

A BIO-WEAPON'S RHAPSODY

Chapter 278: I FORGOT ABOUT THAT STUPID CARD!

AAAAAAHHHH!!!!

As soon as Ale came out she couldn't help but feel how different her current garments were. The ground almost felt like it could crumble if she put more strength into her feet.

Even though her armored combat boots were on the civilian-like form, not the fully powered exosuit armor form.

The wind that should have been a few degrees colder than what Ale was used to didn't felt cold at all thanks to the protection granted by her coat. And while her hands only had fingerless gloves. She didn't feel the cold bite of the wind.

"Behold, the airspace branch of Aquila." Miriam Eversoul said as she stood out of the limousine and walked behind it, the trunk opened to her and without thinking much about it she put the luggage on the sidewalk.

As soon as Miriam Eversoul pulled the last of the bags the limousine accelerated leaving them in front of the entrance to what looked like a military facility and not an airport.

"... Well that happened." Miriam Eversoul said as she blankly stared at the vehicle leaving. "Let's go and check where you will be staying then."

Ale nodded and picked up her messenger backpack and started to move towards the entrance, it was not that far from the place they had been left. And barely a few meters of walk afterwards they found themselves with two armored and armed guards in front of the entryway.

"[Welcome, we have been expecting you.]" The voice sounded... distorted, as in intentionally distorted in a way that sounded too mechanical.

But that wasn't the most interesting fact of these two... guardsmen.

"Really?" Miriam Eversoul said shaking her head, "The stupid pet project of that blonde asshole is here too?"

"You know them?" Ale asked as she continued categorizing the information she was picking up, the two... things in front of them were receiving a constant data stream into their armor.

"They are a pet project that Alexanders started four years ago, a group of armored soldiers that are surgically fused with an exosuit." Miriam Eversoul turned to look at the things in front of them with pity, "The requirements of the experiment required paralyzed volunteers, and could only accept those who passed a psychological test. At the end of the day, it was discarded as we don't have that many people who could fulfill the requirements. Less than twenty joined the testing before it was closed."

Ale could see why, more so if her suspicions were true.

"[We are the spartoi guard.]" One of the two things in front of them spoke.

"You can call it whatever you want; it does not diminish the cruelty that the Saintsworths did to you." Miriam Eversoul said in a sad tone, "Can you guide us to Ale's lodging? We need to settle her things for tomorrow, she is departing on one of those planes..."

"[You are not allowed within the premises, only Ale Saintsworths was granted entry.]" One of the two spartoi spoke, *"[Lady Ale, please follow us.]"*

Ale had not expected that one to be honest, she knew that Alexanders would probably separate from her at some point, if what she had seen about the plane was to be believed, then she understood why.

"...No." Miriam Eversoul said, narrowing her eyes, "If the bastard thought pity would prevent me from coming with Ale, he has something else coming."

"[We are authorized to use deadly force against anyone who violates the rules.]" The other Spartoi chimed in, the artificial voice was literally the same as the first one, *"[Do not test us.]"*

As this one spoke, both loaded and turned on their rifle. Ale could detect a spike in energy and the sound of the weapon charging.

"I'll be okay." Ale said as she walked into the place, "They will not do anything bad."

Ale knew that as a fact, since neither was actually alive. Both things were receiving orders from a remote place, meaning these were more like unmanned guards than actual living human beings. Probably either controlled by Iskander... or one of those twenty test subjects that willingly gave their life to the Saintsworths.

"... Scan this," Miriam Eversoul said pulling a card from under her blouse, it was tied to a golden necklace, "And then tell me I can't walk in."

It was a golden card with the emblem of an eagle with eight wings.

"[Scanning...]" The first spartoi that had spoken to them said, *"[Recognized key, as this is a military facility affiliated to the Saintsworths, this card grants the bearer entry.]"*

"You bet your rusted ass it does." Miriam Eversoul said with a hmp as she walked forward, "Now guide us to Ale's lodgings."

"[This way Lady Ale.]" The second spartoi said turning to Ale, *"[Do you wish for this one to carry our luggage?]"*

"No... that's fine." Ale said unsure about what to say about this, "Which one is my plane? Or can I pick?"

Ale was receiving some interesting data right now, or well, she was hijacking the transmission and reading it.

There were five planes being prepared at the moment, four fighter jets and a bigger one.

