again." The madman said with a smile on his face as he walked beside a machine, which resembled a mechanical crab with no distinctive features, "State your designation."

No... It couldn't be...

"[Test Subject P4.]" The... thing spoke in a mechanical voice, he too had heard that voice before, sometimes when Rhapsody spoke of certain concepts she defaulted to that mechanical emotionless voice, he also had heard it from the recordings when Eleanore spoke to the entity that claimed to be Main Core.

"No one will ever suspect us, and worse comes to worst... We didn't know." The madman said nodding, "At least something came out from this, our test into immortality has proven that the human form can be discarded... You just need the right mindset to survive."

"You all will be immortal all right, I will make sure every piece of shit that wants to follow this type of research will think about you and then decide to better blow their own brains out!" Gabriel said as he glared at the monitor, "Tell me, there is something relevant here or can I blow this place to kingdom come?"

"There is some information about what happened to Minion Designation Rhapsody before she managed to run away." The necklace said and the video moved forward once more.

"We did it!" The image of the madman came into view once more, "We have triggered a Core event! I had to subcontract a dubious paramilitary force, but we managed to trigger a Core!"

The image shifted to one of a man in a body armor fighting Rhapsody on her mechanical form, the man in the video seemed to discharge a few lightning bolts whenever he was near Rhapsody, but Gabriel was only able of seeing it because of his own augmented senses. The armor also seemed familiar enough.

"Bring up the data of The Delivery Guy," Gabriel said, and a photo of the new vigilante/hero/Villain came into his heads-up display. The body armor was, similar enough that he could see some pieces matched, was it the same guy?

Surely it wasn't. If this person was a Saintsworths he should be able to storm this place... Unless... There was something he wasn't seeing.

"The Core seems to emulate and has all the hallmarks of a normal shapeshifter Core, but something seems to be off about it." The madman continued speaking as if the musings of Gabriel didn't affect him, but then again, it was a recording, there was no reason why it would stop only for him. "And soon I found why, you see. P4 was not merely shifting or changing into what we gave her, she took the parts and objects for herself, it didn't matter if their biological make was altered or if something artificial was seeded in them. P4 would emulate it as it was at the moment she took in the object, and that is not something that a normal shapeshifter can do."

The same suspicion he had?

"P4 isn't a normal Core user, no Saintsworths could ever be normal after all." Then there was data on mythological creatures, entities that turned into other people, entities that stole other people's identities... And finally, entities that could mimic someone else, "I suspect P4 is actually a Doppelganger Core user, a creature of myth who can fully replace someone else, it matters not if they have artificial parts or not. It matters not who they are, what they are or where they are. A sample is all she needs to take their form... And if my suspicions are correct, even that will not be needed as her Core continues and evolves further."

That... explained many inconsistencies with what Rhapsody was doing. And explained what kind of creature she was tied to, the only question was... Did she awaken to this Core because her own identity had been stripped of her?

And... When did she awoke?

"DAMNED HELLS!!" The video continued, "P4 escaped, we aren't sure how she did it, how much of her consciousness returned or why, but the AI Core we inserted into her brain has stopped sending data our way, P4 left a carcass to fool us and now I suspect she is at large. We aren't sure if she used her own Core to interfere with the AI Core or if there was external help, but what we know for sure is that she is at large... And if the Saintsworths find out what we did... We are screwd, so if you lost your memories and are recovering right now. Lose them again, destroy these tapes, and run to the mountains."

That was the last video file that was there.

"End of recoverable data," The necklace stated as Gabriel stood and blasted the device to kingdom come, no one could ever find out about this. It was bad enough when someone discovered the nature of another person's Core.

But this? This fits too well.

"Can you find where Rhapsody is at the moment?" Gabriel asked, he still wasn't sure if he should even tell Rhapsody about her past. Had she actually stolen her own identity? What was the real identity of Rhapsody? The happy-go-lucky girl that she acted as a child?

The girl who craved recognition as a teenager?

The young woman who went clubbing with Sylph?

"Found sensors active within the facility... patching data..." The necklace said as Gabriel put on his mask once again, he had access to his HUD even without it, but it was a thing about feelings more than anything, "Found VVIP signal, patching to highest Minion..."

And then he got it, the signal for rescue from the VVIP that Rhapsody had been following. And it was within the facility, in an isolated area that had no connection to the normal layout.

Great, now he had to babysit while also thinking about what to do with Rhapsody and this new data... A new data that Vulcanus would have access soon enough...

"Give me the coordinates," Gabriel grumbled, perhaps he would need to go to Billy before speaking with Vulcanus. He could already imagine what Vulcanus would say about this.

"Transmitting coordinates," But for now, for now he had easier things to deal with. Like a pair of brats that had managed to sneak into a very dangerous supervillain base.