

# A BIO-WEAPON'S RHAPSODY

## Chapter 16: About [Humans], [Powers] and Beetles

"Well for starters let's go by the beginning. What do you know about our **[Powers]**?" Asked the [Human].

Powers?

*"[Word seems to be resonating with the energy within host's Core.]"* Main core seemed to detect some unusual resonance with her weird new [Core].

"It's the amount of strength we can use as [Humans]?" Alexa answered tentatively.

Was this a trap question?

"Hmm....almost right, not all humans have **[Powers]**. But all the humans that have **[Powers]** are stronger than normal." The [Human] stated simply.

What?

Not all humans have powers? Then there were weaker humans?!?

HOW?!? How was it possible that a race that could subjugate the square-shaped entities could be weak?!?

"I see that you don't seem to believe me." The [Human] said, "So that means that either you haven't been around other people or that everyone in your family awakened a Core huh."

*"[Notice: Human seem to believe in host being Human.]"*

That was good to know.

"For example, in my case, I can do these kinds of things." The [Human] made a motion with its hand and the rocks around started floating around, glowing with the same purple light its body was emitting. "This is the same power I used to stop you from crashing into a building."

So, this human used this [Power] to stop her from escaping?

She hadn't felt anything like that before, it was almost as if she had been stuck in an invisible substance that seemed to encompass her whole body, yet she was still able to interact with the gases around. As evidenced by the fact that she was still able to breathe even while encased like this.

"And the difference in our [**Power**] is what allowed me to prevent you from using whatever [**Power**] you used to fly," The [Human] seemed to say that part in an inquiring tone, but after a moment of silence he shrugged and carried on. "So, a SuperHero is someone that when granted this [**Power**] decided to use it for good. In my case, I don the persona of SuperForce."

And after saying such he placed his arms on his waist and stared at an angle of 85° towards the left upwards, having its cape move against the wind and using the [Smile] that somehow had shown its white teeth.

"So, you use your power to...hunt [Prey] for other [Humans]?" Alexa asked not quite sure what to make of this discovery.

Somehow the [Humans] had distinctions among themselves, having some wielding more power than the others, that seemed to explain why her body didn't seem to hold any type of power, perhaps the [Blueprint] she had used was of a [Normal] human instead of a [SuperHero] one.

"...that isn't quite right...We do hunt... Villains, but mostly to keep the peace, if those don't bring troubles we are quite happy with letting them do as they wish actually." The [Human] answered with a wry smile.

Then what was the point?

*"[Notice: Human designated **SuperForce** seems to have some kind of energy barrier surrounding its body, attempts to pry open have been deemed too risky to attempt against a target willing to disclose information.]"*

Main core seemed to have taken the time they spoke to try and get information on this [Human], she was quite happy with letting that go, at least for now...Or till she found a way to take a sample.

"So young lady, while I'm happy speaking with a young candidate I do nee-" The human started saying when its face turned from that [Smile] into another she hadn't seen before, its eyes turned sharp like those of a [Predator]. He seemed to glare at something while quickly opening its arms wide.

*"[WARNING WARNING WARNING! INCOMING MASS OF ENERGY TRAVELING, EMERGENCY DODGE SEQUENCE STARTED.]"* Main Core seemed to notice something too as she felt her body start producing a cocktail of drugs and flooding her system with it.

"RUN!" And she felt her body be thrown away from where she was by the same weird substance that stopped her escape.

She allowed herself to fly through the air as she focused her attention towards the human [SuperForce], he had taken an attack straight on and didn't seem to be hurt, the attack had been a fireball that seemed to be contained within the small testing room without ceiling that she had been forced to land in.

"Well well well, if it isn't my favorite ***SuperFarce***. Since when are you molesting children? Does this mean I'm the Heroine this time?" Was all she had been able to hear as the figure of a red-haired [Human] appeared flying above [SuperForce].

Its presence also signaled the moment she wasn't held by the weird substance and as soon as her feet touched the floor she started moving as fast as her current body allowed her. First by running in the opposite direction those two [Humans] who seemed to be fighting, she didn't want to be in the middle of another [Human] test.

She had barely managed to escape the testing chambers, and she didn't want to join another one. So she ran, she moved her small legs as fast as her current body could tolerate, this place was weird, tall squares made of the same material as the outside of the place she had escaped from.

The only difference was that the making of the [Doors] and [Windows] didn't seem that sturdy. Even the outer materials, while solid, weren't that resistant as far as the probes [Main Core] did to its materials as she passed them were concerned.

Either way, she was surprised by how vast and empty this new testing chamber was, or this [Room]. She wasn't sure of how to differentiate them at the moment,

as far as she was aware, most of the [Rooms] she walked in with the other [Human-child stage] humans were [Rooms] instead of [Testing Chambers].

And since only a [Testing Chamber] had danger, this should be one. No matter which one it was, she needed a safe place to find first, so making sure she wasn't walking closer to the confrontation she had left behind she looked around.

*"[Notice: Passage to underground level found, it should be better to escape in that direction since both targets of conflict seem to have some form of flying capabilities. So underground environment will grant Host a higher chance of survival.]"*

[Main Core] pinged her with that information while also focusing her attention towards an opening in the ground, it seemed that it was some kind of [Door] that led underground.

Alexa didn't see anyone around the open [Door], nor could detect any living beings down, so turning back to make sure no one was following she found a big circle of fire in the sky and figures zooming all over the open sky, that was all the incentive she needed to dive into the unknown.

The path downwards was smooth sailing, each step echoing announcing her arrival, she grimaced with each step and quickly shifted the material of her [Shoes] to something that was less obvious when walking.

In the end, she decided on a soft amalgamation of [Rubber] and [Cloth], that granted fewer defenses to her [Feet], but was comfortable and, more importantly, silent.

And after going down for a few meters down she found....

*"[Heaven]"*

It was...

*"[Wonderful]"*

She couldn't find the right [Words] to describe it.

*"[Marvelous]"*

[Main Core] didn't seem to have that problem of course, but she didn't have access to the same extensive library that [Main Core] had, not consciously of course, since the [Data] [Main Core] could access was stuff she had internalized and assimilated, so if she wanted she could do it too.

Only that she was-

*"[Lazy]"*

-doing more important stuff, such as running for her life away from danger.

The place she found herself in was a type of [Maze], similar to those she had been ordered to fight in before, only...this one seemed to be suited to [Humans], and more importantly...it didn't seem to have [Danger].

The [Test chambers] on it were small [Rooms] with crystal [Doors] that seemed to allow everyone to see into the [Test chambers] within. She walked past them, even though they didn't seem dangerous to her senses, with [Humans] it wasn't easy to know what they made or how dangerous it was.

As far as she knew, the [Humans] fought under different settings, as a race where half of its population had more power than the rest they probably had different and skewed standards.

So while the [Test Chambers] that held [Armor] were appealing she ignored them, even when one [Test Chamber] held small figures that seemed to call to her with the [Test Subject] of small size and [Fluffy] making she walked past it too! She wouldn't be enticed by a [Prey] that looked like she could deal with!



Even the [Test Chamber] that appealed to [Main Core] with square-shaped entities full of those strange lines was ignored!

Yes, if she was suffering then [Main Core] will suffer with her!

"Yoh girlye!" ASDASLDHFASDLKFASDFASDF MAIN ENGINE BURN 500% FOR 1 SECOND!

*"[Denied, no hostile intent detected.]"*

....

"Girle you okay? Sorry for scaring you." The [Human] that spoke before - totally not scaring her - was poking at her side.

Such dangerous entities these humans, walking past all her defenses and penetrating her protections as if it was a simple fabric instead of the mighty [Armor] that she had copied from Melissandra and the [Teacher].

"You okay? Someone there? You don't speak Common?" The [Human] kept prodding at her while making weird facial structures.

"Yes YES," Till she couldn't hold it anymore and swatted its hands away from her face. This [Human] had started stretching her facial skin, and while she knew her [Disguise] was impervious, she didn't want to risk it.

"There we go girlie," the [Human] said while snarling at her.

*"[Facial structure detected and analysis finalized, emotion-face detected and catalogued as **smile.**]"*

The [Human] [Smiled] at her while saying, "What are you doing here alone? Did you separate from your parents when they gave the alarm? It is dangerous to be alone with Scorcher on the loose." He seemed to be wary of something, even if that something wasn't her.

Its mannerism spoke of someone waiting for something was dangerous around, was this [Scorcher] that dangerous? It sounded like someone that she could [Learn] plenty from.

"But it's okay! SuperForce was deployed as far as I could hear before they closed the doors into the bunker..." The [Human] smiled at that, then turned to her, and then his smile dimmed, but he shook his head quickly enough and nodded at something, "Right, the bunker doors... Come with me girlie, the bunker should have outdoor cameras, they may not let me in... but they wouldn't leave a girl like you outside, I will get you to one and you can ask to be let in."

Then the [Human] grabbed her hand and some tremors hit the place, this made the other [Human]'s face frown and say "Let's go quickly, it seems the fight is getting closer to this side."