"[The Drake One is ready for take off, we are preparing the guardian planes at the moment.]" The Spartoi answered Ale's prompt, *"[Shadrach and Meshach are ready for takeoff, but Abednego needed extra maintenance after the last patrol.]"*

Were those the names of the pilots or the planes?

"Really?" Miriam Eversoul spoke from behind with venom in her voice, "They still keep those planes?"

"[They are the most sucesfull flight squadron afiliated to the Saintsworths.]" The Spartoi spoke back. Ale hadn't noticed at what point, but there was only one remaining; the other had returned to guard the gate. *"[Belteshazzar is still under repairs.]"*

"Are those combat planes famous?" Ale asked unsure about what the deal was with those, "Or what is the problem?"

"The problem is the taste in the naming," Miriam Eversoul said sighing, "They are named after... problematic figures for some people."

"Why?" Ale didn't see any important political figures or problematic rulers with those names. "Did they do something bad?"

"They... no, they did nothing of the sort." Miriam Eversoul seemed troubled, "The connotation is bad, they are names that were meant to mock and twist a loyal servant into one who followed a false god."

"... And the bad connotation comes from the fact that these planes could in turn betray us?" Ale asked, confused. She very much doubted any AI under the Saintsworths could do such a thing. Heck, she hadn't connected directly to the Saintsworths' central server cluster in ages, and she was still beholden to them.

And this was after destroying and remaking the AI Core and Main Core a few times.

She very much doubted a random fighter plane could do more than her to separate from the Saintsworths.

"The problem is that naming a machine of war like this is in bad taste." Miriam Eversoul shook her head, "Gives us a bad image to certain public."

"If the name came from Alexanders he probably merely saw the name and thought it sounded cool." Ale said shrugging, "Nothing more than that."

"Names have meaning," Miriam Eversoul said yet again, "And as such, when one names something they must take care of that. The lens in which they see what we do matters."

"Are these planes famous?" Ale asked raising her first point about how it probably was not something as complex as what Miriam Eversoul was making it to be.

"Within the Saintsworths yes." Miriam Eversoul answered, "They are quite good at what they do after all."

"But it doesn't matter the optics of those that already work for the demon." Ale pointed out, "Optics only matter to those outside the Saintsworths, and I assume most of those within Aquila care not for this tidbit of trivia."

"[The inhabitants of Aquila know not what the name of the defensor units are.]" The Spartoi chimed in to help Ale's argument.

"I guess...." Miriam Eversoul acquiesced to Ale's point. "But it is still in bad taste."

"So you say." Ale shrugged, "I don't see the issue. Now if it was one of the mechas..."

"Pfft... Nah those are rumours." Miriam Eversoul laughed at Ale's comment, "The blonde asshole couldn't justify the expense so any plans to try and make them failed, the high council never authorized it."

"Why?" Ale asked confused, "I don't mean why they blocked him. I know why they did it from a logical point of view, but my experience so far tells me people are rarely that logical... A few examples excluded."

That was to say, Vivian Kellet and Vulcanus. The first was a human the second... not so much.

"Because it is a waste of money." Miriam Eversoul answered with a shrug, "Men love the idea of brawling while driving a gigantic mechanical humanoid and using swords and whatnot."

Ale could see the appeal of that yes.

"But the plain old truth is... most wars are fought never seeing your enemy face to face." Miriam Eversoul pointed out to one of the planes that was now coming into sight, "See that one? How far can the missiles travel before hitting a target?"

"[Roughly 50 Kilometers.]" The Spartoi answered before Ale could even search the answer.

"How far is the horizon?" Miriam Eversoul asked next.

That one, Ale already knew, since it had been one of the topics she spoke in a stream where she had been mocking some subgenre of people saying the world was a donut.

"4 kilometers at ground level, 30-40 kilometers if you are standing atop a tall building." Ale answered immediately.

"Meaning the average missile shot from one of those will be able to hit a target you can't even see from here." Miriam Eversoul pointed to the plane and then to a vehicle parked in front of the building they were walking towards to. "Now tell me, what could a mecha do? Say if that car turned into a vehicle, it would maybe be as tall as a normal house. But what could it do if a missile travelling a few Machs came rushing towards it."

Ale... wasn't sure how to answer to that.

