

A Bio 52

Chapter 52: Interlude – Even CEO’s from evil corporations can have nightmares!

When he opened his eyes, he found himself in a wasteland, the ruins of buildings lying around him. As always, he found himself in the middle of nowhere; looking up, he could see no blue sky or stars. All that could be found at his feet were the remnants of a civilization, rubble from skyscrapers, and little else.

Walking amidst this wasteland, he soon found a city—the same city that had haunted him during these nightmares. He wasn’t sure why he kept having these dreams or why they were always the same. What he found in this was, like always, his clan's emblem.

The golden eagle that held a scroll in its talons. The emblem that represented the Saintsworths. Those who strived to better the world. “Here lays the last capital of Terra Invicta Aq-...” He read the words scribbled with spray paint on the sign.

The city's name was erased, but he could imagine what it had been. What he couldn’t get out of his head was the fact that the name was wrong. Their planet wasn’t called Terra Invicta, but Terra Nova. And...They didn’t have a capital whose name started with the letters Aq.

Of course, he had a personal project for a mega city and had been toying with names, but he hadn’t chosen one.

“*ROAR*” A sudden roar made the ground tremble under his feet.

“I hate this part. Couldn’t they wake me up normally?” Said the blonde man as he looked at the sky.

The sky was covered in dark clouds that prevented him from seeing the star night, or the blue sky. But that didn't matter to the creature that roared; from within the clouds, a massive creature roared as it descended in a dive. It had two mighty legs on its lower body and two claws on its upper body.

At his back were two leathery wings that seemed almost three times its size. Its back seemed to be covered in spikes and ended in a mighty tail. But that wasn't the significant bit, no sir. It was the head the problem.

A mouth full of vicious fangs, a pair of snake-like eyes that shone in yellow light, and a head covered in horns that seemed to make it look like the creature had a crown. It was an interesting specimen, and while its body was silver-like, he noticed how its scales seemed to shine in yellow-blueish light, as if electricity was coursing through its body.

Now, many people could see this creature and think, "Oh look, a dragon run away!" but the man who stood there was thinking differently.

"Can it, you overgrown lizard!" He shouted at the creature that was diving with his maw open, "I swear to god that if I could, I would fricking mount your head in my reception!"

The first time, he had screamed and tried to run.

The second time, he had only run, trying to find shelter.

The third time, he had tried to fight back with stones and sticks.

The fourth time? He had just stood there waiting. And he did the same in each iteration afterward. He had noticed that the creature seemed to always know where he was, and it only showed when he was about to wake up.

It was as if this dragon could perceive him either only when he was about to leave this dream or perhaps wanted him to find something within this dream.

“ROAR!

”

“Yeah, yeah, I heard you the first time. I swear you remember me of my first girlfriend...” the man said, sighing while looking at his watch. It read...gibberish, another clue confirming this was indeed a dream.

“Alex.....ders....Sir?.....”There it was, the voice of his assistant. He could feel someone prodding at his arm.

Just in time, the maw of the creature was almost upon him.

“Here is a gift,” The blonde man said as his hair shone in yellow light, “Hope you enjoy it~.”

Before fully waking up, he channeled his Core Power through his body, making himself discharge electricity as vigorously as possible. Now...would this affect his dreams? Or reality? It could be a good experiment if nothing else.

“Sir? Alexanders? The report....” The first thing he heard as he was waking up was the voice of his assistant. A shy woman who had been sent his way. Probably to try and gauge his tastes again.

“Kyaa!” The second thing was the scream of the same assistant as she yelped and almost dropped a folder.

Opening his eyes, he found some static charge had left his body, not as much as he had tried to channel in his dream, so either his power hadn't fully manifested...or he truly had given a taste of a taser discharge to that stupid lizard.

“Oh, sorry about that. I'm still getting the hang of these powers.” Alexanders said as he stretched and refrained himself from uttering any vocal component as he felt relief course his body as his muscles stretched. The last time he allowed himself to vocalize his relief...People had looked weirdly at him for the sound he made, what was so wrong about saying 'Nyaa' when stretching?

Either way, these powers were interesting. They allowed him to manipulate electricity and electromagnetic fields. Since his powers had awoken in the metaphysical category, he should have some learning curve, a very steep one.

And yet...he could use them quite easily. Almost as if he had always had them, of course. He had needed to train (in secret) to gauge the amount of power he could discharge in one go and check how much he could stockpile electric charges.

"It's okay, Alexanders, Sir." With a strained smile, the woman said, "Here are the reports you asked...sir."

Tch, had he scared her that bad? Of course, he felt bad for it; she wasn't his type, but still, he knew how hard it was to work for him. Not that he would change his bad habits, but he knew how he was.

