

A Bio 69

Chapter 69: After dinner with Sam

“So, Cores...” Sam said while taking another (Honestly, too fast to appreciate) bite from his [Chips]; Alexa liked how the red sauce he was using seemed to look as if he was [Feasting] in the remains of a [Prey].
“Where to being with....”

Alexa wasn't quite sure how much [Research] he was even able to do here. His [Core Power] didn't seem that good for a [Research] type unless he also had a way to [Deconstruct] and [Analyze] what he [ate] like Alexa.

Evidence suggested that [Humans] didn't have this [Power] as a base as far as she knew; at the very least, she hadn't seen anyone else do it like her.

“What do you want to know first?” Sam asked instead, “What do you think would be the easiest way to shore up your knowledge and compare it against what I know.”

Well, that was easy, wasn't it?

“What are the [Cores], how are they made, and what catalyzes their formation,” Alexa said.

She...knew that she had more than one [Core], she had [Main Core] who used to serve as her [Home] and [Storage] for her [Consciousness Stream], then she got another [Core]. One she hadn't been able to analyze or really find. This one was what she suspected had helped her not only escape the [Den], but also what allowed her [Consciousness Stream] to move between [Main Core], her [Brain] and possibly this new [Core].

“Well, you ask the big ones, huh...” Sam smiled. “Good, at least this means you aren’t dumb.”

Then, searching within his [Lab Coat], he produced a [Notepad] and a [Pen]. He started drawing something on it, and when he seemed to be halfway done, he showed it to Alexa.

“This square here represents a normal human.” Sure enough, there was a square on the white page. “When a certain set of conditions are fulfilled, what you called Mana Wave starts bombarding the body, if the subject manages to survive and acclimate to these. They get a Core. With all the fancy powers you see on TV... Or if they are unlucky, they get one of what the populace call Beast or Insect Cers.”

“That is?” Alexa asked, wasn’t that answer too simplistic?

“That is for the Core Formation and Core Catalysts. We don’t know what set of rules apply or how to funnel that energy that creates the Cores; there are plenty of names for them if you search around: Prana, Od, Ether, Ki, Chakra, Qi, Maryoku, Curse Energy, Divine Power.” Sam said, writing some of those at the side of the square, “The big boss from the Saintsworths called it Mana; never quite elaborated on why, but that is the most popular name. To be honest I am more inclined to either Od or LifeForce, but who I am to complain.”

Main Core also called it [Mana Waves]. Was this why? Had it been seeded into her [System] with all the other information she had received for free?

“And the [Core Powers]? How are they decided then?” Alexa asked. She had the versions from [Frank The Betle] and the [Corpos], and she also had the version from [Haephestus’ Forge], but Sam had said he worked for the [Saintsworths], so maybe they would have a different version, too?

“That one is more complex. We...never actually got a recorded Core Foundation, or Core creation, or Core catalyst. However, you want to call it. We know Core Users use a special type of energy to achieve the feats they do.” Sam ripped that page and gave it to Alexa; she would seek a way to preserve it for posterity. “We know their powers are divided into some subtypes; roughly, there are...”

And then he started writing on a new page:

-Body Modifications: Shapeshifters, Body Shifters, Flesh shapers and Body Augmentations.

“These are people who can modify their body on the run, but will always return to a base form, most shapeshifters can’t keep an alternative form for example.” Sam said, pointing at her, “While others seem to be tied to what they think as themselves, you, for example, seem to have divided your psyche in some way to increase your versatility, dangerous, but it seems to have paid off.”

...Did he think that Alexa had more leeway because of the perceived division they kept speaking about that they thought she had done?

“Others only change determined parts of their body, like someone who can turn their arms into sharpened blades, people who turn their legs into springs so they can jump farther away, those that stretch their limbs or body as if they were made of gum. And of course, the most common one.” Sam continued writing and doodling some examples of those types of things. [Humans] came with the most [Weird] ideas when it was about modifying their body, Alexa wasn’t even sure how turning bone and muscle into a [Spring] design would even allow what Sam seemed to imply they did, “Those that increase their muscle mass to get superhuman strength.”

“Those....[Blueprints] shouldn’t work.” Alexa said as she read the multiple examples Sam had written, “The bones aren’t flexible enough to work as a [Spring], a [Human Body] doesn’t hold enough [Mass] to turn into a giant hand or to stretch as far as this [Blueprint] says...This... This shouldn’t work.”