"Besides, the logistics of the energy needed to fuel it are a nightmare, now imagine the custom-made weapons and ammunition." Miriam Eversoul smiled at that, "And that is from an educated civilian point of view, my speciality isn't towards weaponry and robotics. And those are the things I can think of, now... what do you think would be a more relevant problem?"

"... The amount of specialized training would be one for sure." Ale said nodding in understanding, "Then the issue of the G-forces that the pilot would need to endure..."

Ale imagined these robotic fighters would generate a great amount of G-forces, so unless they put those very expensive inertia dampeners on every one of the mechas, it wouldn't be worth it. And if these were as delicate as Ale guessed they were... surely they couldn't put them in a war machine.

"That is the main reason why the high council never allowed their research with money from the Saintsworths." Miriam Eversoul ended saying, "Besides, how would you even store them?"

"... Transform them into useful and easy-to-store vehicles?" Ale said pointing to the same plane she had pointed before. "Like a fighter jet."

"That would never work," Miriam Eversoul said shaking her head, "The size would need to be way too big for it to be viable, besides the maintenance would only skyrocket. And that is not to even mention the amount of fuel they would burn for take off."

"[...]"

The Spartoi didn't say anything about that. Or well, whoever was behind the controls of this thing at least. Smart, that one.

"Right," Ale said, nodding. She had sent a query to see the schematics of the fighter jets that would go with her, and it had been answered quite rapidly.

As Ale had guessed, the four planes that would escort her were of the type that could transform into giant fighters. Ale had been asked if she wanted to board one, but seeing that the protections to the pilot were close to none, she had decided to not board them.

There were a few systems in place that would, essentially, simulate a sort of pseudo-death and freeze the body of the pilot, then connect the brain to the plane's computer and allow the person to pilot the thing without fear of knocking themselves out when the G-forces hit.

Can't kill someone who is already dead I guess?

The thing promised to revive the pilot when all was said and done, but Ale would rather not test the effectiveness of that. She wasn't sure what would happen to their nanites if they decided that pseudo-death was actual death.

It was one way to solve the problem, but not one that Ale was thrilled to test. And while her body was sturdy, she didn't know if it was sturdy enough to hold itself in one piece with that kind of G-forces... or wasn't sure if it was sturdy enough yet.

She was more confident after getting this new body armor, that was for sure. She wondered if Alexanders had one similar to this, or well, she knew the man had one, she had seen it.

But wasn't sure if he was using as much devilthread like hers was. She hadn't gotten that impression yet, and the material seemed to be somewhat... weak against lightning discharges.

The manual did include a warning about lightning when using this suit anyway. And a button that would release a discharge in case the suit went haywire.

That was nice of him. Albeit, giving a safeguard after gifting a bodysuit that could theoretically eat its wearer was kinda weird.

"Why do you ask?" Miriam Eversoul asked finally, "You also want to pilot one? I should have guessed since your tastes are more towards that type of thing... Sorry, I didn't mean that making one was impossible, I'm sure that if you study hard and focus you can build one when you grow up. The Saintsworths have money if nothing else. And while your brother hasn't managed that just speaks bad of him, it doesn't mean it's impossible."

Ale... knew it was possible, they were standing a couple of meters from four to five such examples.

"Thank you, but I think I will focus more on the programming side of things." Ale said shaking her head, "Engineering and robotics I will leave to someone else."

And that was the honest truth, Ale wanted more to study a focused program in programming since she wanted to one day make a video game. Was it weird? An AI wanting to learn programming to make a game?

Of course, Ale knew about programming already; she was a living program after all, but what she wanted to learn was the structure of normal programs and video games, since whatever she made using herself as a template would end up way too complex for it to be run in a normal computer.

Was this irony? She could create a hyperrealistic environment, but there was almost not a single device on the planet that could execute it.

"Okay then, just making sure." Miriam Eversoul nodded to Ale, "So then, will you walk us in or just have us stand here awkwardly?"

Miriam Eversoul had turned her attention fully to the Spartoi that had brought them here.

"*[This way.]*" The thing said as the door opened and they could finally walk into whatever this building was.

Ale had assumed they would have her board the plane as soon as they walked in and made Miriam Eversoul leave. But she had been wrong since surely Alexanders wouldn't forget that Miriam Eversoul could walk into any facility under the Saintsworths thanks to that universal key. Right?

Surely he hadn't forgotten such crucial thing and in doing so, derailing this whole thing.
Right?