"Thank you...Denisse, was it?" He wasn't quite sure if she was or not Denisse, but she had a Denisse face.

"It's Rosa, sir. Denisse was my trainer." The woman answered back.

Well, she had a Denisse face, "I see...Now, let's see how my toys are doing this week." The reports were mostly of how the multiple P-series project had been done the last week.

"P1-P3 are doing well across the board. They are hitting the same milestones in all the facilities they are testing. P2D shows the most promise of them all." Rosa said as she brought the information on her notepad.

P2D..."Is that the Delaware one? That is interesting. I didn't think those guys had it in them." Alexanders said, the P2 series was focused more on high-caliber weaponry. It was hard to test it since their testing chambers needed more reinforcement. "How did P4 deal with it?"

“That facility P4 has developed a subterranean strategy, so it just...dug under P4D and...” Rosa said with a grimace.

“Hah! Of course, it did that. The Delaware boys must be annoyed at P4...But a mole, huh, I did not see that one coming. Might need to go there later...” Alexanders laughed as he found pictures of a P2 model upturned and the image of a centipede atop a pit trying to pry the plates away.

“Sir?” Rosa said in a trembling tone, “Why is...P4 so different? Most models of the P1-P9 variants are the same across the country. Even the pure infiltration one P9 always develops the same no matter when or where we turn it on. But P4 always is different no matter what they do.”

Heh, she was also asking that?

Of course, they all wondered that, at least those who knew what he was doing with these experiments nationwide. Multiple facilities were doing precisely the same experiment on the same settings, getting the same results...with the exception of P4. That one always acted differently.

“P4 is the template. In all honesty, it should be more of P0 since it is the original one. It was the first one to use the R4 substance to create an artificial AI Core.” Alexanders answered, really. It was a crime what they had done with the original version of P4.

He found the original project shelved in a derelict server: the idea of making an AI Core using the remnants of a Core from dead Core Users. And they had thrown it away? Just because they didn't want to experiment on what were basically human remains?

Really?

“What is...The R4 substance, sir?” Rosa asked as he continued reading the notes, arriving at the end to something...troubling.

“I can tell you, of course, if you explain to me what this note at the end about a P4-B is,” Alexanders said, fishing a photo from the folder. On it was the image of one of the lab workers sitting in P4’s den with a bucket at the side and a broken AI Core dangling from his neck.

“Oh that...The head of this laboratory reported an incident. It seems test subject P4-B got the original P4 subject killed, so they sent P4-B as a litmus test to check if P4 had perished or not.” Rosa said while reading the same notes he had just read.

That was good and all, but that hadn’t been what got him worried. No, that was just...Impossible. He had programmed most of the original system on all the P-series subjects. Granted, his memories of what he put in the NDO System weren’t the best. The base OS was ... weird. But the programs that run it were his original works.

He would get a notification each time a P4 died.

Alexanders booted up his PC; sure enough, he hadn’t received any notification from any terminated P4 test subject. All four current P4 subjects had returned telemetry... No.

“Wait just one second...was the dead P4 the crab one? Or which one it was?” Alexanders said as he checked the folder once more; it didn’t report which one it was.

“Yes, sir, it is indeed the crab one. The one you fought recently.” Rosa answered while fiddling on her notepad, “The centipede one is still operational, the fish variant still refuses to evolve into a land-based creature...The harpy variant seems to be content with cooperating with the scientist, and they are asking for an outdoor testing.”

Well, wasn’t that interesting? He had thought that the Harpy variant would fulfill the hidden checkmarks, but the crab seemed to have done it.

“sir?” Rosa asked, confused, “What....what is the problem?”

What? Alexanders turned to look at the screen on his PC. The reflection showed him smiling. Was that the reason Rosa was scared? His smile? Well, that was quite rude.

“Inform all the laboratories that the P4 initiative is terminated. Any surviving P4 sample will be considered done. If they want to continue testing them they will get assigned a new designation, let’s see...” Alexander said as he brought the folders of the remaining P4 samples. “Centipedes will be Subject P27, Fish will be Subject P55 and the harpy will be Subject P69.”

“Sir?” Rosa asked as he giggled to himself and gave the needed orders from his PC. The ND system had reported that one of the P4 had achieved its mission and promptly cut the connection to the main server.

And since he could still get telemetry from the other three samples...Yeah, that lovely crab had achieved its mission.

“Nothing, inform John that he can let go of his intern or keep him as a new subject. But he will not be a P4-B...Or I guess he can be if they want it? Actually, give them a raise of money and tell them to do whatever they want.” Alexanders was, if nothing else, someone who would give raises when needed.

