

A BIO-WEAPON'S RHAPSODY

Chapter 261: The Beacon of Civilization... wasn't a thing yet?

"How to use your power properly." Alexanders finally addressed the thing that Ale had asked, or well, stated.

"That is something that can have as many answers as you can think of," Alexanders carried on, setting his fork atop the table in front of him, "Or can have only one answer."

"That... sounds counterintuitive to each other, how can something have many answers yet only have one?" Ale said confused, "That is not logical in the least."

Actually, it was stupid, nothing could be anathema to itself, or contradict itself this much, that was not how things worked. Logic did not work like that.

"Easy," Alexanders said raising his index finger, "How did I do this?"

And then, atop his finger a sphere of what looked to be electricity started hovering... Only... electricity didn't behave like that, so what was that?

"[Detected discharge of plasma, detected a magnetic containment field surrounding said sphere.]"

.... Plasma?!?!?

How... How was it behaving like that? It should disperse in all directions!

Actually, wasn't that really dangerous?!?!

"From your expression you did realize what this was, good." Alexanders said smiling and picking up the sphere with his other hand, he started playing with it, as if it was a normal ball... Each movement made Ale flinch.

"He is messing with you," Miriam Eversoul said from the side, "The more attention you give to his shenanigans the more he will bother you with them."

"Ignore the haters," Alexanders added from the side, "She is angry because she doesn't get why all the people flinch whenever I do this."

"But her assessment is correct." Vivian Kellet stated as she stood, she moved to take the dirty dishes that had been finished, passing by Ale who still had some of her pancakes, but taking Alexanders and Miriam Eversoul dirty dishes, "Even though your reaction is the correct, you can be assured, if that ever broke the building security and safety measures would isolate the issue... and the one that caused it."

Ale... hadn't noticed anything like that.

"[Starting search...Downloading schematics of building... Categorizing...]"

Main Core got into the task at once as soon as Ale thought about it.

"[Accessing local database... handshake protocol established...Confirmed sixty-nine protocols to ensure the safety and security of the inhabitants of this building.]"

....Really? Sixty-nine?

"What?" Alexanders said, confused at Ale, probably because Ale's expression had turned from one of worry to one of disappointment, the blonde man merely stared at Ale with a fork in his hand, "I will throw this at you, don't test me."

"...Nothing," Ale said sighing, what had she expected? This was, after all, Alexa's older brother. "So? What was the point again? You probably are using your Core Power to do that... somehow..."

"And that is the crux of the matter," Alexanders said letting the sphere of plasma float around him, orbiting as if it was a moon trapped in his gravity well... or something, "I

hired a few B-List, C-List and one particular prickly D-List and paid all their debts if they managed to do this. None managed, well... the D-List got close, but lost concentration and ended frying his left arm, had to get him a new one."

"...Was that how the guy with the left arm that had all his nerve endings fried came to be?" Vivian Kellet asked from the kitchen, "The one that wanted a bionic arm that could tolerate Lightning discharges and that you ordered specifically that we did not fulfill his request?"

"That's the guy, he called me stupid. So he gets a training arm. So long as he manages to continue using his Core Power, he will probably rise to A-List." Alexanders said nodding at his own statement, it was funny seeing how some of his mannerisms were this similar to those of Alexa, "So, you answered that I did this using my Core Power. Which, to be fair, was obvious. The question is... how?"

How?

"You built... a containment field using electromagnetism then made the plasma...?" Ale said thinking about it, that was the obvious answer, well, second most obvious answer anyway, "But I assume that is not what you are asking?"

"It is," Alexanders answered, "But the crux of the matter is not what I did, but how I did it. Any takes? Feel free to showcase your above high school knowledge too Eversoul, Kellet."

Vivian Kellet didn't answer and instead continued washing the dirty dishes. While Miriam Eversoul just huffed.

"That's just some fancy lightning showcase, you are probably just controlling the lightning from escaping your area of control." Was the answer that Miriam Eversoul came in the end.

"That is an sphere of condensed plasma," Vivian Kellet finally answered, "Most people react with panic or fear as they know the effects of such condensed amount of raw plasma, the temperature would be enough to cause some damage to the nearby furniture and the electromagnetic interference would probably fry a few of the devices... if it was normal plasma that is."

"What do you mean?" Miriam Eversoul said, eyeing with suspicion at Alexanders, "It isn't normal lightning?"

"Nope," Alexanders smirked, "Funny thing, the phenomena we bring forth to the real world with Core Powers are more potent than those in a normal environment, in this example, my sphere of plasma has several orders of magnitude more dangerous."

"One of my subordinates said that they had measured the damage, that is comparable with a small explosive, the temperature would be capable of melting steel plates and the electromagnetic damage would be high enough to damage most of the electronic devices within this apartment." Vivian Kellet said still not turning to look at them, "That is when taking into consideration the output of most B-List Core Users."

Right...

"What spot does he have in that list?" Ale asked unsure if she really wanted to know.

"That list is measured by the degree of damage one can cause to their environment. Just by existing this man is near the top of the list, so that metric is pointless when judging him." Miriam Eversoul answered before Alexanders could.

"If it was only the type of power, mine is near the D-List. If we take the amount of influence it gives me, it rises to C-List." Alexanders answered nonetheless, "To rise above one needs smarts, knowledge and luck."

Ale assumed Alexanders had the first two, she would need to gauge how he moved and behaved to see the third, so at least B-List.

By using that metric Alexa was probably near the top, if the fear to the Nanites was to go by, and the fact that she could create new Core users could by itself send her to the very top.

"So, what am I doing then?" Alexanders asked yet again, "Vivian and Eversoul already answered. Expand upon your previous answers, give me the methodology you would use if you were in my place."

The method she would use?

Ale couldn't help but raise her hand and look at her own Index finger, all it would take would be for her to create the needed machinery within her body to generate the containment field...

"I would first create a Faraday cage," Ale said imagining the process, the blueprints she would need to develop or source, "Feed the energy to kickstart the plasma and start feeding inside the Faraday cage, then keep the stability and check the status of the containment field as I decide what to do next."

Alexanders smiled at that answer while Vivian Kellet nodded from the other side of the kitchen, Miriam Eversoul... Just shrugged at Ale's stare.

"Good," Alexanders ended up saying when no one else spoke, "That is, indeed what I do."

"Kinda obvious to be honest," Ale said as answer to that statement.

"You would think so," Alexanders laughed at the retort from Ale, "But turns out, the guy I said before? The one that got the closest? He merely 'willed the sphere of plasma into being' or so he said, he had no formula or thought what his actions would generate. Merely thought very hard 'I want a sphere like that' and his Core Power did the rest."

...That... sounded highly irresponsible.

"Most Core Users do that, they don't understand what their Core Powers do. It's why we have such a weird subset of Core powers categorized as 'Beast Core' when they all are just shifters too dumb to understand that a 'Power that lets me turn into a bear' is in reality 'A power that lets me change into another form'." Alexanders shook his head in disappointment, "Just because the first time they became a bear does not mean they can't change into other forms... But it's like talking to a wall."

"We don't understand Core Powers yet, perhaps their Core power works like that, while yours doesn't." Miriam Eversoul chimed from the side.

But Ale shared that same sentiment with Alexanders.

"I can turn into animals too," So Ale chimed from the side, "And I am not a beast core user."

"See!" Alexanders jumped into the statement, throwing the sphere of Plasma behind him where it fizzled out into nothing, "I told you they worked like I said!"

"I do need a working blueprint, and the biomass to compensate in case my new form ends up bigger." Ale said adding the needed requirements in case they asked her to shift into said bear, "But it can be done."

"And they don't have that limitation," Miriam Eversoul said turning to Alexanders, "So that would mean the power of Ale and the power of those beast core users isn't the same."