*"[Notice: Tremors determined to have the strength of a Magnitude 4.5 earthquake. The integral structure seems to suggest it was designed to break into big pieces that would allow survivors to hide between the pieces. The current size of host means that this environment is perfect for ambushing Humans and getting more samples, advice to stay in this area and use the opportunity to strike when the chance appears.]"*

That had been one long message from [Main Core], "Are we in danger?" So she wanted to make sure the evaluation from [Main Core] was correct, and as such she asked the [Human].

He seemed somewhat different from most of the ones she had interacted with so far after all.

"What? Of course not, they designed the underground mall to be sturdy, see those lines on the ceiling?" And the [Human] pointed with one of his claws at the same lines that [Main Core] had highlighted when giving its explanation. "Those are break points designed to make a collapse more controlled, some Tinker designed it so that the pieces break and create openings for survivors to hide while waiting for rescue."

So the [Human] gave reason to [Main Core], but then the important part came next "What about if a [Predator] uses those to attack isolated [Humans]?" Alexa asked.

That made the [Human] stop in its tracks as he grabbed with more strength her arm as his other claw opened and closed, then this [Human] turned his stalk eyes towards her while his [Human] eye kept moving forward.

"Then that one would not be a human anymore, but a beast... no Human would attack another one in a time of need like this one." He said with finality and then stopped moving as they came to an opening with four paths leading to four different directions.

"Do I scare you?" He asked her, "Is my monstrous appearance really that bad? I thought...I thought that since you didn't scream you didn't fear me."

The [Human] let her hand go and touched his claw first, then moved to the half of his face that was covered in chitin with a pair of stalk eyes on the side, she didn't understand why this [Human] only modified half of its [Face] and [Arms] and not his whole body.

It irked her how she could only have a full blueprint if he only did the full body, but so far, all the information she got from it was useless since something seemed to make the human parts work with the nonhuman parts and she couldn't isolate that part.

But either way, she needed to answer his question, didn't she?

"No, you don't scare me." So she answered honestly, she had seen what the [Chitin] could do firsthand as a fellow user of [Chitin] derivate armors, if anything she knew better than most P series subjects how to deal with it.

And since this [Human] had half of its [Head] unprotected it would be easier to deal with him, especially if she incapacitated his stalk eyes. Really, stalk eyes? That was a very bad decision to go for.

*"[Lousy design]"*

See, even [Main Core] gave her the reason here!

"...I see...thank you for not fearing me." Said the [Human], weird. Why would she fear him?

He didn't seem that impressive, if anything he reeked of [Failed experiment] more than anything, besides, he didn't even seem to have many muscles on his nonhuman parts, and his [Chitin] parts weren't lustrous enough, evidence that he wasn't even taking good care of them!

Why use [Chitin] if you aren't going to take care of it?!?

What did he think [Chitin] was? A cure-all?

No!

Well, yes it was, but one needed to take care of it dang it!

"Now, before we move to the shelter you need to do something for me okay?" The [Human] said as they started moving once more, he seemed to be guiding her to a [Shelter], whatever that was. "And this is important so no matter what you need to do it, can you do that for me?"

He seemed to be about to ask her to do something of utmost importance, and since she was looking to integrate into any group within the [Human] society to blend in... she would do her best to fulfill this [Mission].

"If they ask if someone is with you..." Started saying the [Human] and stopping for a second to look around as they stopped in front of a square-shaped reflective surface that had [Armor] on display. "You need to say that you are alone."

Ah, he wanted to ambush the other [Humans], maybe they weren't part of the same [Faction]?

"They will attempt to scan the area for other people, but these Parts make me invisible to their scanning." The [Human] said, so he was a [Predator] even with all of those bad designs?

Maybe she needed to readjust her judgment.

"It's okay, I will find a place to hide and weather the storm. Just make sure to enter and be a good girl okay?" The [Human] placed his normal [Hand] atop her head and moved it from side to side.

It felt...

*"[Emotion recognized, categorizing...Notice, Human emotion generated endorphin secretion...Human emotion name: Joy, pleasure....]"*

It felt good.

"I will be seeing you around girlie, if you ever find yourself in the slums or near ask for Frank the Beetle. They will point you in my direction." The [Human] did that weird [Laugh] thing they liked doing, "Not that you should be on the slums...if others see you around they will think you want to awaken a [Beast-Core] or [Insect-Core]. You don't want that even after you awaken."

Then afterward he pushed her towards one of the [Doors], "Enter that store and follow the yellow arrows, when you find the metallic door just push the button and the camera should turn on by itself, they will scan you and let you in."

After saying that the [Human - Designation Frank the beetle] started blurring and soon enough she wasn't able to see him.

*"[Warning, no signals of human detected. Re-designating threat level from Negible to **Extreme.**]"*

And yet, somehow...She didn't think that [Frank the Beetle] would ever be a danger to her, even if [Main Core] kept sending warning signals her way.

But for now? She walked towards the door and followed the yellow things on the floor.

*"[Designation assigned to yellow geometrical figure: Arrows]"*

And following after them she soon enough was standing in front of a [Door] different than the ones she had found before, she had seen doors made of [Vegetable Matter], doors made of [Crystal-like material], and then it was this...



A door made entirely of [Metal], the alloy seemed to include most of those materials she had once used for her [External plates].

And sure enough, as [Frank the Beetle] had said, at the side was a button with a weird symbol, so she pressed it and soon enough one of the square-shaped entities embedded in the wall spoke to her.

Now she only needed to find out what was the deal with this place that [Frank the Beetle] wanted her to go into.

## Chapter 17: About Cores

*"Who is this? Did the fight end?"* Was the first thing the square-shaped entity spoke after Alexa pushed the button.

"I was told that in case of danger, I should come and push this button," Alexa said towards the square-shaped entity.

She felt some trepidation at them, should she attempt to see if they would accept her in their society? Would it even work? Was this square-shaped entity free from the control of the [Humans]?

*"Huh? A little girl?"* The square-shaped entity said as it opened its [Eye]. She heard its mechanical [Eye] start working and could see a red [Light] above it.

...Was this square-shaped entity blind? Chances were it couldn't see unless a [Human] allowed it to [See]. So...it would be for the best if she didn't bring her plans of sedition, this spoke of a [Human] being around the square-shaped entity after all.

"I'm Alexa, will you provide me with protection? I was told that you would." She was interested in what measures the [Humans] had to protect themselves against attacks of the magnitude she had seen from both [Human-Designation Superforce] and [Human-Designation Scorcher].

They seemed to move in extremes of power way beyond what she had been able to do at the peak of her power. Granted, she didn't have that much [Biomass], [Energy], or [Materials] to work with. But still!

*"What? No! We need to make sure she is human first!"* She heard muffled sounds followed by that statement, a single statement that made her blood feel cold, she wasn't sure why the weird feeling, her thermal signs showed her body temperature remained stable at 36°C.

She had noticed most of the humans around seemed to work between 36.5°C to 38°C, with the [Human - Adult Stage] usually staying closer to 36.5°C, reason why she was staying around 36°C. To see if she could awaken the [Power] that the [Humans] seemed to hoard.

*"Sorry about that little girl, but we need to make sure you don't have a Core. Nothing personal."* Said the square-shaped entity while a weird light formed on the floor just in front of the metal door. *"Stand in the square and we will scan you. This will let us know if you have a Core or not. If you aren't a bug or beast you have nothing to fear. Easy right?"*

What?

They wanted to make sure she didn't have a [Core]? Weren't they trying to make sure she was [Human]? What did her [Core] have anything to do with that?

"Why having a [Core] would mean I'm not [Human]?" Asked Alexa as she eyed the square on the floor warily.

She then heard some rustling from the square-shaped entity and after a few more seconds it spoke again, however, this time the voice it projected seemed different, closer to the voice the [Teacher] had used, *"Sorry about that darling. What my companion meant was that we need to make sure you don't have a potentially dangerous Core. Having a Core will not make you less Human."*

It said this time the square-shaped entity, was this new voice a [Human - Woman]? She had noticed that the ones aligned with that gender seemed to be more...forgiving with her current form.

"Unless she has a [Beast Core] or [Insect Core]!" The square-shaped entity said again, this time the voice sounded more muted, as if it had spoken from farther away.

"What is a [Beast Core] or an [Insect Core]?" Asked Alexa fully intrigued by their designation for cores.

Her [Main Core] didn't have one of those classifications, so she should be fine, she wasn't sure what they meant by that. Maybe it was the implementation of the [Blueprints] they used?

*"Have you seen those people that grow furry ears or tails on the TV?"* The voice started speaking, what was a TV? She understood the ears or tails reference though, the P9 subject had grown both of those, so she nodded her head like the other [Human - Child Stage] did to show her understanding. *"That person awoke a [Beast Core] so their body adopted Beast traits, they have more strength and other qualities that make them closer to beast than humans. But in turn, their instincts are more...dangerous for normal people."*

So their [Beast Core] adopted a more savage [Blueprint] and in exchange they lost control of their faculties? She now understood why the [Humans] didn't like P9, if their weapon couldn't control her urges it would be obviously purged. She would never go down that route if possible.

"Then an [Insect Core]?" Asked Alexa then after internalizing the information and leaving a note to check against her [Main Core] going that route.