Unless these [Humans] also had access to a [Storage] type of [Core Power] as she did, but she got the impression that hers was related to what her [Core] power did, just like how she couldn’t find her [Core] and it was probably stored in the same place that her [Storage] seemed to keep her stuff.

“Exactly!” Sam said, pointing at her, “Most people just take it for granted and say that Core Powers work that way, but at least the examples I was able to speak with all said the same. ‘We don’t know how it works, just that it does’ and it annoyed me so much.”

Alexa nodded at that, she also hated bad [Data] or incomplete [Data].

“As far as I could decipher, their Core used that weird energy to interact with their mass and somehow bend a few laws of physics to make it work. They paid for those bent laws, be it in an accelerated metabolism that required more food or by getting tired faster, their body also never returned to normal. For example, the guy that could stretch as if he was made of gum, we couldn’t measure his brain activity since his skin no longer conducted electricity. While he couldn’t get hurt as easily with kinetic energy, he was extremely susceptible to cutting wounds and fire.” Sam nodded with glee in his eyes, “So you see, these Core Powers, while they provide weird powers and ways to deceive the laws of physics, they aren’t foolproof. And while there can be two people that do the same, their way of doing it isn’t the same. You, for example, are probably the first Molecular Shifter ever.”

He said that again, how did he even notice that she was shape-shifting using a molecular approach?

“I don’t know how I do it, I just [do it],” Alexa said, mimicking the example he had used before.

“Hah! Good joke,” Sam laughed, “But seriously, no shapeshifter can make a table mantle, chairs, and a table as you did; if you want to keep this secret, limit what you modify to things you are touching and try to make them decay when you aren’t touching them anymore.”

...Like how her nanites decomposed? She had changed how her [Nanites] created stuff because she didn’t want to expose herself to things turning to dust when she was separated from them....

“Anyway, that is the first type of Core Powers. Let's move on to the next.” Sam said, passing her the new notes, so Alexa dutifully took them and placed the pieces of paper with the others.

Sam started writing the next words on his [Notepad].

-Body Alterations: Beast-like transformation, Insect-like transformation.

“The so-called Beast Cores and Insect Cores, we can also include Bird Cores, Fish Cores, and Anything you can name Cores.” Sam shrugged, “They are easier to identify, you get transformed into an animal and keep some degree of freedom, be it total or partial, there are people who can repress the animalistic traits and there are people who look like they can repress the animalistic traits...care to guess which one I am?”

Alexa was nodding till Sam said that last part.

“You... are pretending to repress the animalistic traits.” Alexa said slowly, “Your upper body only looks [Human] from afar, but there is no way that it is. The [Spider] half should have a different set of [Blood] and [Organs] not suitable for a [Human].”

And that was the thing, Alexa didn’t have his [Blueprint]. Still, just the fact that he could survive with his lower body like that meant that he had a series of specialized organs that allowed the interaction between two different sets of organs. Or his whole upper body had been remodeled to allow the insect anatomy of his lower body to mesh with his upper body.

“Correct.” Sam smiled while his lower fangs seemed to open and close as if to make the sound of amusement, “I haven’t been able to check my upper body, mostly because my lower half has turned quite menacing and the amount of food I have to eat daily is becoming quite prohibitive to sustain away from a hunting ground such as this. But last time I was able to take a CT Scan, my upper body was changing to accommodate a more...exotic physiology.”

And wasn’t that interesting?

Alexa wanted to dissect Sam and explore every nook and cranny to discover how to make such an impossibly large [Insect] form with only biological components. She wanted to [Know] so as to be a step closer to the return of her glorious [CRAB] form...

Or perhaps...she could also be an [Arachne]? She would get to have the lower form of her [CRAB] while keeping the upper form of her Alexa form?

That way she could continue enjoying the joys of [Mango] and [Beer] while also having the [Might] of [THE CRAB]!

Yes. She could attempt to do that.

“So most of the other Animalistic Core Users must have changed their physiology to some degree. You, as a Molecular Shifter, may be able to piece that together. I have some documents with autopsies done on dead Beast Core Users you may be interested in. We can go about them later.” Sam said, passing her the notes he had written while they spoke. And now, onto the next set...”