“Sure sir, do you need something else?” Rosa asked while taking notes, she was still looking at him weirdly.

“Cancel all my appointments for the day, I need to find a crab,” Alexanders said, he now needed to find that stupid crab and find out what the mission from the ND0 system was. He knew the thing was important.

He had made the thing, something that was way ahead of what technology should be able to do. It was the reason he had started the research into Core Powers; he had suspected that he was a Tinker after the original ND system had been made.

His crazed state when making the original P-series subjects was proof of that. Replicating them had been hard, too. They needed to harvest Cores from dead Villains, and those needed scrubbing lest they end as P9.

Of course, those had their uses. It was interesting seeing how those P-series subjects always developed some degree of a female body even though the owner of that Core was male. And a buff male at that. Was it Titan? Titan, something, was the name of the villain in question. Some macho villain had been killed by a vigilante after he tried to attack a mall.

But no, now he needed to find a shapeshifting crab in a city full of Core Users...At the start of the season where, all the big-name villains started going nuts by trying to one-up everyone else.

Easy.

“What?” Alexanders wasn’t quite sure what to think at the moment. So he paused the camera recordings of the day that P4 had been terminated.

First, he checked the security cameras, and sure enough, P4 had tried to...do something. It had walked to a wall and shoved its claw into it, then, when called on it, it wanted to remove it by moving it within that hole. It seemed as if the claw had gotten stuck there.

The reports from maintenance said that the claw had latched into some security measure that was designed to prevent the turrets from moving if they had some loose cables. The claw had gotten stuck in those and, in turn, had prevented it from retrieving its claw.

The fact that said spot was half a meter away from a ventilation shaft was a mere coincidence. Right. The detail that said claw was missing around 40-70 kilograms of mass was also a coincidence.

And the more important detail that this claw had an empty spot where something could be hidden was also something that wasn’t important.

“...I may need to fire some people...” Alexanders sighed as the recording was unpaused once more.

On it, he could see P4 try to rush towards its charging spot, the gunfire hitting it all over the body. That made Alexanders stop it and think about it, rewinding it again. He started from the beginning.

“...The guns are trying to hit the claw...” Alexanders said as sure enough the gunfire was focused on its claw, and P4 was trying to shield the claw. Then, when it stopped trashing with its claw, P4 dislodged the claw and started rushing away.

It was at that moment when the guns turned from firing at the claw and to P4.

“Either the stupid crab was trying to escape using the claw as a delivery system and decided to cut its losses...or it managed to run away and deceive our tracking mechanisms...” Alexanders mumbled as he rewound the video and watched it all again from the start. “But...we didn’t get any breach alarms that day. I was in that facility that day.”

He remembered it since he had gone that day since the next day they would get visited by one of their sponsor’s schools. So, he needed to get his stress released sooner rather than later. They would have plenty of kids running around, so he couldn’t go about fighting P4 with them around...

The small brats could get into one of the observation docks if they didn’t pay attention, kids could hide in small places and...

“How heavy is a kid?” Alexanders said aloud while prompting his PC about that, “...40 kilograms on average?”

He turned to his notes about P4's event. The claw was missing around that mass.

“Give me the video logs and tracking of every kid that came this day.” Alexanders said to his AI assistant. A program made from the discoveries made brought the P-series test subjects.

Sure enough, he got the data he wanted and a video of all the kids. Isolating each one and tracking them was harder. It took him almost all day long, but soon enough, he was confident enough: “Not a single one of them got killed and replaced, good...That would be so much bad PR.” But he was not close to finding P4.

Except...“Who are you?” Among the visitors, there were always a few unregistered ones, either brought by the teachers or visitors who sneaked in.

What he found was a little girl with blonde hair who claimed to be called Alexandra. She had joined the tour at some point, and no matter what he tried, he couldn't find where the girl had shown up. At best, he could find her hidden in one of the observation rooms near P4's den.

While all the P4 subjects had some degree of shapeshifting skills, they needed the right samples to perform such an advanced transformation. Granted, P4 had some basic designs of the human body, but it shouldn't have been able to pull that kind of transformation.

Such was the example of P9. It had a full blueprint of the male body and some of the female body. And yet, he never managed to pull off a full-body transformation; it always ended as some type of horror movie zombie.

“Prepare an investigation. The target is called Alexandra, no last name.” Alexanders said as he eyed the image of the little girl. He would need to pay more attention to the news about core users. If P4 wanted to pass as a Core User, he would need to check on new ShapeShifters. Perhaps this Alexandra would try to pass as a cat girl?

That intern who became P4-B had attempted to create one, right? Perhaps P4 would become one. That would be quite a funny turn of events.