*"An [Insect Core] is the same, but instead of following the path of an animal. They follow the path of insects, they are more dangerous since their instincts are stronger. And like Insects, they gain strength many times their sizes, to that we include that their chitin-like armor makes them more durable...And the possibility of awakening other Core Powers...They tend to be more dangerous. And unlike the [Beast Cores] they don't discriminate in their feeding."* The square-shaped entity spoke once more, this time she could [Feel] an emotion in the distorted voice.

*"[Human emotion detected, fear.]"*

They feared those that embraced the chitin superiority, she would try to harvest some of those [Insect Cores] to add into her library, maybe she could harvest some of their advantages while trimming the disadvantages. She should be able to make it so the more [Illogical] instincts never arrived into her consciousness stream.

"So If I don't have either?" Asked Alexa looking her up and down, "I don't have chitin-like [Armor] nor [Furry ears] or [Tail]."

And she gave herself a look over, she didn't have either of course, she knew how her [Blueprint] looked better than anyone.

*"We need to still scan you, there are some Core users that awake weird powers, from Camouflage to Shape-Shifting]..So please step in the light."* The square-shaped entity spoke once more.

So she..."Will it hurt?" Asked that, somehow her voice seemed to [Tremble] at the question, was her [Vocal Module] failing? She had noticed this before too.

*"Of course not, we will only scan you for energy signals or Core formation. We can identify [Beast Cores] or [Insect Cores] easily, but anything besides that will not be proved further."* The square-shaped entity spoke and then remained silent.

So Alexa tentatively stood in the light and prepared herself to escape at the slight signal of danger.

*"Scan in progress, please don't leave the designated area."* Spoke the square-shaped entity, this time with no inflection. Was this the true voice of this square-shaped entity?

*"Core detected...Designation: [Unknown]."* The square-shaped entity spoke, she prepared herself to defend or escape but...nothing came. *"Age: 5 Years, Gender: Female, Registration: NA, Name: NA, Status: Illegal Alien."*

The square-shaped entity continued speaking giving extra data, "My name is Alexa." She said when the name showed as NA.

That wasn't her name at all!

*"Updated information found, Name: Alexa."* The square-shaped entity spoke.

*"FIVE YEARS?!?"* Then the square-shaped entity spoke once more, this time with an inflection in its voice. *"OPEN THE DOOR SHE IS A CHILD!"*

*"Of course it is, didn't you hear me before? But even as a kid she still has a [Core], she stays outside."* The first voice spoke once more, it seemed to be fighting against each other? *"SHE IS FIVE! WHAT DANGER CAN SHE BE?!?"*

Rude, she was plenty dangerous!

She just needed some extra materials to work with, "So can I leave the square?" Asked Alexa as the light in the flooring had disappeared.

It gave her weird feelings being in that thing, it felt like some of the parts of her [Tests] she used to do in the [Testing Chamber].

*"Of course dearie, we will-"* The square-shaped entity spoke, only to be cut again *"-not be opening the door, sorry kid. But we can't risk it."*

So they wouldn't let her in? That was...problematic.

"Do not react, repeat after me." She heard [Frank the Beetle] speak as a [Hand] was placed on her shoulder. "Under the provisional law for **[Core Users]** section 4, paragraph 5: Discrimination against [Core Users], based on the Existence of their [Core], including, but not limited to: Exclusion from Evacuation Bunkers, denial of work, denial of services, exclusion in rescue missions, discrimination or abuse of their [Core Powers] can be a reason for legal action against the perpetrator."

She found that information interesting since it spoke about [Humans] policing each other, she wondered how they managed to do that if not all of them had the power to [Enforce] such weird rules.

Either way, she repeated those words verbatim only for the square-shaped entity to stop rambling between them, "...*Your parents are Core Users too then huh.*" The first voice spoke, "*Under corporate law, we can't put our customers at risk, even at the expense of lives outside our umbrella. Unless you can prove that you have a membership with us (Which by the way requires proof of citizenship) we can't risk opening the door and allowing Scorcher to put at risk lives on this side.*"

"...*I'm sorry, but maybe if you find another shelter? One whose boss isn't...*" The second voice started speaking only to be cut down as the square-shaped entity's red light dimmed.

"They cut the connection huh, had I known you were a Core User I wouldn't have exposed you to this." [Frank the Beetle] said as he materialized at her side. "This is among the better ones and among the very few that can open after a warning goes on...But they discriminate against Core Users."



Discrimination? What was that?

"What are [Core Users]?" Alexa asked, did they have multiple extra designations? Were they also another different classification besides [Prey], [Predator], and [Power User]?

"Do you know what a Superhero or Supervillains are?" Asked [Frank the Beetle] as he started moving outside this [Room].

She of course followed after him (Making sure the square-shaped entity was always in her range of vision), and arrived at the [Outside] once more.

"Like [SuperForce]?" She asked [Frank the Beetle], his [Name] seemed close enough to [Superhero] at least.

"Exactly, a Superhero is a Core User who decides to use their Power for good. While a Supervillains is someone that uses for themselves." [Frank the Beetle] explained, then pointed to his chitin-clad arm. "Most [Insect Core Users] have a hard time controlling their instincts, so they tend to gravitate to Supervillains or straight-up Super Criminals, so we have bad fame and we rarely get accepted into bunkers."

That seemed weird, if they were as dangerous as the square-shaped entity spoke of, then why would they accept being treated like that? She for one wouldn't accept.

"You see, at the start, it wasn't like that. We were treated as victims of circumstances, 'who would want to end like that' they said." [Frank the Beetle] said while doing those weird sounds with his mouth.

*"[Analysis finished, description found, weird sounds reclassified as: Laughter. Symbol of amusement, happiness, positive emotion.]"*

"But then one Insect Core User was stressed and in a bunker, he was the only Core User so they expected him to defend them in case of danger...That one...Didn't deal well with stress, and his stress reaction to that was eating." Frank said with a grimace.

She didn't have a problem with that. "I like to [*Eat*] too, what is the problem there?" So she asked as such.

"You see, as Insect Core User we can eat...almost anything really. So when he ran out of jerkies...He turned to the next [***Meat***

] around." Frank said and then turned to look at her, his [Human] eye seemed...weird.

She didn't know what that look was, but his insect eye? She understood well that one. It was the same look she used to have while looking at her fellow test subjects, the look of someone eyeing [Food].

"...Ah." Was all Alexa could say when she understood the problem.

*"[New Emotion detected and categorized: Sadness]"*

So Frank the beetle was sad because of that?

"Ah, shit....right you are what? Five? I shouldn't be telling you about this kind of crap..." And he started hitting his head with his [Human] arm, "This stupid insect brain. It thinks of you as a [**Fellow**] but you are a kid, even with a Core...Actually, what is your core?"

What was her core?

[Main Core], but that wasn't what he was asking for right?

"You aren't a [Insect Core] or [Beast Core], the machine said [Unknown] so either it hasn't scanned your type or they didn't pay for the full library... Probably the second since they are known to be cheapskates." Frank smiled once more and turned to her, "By the way, don't reveal your core if anyone asks. Better that way

if you can pass it up as a normal Human if asked just say that is a Misc one or a Humanoid type. They love the [Elf Type]."

The what type?

THEY HAD [Human Core] TYPES?!?!?

"There is a [Human Core]?" She asked unsure, maybe that was her [Core] type? She didn't remember anything saying that though.

"I guess? Not like it would give you anything, for example, mine is Beetle Core. As you can infer from my name, if I could pass up as something else I wouldn't share it. But everyone that knows me is aware of it. What I don't share is my Core Power though." Frank said as he turned translucid and visible again, "So please don't share that part if possible...It would make my life harder than needed."

Then why share it?

"I share it with you because I want you to know that I will be around in case you need help, at least till SuperForce and Scorchers end their battle...Or we manage to find you a Shelter to hide in," Frank said immediately while she was thinking of a way to ask him that.

Could Frank also read her consciousness stream?

"Your emotions are painted in your face, that is why I knew what you wanted to ask." Frank said while laughing, "That is why I came to you, you looked scared and had this look of happiness at the same time, like you hadn't seen the subway station before."

...well she hadn't seen it before.

"So come, let's see if we can find another shelter without assholes in it." Frank said while extending his hand towards her.

*"[Suggestion: Use chance to get a full blueprint of subject **Frank the beetle** for comparative blueprint study.]"*

She extended her hand and took it, not only because it would make it easier to get the [Blueprint], but because she seemed to be experiencing a new type of [Emotion] while doing so.

And she needed all the help possible to understand how these [Humans] worked if she was to survive in this place.

*"[New Emotion within host detected...categorizing...**Joy**.]"*

She would try to find a place to study and decompress her findings, but for now? For now, she would walk around with [Frank the beetle] searching for a place to [Hide]. It would be a good way to find out more about human society and why they had slaved the square-shaped entities at the very least.

## Chapter 18: About [Elders] and their power.

They ended up walking around for a few blocks before [Frank the Beetle] found them a comfortable alley to stop by. He then emptied a cylinder full of decomposing biomass and put it near her, then did the same with a bigger one and sat himself on it.

"Okay, time to speak...We need to get some things straight." Said [Frank the Beetle] while waiting for her to move.

Should she also imitate him and initiate a pseudo-rest period? For now, she sat herself in the cylinder, it was refreshing for one not having to deal with the carcass of a square-shaped entity.

"When did you form your Core?" And [Frank the Beetle] started with a fast one.