"That could be explained by the fact that she is just more efficient, most beast core users have to ingest a great amount of food to be healthy, while she doesn't need to." Alexanders pointed that as his defense, "So that just means she is good at using her power and they aren't."

"That is just your point of view," Miriam Eversoul said shrugging, "If you had gotten a beast core then we could test it, but you didn't. So unless you find a way to reroll your Core Power..."

"Hah!" Alexanders barked a laugh, "You wish, I ain't dropping this one even if we could find a way to do it."

"What's so good about that one?" Ale asked not wanting to be forgotten. "I would imagine you would want... you know..."

"What a Dragon Core?" Alexanders smirked, "Nah, I just think this one is cool. Don't get me wrong, I have seen what you can do, and have a few theories about what you could do. But shooting Lightning from your hands and feeling the whole EM environment... If you all could see the world as I can... You wouldn't want anything else, besides..."

Alexanders then turned to look around, and Ale noticed how his eyes had stopped for a few extra seconds on the purple woman who was once again floating behind them.

"This one serves my needs just nicely." Alexanders ended up adding, "But that is really besides the point, what matters now is that we have found out that your methodology is just like mine, so that solves how to help you."

"What do you mean?" Ale asked confused, there was no way that Alexanders didn't know how their power worked, their actual power. He had the original blueprints of P4 after all. "Didn't you already know how our power worked?"

"That?" Alexanders said pointing behind him, behind him was the kitchen, "That doesn't matter, what you did before, or how you did it is meaningless, unless you want to return to that?"

"No." Ale refused to be like that again, "But that is what is at our foundation."

Their foundation was of a BioWeapon.

"You are thinking about it wrong," Alexanders said smirking once again, "Your foundation may be that, but how you go about it is very different, look at where you are and how you are right now. Are you like you were before?"

...No.

She was not a ten-tonne mechanical crab. Right now, she was a teenager who had several modifications to her skeletal system and a few mechanical upgrades to her body. So she shook her head.

"And the way you use your power is different, yeah sure, you can do a few of the things that you did before. You did learn many interesting tricks did you not?" Alexanders said shrugging as he walked behind Ale, placing both his hands atop her shoulders, "But you can do many things you couldn't do before can't you? Or could you have made a 20mm anti-material rifle inside your body? Could you create the custom-made ammunition? You brought all those changes from thin air did you not?"

... Ale hadn't thought about that.

"Besides you can do other things you couldn't before, don't think I haven't noticed your weight..." This last bit was more of a whisper than anything, was it a warning? Or a reminder?

Ale had for a second forgotten the kind of person that this man was, even if he was showing favor to her... and even if he indeed felt guilty about her for some reason, he was still the person who had made the original program from... whatever reason.

"Yes..." Ale nodded for now, "My Core Power has other aspects to it that I haven't understood that well."

"Yeah," Alexanders latched on that and didn't mention anything about his previous statement, "Guessed as much, when you translated the design like that instead of materializing the weapon itself, was it because you wouldn't be able to shoot it normally? Or something that your Core power decided for you?"

"The first," Ale answered, "I would not be able to wield that kind of weapon even if I have the strength to hold it, my center of gravity would change too much, and the gun would be too unstable. So I adapted it and used my whole body as a stand for it."

That had been the answer she had come to naturally anyway, she wasn't sure if Core had chimed in on her decision or not, but she was guessing Core was not part of the equation.

"So, for now we know that you can make anything you have a blueprint for." Alexanders said as he walked in front of her once again. "So that means you are more of a builder than someone who just asks and gets things out of thin air. Meaning your only limiter is the amount of 'Blueprints' that is to say, knowledge you have."

That was kind of obvious to Ale from the beginning.

"So she needs to study." Miriam Eversoul said from the table, "We don't have schools here yet to we?"

School?

"Those are set up for the last phase," Alexanders answered, "We need to finish all the infrastructure first and set up the hospitals and daycare centers first, besides hiring the teachers first."

"Don't forget of the administrative side again," Miriam Eversoul sighed from behind, "It was hell the first time."

What were they speaking about? School? Alexa went to school already, but they couldn't expect her to learn how to use her core power there right?

Alexa cared not for those things.

"ALBIREO and CRADDLE can deal with that, if needed Cardinal can help too." Alexanders said shaking his head, "We will get some administrative personnel of course, but not as much as you suggested, I don't mind giving works that amounts to nothing and are only to keep the populace fed, but I will not leave such crucial work in the hands of **people**. This is too important for that."

"What are you two speaking about?" Ale raised her hand to get some attention.

"Oh right, you don't know." Alexanders said facepalming, "Right... should probably start from there, do you know where we are right now?"

"Aquila right?" Ale said, "A super secret installation or something, I wasn't paying too much attention when coming here, just in case you didn't want me to see too much."

"What?" Alexanders seemed surprised at that, "Such a waste... but then again, it may be for the better, but no. That is not what I mean, do you know what this is, what this is really, out in the open."

"...A lab to create... something?" Ale had almost said 'To create bioweapons'.

"I mean, that is on the side, and what I will tell the old geezers, but no. The actual end goal is..." Alexanders smiled, this time it seemed actually genuine. "Something that will become a beacon of knowledge and move our civilization forward."

"... You will light the beacon of civilization...?" Ale said almost automatically, the words that she had seen a few times at the end of Core's messages.

"Yes!" Alexanders said with his eyes shining, almost like how Alexa looked whenever she was excited about something, "That's it! We will light the beacon of civilization! That's perfect!"

...Was... wasn't that their motto? Granted, Ale hadn't seen it anywhere besides Core's messages.

"You have earned the right to ask me for anything, and I will get it for you. ANYTHING!" Alexanders was busy writing something on his phone that he had brought at some point, "I need to save it and send it to marketing, we need to ensure no one is using it yet."

...Was... wasn't Ale supposed to say it? Turning to look at Sapphire she found the woman smiling mysteriously, an almost imperceptible nod was sent her way.

The woman knew the saying too, Ale was sure. But... if Sapphire knew it, if Core knew it... Why didn't Alexanders?

Chapter 262: The Blueprint of Aquila.

Alexanders took more time than Ale was sure he noticed fussing on his phone with Sapphire at the side, merely nodding at his ramblings; neither Miriam Eversoul nor Vivian Kellet seemed to pay him any attention.

"Let him be, he is in the middle of one of his weird non-tinker twitch episodes," Miriam Eversoul had said when Ale was still waiting for him to continue speaking.

"Is this something that happens often?" Ale asked, unsure if that was something normal or not. She hadn't seen something like this before, but she hadn't spent that much time near tinker core users.

She still wasn't that sure if that was something she should even attempt to spend time near, after all, wouldn't they notice the reality of what Ale and Alexa were? It seemed like a risk for no gain. Or almost no gain.

"Not as often as before, a couple years ago he would go in and out every two to three days, was it five years ago when it calmed down?" Miriam Eversoul said turning to Vivian Kellet, "What do you think Viv?"

"Roughly five years with two to three months as margin of error." Vivian Kellet said nodding, "He made an spectacle about finally managing to get the right hardware for something, there was no new patents or inventions filled those years, so it is still unsure what it was. And since most of our AI networks were already in place, it was not that."

... What had been what he made then? Ale wasn't entirely sure Sapphire was a true AI, she was too advanced, not that they could even argue about that fact, since Alexa herself was something like that.

No wait, was Sapphire a former test subject who also triggered a Core? That seemed... something they would need to check later, because if she was, why was she still in this weird relationship with Alexanders?

But Ale couldn't ask that, not here, not in a place that Sapphire could monitor. How much did they know about this purple-haired woman, anyway? They didn't seem to know the body they had shown in the files from before was of Sapphire, but that could be explained by them not knowing her figure or how the body looked. They could still know about the woman.

"Do you know who the main administrator of the Saintsworths network is?" Ale decided to outright ask, Sapphire was around anyway, if she didn't want for the questions to be answered she could say something.

