

A BIO-WEAPON'S RHAPSODY

Chapter 1: First Encounter.

[“Subject P4, enter the arena.”]

It heard the voice coming from the ceiling of its chamber, mechanical with no inflection to it, followed by the scratched heavy metallic door starting to move. It always grated its sensory receptors, so as always it momentarily turned them off while the metallic door was opening, it regretted having attacked the bipeds that had come to check the door.

So it rose from the floor and prepared, it had grown quite accustomed to these tests through the years in these rooms, and its body had grown so much in the testing by cannibalizing the parts of other subjects.

And like that, it started moving, one leg at a time. Its current body no longer looked mechanical like at the start, from a mere box with wheels it had taken first the legs design from an insectoid species after eating and using the biomass to create its own legs. Its exterior body was covered in flesh and a yellow metallic chitin for outer armor in a full-body oval form with only the two

pairs of legs on the sides and at the front of its body had a pair of mandibles stolen from an insectoid species that fought in waves.

Those mandibles were the only way to distinguish which part of its body was the “Front”. Its whole body had no body parts like most living organisms to distinguish front from back, since all the biomass was fully digested and utilized it didn’t need digestive or excretory systems. Most of its sensory organs were stuck in its appendages too, that way its main body didn’t need to risk connections that would work as easy access to its internals.

It had learned that lesson the hard way when another test subject (P7) used one of its external sensory appendages to almost kill it.

After coming into the arena it found another of its brethren.

[“Combat test, subjects P4 & P9 start in 53 seconds.”]

The being said from the weird box-shaped organism in the walls. It knew no living being was there as it had studied those box-shaped organisms before, its sound-based sensory organ was based on the data obtained from those boxes... Same as its sound-based attack appendages.

["Fight."]

Said the being using those box-shaped organisms after 53 of that unit of time passed by, it had taken it almost a month to find out how the box-shaped organism used that measure of time, afterwards the box-shaped organism started using randomized amounts and measures. But by that time it was too late, it guessed that the box-shaped organism didn't want other test subjects to learn of its secrets.

It wasn't going to share this discovery either so it was quite happy with them taking that approach.

"Hey weird crab, you conscious yet?" Said the other Subject using a weird configuration to try and produce the sounds of the box-shaped being.

It tensed at that, and started scurrying to the right, the other P-series subject moved counterwise.

It now could see its design and judge it...

[Primitive]

This P-series subject seemed to favor bipedal design, just like the weird slave bipedal beings that used to service its containment chamber, a relatively large and skewed torso that could barely stand straight with two appendages to the sides besides the central appendage that housed most of its sensory inputs.

The leg appendages seemed to be skewed and it could barely stand straight, it guessed that the P9 subject had trimmed part of its main core body to try and find equilibrium in that bipedal type body...And failed at it.

For some reason, it had tried to include sensory sound-type appendages on its head too.

“Uuughh, another nonsentient one? When will I get a companion...That goddess scammed me when she reincarnated me in this body,” the P9 subject said. It couldn’t understand how those words were meant to be an attack.

But it filed them into its database, perhaps they held a mental component? The P666 subject used mental corruption after all. It had spent almost a month purging its database from that data...

[File sound-based sensory data in Virtual Machine and depure its content.]

“And what is this thing supposed to be, a spider? A centipede? An...ant?” The other subject raised one of its superior appendages while the sound attack was being emitted from the main sensory appendage.

It found that most of the sound attacks came from an aperture in the central appendage above its torso...That would be a good point of attack. It prepared itself for the combat, its internals were revved and warm enough that it could start a burst of speed at a moment's notice. The only reason it didn't start was because it was curious about the type of attack this P-series subject would use.

“Nothing personal bug, but I need to kill you and see if I will finally get levels and skills. I will sue that goddess for scamming me as soon as I manage to get my skills.” And finally, the other P-Series subject showed its cards.

From the left superior torso appendage it started to focus heat, it seemed that it stored heat in the bulges at its chest and then directed it into the appendages at the torso, where it would discharge it at the target.

It was a good design, but the time loss from the travel of heat across its body and then to the discharge was too long, it also put unnecessary strain on the P-series subject body, it was...

[*Flawed.*]

Such a waste of a good design, it was already creating more useful ways to use that type of attack, perhaps it could be used as an alternative booster for speed? A quick small burst or barrage of heat waves? Maybe if it included some kind of solution it could spread high-energy attacks?

So many options.

“Flare of Justice!” And this P-series subject was using vocal commands too?

That must be some kind of sound-based mental intrusion into its programming. Either way, it just stopped its circling and turned counterclockwise to dodge the attack while bracing itself for the second hidden attack that his P-series subject would use.

“W-What? Don’t dodge you stupid bug!?!?” Sure enough, it came right after its failed attack with more sound-based attacks.

[Status Report.]

It queried its internal program searching for the sound-based virus...

[All Status Nominal.]

Its safeguards reported nothing, and the multiple virtual machines running its sensory data reported the same. Perhaps the firewalls it built before for the P666 subject were that good?

[Analyze sound based attack.]

It would however do its due and search it again, it wouldn't do for another of those situations to spring on it, but for now, it started rushing forward the P9 subject, with some luck it could nab the [Core] from it and study it fast enough before the box-shaped organism demanded it to stop.

It evaluated the damage in the arena, the spot where it stood before it was red, and the dirt and rocks turned red while also taking the form of liquid.

[Estimated temperature 850°C.]

The appendage of subject P9 didn't seem to be in danger, and it could see vapor leaving from its body, mostly from what it had thought were sensory organs at the top of its superior appendage.