Alexa really liked his [Handwriting]; it was neat, and the paper seemed to keep some of his [Scent]. She liked very much this [Scent], and she would see about reproducing it later.

But Alexa didn't have time to check on this as Sam was already writing.

-Metaphysical Powers: Manipulation of forces of nature.

Only that had been written on the new piece of paper.

“What do you think these are?” Sam asked her with great interest in his voice.

Was this a trick question?

“[Core Powers] that don’t fit in the other two categories?” Alexa answered as such, she wasn’t quite sure what else to say.

To begin with, what even qualified as [Metaphysical].

“Heh, clever girl.” Sam nodded at her, Alexa felt something akin to her [Stomach] wanting to fly out of her body. “Yes, these are the kind of bullshit power that can’t be explained with normal physics.”

Sam then started writing some [Names] on his notepad, he then turned it around and showed it to Alexa.

“[SuperForce], [Scorcher], [Vulcanus]....” The list went on to name others that Alexa didn’t know, “Are these... [Metaphysical Core Users]?”

Alexa understood why [SuperForce] and [Scorcher] were on that list, but why [Vulcanus]? As far as she knew, his was a [Core Power] that changed the body, shouldn’t he be in that category?

“Yes, they have powers that shouldn’t work with a normal human physiognomy, creating energy barriers, expelling fire from their body, or, as your last example, Vulcanus. The power to change his body to that of a machine, there is no way he could work as a Human anymore, and yet he has been known to show human emotions.” Sam shook his head, “No machine should be able to display that degree of emotions, any machine that can do such a thing is no longer a machine, but a new species, and yet. Vulcanus shouldn’t be that since he is clearly Human, or at least pretends to be anyway.”

... Alexa was conflicted by that statement. She...wasn’t quite sure how to refer to herself. “What is [Species], how do we define what [Race] someone is?” Alexa, in turn, asked.

“Philosophy now?” Sam said, turning to her, “Well, for one, I think a Human should be someone with both a Human body and a Human mind.”

....wasn't that a too simplistic way to see the world?

“I know, but as my old boss would say, simple is better. If it moves like a duck, eats like a duck, has a duck body and a duck thoughts. What is it?” Sam asked her, wasn't he describing this animal called [Duck]?

“A duck?” Alexa answered confused.

“Wrong, that is Subject D4, a variation of some ultra-secret project from the Saintsworths...or so they say.” Sam smiled while answering, “You see, they were trying. The big boss wanted to prove something, and so he made some series of test subjects in the form of artificial animals with scanned brains digitalized and inserted in artificial intelligence cores.”

....That sounded awfully similar to her [Main Core].

“And?” Alexa asked, unsure of what he wanted to arrive at.

“Well, we made a very expensive duck that couldn't breed with normal ducks and could hide a minigun on his chest. Besides that, it acted like a normal duck, and all the veterinarians that studied its behavior

came to the same answer, 'That is a duck.'" Sam said shrugging, "At least till they tried to touch or check it."

That indeed seemed like a weird way to find that answer.

"So biologically speaking..." Alexa said leadingly.

"It was a duck, with some parts that weren't that of a duck. Granted, its flesh didn't start as a duck, and it didn't have the brain of a duck at the beginning..." Sam answered shrugging, "I don't know how they did it or what type of in vitro breeding project they used to grow the body of a duck, but I can guarantee you that the Subject D4 wasn't born a normal duck."

Great, Alexa found that she had a cousin duck.... No wait, wouldn't that make all the P-series subjects her family?

She would limit her family bonds to those that shared her serial number or closer links, yes—better that way.

"So that artificial subject was a duck even if it wasn't born a duck?" Alexa asked as a means of confirmation.

"For the sake of the argument, yes, it had the body of a duck, the mind of a duck, and it acted like a duck. Now...can the same be said of Vulcanus? Of SuperForce? Of Scorchers?" Sam countered.

"...[SuperForce] seems to act with [Human] lives in mind. So he should qualify as [Human]." Alexa answered, Sam gave her a nod at this. "As for [Scorcher], he seems to hold no regard to [Human] life, this too, can be attributed to [Human] behaviour."

Sam smirked at her thread of thought, but even so, he nodded at her.

"But [Vulcanus]...Doesn't seem to have a [Human] body, and if anything, he doesn't act like a [Human]." Alexa answered.