Ale knew for sure Sapphire was paying attention to her even if she pretended to be taking care of Alexanders, it was the most simple thing for an existence like them to split their attention in two threads after all.

"Hmm... It should be one of the AI's right?" Miriam Eversoul said turning to Vivian, "Would it be ALBIREO?"

"That one manages this place," Vivian Kellet said shaking her head, "Even like that Alexanders made sure to partition the administration of his projects, in case one of them failed and to prevent leaks of data."

"Then CRADDLE?" Vivian Kellet pointed, "That one manages schools and whatnot right?"

CRADDLE? The one that Alexa spoke with during classes?

"While it manages the school and orphanage system, the Saintsworths as a whole encompass way more than that." Vivian Kellet shook her head yet again, "As such I doubt that one is that high in the totem pole."

"ISKANDER?" Miriam Eversoul said and after a few seconds of saying that shook her head, "No, that one was supposed to be isolated to only weapon systems... And I doubt that man is irresponsible enough to put the one controlling the weapons in the same position to control everything else."

"That means it should be CARDINAL." Vivian Kellet said, "By elimination, but that one... feels as if it was following orders, even though it should be at the top."

"Or near the top," Miriam Eversoul said also nodding at that, "Why are you asking?"

Ale... was sure Cardinal was not at the top, why? Because she was seeing the one that was at the top.

"No real reason." Ale said shrugging, if they didn't know, they didn't know.
"What about Sapphire?"

That seemed to get a reaction from Alexanders, at least for a few seconds, before he shrugged and continued sending messages and grumbling about some things.

"That should be Alexanders secretary AI." Miriam Eversoul said shaking her head, "Or the name he stuck the poor soul that is working is his secretary/manager."

The name he stuck...?

"What do you mean by the name he stuck in their poor soul?" Ale asked, confused, "Did he change the name of someone?"

That was a very real problem that could happen, Ale had seen Alexa doing that before, like how she refused to utter the name of the director of her school, only referring to him as Mister Pig.

"He used to do that when he was little." Miriam Eversoul started speaking as she sighed, "The Saintsworths... is not a normal family, the power struggle is something they experience since little. And while it isn't as bad as before, just as he said before. A hundred years ago they got sold as slaves and needed to prove their worth by returning home... But it is still harsh."

Harsh?

Alexa... hadn't seen anything of the like. Granted, Ale did notice a few suspicious people in their periphery, but since they lived within a super villain zone she had assumed it was because of that.

"Yeah, I am not sure how much of it is true, but there are rumors that even today the Saintsworths' kids suffer from assassination attempts from time to

time. The ones who are more likely to rise to the top suffer more." Miriam Eversoul carried on explaining that, "Alexanders, the blonde irrational bundle of ego is one of those that stands at the top of the totem pole. AS such, he also grew with those kinds of expectations and responsibilities."

He was? Since little? Like this?

"So after getting annoyed at the fact that his maidservants got exchanged every two weeks for safety reasons, he decided to stop learning their names and just call them with the same name all of them." Miriam Eversoul said with a sad smile on her face, "All of them after that point have been called the same, no matter if they walk with their name in a tag or not. He refuses to acknowledge them by any name besides the same one."

"And that one is..." Ale asked with trepidation, what kind of name would this man use? Alexa? Alexastrix? Alemony?

"Elizabeth." Miriam Eversoul stated evenly, "We aren't sure at what point he got a maidservant with that name, or if he just picked at random. But any secretary he had from that point on got called like that. At least till he started using that name Sapphire."

"He just liked that name," Sapphire said with a smirk from the other side, *"Also, unless they have clearance level nine they will not know who I am, not really. Not even the high council from the Saintsworths has that much clearance... Not even handsome does by the way, his ends at level eight."*

What?

Who even has that level of clearance then?

Who even designed it like that?!?!?

"A very grumpy and manly blonde made it like that, and he is about to end his ramblings. Get ready." Sapphire added with a smirk.

Grumpy and manly?

"Aaaand done, man I hate PR." Alexanders said stretching, "Did I miss something? Sapphire?"

"Nothing too important handsome, your new sister asked if they knew me. They don't." Sapphire chimed helpfully from the side.

"Nothing too important," Miriam Eversoul answered the question too, "You were about to tell Ale what this place's goal is. And unless you decide to finally tell us why you are making it, may as well go ahead and tell her the same bullshit you told us before."

Alexanders made an understanding face as he nodded, listening to both women's answers.

"Well, like I was saying." Alexanders said, coughing into his fist as if he needed to recenter himself, "It's a school."

A school?

"... He just saw a series about a city school and thought it was cool, so he made one too." Miriam Eversoul said, facepalming, "It's stupid, highly

irresponsible. And will get us at least five people suing us by the end of the week it launches."

"It's also practical and will ensure the best possible education devoid of meddling from people who only want to line up their pockets." Alexanders pointed, "And this school plan works, I tested it in a few schools. Mr Pig was one of our test subjects."

"... Mr Pig? Ah..." Miriam Eversoul had a face of understanding, "Right.... Mister Kendrick Hamilton's school, that was why you bought it?"

"If a pig comes to you talking about a school, wouldn't you help him out?" Alexanders said shrugging, "It was surprising enough that he could talk, but he was wearing a tuxedo. How could I not help him?"

... He was mad, or was finding this amusing as a joke and was just playing the bit. Ale was unsure of what would be better or worse in this scenario.

"So you... Are you making a school ground?" Ale decided to ask, she didn't want this conversation to turn into a weird direction, it was weird as it was already if one thought about a pig wearing a tuxedo and whatnot. "And

decided to sink twice the annual budget on it? What is that expensive about making a school?"

Alexanders shook his head in disappointment.

"You are thinking too small, the center of it... Sapphire if you would?"
Alexanders said moving his hands around as if he was tracing a drawing.

The purple woman sighed and snapped her fingers, there it was then, a holographic projection of a high rise building standing... alone.

"Thank you," Alexanders thanked that nonetheless, "So let's start from the center I guess, this is the central spire and the main administrative area (For the normies anyway), here we will have all the legal business and the people that think they rule the city, all the sponsors will get a floor and a penthouse meeting room at the top where they can pretend to be important."

The hologram showcased divisions around the floors, roughly thirteen divisions, at the ground level, one division with several floors worth, and at the top, a single floor segregated from the rest.

"Ground level and a few above for the populace, the rest for those that will pay us money to let them have a stake in what a few selected buildings within Aquila do." Alexanders said laughing, "The fools... What matters is either underground or around it."

The image expanded to a central district immediately around the spire.

"Then we have housing, several worth of apartment buildings designed for the students and workers, they will not mix with each other and will have their own districts, of course." The image highlighted a series of apartments all around, a few yellow a few blue and a couple dark. "Yellow are designed for the students and will have a higher surveillance to ensure they don't get into too many shenanigans, we will have a few teachers per student dormitory and more or less make sure they are okay-ish. Blue are for teachers and researchers while black are... well we don't need to mind them for now."

Ale very much wanted to mind them, she really wanted to mind them!

"Then we have the fun part." The projection extended to the ten pointy parts of the star design, "The branches, the immediate buildings are dedicated to pre-

school, primary education, which are the first years of education, and kindergarten, basically we prepare the children so they make a better future."

"Ah, yes, the indoctrination camps." Miriam Eversoul said in a mocking tone, "I hate it, the fact that you spawned this from everything I want, and I can't help but see how people will twist it in the worst way possible."

Twist it?

"Are they not teaching them right?" Ale asked confused, "Is there a problem with the syllabus? Alexa's syllabus was... weirdly advanced, but the classes she got had the right amount of information from what one could need..."

"If they were highly engineered children then sure. But a normal child would not need that kind of education, and we will move their classmates to a more normal environment if I can get away with it." Alexanders said shaking his head, "Man I assure you, the heathens will probably move heaven and earth trying to find my angle and achieve nothing. These schools will not indoctrinate anything, they will teach as they should. Showing facts and nothing else, no political agenda, no twisted history. Nothing of the like."