His eyes seemed entirely focused on her, most of them. One of his [Stalk Eyes] seemed to watch every possible angle.

"You don't need to say a precise date, but if it was a few days ago and your parents didn't tell you anything we need to have a Talk." [Frank the beetle] seemed to want what was best for her.

She wasn't sure why she knew that, or what made her think that.

*"[There haven't been any new commands sent from external sources and current brain chemistry doesn't seem to indicate manipulation of thoughts on the host.]"*

[Main Core] seemed to think that she was thinking this by herself, but why?

*"[Possible reasons: Frank the beetle fills a primal need caused by the current body of the host. Possible feeling wanted by host body: Approval.]"*

Her body wanted [Approval]? She needed to do a full dive and fix it, if she had compromised this easily it would be a problem. Maybe it was also a problem caused by her [Core]?

"It was...recent." She answered, "Why?"

[Frank the Beetle] nodded at her, "Thought as much since you didn't know much about them when asking..." Then he moved his [Human] hand across his chitin on his head as if trying to check for integrity. "Okay, the next one is harder...Do you know your way home?"

...Yes...She did...

"Can you go back on your own?" [Frank the beetle] asked before she could answer, it seemed that he had deemed her capable of remembering her way back. But...was that home?

*"[Inferred meaning of Home from context clues: Safe place.]"*

"I don't have a [Home] to go." The place she had come from wasn't safe. She was reminded of the [Teacher] that seemed to give her a card for a [Safe] place. Could she go there?

She didn't want to keep contact with anyone that knew her links to her [Previous Den] if possible, but it was a valid option should she find herself short of biomass...

She only needed to decipher the way to decode the information held within the square-shaped plant fiber object in which it was saved.



"\*sigh\* That makes it more difficult, if you have a Core we need to make sure it doesn't...devolve into something dangerous, you seem fine near me. So the Evolution must be going away from an [Insect Core]." ...The what?

"My [Core] was made today, what [Evolution] do you mean?" Alexa said before [Frank the beetle] moved too much away from that.

However what came next wasn't something she had expected, first she thought something had happened as [Frank the beetle] gave a battle screech and ran as far away from the alley entry as his body was able to.

She turned her attention towards the entry point and prepared herself for combat...only to find nothing, which was good. Since she wasn't sure that she would be able to fight that well in this form.

"Is something the matter?" She asked as [Frank the beetle] tried to move further into the wall, was he trying to phase through it?

She had never managed to do that with her crab form, since that form had too many materials, but maybe chitin and meat would make it easier?

"WHY DIDN'T YOU SAID THAT FIRST! I COULD HAVE INFECTED YOU WITH MY **[Insect Core]**!" [Frank the beetle] said back at her.

He what?

*"[Target Frank the Beetle has been expelling unidentified energy, said energy has been absorbed and distilled into the same type that current Core has. Perhaps less capable Core Users can be affected by this energy and make it so they synch themselves to other nearby Core Users making more tight communities.]"*

Was the analysis Main Core gave her, so should she [Shift] her form closer to [Frank the Beetle] to make it easier to integrate herself in his community?

She wouldn't mind having a chitin plating again...But she would miss the feeling of the wind on her [Skin]...

"DO NOT ATTEMPT TO FORM AN [Insect Core]!" [Frank the beetle] said from the back end.

"But wouldn't that make it easier to live in this area?" She asked back to [Frank the beetle], who seemed taken aback by her logic.

Had she missed some implications?

"...[Insect Core]'s are tied to more primal instincts, children rarely are able to control their feelings, and as such end up dead...I...I don't want to have to kill

another kid, so no. I will not be responsible for this, here, take this." And then [Frank the beetle] threw another vegetable fiber thing her way.

It had the depiction of square-shaped forms and a few lines between them, "That's a map of this area, the red dot is where the bunker I took you is. Follow the arrows in the map, it will guide you to an Organization I work with from time to time, they will help you there to stabilize the [Core]. If you don't have anywhere to stay they should allow you into their daycare...If they refuse to give you a place to stay show them the letter I wrote at the back of the map. That should get you a place to stay, but you may need to work for a living." [Frank the beetle] started climbing the wall, "Do not come near this place till your [Core] has settled, and if you end up as an [Insect Core]...please do not leave the sewers."

And afterward [Frank the beetle] turned invisible once more, she was no longer able to detect him, and felt...

*"[New emotion detected, Loneliness: The feeling of solitude.]"*

Alone, she took the square-shaped object made of vegetable fiber and saw the depiction on it. It had more squiggle lines besides those that seemed to indicate the area she was or had been.

*"[New Information detected, compared to mental map...Accuracy of 85%, map updated...Inferring information from extrapolating data...Squiggle lines may hold information....Starting translating subroutine.]"*

So the squiggle lines were indeed information codified into it, so all the squiggle lines she had been seeing all around were codified information of some kind?

The [Humans] were indeed a dangerous creature, for now, she would follow the [Map] and see what this was about, perhaps she could find a way to [Settle her core] and return to speak more with [Frank the beetle]?

That was her plan for now, but for now?

"I will see you later then [Frank the beetle], thank you," Alexa said to the empty air, she liked to think that [Main Core] would find evidence of [Frank the beetle].

But [Main Core] didn't find any signal of the [Human] in question, so with a sigh Alexa left the alleyway they had walked in. Following the approximate directions of the [Map] she got, she started walking toward that place.

The sounds of the fight between the [Scorcher] and [SuperForce] had started to slow down, and as far as [Main Core] was concerned:

*"[Probability of structural failure within range of survivability to current form are optimal, current form has shown to be able to function without internal bone structure for long times, it is possible to alter the internal muscles to work and move without bones.]"*

[Main Core] showed her a few examples of her under those settings, a few projections of muscles contorting and moving along the floor, for some reason she felt a visceral reaction to those images and didn't want to entertain the idea of them. Something about how her body looked and moved felt [Wrong], it came from the biological side of her body. So it wasn't entirely [Logical], but since she needed this side to function and work as a way to integrate herself in [Human] society, she couldn't turn it off.

So instead she shelved the idea altogether!

If the place fell on her head she would either need to turn off her [Brain] and let [Main Core] host her [Self] while doing what was needed or bite the biomass cost and do it manually.

But for now, she had places to go!

Such as...Whatever those squiggly lines meant!

"See? I told you it was safe, the tremors have stopped for almost five minutes already, so it means the fight ended." Alexa heard someone speak as someone opened a [Door] and walked outside one of the [Rooms] in the [Street]. "Oh, where is your Mother darling?"

Darling?

*"[Emotion detected in tone, correlation...Love, care, protection.]"*

The [Human - Female Adult Stage] said as she turned to look at her, Alexa wasn't quite sure why they all always reacted like this to her, was this some kind of genetic imprint on them to show these reactions to [Human - Child Stage]?

"I was told to follow these directions, do you know what it says here?" Alexa said as she hid the second letter [Frank the Beetle] had given her and only showed the [Map] with the [Directions].

"Is your Mother there? Let me see..." Said the [Human - Female Adult Stage] as she [Smiled] and put a pair of [Crystal]-like objects in front of her [Eyes].

*"[Perception alteration object detected...Analysis in progress, seems to function to increase the fidelity of visual information, possible blueprint stored for further use.]"*

She wasn't sure why [Main Core] wanted to save that one, she already had plenty of designs of [Cameras] from her time with the P1-P3 subjects, hell, her own time as her [Glorious form] had plenty use of [Cameras], and the [Human] Eye was a marvel of bio camera on its own, not the most efficient one in a single wavelength, but good enough with multiple wavelength.

"Oh..." The [Human - Female Adult Stage] said as her tone of voice dropped a few decibels, "...I didn't know..."

Now that reaction was different, it was closer to the one [Teach] had shown when she found that she didn't have anyone waiting for her in the [Reception], it was...

*"[Human Emotion: Sadness, defeat, pity.]"*

It was tinged with those bad emotions, Alexa didn't like those emotions.

"It says... Second Chance Employment, it is..." The [Human-Female Adult Stage] said as she returned the [Map] to Alexa, "...a place that gives jobs to those that can't hold a normal one, are you sure your Mother is there?"

Well, she was sure her [Mother] wasn't there, as she didn't have one of those, maybe she should search what those words meant?

"I was told that I could get a place to stay there," Alexa answered, she wasn't sure why, but the [Human - Female Adult Stage] had drops of water form on the side of her eyes at her answer.

"Is it safe then?" Another [Human] spoke as the [Door] opened again, "huh? It is safe, they even let kids walk around huh...is something the matter?"

The new [Human] turned its eyes to the previous one and then towards her, and finally towards her [Map]. "Evan...This girl....she..." And while saying so she pointed to her [Map].

"She what?" Asked the other [Human] as he turned its attention to her [Map] "Oh that is four blocks that way."

The other [Human] said while pointing her in the same direction she had been walking. "EVAN!" The [Human-Adult Stage Female] raised her volume while hitting the other Human. "Don't you know what kind of neighborhood that is?!?"

What kind of what was what?

"I mean yeah, but it isn't like they don't have kids on it. Granted this one looks more high-end since she is dressed in expensive-looking clothes...." the [Evan] human eyed her as if calculating something, she in turn just prepared to run away, checking her stockpiles of energy and preparing her [Nanites] to reconstruct the ruptured muscles should she need to prepare a burst of energy. "But still has the same vibe as those on our side."