Of everyone so far, he was the one that seemed to be the most... [Cold] towards her, even if he was also the one that seemed to hold the biggest interest in her, and the one that seemingly gave the most allowances to her.

"Ohoh....have you met the tin head? Didn't think he made appearances in public anymore...but then again, you have quite the interesting headgear too." Sam looked at her head, and Alexa felt herself want to, once more, fill her facial capillaries with blood; right, she had forgotten about the mask.... "But yes, Vulcanus doesn't have a Human body, nor does he really have a human mind, no matter how much he tries to pretend otherwise; care to guess why?"

Why? Wasn't it because he was a machine?

"Because...He doesn't have a [Human Brain]?" Alexa answered.

"Hmm....That is one way to see it, he used to have one, but the darkest side of the Saintsworths wanted to know how many organs you need to trigger a Core awakening, so we picked some test subjects and divided their body into the bare minimum possible while keeping them alive connected to some

machines, you would be surprised how far you can stretch the definition of a Human when Tinker Tech is in play.” Sam sighed as he turned to look to the side, one of his claws rose and he caressed it with his hand. “And so the Human that was Vulcanus was divided in ten different rooms with isolated system, one had the brain, one had the heart, the livers, kidney, lung, digestive system....you get the idea.”

That was...quite the interesting way to test it.

“Care to guess which part was the one to trigger the Core and which ones didn’t?” Sam turned to look at Alexa.

“....The [Brain]?” Alexa answered, that was the one that held the [Consciousness Stream] after all.

“That is my guess, too; some of the other scientists claimed that it was the heart, others the endocrine system. And there was this woman that claimed that all the body triggered.” Sam shrugged yet again, “To be honest, we aren’t sure. As soon as he triggered he took over of all the machines, deleted the footage and destroyed the evidence. Only Vulcanus himself can answer that question.”

....Why would he..?

“We don’t know why he did it either, he ran away with part of the research. I only found out about this in passing when running away since he asked me if I could help him with some of his research, but even so he never gave me that part of the data. In the end, whatever he wanted from me, I could not give. So I was handed this part of the sewer system as compensation.” Sam ended his talk about it there, “But I can answer you this, that man is not Human anymore. Now... with that out of the way...Are Beast Core Humans? Are Insect Core User Humans?... Am I Human?”

That was quite the interesting take...

“[Monster Designation: Sam provides interesting data. Host is advised to soothe his worries.]”

“You are what you decide to be.” Alexa answered, she summoned her blue screen with her data with a flick of her mind. “Just like how no matter what form or shape I take, I will always be the same.”

Status

Name: Alexandra Saintsworths Head: Human(Peak)

Race: Bio-Weapon Right Arm: Human(Mod)

Subrace: Human Left Arm: Human(Mod)

Gender: Female Torso: Human(Peak)

Age: 5 12 19 years Right Leg: Human(Mod)

Weight: 42 52 65 kgs Left Leg: Human(Mod)

Height: 1,02 1,45 1,65 cms Skeleton System: Reinforced

Overall Status: Healthy Muscular System: Reinforced

Current Form: Human (Peak) Nanite Foundry: Active

Sub Nanite Foundry: Active

Body Status

Strength 42 75 107 units Health: 30 22 22

Dexterity: 40 50 30 units Mana: 25 21 21

Constitution 10 6 6 units Stamina: 41 35 39

Luck 10 10 10 units Nanite Swarm: 4 7 10

Alexa could still read her name there, Alexandra Saintsworths. Not Subject P4, not Alexa [Child Stage], or Alexa [Teenager Stage]...not even Alexa [Young Woman Stage]. No, only Alexandra Saintsworths.

Her race was still [BioWeapon], for that is what she was, even if she pretended to be otherwise. Her goals weren't the same as those of an average human. Despite all she did, she still made new weapons for this body.

She still wanted to recreate her glorious [CRAB] form too.

"So long as you wish to be [Human], you will be. But...the question shouldn't be if you are or aren't [Human]." Alexa said, smiling, "The question should be...why would you want to be only [Human]?"

That was the important question, Sam could be so much more...With this amount of [Biomass]? With his [Knowledge]?

Why would he settle for so little as being [Only Human]?

Alexa wouldn't, at the very least...