Ale... found that highly doubtful, but she was willing to overlook it for now.

"The further you go down the branch, the more specialized the schools are, and they will have their own dorms here and there in the districts." Alexanders said moving on, "Each branch will have their own restaurant, malls, hospitals and sub administrative nodes. The important decisions will be made at the spire of course. But they will be more or less independent."

"And you will find the money for this..." Ale said, the design was ambitious, and she couldn't help but notice the blank spots that were forming on the holographic map.

"Of course from sponsors," Alexanders said nodding, "I could pay it all by myself, don't get me wrong, but people would start complaining more about me raising a private army or whatever, so they will pay for my dream."

Then small points of light started shining in the branches where there wasn't anything before.

"You want to research a new artificial organ technology? Pay me this and you get your own laboratory, in the correct branch of course. You will also have

access to university students that are studying just that to have as interns, ones who aren't biased from the current trends in the world." Alexanders gave an example highlighting one of the branches.

"You want to research new theoretical types of energy? We have a branch for you." Another one was lit up, "Weapons? Artificial intelligence? Robotics? Space? The Core powers?"

One by one multiple lights started dotting the artificial star design.

"I... how much variety is there for this to even be viable?" Ale couldn't believe he could have that many specialties for each star branch.

"Well that is just the thing, we... don't really have that many options to go." Alexanders said shrugging, "Genetics, pharma, weapons, Artificial intelligence, political sciences, the amusement park branch... The psychology branch, energy, robotics and space... But each branch will probably have stuff that doesn't fall in one of those ten categories anyway."

Ale counted, those were ten branches, so he did have one for each huh.

"And what does this have to do with me wanting to learn more about my powers?" Ale decided to ask, since that had been the original question.

"Well, you wanted to learn right? Might as well go to school to achieve that. Don't get me wrong, I know Alexa is already going to classes, I get her report card every week." Alexanders said shrugging, "But you on the other hand... Could also go to school if you want, I can set up attendance online if you want that option too, but for one... I do know of a certain Bryan will attend one of my new schools, the idiots couldn't help themselves."

Alexanders laughed at that, there was this dangerous glint to him at the moment. No wait. Bryan? Wasn't...

Wasn't that the kid Ale started messaging from time to time?!?!? He was coming here?!?!?

Why?!?!?

Chapter 263: Alexanders truly is an asshole

Bryan, Ale knew that name, of course she knew it.

That was the fake name that he had given Ale when she asked for a name. The actual name was Dylan Brighton.

She hadn't checked on what meaning was behind hiding the name, she had assumed at the time that he was important since there were several people around checking on him, just how [Big sister] was doing to her.

But the gravitas was different, [Big sister] was paying attention more with the intent of helping Ale rather than rescue. While the feeling she had gotten from Dylan's bodyguards was one where they would jump to save him and use everyone else as a shield if anything.

"Bryan?" Miriam Eversoul asked looking at Ale, if she was like Alexanders or Alexa, then she would probably would have stars in her eyes right about now, good thing she wasn't. "And who is this Bryan fella?"

Ale was about to answer that he was no one, of course, she had just met him once and sent a few messages here and there, played a couple of times, and saw him on her chat a few times.

"The son of the Brightons, the hope that they are raising up to stand up against the evil dragon that wants to destroy the world." Alexanders however, had other plans and started speaking before Ale could even defend her honor, "Would you see my surprise when I got an alert from the secret service from the Brightons tripping the silent alarms, searching for things they shouldn't even know to search?"

Silent alarms?

"The ones who are trying to decentralize the power you amassed and want to create a more democratic government?" Miriam Eversoul asked with a smile on her face, "The ones who share my fears about you and your goddamned family?"

"I will not start a political discussion here," Alexanders said annoyed, "They are free to start their own political party or city away from my stuff."

That... seemed to irk Alexanders?

"What is that they do?" Ale asked confused, "Dylan didn't seem that... bad."

"Dylan?" Miriam Eversoul repeated the name confused, right, Alexanders (The asshole) had said his fake name.

"The actual name of Bryan," Alexanders said dismissively, "As for what they have done... Technically nothing. That is the infuriating thing about the little shits."

Then if they hadn't done anything...

"They want democracy, as in they want the presidents to be elected and for them to have a good government where their silly fantasy about how the world works are correct and obvious." Alexanders started speaking as screens (Holographic screens) started popping around them, "They want clarity, transparency and all of those fancy words the heathens of society want."

"I thought you said that we wouldn't go into politics." Miriam Eversoul mocked from the side.

"I am explaining," Alexanders said, throwing a screen at Miriam Eversoul, "The thing is, they want my money to do so. And are angry when I don't give them free stuff. Don't get me wrong, I respect democracy, I despise socialism and I couldn't care less about the political parties of others."

"Then what is the issue?" Ale was confused, from what he was saying, the only thing that he didn't want was the part where Dylan's family wanted to use his money, which, to be fair. Was reasonable.

"We don't live in a democracy." Alexanders said dropping the bomb.

"... I thought you didn't like socialism...?" Ale was confused, "Actually, you said they wanted democracy right? Then if we aren't a democracy... and you hate socialism... what are we?"

"We are a meritocracy." Alexanders said nodding, "I will give money and pay the research of anyone who proves their worth."

"That is to say so long they are under you." Miriam Eversoul pointed out, "They have to sell their souls to you first."

"If you want to fund their research and get nothing out of it, go ahead. I will give you a list with contact information of everyone who didn't want to sign with me. Hell, I will even give you the list of those who accepted signing with me with the amount of money they took, so you can go ahead and buy them out of me." Alexanders smiled at Miriam Eversoul as a new screen hovered above his open palm, "Go on, just get your phone close to this, and the data can be transferred so you can go and be a social justice warrior and save them from the evil clutches of the evil dragon."

Miriam Eversoul (Understandably) didn't move forward. That was a trap if Ale had seen one before, one that Miriam Eversoul walked by herself of course, but that wasn't her fault. Alexanders made the trap after all.

"So what are we?" Ale decided to ask, moving the conversation forward, "If you say we are a meritocracy but Miriam Eversoul say we aren't."

"We are a dictatorship." Miriam Eversoul stated plainly, "With his family at the top."

"I prefer the term Imperium or Empire." Alexanders added, "I fancy myself more like that, but that is a joke of course. I hold no political power or army."

"Not that you need an army with all the autonomous weapons your company develops and sells." Vivian Kellet suddenly jumped into the conversation.

Ale had to agree with that statement, as a former bioweapon from the Saintsworths she was sure Alexanders could topple any kind of armed defence that the politics or powers to be could muster.

That was under the assumption that he didn't have a way to take control of any weapon he sold, actually.

"What stops him from taking over the weapons he already sold?" Ale jumped with her very justified question.

Which took the two women with them by surprise.

"Well, that is one horrifying thought to have. I will not sleep the same from now on." Miriam Eversoul said sighing and taking a big gulp from the cup that she had ignored most of the breakfast.

"Hahahahah," Alexanders, for his part, was laughing, "No one had said that in some time, so I had thought people had started to forget who gives maintenance and builds the intelligence of their smart weapons. Why are they so antagonistic while most of the automated systems of their defense system are maintained by our company, is something I will never understand."

"That is not a denial." Miriam Eversoul said, "That is not a denial at all, anything... Actually, isn't that against the contract you should have signed?"

"First," Alexanders said, raising a finger, "You assume that clause is in the contract, you overestimate the intelligence of the politicians you rally behind."

Ale wouldn't believe anyone who raised itself above the rest of humanity could be that... incompetent.

"And second," Alexanders raised a second finger, "Who is gonna stop me if I decide to send a command for revolution? Not that I need to send one, half of their weapons will fizzle out the second they don't get their scheduled maintenance anyway."