The [Evan] Human said at the end, "Move along kid. My partner is new to this part of the city, just ignore her and try to not scam her if you can, I will turn a blind eye should I see you again in exchange." And then made a motion for her to move.



She wasn't quite sure what [Our Side] referred to, but still appreciated the directions and translation services they had given her. She had a few words to match with those squiggly lines after all.

*"[Our Side, may refer to an allegiance, either perceived or real.]"*

Main core seemed to think that the [Evan] Human had misjudged her as someone from the same [Faction] as him, that was...maybe good? It may mean that she would fit in some of the [Factions] already, and that would make it easier to blend in.

*"[Translation suit advanced, adding known meaning to lines in paper.]"*

And that was also advancing, everything was going quite well, now she only needed to arrive at the location in the [Map].

And while comparing the squiggle lines around versus the translation on this [Map] she found plenty of repetitions of these [Letters], it seemed to be a very short code that they used seemed to only use thirty-six characters or [Letters] on it.

They grouped them to make the bulk bigger, and even if she took into consideration the thirty-six different variations, it seemed that of those, ten seemed to be particularly different, for some reason most of those codes followed a somewhat similar pattern than there were the characters [1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9,

o] that looked somewhat different. Also unlike the other twenty-six characters. These rarely showed in the middle of the other encrypted messages.

Take this untranslated cipher for example [Bistro Burger], it seemed to use a few of the [Characters] previously analyzed, but then on the side of this [Block] was another [Sign] that reused some of those in [Bistro Burger #3].

It added two extra characters, one she knew since it had shown in some parts of her code, so it referred to some [Designation] so the [3] would be said designation. But what did [3] mean?!?!

Why couldn't these [Humans] be more clear and integrate their [Language] into the [Brain] from [Inception]! Would it be that too hard?!?

Hadn't they enslaved another species?!? Surely they had the technology!

"*[Emotion Detected, Anger.]*

"

She was angry? So this was anger, interesting...NOT, SHE WAS ANNOYED AT THIS!

*"[New emotion added to database, Annoyance. Thank you for your help in the Emotion Database host.]"*

..."New emotion detected, sassiness...Add it to the database." She wasn't sure if that was the correct way, nor if the emotion was correct. But she felt it was correct.

Who would have thought, she was getting the hang of this [Human] thing already!

*"[...Analyzed evidence, correct. Adding Sassy to the database.]"*

Small victories.

And while feeling [Smug] about how she had dealt a critical hit to [Main Core] for getting out of order she continued her trek towards her objective, as she saw the time tick forward more and more [Humans] started leaving the [Rooms] at the side of the [Street], it was soon that the whole place was populated by multiple variations of the different [Stages] on their growth, from [Child] to [Adult] with some variations that she didn't have yet stored, there seemed to be a few [Larva] or [Pupa] stage here and there, she wasn't sure what differences existed in those [Blueprints].

On one side she could see a [Larva] stage human carried with its appendages flopping uselessly around, but from what she could tell from its [Face], it had about the same estimated [Biomass] as another [Pupa] stage that was covered in the same [Textile] material that her [Armor] was made.

If anything that one seemed more [Comfortable] than the one that had its appendages flopping around uselessly. Was the [Larva] stage variant one that hadn't managed to get the [Textile] armor? Did the humans also [Grow] the [Textile] armor and those [Larva] hadn't got enough [Biomass]?

Then we moved to those closer to her in size, it seemed that hers wasn't as standardized as she had thought, there were some variations from stage to stage, and it seemed that the [Humans] grew entirely in a slow and methodical way, but while the transition seemed to be...gradual, there were stark demarcations between stages.

She had captured visual data of at least two to three stages between her current one [Child] to the [Adult], and even between the [Adult], there seemed to be at least two variations on that one. And of course...there was [That].

"Have a candy darling." What seemed to be a decrepit [Human], giving small condensed [Balls] of bioenergy full of [Dextrose]. It was eerie, most [Humans] treated with deference, [Adult] stage humans gave way to this one. While [Child] stage humans keep roaming around it and doing their best to ingratiate to this one.

She just was straight up wary of that human, she of course took the bioenergy object and quickly ate it, it was free energy after all, and also there was a weird flavor on it that seemed to increase the production of [Serotonin] on her organic core. And while doing so she took as small a sample as she could from that [Human].

It was easy enough, and she was half sure the [Human] knew since it [Smiled] at her as their [Hands] separated from each other, hers with the [Bioenergy] object in her [Hand] and as much as dead skin she could manage to absorb from the other [Human] (And she had plenty to go around).

She got so much that she even managed to get a full [Blueprint] from her.

*"[Blueprint acquired, added to database: Human - Female Elder Stage]."*

*"[Blueprint acquired, added to database: Disease - Diabetic]"*

*"[Blueprint acquired, added to database: Disease - Hypertension]"*

*"[Blueprint acquired, added to database: Genetic Malfunction - Cancerogenous Cell]."*

Truly, the peak of humanity, so much hidden within the shell of decrepit and weakness, but hidden within the true [Evil] of what they were capable of, she had needed to [Destroy] a few organs when she tried to simulate some of those things. And others were outright biochemical attacks. Those she had been forbidden from developing, and after seeing what they could do to her [Unawaken Human Body], she understood why.

The first [Disease] would make it almost impossible for her to assimilate [Bioenergy] efficiently, the second one made a chaos to move her [Blood] with any degree of efficiency and made it almost impossible for her to [Fight] with any modicum of efficiency.

Even at their most [Senile] stage the [Humans] found ways to equalize the fight...

But the last one, the last one made her fear fully settle in her [mind].

*"[Warning, further attempts to study new cell types risk destruction of the current body. Care is advised.]"*

It worked somewhat similar to her [Nanite] swarm, only on a biological level, and it...It was horrific what it did, it turned the [Cells] within the body into uncontrollable entities that reproduced at an alarming rate and would cannibalize other parts of the body to fester more of their brethren.

For her, it was worse since her body was streamlined for her [Nanite Swarm], so most of her body followed the same template that made it easier for alterations, so should she get some of those cells without paying attention...

She may very well lose all her current biomass, and be left with only the [Mechanical] parts, and with only those, she would find it hard to get more [Biomass] without humans finding out about her.

Truly... [Humanity] was a [Monstrous] thing... And she walked around with that kind of [Weaponry]? And they allowed their [Larva], [Pupa] and [Child] stage [Humans] near?

She wasn't sure if applauded their bravery or their confidence, it meant one thing though. Should she manage to fully integrate...She could very well no longer fear attacks, but should they ever find out about her...

*"[Utter destruction]"*

Yeah...So this [Map] better grant her what she was promised.

## Chapter 19: I'm not crying, you are crying!

The endpoint of her travel had been finally at her mercy!

The perilous travel surrounded by danger, destruction, and mayhem would be at an end, she had traveled far and wide, deceiving hundreds upon thousands of [Humans] with her wit and smarts. She would achieve her goal!

She!

Would!

[TRIUMPH]!

*"[Warning, threshold for activity exceeded, purging exuding dextrose from bloodstream...Stockpiling bioenergy for later use.]"*

...She was being stared at, most of the [Humans] that walked by turned at her and smiled or [Giggled], she felt a rush of heat go to her face, it seemed that the biological answer to her predicament was a change of color to her [Face].

It was obviously an automatic reaction from her [Human] blueprint, one that was obviously not working since most of those [Humans] near had fished other smaller [Square shaped] entities and pointed at her. She didn't feel [Hostile] intent from them, so she decided to ignore them.

Instead, she did something more important, such as:

*"Main Core, log the previous chemical reaction, find the reason for it, and plot some use for it, if no useful use is found isolate the start of the reaction and block it!"* She ordered [Main Core].



*"[Order acknowledged, error...error... Biochemical reaction logged upon **Emotion** parts of the organic brain, tampering is ill-advised until a full understanding of delimitations of Host are found.]"*

What was the answer to these situations?

Oh right, it was that...

Dang it.

Instead, she decided to move forward and walk towards the [Room] that was at the end of her travel, she had asked plenty [Humans] about the address so far. Half of them had refused to answer or did so while asking if she was [Okay] or [Safe], as she got closer and closer to the end of her travel those answers changed in tone too.

The closer she got the more easily she got the answer needed, and the more often she got those [Candies] from the [Human - Elder Stage] humans, both from the [Male] and [Female] variant.

It was also the main reason she had found that her [Body] had a [Hard Limit] in the amount of pure Dextrose she was able to function with before her

[Consciousness Stream] went haywire. Curse you [Humans] for making a hard limit on the [Child Stage] variant!

"Oh? We barely opened and we already have clients!" A shrill voice started speaking as soon as she opened the door into the [Room], it was a [Human - Female Stage Adult] as far as she could see.

"...Did you come with Mommy or Daddy, little girl?" Asked the shrill voice as she got closer to her spot, it didn't seem to want to move, and she felt that communication would be more efficient if they stood somewhat close to each other.

It also made it easier for her to [Attack] should it be deemed necessary.

"I was told here I could get a place to stay." She said first while showing the map that [Frank the beetle] had given her.