So it used those to release the accumulated heat.

“Stay still you stupid oversized bug!” It continued with its sound-based attacks while more heat started condensing in the bulges at its central appendage. And it wondered how it wasn't blowing the lateral appendage with the heat discharge...Or how it kept balanced.

It decided to rush to onto the back of Subject P9 even if it risked being in its line of fire, and it found...That it had a weird back.

“Hey don't peek at my ass you perverted bug!” Subject P9 screeched its sound attack at a higher tone while it used a long tail appendage to turn faster and use the heat-based attack from its arm at it.

This time since it had rushed to see if there was a secret to its balance it suffered a scratch on its external armor.

It wasn't sure if the new information was worth it.

[Inferior design]

Its back had two additional bulges where the lower appendages joined the main torso appendage and a long tail. The bulges didn't seem to serve any use nor seemed to hold heat, perhaps it used them as a soft seating option? Or to hold into walls by using suction?

Either way they didn't seem like a viable option for combat, so it would probably not use them even if it managed to steal the design.

For now, it was time to move into attack...But first...

[Purge compromised external plating.]

Since part of its external armor was grazed and melted it expelled the armor and moved one of the spare plates to cover it.

“That’s cheating!” Came the sound attack of Subject P9. It didn’t seem to be effective, so it was wondering why it kept using them.

After making sure the new plate was in place and wouldn’t move too much (It would need to secure it while resting later) it rushed subject P9 while using all the kinetic energy its six appendages could generate. This was the reason it favored this current design over the bipeds or quadrupeds.

“D-Don’t come this way you insect!!” The P9 subject started flailing its superior appendices while its sensory organs seemed to focus on its body and at the same time search for something around the testing grounds.

It had an ally?!?

[Urgent directive, finish off P9 Subject and prepare for prolonged combat.]

It could no longer study P9, the last time it had to fight several subjects like this it had lost too much biomass, and half of its [Core] had been torn apart. And since the bipedal slaves no longer wanted to interact with its main body, repairs were hard to come by.

Perhaps it was a bad idea to try and nab one of those slaves to try and use its designs?

The box-shaped organisms were too stingy with their slaves!

So following its current combat directive, it rushed subject P9, and using its main claw it crushed subject P9's sensory appendage, it planned to take its sight and hearing first then study its regenerative focus to find its [Core].

[P9 subject no longer responding to stimuli. Main Objective achieved.]

Its [Core] registered the destruction of the P9 subject, it seemed that it had housed its main [Core] with the sensory appendices.

[Lacking.]

It understood the idea behind that of course, if the sensory organs were housed near the [Core] you could receive information faster, that was why it

had also had done the same at the start, but the time saved wasn't worth the danger of leaving a line to the main [Core] so...exposed.

Either way, it needed to prepare for the ambush of the other P-series subjects, so while it wanted to study it closer it only took an extra bite from the P9 subject to restore some biomass and prepare to fight.

["Test finished, time 1 minute 42 seconds...P4 Subject, return to the den."]

The box-shaped organism declared the finish of testing. And that also signaled that it was alone in the arena...The box-shaped organism knew it was aware of their measure of time, and they had used two of the four measures of time it knew.

The P9 subject was smarter than it was given credit for. It tried to bait the organism into retreat by creating the idea of more test subjects.

["P4 subject, return to den. You will be provided nutrient paste to replenish your stores of energy."]

Tch... It wouldn't be able to steal the design of P9, perhaps the box-shaped organisms had promised it reinforcements?

It wanted to study the design of this P-series subject for the heat store bulges on its main appendages, maybe it could include it to store energy instead of heat?

But why only use two bulges instead of more? Why so high in the torso appendage, wasn't that unbalanced? Was that the reason why its rear had two bulges just where the lower appendages connected to the main torso?

[Received order to return to den.]

The Box-shaped organism had thus spoken, they sent a directive straight to its core. It was tempted to try and fight it off... But decided against it. It managed to survive the fight with minimal damage and only lost one spare plating for its external armor. It still had a few left but not nearly enough to risk prolonged fights without access to biomass.

And while the nutrient paste was good to replenish lost energy... It didn't have nearly enough mass to make new spare parts or external plates. If it had lost a leg instead of part of its armor...

It would have needed to restructure its combat mode...again.

[Order acknowledged.]

So it gave a cursory glance to subject P9's inactive body...While it didn't have nearly enough biomass to tempt it to try and disregard the order. It instead had interesting designs, it wondered what it had made it make such a body that resembled so much the slaves of the box-shaped organism.

Why was it only missing the external textile armor the slaves used!

It wondered how subject P9 had seen them without their slave textile armor... They never came into its den without a few layers of those textile armors...Sometimes it couldn't even see their sensory organs even... It had taken a long time to discern they used several types of textile armor.

Perhaps subject P9 had inferred and created that design while extrapolating the designs from earlier contacts?

It remembered that at the start the slaves used few layers of textile armor...It had vague memories stored of some short wavy textile armor used by the variant that had bulges...Oh, subject P9 was imitating one of the two variants!

Now it made sense why it used those bulges in its central appendage!

But then why did it have those sensory organs at the top of its head and the tail appendage?

Its visual sensory organ was different too, and reviewing the logs the sensory appendage had strands of keratin near the sound-making organ...

With some luck the biomass that it managed to take before the testing ended would bring some information about its design decisions...

At least the box-shaped organism had forgotten to make it spit it, they probably thought it had already burned that biomass into combustible to replace the external plate...It usually would do, but since the design was interesting enough it had decided against it.

And now it was time to see if it would pay off.