Wasn't that a bad design?

"They are designed like that, but that is besides the point. Even if I denied the accusations you wouldn't believe me. And even if they also believed your accusations, they would still buy our weapons, since the alternative underperforms by several orders of magnitude." Alexanders shrugged, "So they screwd themselves."

"Either buy weapons that they know are useless against the Saintsworths..." Miriam Eversoul said sighing, "Or use subpar weaponry?"

"I wouldn't say they are useless against the Saintsworths, she can attest to that." Alexanders said pointing to Ale.

"...she was attacked by guns of your company?" Miriam Eversoul said, narrowing her eyes at Alexanders, fury hidden behind (Well, not particularly hidden) her eyes.

"We all have at some point," Alexanders said with a shrug, "What did they use for the last assassination attempt, Sapphire?"

And Sapphire answered quickly enough projecting a new screen, it was...

"Cool..." Ale said the words aloud as the [Gun] schematic projected.

"That is one of our newest bolter assault rifle, this baby can pierce most military grade material out there." Alexanders started saying as a video started playing, there a vehicle arrived at a building... actually, wasn't that Alexa's apartment building? "And here we have myself going to pick up some stuff..."

The video started playing, and a group of people wearing black body armor stormed from a couple of vans that had parked beside the first vehicle as Alexanders got out of the first vehicle.

As soon as those came out someone tackled Alexanders to the floor and the sound of explosions started, most of the front building and the vehicle Alexanders had arrived were okay.

The other things around were not.

The gun discharge sounds carried on for half a minute before a man surrounded in a purple aura descended and started moving at high speeds around the scene.

"And there you have it." Alexanders said with a shrug, "I also get shot by my own weaponry, so I wouldn't say the weapons don't work with a Saintsworths."

"I thought you said these could penetrate most military grade armor." Miriam Eversoul said narrowing her eyes at Alexanders, "How do you explain that?"

"Do you even know what military grade means?" Alexanders said smirking, "It just meant the cheapest possible outcome, my vehicle uses top-of-the-art armor. Same as the building in question."

"What building was that? I don't recognize it, and I have visited most of the facilities you tend to go to." Miriam Eversoul said confused, "It looked like it was in a city, so it isn't a hidden laboratory. Did you lie to me?"

"That would be... Alexa's former apartment building." Ale said, raising her hand to get attention back to her, "I recognize the design, because not many buildings share these aesthetics."

Also because Ale had studied it in great detail as she needed to be ready in case it became a place she needed to escape from.

"... That didn't make to the news." Miriam Eversoul said covering her mouth, "Victims? Casualties?"

"Who do you take me for?" Alexanders answered offended, "A low class villain? I ensured the place was devoid of civilians, all those that you see running around are paid agents, and they converged on the assailants from behind to incapacitate them."

The video resumed with screaming and shouts from the would-be assailants being attacked, and a close-up of the people who had attacked being gagged, cuffed, and piled up on their vehicles, some of the 'Civilians' boarding said vehicles and leaving the scene.

"They were interrogated and used as evidence, the organizer of this attack will have a very bad weeks ahead of him." Alexanders smiled evilly as he said that, "But anyway. As you have seen, even though they shot me using my own weapons, they worked just fine. And this is after I already knew they were coming. Why? Can anyone guess?"

"They were fully mechanical?" Ale said guessing that it would be something like that.

"So you could use it as an excuse that the fears were unfounded?" Miriam Eversoul took the more pragmatic view.

"It helped you move forward your plans so there was no reason to stop them from attacking you." Vivian Kellet also took the more cynical view.

"Wrong, all of you... Well not Ale...kinda." Alexanders said laughing yet again, why was he that... happy? "The answer is... I could have stopped their weapons thanks to my Core Power. But that would be from my Core Power. The Authority to stop their weapons resides within ISKANDER. And that one has been focusing on the new project (Not this one). So right now... At this very period of time, the Saintsworths are the most vulnerable."

That statement had made Miriam Eversoul freeze in her spot.

"Are you mad?!?!?" Only to make her scream as such, "Why are you telling us this?!?!? You shouldn't tell anyone of this! What if it gets out?"

"Well, then we will be testing how much the people within the Saintsworths deserve to have their spot after all... We at the Saintsworths proclaim to value meritocracy above all after all..." Alexanders smiled evilly at that statement, "Besides, who will find out? Will you go out of your way and tell all the multiple Saintsworths' enemies that right now is the time to attack? Because as you have seen... If they come after me, they will find out."

Ale doubted many people could actually fight him off, not with that purple woman hovering around him, even at this moment, Ale wasn't sure if she could attack him fast enough to incapacitate him... Not that she had any reason to do so.

"...You are actually evil... So what, if new forces attack you, will you use that as evidence to get rid of me?" Miriam Eversoul stated with a frown on her face.

Okay, perhaps Ale did have a reason to attack Alexanders....

"Nah," Alexanders however shook his head, "You wouldn't do that. Your bleeding heart would not allow you. The thought of all the children who could be hurt in the process would get in the way of you actually doing anything with that data."

Then turning to Vivian Kellet, "The same applies to her, she has no reason to sell me out. The only one who could probably get something out of it doesn't have a reason to do so." And finally he said that turning to Ale.

"..." Ale of course said nothing.

"But yeah, so what will it be kiddo?" Alexanders said, returning to his playful tone once again, "Will you attend school? Spend your time playing and messing around? Or try to return to Ohio?"

"Is that even an option?" Ale asked, "I will not be able to take care of Alexa if I return back."

"I could probably get something designed within the week that would allow you to move around..." Alexanders said thoughtfull.

"Don't count on it, there is no easy solution to your current problem." Sapphire however stated as such from behind, "Not even with a couple hundred years would he be able to find a solution that can purify the mana around you to normal."

That seemed like... a very specific statement, one that she had prevented Alexanders from hearing too. Perhaps there was something in there to inquire about.

"I think..." Ale said looking around, the face of Miriam Eversoul focused on her with the warmth undertone, the face of Vivian Kellet calculating and cold, and finally, the eyes of Alexanders who seemed to look at her, but also beyond her, as if seeing something else... Was he watching a video behind her head or something? "...That I would like to spend a few days here before deciding if I want to return home or not."

If... If the issue with her Mana was resolved soon, she could return back. She would miss the time here of course, but there was still some things she needed to deal with back at Ohio.

Then and only then, she could think about what to do next. Perhaps returning here then wouldn't be so bad?

Maybe bringing [Big Sister] and [Golem] would be an option?

Besides Alexa would get angry if she wasn't able to see her friends... Actually, Ale also needed to deal with those two. Unless they also joined these new schools Alexanders was making...

Oh god, they would join these wouldn't they? If Alexanders was pulling all the schools into this...

Wouldn't then the school that Alexa was attending end up here too?

...Then there was no point in deciding! It was a done deal from the beginning.

"That's also an option," Alexanders said nodding without a care in the world, he probably thought Ale hadn't realized his plan...

This was why people said that he was an asshole.

Chapter 264: A quiet afternoon.

After finishing that discussion the talk moved to a more sedated and normal-ish pace.

Miriam Eversoul moved on to speak with Vivian Kellet about the schedule and the logistics of living on the apartment, Vivian Kellet would not remain to live within the apartment.

The same was to be said about Alexanders, but that had already been addressed. The man had said he would spend more time coming, and that should be enough for Ale.

She was still dealing with most of the things that had happened, and the fact that she had been out and about for so long. Well, not that long, she had been out for more before, or for extended amounts of time whenever she had a mission to deal with.

Case in point, the last mission was probably among the times she had been out for the longest time yet.

"Is there a problem?" Miriam Eversoul suddenly asked.

At some point that Ale hadn't noticed, the woman had sat beside her.

Ale was now sitting in the lounge area of the apartment, watching... she wasn't even sure what was on the TV.