This, however, made the [Woman] frown at her, "This is a service we provide for orphans...Where is your mom and dad?"

Orphans? Was that what she was? She didn't have one of those [Mom] or [Dad] as far as she was aware.

"I don't know what a [Mom] and [Dad] are, nor what an [Orphan] is, but [Frank the Beetle] told me to give you this should you not want to host me," Alexa said while providing the second envelope, she had copied most of the contents into her [Database] to try and use it as a decryption key.

Either way, she looked for evidence of what the [Envelope] may reveal, and so far, the faces she was going through were added to her [Emotional] database for further perusal.

"Well f#ck, Frank dropped another one on me did he?" The woman said as she turned to look at her and then opened one of the [Containers] within the furniture she was sitting in front of. It was square-shaped at the top with four legs at each corner, from her side, she wasn't able to see how it looked on the other side. But if it was like the ones she had seen in the [Room] that she arrived after exiting her [Den].

Then more than likely it held containers to hold things, she had hidden before in one of those after all.

"Don't move and if you can don't use any skill or power you have." The [Woman] said as she pointed at her with some kind of [Device].

*"[Warning, energy wave detected, resonating with Core. No new instructions found, no remnants energy found...]"* Main Core went on a long list of security functions about that.

"Hmm...It is a [Solid Core], but Frank said that you just awakened it...Did you lie to him?" The [Woman] spoke and for a few seconds, she felt as if the [Eyes] of her were shining.

*"[Warning, probable use of power or skill in use, prepare energy burn for quick escape.]"* Main Core warned her.

She could see the evidence well enough on her own though, "No...I made my [Core] around the time I told [Frank the beetle]." She said, unsure of why she was feeling [Angry] at the thought of having lied to [Frank the beetle].

"Hmm...No lies, but you do have some interesting thing going on...Are you a System?" The Woman asked and she felt herself grow incredibly cold.

She was found out? This quick?

How? Why? What?

*"[No hostile intent detected.]"*Main Core reported, but even so, this was dangerous.

"Of course, I'm not hostile, my [Core] lets me poke around surface thoughts and find out lies easily. I found your passenger like that." The Woman added while smirking.

She could read surface thoughts?

"*Main Core?*" She asked inwardly.

"*[Possible, thoughts are formed as biochemical reactions in brain matter. Encoding....]*" Main Core started processing as the eyes of the woman narrowed at her.

"Now now, you can't just..." She started saying and then her eyes turned confused.

"*[Encoding finished, thoughts will be translated into source code.]*" Main Core said but she didn't really notice any difference.

"And now you are thinking in 0 and 1? No wait, now its weird words? And now it isn't even words but static. What the hell?" The Woman said as her face turned more confused by the second.

"So, will you give me a place to stay?" Alexa asked, bringing back the important topic. "[Frank the beetle] implied that even if you didn't want to give me a place to stay I would be able to get a [Job] and as such get a place to stay."

At these words, the [Woman] face fell, as if she had tasted the most worthless piece of [Biomass] or just how she felt when [Main Core] started preventing her from processing more of those [Candy] that the [Elderly] gave her.

"Yes...we can provide Jobs to those that have a [Core], just like yours. And since yours seems to be mature already you can work for us. But... we rarely find Customers for kids as young as....you." The [Woman] said while pointing at her. "More than usual those that want kids as young as you aren't up to our standard, usually the youngest we can safely introduce are those that are between 12 to 15 years old."

...That didn't really tell her anything.

"How many [Seconds], [Hours] or [Minutes] is one of these... [Years]." Alexa asked, trying to get her head over those new metrics.

"...sixty seconds is one minute, sixty minutes is one hour, twenty-four hours is a day, seven days a week, the month varies but usually is between thirty to thirty-one days with February as an exception since that one is between 28 to 29 days." The [Woman] started explaining, had the [Humans] withheld so many ways to measure time?

This would be more efficient.

"Twelve months is a year." The Woman finished her explanation, "This is basic knowledge..."

Wait, this was basic?

No more importantly...Her [Blueprint] didn't have a [Age] on it?

"[Age of Blueprint recorded at **5 year old.**]" Oh...She was missing 7 years at the very minimum?

No wait, by this metric, wasn't her actual age around two? She should be...

"Do you have an example of a twelve-year-old [Female] that would be able to accept a [Job]," Alexa asked, she really needed to integrate into this [Faction]. They provided information for free!

"...Here, this is a picture of one of our youngest recruits, do mind that she got the job because her powers were very useful in our line of work." The [Woman] said showing her a picture of another [Human], this one was at one of the theoretical thresholds Main Core had deduced they developed.

The differences weren't that big, mostly she had longer [Legs] and [Arms], but everything else seemed to grow in tandem to those two parts.

*"[Approximated weight estimated around the current Biomass of host, that form may be more efficient to keep the current weight of materials. Calculating...]"* Main Core said as she saw her current form within her [Library] adapt and change.

"So? As you can see she is almost twice as big as you. No way we can pass-" The [Human - Adult Stage Female] started saying but she wasn't paying attention to her anymore.

*"[Finished blueprint, execute?]"* Main Core asked and she nodded in affirmative.

The changes started almost at the same time as she nodded her head, first her [Legs] started growing, and she jumped to 1,32M in height from her previous 70cm. It was somewhat below the target margin that she had aimed at.

*"[Notice, following the growing curve host would never achieve 1,5M in height at the target age of 12 years. If the host wishes for more height, targeting an older stage may be viable.]"* Main Core sniped back at her.

Rude!

This Main Core was rude!



*..."[Detected emotional instability, possible reason...Change in biochemistry from accelerated growth, hormonal charges unstable within host...still within threshold, no action taken.]"*

She wasn't moody dang it!

Either way, she noticed that her clothes seemed to no longer fit her, so she also sent an order to change them as her body changed. From the design that she had where most of her [Legs] were exposed, she extended the [Lower body armor - External outfit] so it covered her whole [Legs].

The [Sneakers] adapted to her [Feet] quite nicely so that hadn't changed that much. If anything she swapped the design of her [Socks] to one she had seen that seemed to go all the way to her [Knee].

The [Top] of her body grew both in width and height, even if most of her [Chest] remained the same...And for some reason, she found that [Annoying] even if she couldn't quite pick up the reason for it.

It was mostly for that reason that she opted to swap her [Top armor - External Outfit] to a design she found appealing in the streets, it was a somewhat loose [Jacket] white in color with dark lines here and there. It covered her [Chest] and [Arms] quite snugly, and below she left herself with a normally designed [Blouse] and of course the [Underarmor]...

Whose design hadn't changed that much from her previous form...?

And while her [Underarmor - Lower body] also didn't change, for some reason the fact that her [Underarmor - Upper Body] also didn't change [Annoyed] her too.

"Will this be acceptable?" She asked shrill voice, noticing how her pitch also had increased, did the increase in air that could go through her [Vocal Organ] change?

Should she change that back?

"No, wait, stop, what? How? How old are you?" The [Woman] asked her as she was touching her [Throat] thinking about if she should change it to her previous [Voice].

*"[Detected Energy Wave, target is currently using **Lie detector** care is advised.]"* Main Core intoned in her head.

Of course, she knew that "I'm asking **you**, whoever is the one that was **born** in that body first." The [Woman] added to her question.

Well, that was quite the conundrum huh?

"I am currently 12 years old, the minimum acceptable age to work in this establishment," Alexa answered, she was sure of her answer since that was what her new [Blueprint] said.

She had tons of new [Biological] functions unlocked, some more interesting than others, but that would need to wait for further study at a later date. Just like her [Craving] for more bioenergy from those [Candies], shaping her flesh had burned plenty of energy!

She deserved her snack!

"...You aren't lying. No wait, what age were you when you arrived then?" The [Woman] asked back, what was the deal with this [Woman]? So naggy.

...what?

"I was 5 years old when I first stepped here." She answered while thinking back at the previous consciousness thread, it didn't make sense for her to suddenly attribute a new [Emotion].

What was even [Naggy]?

*"[New Emotion detected, Naggy: To be annoying and insistent about a social situation.]"*

...She was [Naggy], but why was she Naggy?

"\*sigh\* Okay okay, then what is your real age?" The woman asked again, she felt the energy wave increase and tried to lock into her body.

Somehow it seemed to want to lock closer into her, but when it got close enough to [Main Core] it slipped away as if it wasn't able to latch onto it, that was interesting, it implied that whatever she [thought] within the confines of [Main Core] would be safe from this type of power.

Even if she was able to somehow [hear] [Main Core] before they masked her thoughts...

*"[Notice, only thoughts from Main Core are masked, Host should try to think in machine code to mask her own thoughts, but even that is unwarranted to work.]"*

...So she could hear her speak in her mind?

"Not in the way you think. After you learn about it the more you think about me or towards me, the easier it becomes to [Read] you. In contrast, the more you don't

want your mind to be read, the harder it becomes. It only works when you are aware of someone reading you, so it isn't a perfect defense, and I'm not sure it works the same for everyone, but for now, think very hard and answer the question. "The [Woman] said, Alexa wasn't sure if she would trust her. But for now, since she seemed to be [Honest] about it...

*"[New Emotion detected, Honest: The act of being truthful about something, being a statement or situation.]"*

Why did she think she was being [Honest]? Was she manipulating her [Mind] too?