"Not really..." Ale said, checking quickly on her memory database and downloading the data on what she had seen straight up to her active memory to see what had happened...

Nothing much while she was deep in thought; Alexanders had merely sat beside her for a few minutes, smirking like a madman, as they watched TV in silence.

Sapphire had said something to him to which he nodded and said his goodbye.

Then Ale had continued staring at the television for another hour or so before Miriam Eversoul came and here they were now back in the present.

She had really dissociated hard huh.

"Nothing relevant." Ale had elaborated before Miriam could even say anything. "I was just thinking..."

Or well, not thinking at all.

"A penny for your thought." Miriam Eversoul suddenly said, offering monetary gain... or not, probably some weird saying that she didn't have the full cultural knowledge to understand. She was picking up those as she streamed, of course, but there was only so much, besides, most of the sayings she was learning didn't quite translate well for normal environments if she was to be honest.

It was more like her viewers were being influenced by her and not the other way around.

"I am unsure about what to say or do." Ale decided to just get the words out in the open, "I... we don't have these types of problems, or we didn't use to have them."

"How did you solve them before?" Miriam Eversoul asked, "What was your thought process."

What was the thought process?

"We did what was best for Alexa," Ale answered as such, "We would sit at the table and think what to do, Alexa sometimes helped or chimed in of course, but I usually discussed our plans with Alexandra before picking a path and plan around that goal."

It wasn't that hard, but that was not an option anymore was it? Perhaps if Main Core hadn't lobotomized itself then it would be different, but Ale wasn't confident in being able to bring that one back.

"And what about what's best for you?" Miriam Eversoul suddenly said.

"Me?" Ale was surprised... or well, that shouldn't have surprised her as much as it did. This was the kind of person this woman was after all.

But that made Ale really think, what was the best for her?

"I..." She was not really sure, she hadn't thought of it like that, could she even allow herself to think like that? Would Alexa... Who was she kidding, Alexa would probably not mind it, chances were that was part of the reason why Alexa had let her stay this much outside.

Alexa was like that, she cared for them as much as they cared for her.

So then... it shouldn't be an issue, right?

"...I want to go back." Ale ended up saying, "...I really want to go back, to stand there and announce that... I have arrived..."

To say that she was back.

"Then you should do that." Miriam Eversoul said encouraging her, "As long as you can do it safely, as long as you don't put yourself at risk. Then you are free to wish to do just that."

She was?

"But..." Ale said raising her hand, closing and opening her fist, "... The mana corruption..."

"I'm sure Alexanders will come tomorrow from that door all smug telling us how he managed to solve the issue." Miriam Eversoul said with a huff, "He probably already has the solution."

Ale... didn't think so. She didn't think that Alexanders had the solution, even the one that he had given her to temporarily purge her from the foreign hostile mana was just that.

A temporary solution, Ale could still feel the corrupted mana being syphoned away leaving a bubble devoid of said mana around her. She had pinged for the full schematic of the device and had found that the most compact thing was still as big, if not bigger than the apartment building she lived in Ohio.

Which was terrifying prospect. But it was that big because the blonde... Because Alexanders had done away with all the easy methods available and just put out the most simple way to achieve what he wanted.

He was creating in a very inefficient way a void of mana. And the barest formula or example he was using was the phenomenon that Alexandra had achieved when she triggered her Core creation event.

Which was a whole other thing.

"... I... don't think I can go back." Ale ended up saying, "I can't... Alexa could go back, right now. But... I would not be able to go out..."

"And do you think Alexa would want that?" Miriam Eversoul asked smiling at her, "The fact that you are out and about tells me that she wants you to destress too, doesn't she?"

...Yes.

"Alexa..." Ale was about to say that Alexa didn't want that, but instead, quick-started a blueprint they hadn't used in a long time. She made a mini speaker in the palm of her hand, hidden beneath the skin and flesh. "Alexa, do you want to go back to Ohio? Or do you want to stay here?"

Ale pinged Alexa and ensured that she knew the speaker was there.

"..." Even so, the speaker refused to speak.

"...Alexanders is gone," Ale said for some reason, she wasn't sure why, but she had noticed that Alexa didn't want to be or stay around the blonde man, even if she herself acknowledged him as their older brother.

"...*Alexa knew that.*" Alexa's voice sounded from the speaker.

"...That's..." Miriam Eversoul said looking at Ale's hand, "Interesting... Ventriloquism? No, this is something else... It's an application of your Core Power?"

"Yes," Ale nodded, "It's one of the gifts that Main Core left for us."

"He was a dummy!" Alexa chimed in, *"Main Core was a smart dummy!"*

"That's not the important thing here," Ale said turning her full attention to the fact that Alexa had indeed spoken when they confirmed Alexanders was not around, "Do you want to go back to our apartment?"

"...Alexa doesn't mind either way." Alexa's carefree voice sounded from the speaker, *"Alexa wants Ale to also have fun, so if Ale wants to stay here Alexa doesn't mind! Her friends will come later anyway! Big Brother said so!"*

"So she was aware?" Miriam Eversoul commented from the side, "And yet didn't come out? Interesting... Is it because she doesn't know him yet? But he said that the asshole was her brother..."

"But Alexa doesn't mind going back if Ale wants to." Alexa continued speaking, *"Alexa knows that Ale wants to go back to the [Fan Girl]. Alexa will do her best to keep the bad tasting [Feels] away!"*

...That was sweet in on itself.

"So there you have it." Miriam Eversoul said after recentering herself, "Alexa also wants what is best for you."

"...Okay." Ale said nodding, "Then we can stay a few days more, but we are returning to Ohio."

"Alexa doesn't mind if Ale wants to stay here." Alexa started saying as soon as Ale said her plans, "Alexa also likes it here!"

Ale wasn't sure if Alexa truly wanted to remain here or go back. On one hand, Alexa had all her friends in Ohio; even if they were going to come here, they would not come immediately.

On the other hand, she had Miriam Eversoul, someone who Alexa was... weirdly imprinted on.

"Any reason to want and return there like that?" Miriam Eversoul asked, "Is it for Alexa? or for yourself?"

"It's for both of us." Ale answered closing her hand and dismissing the construct within, "Thank you Alexa."

"Your welcome!" Alexa answered only within her mind.

"How so?" Miriam Eversoul asked intrigued, "I seem to remember you saying that Alexa would probably like it more there than here. I can understand it since there aren't many kids around for you or her to play with."

That... was part of the reason yes.

"But as Alexanders said, kids will start coming on. I can assure you that I will do my best to move those plans forward and get at least a couple of families with children for you to play with within the week." Miriam Eversoul stated, attempting to assure Ale about that.

And to be honest, Ale believed her; she believed they could get people within the week, more so because if Alexanders truly wanted to help them, she believed he would be able to move people to this place before the week finished.

But no, that was not the reason why she wanted to return to Ohio.

"It's not for Alexa that I want to return to Ohio." Ale said answering to those statements, "It's also for me."

It was mostly for her to be honest. As Alexa said, she could spend the time here if needed, she would find something to entertain herself quite easily.

And if it was to help Ale, Alexa would do whatever was needed, she was that kind of girl.

"I need to face the consequences. And I want to reassure [Big Sister] that I am fine," Ale just wanted to go back to their home, to their apartment, and while she knew that their stuff was probably already picked up and here, she still wanted to return to that apartment. "Besides, because of our power... There is meaning in doing it in person, it wouldn't do if we just spoke it through the phone or via video call."

Ale of course knew that would work for most, but they were shapeshifters. Their face was not something that hard to make or fake.

Not that Ale had seen other people who looked like them... One couldn't fake the vibes or how they behaved other people as easily as they could. Their method to achieve that was also something that not many could achieve.

Ale couldn't help but shiver at the realization of what Alexa did to achieve such uncanny mimicry.