"No need to be wary, see. This is why I only tell people that my power is detecting lies...You teenagers get all moody when you think I am reading your mind. No, my power has hard limits. I can [Read] you when you project your thoughts to me. Or when you think of me. Period." The [Woman] tried to explain.

So she wouldn't be able to [Read] her so long she didn't want her to be read?

*"I will [Terminate your life] no matter if you can read me or not in 4, 3, 2...1"* Alexa thought internally while preparing herself to attack. She was wary.

Looking and analyzing how she reacted, and when the time came...The [Woman] didn't move at all, so Alexa stopped her movement.

*"[No reactions from consciousness stream, no evidence of thoughts about wanting to abort the action. No evidence that the [Human - Adult Stage Woman] knew about the possibility of her stopping the attack. Result: She is being **Honest**."]*

"My body and mental age are tied to my form, if you ask about the age of my [Core] then that would be 2 days, it's the only one that doesn't seem to change according to my understanding," Alexa said with caution trying to not give more information than needed, she wasn't quite sure about why it mattered that much.

Well, taking into consideration that this form should be six times as old as her previous crab form...

*"[Amount of combat information, tactical information, and survival information less than a sixth of estimated information acquired in the period of time is minimal in comparison. Maybe they require the amount of information implied with age.]"* The analysis of main core...it chilled her back.

It was a sensation of [Fear] and a new [Emotion] she hadn't felt before.

*"[New series of emotions detected, added to database.]"*

*"[Panic: The emotion derivative of fear, increased distress attributed to this one, the source of it can be both fake and real.]"*

*"[Distress: Extreme discomfort, or adversity. Caused by problems both social and real, it causes or increases the [Panic] or other negative emotions.]"*

Well, it was great that [Main Core] was increasing the amount of data it could process with the [Growth] of her body and organs, she did notice her [Brain] was bigger and it could feel and process a new diversity of [Emotions], like the ones that made her mind go in a thousand different directions.

*"[Amount of thread of thoughts does not number in the Thousands.]"*

SHUT IT MAIN CORE!

WE ARE IN DANGER HERE!

Breathe Alexa, breathe...Focus...Point out the advantages you confer.

"I can promise that my [Mastery] over the disciplines needed for the job can be fulfilled should I get access to the needed [Data]." She started easy and simple, "Besides I can achieve a degree of flexibility vastly superior to any [Model] on the [Series] I currently hold. Granted the amount of [Data] my [Brain] has is limited by the [Design] I can alter it to fulfill any need deemed with-"

She was rambling, what was rambling?

*"[Rambling: The act of speak and say nothing of relevance.]"*

...Thank you Main Core. Yes, she was doing that. She wasn't even sure of what she was saying at this point. Was it effective? The degree of emotions the [Woman] was showing was blurred for some reason.

She...she...what? Why was the woman blurry? She felt something in her face, something was leaking. Was she leaking? DID THEY MISS SOMETHING IN THE BLUEPRINT?!?

MAIN CORE WHAT THE HECK?!?

*"[No obvious flaw in blueprint...Checking...Negative, current status of Host within nominal ranges. Current activity is within the threshold of emotional distress host is experimenting and is deemed appropriate by checks within the blueprint.]"*

THEN EXPLAIN THIS DEFECT!

*"[Current emotional status was seeded from original blueprint, emotion found and analyzed.]"*



...It was from the original blueprint?

"shh....it's okay, we will not throw you away okay?" The [Woman] stood in front of her, when did she get here? Was...Was she going to be terminated?

"I...\*sniff\*...I can \*sniff\*...Don't [Terminate me] please?" She wanted to run away, she wanted to fight. She wanted to escape this cursed place, return to a simpler [Blueprint], and throw everything away.

"Everything will be all right okay, no one will hurt you...Well, at least not here and now. I can't promise the same if you do take the job though." The [Woman] said and she [Laughed], was that funny?

That the job could get her [Terminated]?

And if that wasn't enough, the [Woman] extended her arms around her [Body] and pushed her towards her [Chest], then she started to...Rub? Compress? Give her pats? She was doing something weird on her back.

"shh...Everything will be alright, cry it out. The bad people will not hurt you here." And the [Woman] started doing that weird thing on her back while subvocalizing some weird [Tune].

It...It made her so tired...So so tired...

*"[New Emotion detected, Crying/Cry: The act of releasing fluid from the eyes to let the backed-up emotions out in an attempt to find comfort from older members from the same species. Effectivity currently shown to be extreme.]"*

## Chapter 20: There is [Truth] and there are [Books]...

That was tiring.

*"[Status within optimal range, finished purging of troublesome emotions... Brain chemistry once again optimal.]"*

Also, her [Eyes] hurt, her nose was stuffy, and she would need to recycle the fluids stuck to her [Outer armor], and restock more [Water] after having lost so much in this activity.

"Are you feeling okay now?" The [Woman] had stayed with her all the time, [Hugging] her.

That was a thing it seemed that [Older] members of this race did, it helped alleviate the biochemical instability in their younger members.

*"[Hug: The act of giving comfort to members of their race under duress. Effectivity under study, need more samples.]"*

...So I need to collect more hugs?

That would be...harsh, she didn't want to [Cry] that often, even if she was the most beautiful of all, crying didn't feel like something [Cute] to do.

"Here, clean your nos-" The [Woman] was about to give her a piece of [Fabric] before stopping and staring at her, "...That is a neat way to deal with the after-effects of crying, are you using your [Power] to return your eyes and nose back to normal?"

She was indeed using her skills as a bio-weapon to morph her body back to the base state, she was still missing a few millimeters of moisture and some grams of biomass from the nasal fluid she lost though.

"Okay, now let's play a game. I ask a question, you answer [Truthfully], then you get to ask a question and I in turn answer [Truthfully]. One of my Core Power's limits is that should I promise to answer truthfully I will need to fulfill that promise." The [Woman] offered to her as she pointed to a [Chair] for her, then sat herself in the [Desk].

That seemed...

*"[Acceptable, so long there is an option to refuse.]"*

Right, she needed the guarantee of being able to refuse. "I can do it, so long I can refuse to answer some questions." Main Core was right.

"Hmm...That is fine, but you get no question and will need to answer another question, you only get three chances to refuse though. If you refuse three questions I am not giving you a Job nor a place to crash. I will give you another address to go through. If your Core was unstable then I may accept you anyway, but yours isn't Unstable." The [Woman] said.

She didn't want to go elsewhere though, so she may need to sacrifice some inform-

*"[Warning, actions of host are endangering prime directives, reroll though-]"*

Main Core started to say before she clamped it down **"[BEHAVE]"** and hissed under her breath.

"Everything okay?" The [Woman] asked, but she ignored her and turned inwardly.

*"[...Re analyzing situation, reassessing prime directives...Current activities within margin, proceed Host.]"*

That's what I thought.

"Yes, who starts?" Alexa asked after glaring at [Main Core], she would need to get some private time to check on those, [Main Core] had attempted a thought reroll. He shouldn't have enough agency to do that.

Then what would have rerolled? She would need to make sure about that.

"Okay, first question...Are you a System? How many people are inside that pretty head of you?" The [Woman] started once more, right? She had asked that before. Did she know about her OS?

"I need clarifications first, you ask if I'm a [System], or what [System] I run on? These seem to imply your definition of what a [System] is, is different from mine." Alexa said she found the question dangerous in itself. The [Woman] seemed to think that she was [Human] but then went ahead and asked if she was running a [System] or not.

"Hmm...Right, then let me elaborate..." The [Woman] hummed to herself before nodding and started saying, "Okay a System is when in your head there are multiple other voices that are different from You, they have their own personality, and memories and sometimes they can take control of your body. Some lose

memories of what the other people did, some can see...So, is anyone inside there with you?"

...The heck is that? Are the [Humans] so advanced that they can share bodies with others? Or was this a form of organic dual consciousness stream going? Was she like that?

*"[Technically, that definition is accurate. While Main Core does not hold a personality or memories, it can be considered a pseudo-consciousness stream independent from the one the organic brain has running. Even if both ultimately are part of the whole.]"*

So the answer was a yes...? "I guess? There are two voices in my head and we do speak among us..." Alexa answered tentatively. She wasn't quite sure if the answer was correct or not.

But since the [Woman] nodded as she answered, then it should be correct, "Okay good enough, ask away your question then." The [Woman] said with a [Smile] at her, making motions with her hands toward her chest.

...Somehow it annoyed her that her bulges were bigger than hers.

"Why do you care if I'm one of those [Systems] or not." She said, almost immediately regretting her question. She should have asked something relevant to her immediate survival, or how to get the correct qualifications to get the [Job] or [Place to crash] offered before!

"...I should have asked for the right of denial too." The [Woman] sighed, only making her [Eyes] narrow, was that the correct question then? "A System is...okay, let me start with saying this. A system can be created for many reasons, it can be made for natural reasons, and it can be created because you have a vibrant and wonderful imagination!"

The [Woman] made some weird movements with her hands and smiled brightly at that, only for her face to turn downcast after and adding, "But the most common reason for it is usually Trauma...and by your face, you don't know that word, of course, you don't...fricking kids..."