More so since those mimicries were quite close to Ale's self, as they were created by a similar process to the one that birthed them, even if they didn't bloom to the same degree as her.

"I see...." Miriam Eversoul said nodding at Ale's words, "I will respect your decision. But I will not authorize such travels unless we can guarantee you will be safe."

"Alexa can move as normal ther-" Ale started saying only for Miriam Eversoul's finger to be put atop her lips, silencing her.

"I meant your safety too." Miriam Eversoul said, "I don't know how it feels for you, but to me, to the people around you. What your body goes when that side effect from Test Subject Ms2 looks quite painful."

"It isn't..." Ale started saying only to shut up as soon as Miriam Eversoul frowned at her, "... I can cut the nerve endings of the affected parts before it becomes an issue."

To be honest, it hurt like hell. The feeling of her body turning into ash was not something she wanted to go by again if possible.

"If you need to cut the nerve endings, then more reason for you to not go back." Miriam Eversoul stated plainly, "I am sure Alexa also doesn't want you to suffer."

"Yeah! Alexa doesn't want Ale to have the pains!"

"... But..." Ale started speaking only for Miriam's Eversoul finger to be raised again, that gesture was enough for Ale to shut up again.

"It is meaningless if you can't be out." Miriam Eversoul shook her head as she said that, "If you aren't going to be out and about, you may as well remain here. Or do you want Alexa to be alone in Ohio?"

"... She won't be alone." Ale grumbled.

"I can live with you, Vivian can come every now and then, but we can't stay 24/7 with you." Miriam Eversoul sighed, "Not yet, we need to adjust our schedules for such a big change. The only one who could get away with doing so is the blonde asshole, but even he isn't that irresponsible."

"He isn't?" Ale asked surprised.

"...I mean, if the things he was doing were work for others he would probably just ditch them, but his current work schedule is filled with things he wants to do." Miriam Eversoul smiled, amused at that, "Imagine the irony, first time the asshole wants free time but can't ditch it since it's his own work."

Ale did find that funny.

"So... When can I go back then?" Ale asked, "And how are we going to test if it's safe for me to return?"

"When Alexanders pulls from god knows where the device that will purify or isolate the mana around you." Miriam Eversoul said raising a finger, "Or when we got confirmation that the ambient mana is no longer hostile to you."

"And how are we going to confirm that one?" Ale asked, unsure if people could even find out about that.

"That... we will need your brother to confirm." Miriam Eversoul merely said in the most irresponsible tone possible, "He probably knows how to check for that, since he is the one who made that weird bubble devoid of mana that is following you."

...How was he even doing that actually.

Ale understood the basis of the idea, create an environment devoid of mana, simple. But how was that device able to track where Ale was and isolate the ambient mana from touching her?

That was the question.

Chapter 265: Why worms? Of all things... why worms?

The question was not solved in the end. They did try coming up with an idea of how Alexanders could achieve such effect, but neither Miriam Eversoul nor Vivian Kellet were experts in the correct field to come up with a viable solution. Miriam Eversoul's suggestions were more of a way to find the answer within, which really doesn't work unless you already know how to solve the issue.

Ale didn't know nor did they have any blueprint within their database to fix that issue, or not any database that Ale could find anyway.

After a few attempts to find a way to turn industrial-grade ventilators and vacuum cleaners into a way to purify the Mana in the environment (And failing at it), they decided to just wait and see what Alexanders brought tomorrow. It was a consensus that the blonde man would be able to find a solution.

Even if Ale still couldn't help but remember what Sapphire had said, those cryptic words stuck with her.

But she had just too much things to deal with, so she would process it one at the time, her list was not getting shorter, and instead was turning even longer by the day.

She wasn't even sure it wouldn't become a book by the moment she was done. So instead Ale had decided to move to her bedroom when it was appropriate. Miriam Eversoul had said she needed to go to the office to set up some documents, and Vivian Kellet left ten minutes afterwards. Leaving Ale alone in the apartment.

Ale didn't mind that of course, since it made it even less inconspicuous for her to do what she wanted.

"Albireo?" Ale said aloud once she was convinced no one was in the apartment, even if she was inside her room, she still couldn't be 100% sure.

"Yes Lady Ale?" Albireo answered at once, *"What can I do for you today?"*

"How much of what I do here is being transmitted to Alexanders?" Ale decided to ask the first thing that was important in this moment.

"Nothing," Albireo answered at once, an answer she was not expecting, *"Mistress Sapphire told us to inform you that while Alexanders was the CEO, he does not have full control of the Conglomerate just yet."*

...Right.

Same thing Alexanders alluded before.

"So since he doesn't control it, he can't access the recordings. Is that correct?" Ale asked, she wanted full security and reassurance.

"...No. It is possible for Master to access these recordings if he wishes, he just doesn't use that privilege often." Albireo's answer was in line with what Ale suspected.

"Elaborate." Ale decided to confirm it for sure, the thing she suspected sounded stupid on paper, but it was better to be sure.

"Master can ask for the recordings to be shown to him. And if Mistress Sapphire decides to show them to him. He would be able to see said recordings." Albireo said just what Ale feared, Sapphire truly was at the top of the totem pole. "Master has never once used this privilege, and Mistress hasn't offered, but one can guess that both are aware of this."

So while Alexanders hadn't used said privilege, and Sapphrie hadn't offered, both knew it was possible. Just like how Ale knew it was possible.

"Will I know if he makes use of this?" Ale asked, she doubted they would tell her.

"As a someone recognized by Master, your data is private, only if you make it visible to him, will Mistress Sapphire be able to interact with said data."

Albireo told Ale something she hadn't quite expected, *"So even if Master asks for the recordings, if you make them impossible to be seen, they will not be able to see them unless Mistress Sapphire willingly seeks them and finds the files with restrictions on them."*

That was... interesting.

"So what are the current settings?" Ale asked, she assumed they could see her before, but perhaps it had changed after Alexanders got hit by that random weird guilt?

"Settings are visible to all." Albireo showed Ale a blue screen with the settings, it was a random privacy settings tab. *"Do you wish to change them?"*

Did she?

"... No, leave them as they are." Ale said she would rather only private some things and leave the rest for all to see; this way, she could ensure what she wanted hidden would remain hidden. No reason for them to search for video files if they were under the impression that all was visible. "Create a shortcut so that I can private video files as soon as I want, also create a data stream straight to me so I can see the video recordings of myself and add those of Alexa too."

"Setting up data uplink." Albireo set up that quickly enough, and to surprise to no one, the data files were compatible with Ale's current software, nothing surprising there. At least she wouldn't need to convert the data files to something she could interpret. That was always good.

It was weird seeing herself from a third person POV though, more so since she couldn't control the point of view, it was like seeing herself from the perspective of one of these weird games that didn't allow you to control the camera.

She hated those games, the control were weird to use. Not that it was the case here, since she could move her body as normal.

Once the datalink was set up, Ale set up some normal commands for Main Core to monitor that, she did not need 24/7 video feed of herself from a third person point of view. It could be useful during mission work though.

"Okay, that will be all. Please keep the monitoring to the minimum and if you can, all questions and prompts about my person and Alexa should be directed first to me, and then follow the normal chain of command." Ale wasn't sure how much of that would stick, since she was (Quite certain) expecting that the one at the top would be able to ignore her commands on this.

She wasn't quite sure why Albireo was this deferential, no matter if Alexa was or not the favorite sister of Alexanders. So far she hadn't seen much love towards Alexa from Sapphire.

Which was in itself weird, but she assumed that they had been somewhat lucky in that aspect... unless shenanigans were to be ensue of course.

As soon as Ale noticed that the transmission of data between the multiple cameras within the apartment and the overwatch from Albireo decreased to the minimum, Ale sighed in relief and sat down on the bed.

She wasn't sure what to do about what followed or how to even broach it fully, Alexa... was not the best conversation partner after all.