The [Woman] sighed more and more, did she have a malfunction in her [Breathing] organs?

"Trauma is... like if someone did something very bad to you, made you want to run away, made you cry till you fell asleep every single night, or when someone abused you. Ring any bell?" The [Woman] turned to her after that and turned to her. "This will be my question by the way."

...Traumatic experiences huh...

*"[Those may include body modification if the logs readings of pain amount are to be believed, also body dismembering, and multiple activities realized while at the testing chambers.]"*

"Would the [Trauma] you speak of include above normal pain, below average eating, low intake energy food, tasteless food, body dismembering, or multiple high stress and stakes situations in combat settings?" Alexa asked to clarify her questions brought up by [Main Core], getting a small nod from the [Woman], and she noticed a small tremble in her facial expression. As if she was fighting to control her own reaction. Interesting.

"I will use my first denial to a question. I do not want to elaborate or answer that question." Alexa decided in the end, to explain the limits of her pain tolerance or the full spectrum of her bio-morphing abilities.

"That is fair, then my next question... Are you running away from somewhere?" The [Woman] asked. Wasn't that obvious?

"Yes, my previous... [Dwelling] wasn't as comfortable after an [Incident]." Alexa answered, then started thinking. What could she ask now?

She needed something that served her purpose.

"What are the qualifications I need to fulfill to get the [Job] and get a new [Housing]?" She ended by asking in the end, this was important, should she not be



able to get this place to grant her an entry into the more broad aspects of [Human] society. Then at least she could tailor her approach to the next one.

"Usually we ask for our employee to be of age, which is above 16 years old at the bare minimum. If their qualifications are good enough we can accept fifteen. Usually, those under eighteen are accepted under the premise of being trained and they pay for their time with us." The [Woman] started saying, so she was missing 1095 days at the bare minimum? Would she need to find a blueprint for those ages, or try to calculate it from scratch?

No wait, hadn't she said that this age was the absolute minimum they could ever accept?

"Yes, we do have some employees in the twelve age range, the current age you seem to...have...I will ask you about that next, anyway. If our employees are Supers we make more allowances. Even so, the bare minimum we have ever accepted was twelve years old because that girl's power was adequate for logistics within one of the employers we work with." The [Woman] said after reading part of her line of thought.

How did that work?

"My turn again... What will you do if we don't employ you?" The [Woman] then asked her, what would she do?

"I will try to find [Employment] and a [Dwelling] in another place." She answered as just, the [Woman] didn't seem surprised by her answer, even if she wasn't to be happy with her answer.

"My turn, should I get the [Job], how will I get the needed information to perform the [Job]?" That was important, she needed a steady source of information.

"...\*sigh\* Girl, you shouldn't need to worry...Ughh...." The [Woman] seemed to have some problems with her internal processing, in the end, she ended up answering her question "Yes, we will provide you with training and manuals that you will need to read and memorize...We will need your contact information to give you..."

She stopped speaking, narrowing her eyes at her, had her [Face] shown more of her internal turmoil? She was, after all, not sure if she would be able to receive new data streams after leaving the [Testing Chambers]. She hadn't tried it yet and wasn't sure what type of data stream the [Humans] used.

She doubted the encrypted messages used to guide her here were the only way to share information and data, that would be so...

"Question. Do you know how to read?" The [Woman] asked her with her eyes narrowed as she searched for something on her [Desk], "This is part of the question, read this."

And then handed her a piece of [Paper], it was different from the one before, and unlike what she had used so far, this one seemed to be using a different method of engraving than the [Letters] she had found on the [Streets].

The [Letters] were imprinted using a faulty model or something, it was closer to curves than the clear lines..." *Main Core? The translation suit is ready?*" She asked inwardly.

Getting a weird reaction from the [Woman]'s face as one of her [Eyebrow]'s seemed to rise a few centimeters.

"[Negative, not enough data.]"

...Dang it.

"...I know the amount of different variations that exist within this [Encryption] and could probably work..." She started saying, trying to find a way to phrase it so she wouldn't be seen as an [Inferior] model within the same line she currently seemed to be part of.

"Can you read it?" The [Woman] doubled down in her question.

"[No.]"

"Not yet. Given time I may be able to infer the meaning if I get more [Data]" She answered in the end.

Had she known they would require this of her, she would probably have prepared more, why had she rushed here though? She could see the flaws of her previous planning, they were so obvious!

She didn't have any idea of where she was rushing in, she didn't know what she could expect, she had only come here like...like...

*"[A bumbling fool high in sucrose.]"*

...Was her previous form the reason why? Was her [Brain] affecting more of her actions?

She would need to check on that...And maybe rethink the limits of what form she took, she did notice that in her more [Human] forms she had different levels of [Feelings] and [Needs] that she hadn't experienced before when she was in her [Crab] form.

"Okay...Not ideal...But we can work with this." The [Woman] said, bringing her away from her musings. "Last question then...Can I speak to your system mate?"

She asked again. Granted, she had all the power in this relationship, but could [Main Core] speak with her? Would she need to open a data stream?

Was it safe to do?

*"[Inconclusive evidence, advice to check in isolated area with no witness and with a backup ready...]"*

Main core seemed to be wary of opening those gates within the data stream, as was she, they probably were wary for different reasons. She didn't [Need] Main core, it was convenient, and she was used to having a [Main Core]. But most of her functions came from whatever [Core] was formed in the testing chamber.

So should [Main Core] become a liability, she could always destroy it and make a new one...

*"[Highly inefficient-]"* Main core of course was against that *"Effective way to deal with hostile takeover, if you know of a better way I'm listening."*

Alas, that wasn't the problem at hand. How could that [Woman] speak to Main Core, there wasn't an actual way of doing so without linking the data stream...

*"[Answer: Shift part of the organic parts within the **throat** to create an audio projector and use that to connect the data stream to create an artificial **voice**.]"*

Oh, that was as good a way as any.

"Yes, let me just...move this..." She answered the woman as she felt part of her [Throat] shift and change, the Nanites within her bloodstream working in moving part of the remaining biomass within her body, it felt weird having a metallic part within this body.

Even if her previous one was designed to accommodate both fleshy bits and mechanical ones. This body didn't seem to be well designed in that aspect, maybe the [Human Anatomy] wasn't prepared for these changes?

Or was it that the older models within the [Humans] were the only ones prepared for these changes? [Frank the beetle] seemed fine with his body having chitin and flesh combined. He had, after all, both exoskeleton and endoskeleton systems.

*"[**Test...Test...**]"* She heard the telltale voice of a square-shaped entity resonating within her body. That...That [Scared] her.

*"[Host, please open the*

***mouth.]"***

And almost in reflex to the times she had listened without question the [Square-shaped entities] she did open her mouth, only for the voice of one of the [Square-shaped entities] started to flow from her mouth.

***"[Greetings Human, what is that you require of me to grant Alexa work within your faction.]"*** Main Core started speaking, why was using the voice of the square-shaped entities though?

"Interesting, I have no idea how are you speaking without moving your mouth...Is it part of your power?" The [Woman] said, oh right. Main Core wasn't using her vocal cords...

***"[I was not part of the deal you made with Alexa, so I'm not beholden to follow those rules. Do you want to make such a deal with me too?]"*** Main Core seemed...different.

It was a stark contrast with how it acted with her, it was...

***"[New Emotion detected, Pride: To feel superior about your position within a social situation without any doubt.]"***

That, Main Core feels too prideful compared to how it acted with her.

"That is fine, so...What's the deal with you?" The [Woman] asked Main Core.

**"[Unknown meaning to question. My purpose is to serve host to the best of my abilities and help her achieve her goals.]"** Main Core said she was getting tired of having her mouth open.

But this seemed important, so she needed to endure!

"Do you have a name?" The [Woman] asked.

Why would [Main Core] have a name?

**"[We have a designation and number granted to us by the Humans in charge, only Host has a Name since it was deemed needed to join Human society.]"** Main Core answered. That was way too close to comfort!

"That is enough," Alexa said as she started to remove the new addition to her throat.



"I guess it is enough to get an idea of what kind of System you have going..." The [Woman] answered after, then while grabbing some smaller piece of paper, it was close in size to what [Frank the bettle] had given her before.

"What is that?" Asked Alexa as the [Woman] handed her the piece of paper, it was full of more of those [Letters].

"Is the answer to whether you get the job or not." Smiled the [Woman].

"...I still don't have the necessary information to decrypt this kind of [Information]," Alexa said while frowning at the [Woman].

"Oh right, here we have this one too." The [Woman] said while giving her a bundle of [Pieces of paper] stuck between two harder pieces of material. Her initial analysis determined that the outer parts were harder, probably to protect the information within.

Opening to the first page revealed the image of a [Human - Child Stage Female] dressed just like she was a minute ago.

Followed by a big white blob with the letters [Girl].

Looking at the first hard piece after closing the book she found the inscriptions on the outside too.

[Learn to Read]

In bold [Letters], then below that another series of [Letters], [Age 3-6].

Well, she would try to use this as a cipher then, "Now come, and sit. We will be practicing this at least till lunch. Depending on how good you become we will decide if sending you alone or with an escort to the induction." The [Woman] said while grabbing her by the [Hand] and moving her to a [Chair] nearby.

So she would help her in the deciphering? That was...Nice of her.