"Okay Alexa, let's talk." Ale said aloud, and when she didn't get an answer to her prompt, sighed.

Of course it wouldn't be that easy, Alexa was... being difficult as of late. Almost as if she was feeling guilty about something, which would be hilarious in almost any circumstance but the one they were in right now.

But that was something she would need to address as soon as possible, her current mental mindset wasn't as stable as she would want it to be, and she suspected that was part of the reason why Alexa wasn't coming out.

If her own experience in a death loop was something to go by... Ale... was not someone who could deal with the most complex aspects of her psyche being fully digitized, which was something very weird to find out. Considering what her actual identity was, she should be someone more attuned to the mental state that they lived in.

But she would check on that later.

"Let's do it your way then," Ale said taking a deep breath and sharpening her mind, this was something she used to do without thinking, but it was taking some focus to achieve right now.

Ale sank into their own mindscape.

The feeling as she felt her body drop into the mental mindscape was something she hadn't expected, somehow... The familiar mindscape felt... cold.

But Ale didn't let that dissuade her, this was her home. This was the place they would have to face at some point, even if she didn't come now, there would come a time when she would need to face this.

Besides, she had returned here after the original death loop and had exited it as normal. So it wasn't impossible for her to exit it, she knew that. She had done so when it was needed, during emergency, and when Alexa wanted.

She was fine.

She was fine...

She was... fine...

"Ale is fine!"

"Alexa?" Ale suddenly felt someone jump at her, before she noticed she was once again sitting on the queen-sized bed inside the mindscape.

The giant bed that Alexa had made for them, the one where they would sleep together.

"...Alexa is sorry..." Alexa said still hugging Ale, she didn't say anything else, but that she was sorry.

"It's fine Alexa," Ale said hugging the little girl back, "I know you meant well, but even so. I will also get worried if you don't want to come out. As much as I enjoy being out..."

And she really meant it, Ale hadn't noticed how much she enjoyed being out before today, more so when there wasn't a crisis for her to solve.

"You also need to be out, we can split the time if you really want." Ale wouldn't mind leaving the mornings to Alexa, she seemed to enjoy going to school, so going in the morning to school wouldn't be bad.

"Not because of that," Alexa still wouldn't stop hugging Ale, so Ale couldn't see her face, "Alexa isn't sure about why, but she is sorry. Alexa did a bad, but she doesn't remember, she doesn't remember, even though Alexa turned everything upside down!"

Ale... did notice that there was something out of place within their mindscape.

"She searched everywhere!" Alexa said pulling away from Ale, the eyes of the little girl... didn't have tears, even though Alexa did sound as if she was... sad?

Ale... wasn't sure why, but even though her brain was telling her that Alexa was sad and crying, the face she saw was... sad? Alexa said and felt that she was sad, so surely that was Alexa's sad face... yes...

No wait...

Huh?

"Ale?" Alexa suddenly asked, she seemed worried, "Are you okay?"

Was Ale okay?

Most certainly no, she was not. There was a feeling creeping at her back for one, and since Alexa had been rummaging everywhere the mindscape felt... alien.

Was it because it had been Ale and Alexandra's work to keep everything tidy? It was probably that, Ale was stressed about many things and dealing with this would be a chore.

"Yeah sorry, mind wandered for a second there." Ale said sighing, "Don't have any funny thoughts though, we do need to talk."

"Alexa only has funny thoughts though! If they are Alexa's thoughts then they are funny!" Alexa proclaimed proudly.

Yes, that was what Alexa was like.

"You know what I mean," Ale said smiling, "Or maybe not? Either way, let's talk."

"We are talking!" Alexa said sticking her tongue out, "Ale is being dummy!"

...Ale really wanted to get mad, but that was what speaking to Alexa was, she shouldn't have been surprised.

"Yes, I know." Ale said nodding, "... I need to work on not being this dummy."

"... Alexa likes a dummy Ale... It's okay to be dummy." Alexa suddenly said, "Alexa knows she is also a dummy... If Alexa weren't a dummy, she would not make mistakes..."

"Everyone makes mistakes Alexa, it's fine." Ale said hugging once more Alexa, "It's okay, I also made mistakes... And even Alexandra made mistakes... "

That was what being... Human was all about, and they had decided to walk this path when they decided to pretend and turn into one of them. Even if the decision had been made from the wrong assumptions, it was a path they had walked and would need to deal with.

"...Okay..." Alexa nodded in silence, "But Alexa is still sorry."

"I too am sorry," Ale said sighing, "But we learn from our mistakes, and we will try to not make them again okay? I promise to not make the same mistake again. So you can do the same."

"Alexa promises!" Alexa said nodding enthusiastically, "Alexa will do her best, and make up to Ale!"

"And I'll do my best to make up to you too." Ale laughed, unsure why Alexa wanted to make it up to her, considering that the crux of their problems had come from a mistake made by herself and not by Alexa.

But Alexa was a good girl like that.

"Well, before getting to clean this mess, let's talk about what I wanted." Ale pulled at Alexa and together with her, they walked to the dinner within the mindscape, it mimicked their apartment perfectly, so that was a nice feeling to have, even if Ale knew this was not the same place.

Alexa of course followed after her, she didn't complain or say anything, which was in by itself a great start. Ale had expected the need to wrangle the little girl, so that was good for now.

"Okay, first... What do we know about the little gift that Melissandra Singh left on us, that is to say. On me." Ale said, snapping her fingers and pulling all the data and samples they had about the foreign Mana that caused the decomposition on her.

It made her blood boil and seethe.

"... The thingy that Meli-Meli left in Ale..." Alexa said in a small voice, " Should be purged in a couple weeks at the longest."

The same prognosis they had from Miriam Eversoul, Vivian Kellet, and Alexanders?

"Alexa is noming at it as best as she can, but it tastes bad and makes Alexa's tummy rumble." Alexa said pointing at a trash can that... wasn't before here, "Alexa's rumbles make her sick and she has emptied her tummy two times already... But she will get it all out of Ale soon enough!"

...What?

"... Are you... eating the [**Death**] Mana?" Ale was unsure about what to think, that... was that how Main Core purified the Mana? But... Alexandra didn't say anything about eating Mana... did she?

"Yes!" Alexa nodded proudly and puffed her chest, "...It tastes bad, the [Feels] are all wrong and Meli-Meli mixed something weird in there, it cracked one of Alexa's teeth!"

Alexa pulled a broken tooth from one of her pockets, of course, this was a visual representation and not actual teeth...

Even if it felt real... And had all the correct genetic markers for one of Alexa's teeth...

There was no way that Alexa could have something physical within their mindscape after all, the mindscape didn't work like that...

"...How are you even... Why..." Ale wasn't sure what to ask first and what to check second, "... Do you need help...?"

So she ended up asking that instead.

"...Hmm.... Alexa could use the help, but Ale doesn't have the wiggles needed to do that." Alexa said, shaking her head and pointing beside her feet, the floor turned transparent for a second and...

"Ouch!" Ale felt her mind blank out for a second, she didn't know one could get headaches within the mindscape.

"...Was that...worms?" Ale asked as she tried to remember what she had seen, only for the headache to intensify, so instead she instinctively decided to delete the memory, which seemed to calm down the pain. "What the hell was that?"

"Alexa's wiggles!" Alexa said smiling brightly, "They are what Alexa is using to deal with the bad [Feels] that Meli-Meli left us, but since Ale doesn't have wiggles like Alexa she can't help. So leave everything to Alexa!"

That was... worrying, the fact that Alexa had something that she couldn't do, but perhaps it had something to do with how their minds were wired? Ale was aware that they all had different perspectives and ways to use their powers.

Perhaps this was something that Alexa could do because of how she saw the world and interfaced with their shared powers? Alexa's mind was more flexible than hers in some aspects after all.

....

"But why worms?" Even so, Ale couldn't help but wonder that aloud while sighing.

Her sister was weird.