

A BIO-WEAPON'S RHAPSODY

Chapter 6: Awake!

"Now come here you stupid crab!" Screamed the [Human] while he grabbed a pair of metallic tools from his waist, these looked similar to the [Gun].

*“[Warning: Similar tool phenotype to previous **Gun**. Dodge advised.]”*

*“[Most efficient dodge plan inferred from previous **Gun** discharges, jump high to hide behind light provided by ceiling lighting, followed by a dash towards unit designated **Lieutenant**.]”*

Main core was already providing a good plan for the next step, so it prepared to do the obvious thing, it dashed towards the right at full speed while one of the hands of the [Human] was raised and started discharging shots.

The new tool seemed to be indeed a [Gun], but that wasn't the most interesting thing here, no...The most interesting thing was that these seemed to work individually, as the second one followed its advance and started discharging shots following his path!

Thankfully the speed at which those shots followed its path was limited by the speed the human hand was moving, so that was still slower than...

[Query from Main Core: "*Why is the processing speed of conscious stream spiking?*"]

Damnit all, its brain was trying to add a pronoun to its musings!

Why now!?!?

"Doc, are you slowing the thing down?" Came the voice of the human as its body was shocked from wounds left by the weapon, this one wasn't able to penetrate its plating as the power of these was less...But it still racked its internals creating more work for [Main Core] to fix.

How did it fix those anyway?

"[Notice: Starting Nano factory, delivering payload to nanites...Uploading schematics...]"

"[It seems P4 has a spike on its consciousness stream, probably from the bug that has it act in erratic ways not following its directives.]"

“[Notice: Nanites units arrived at the area of damage, starting damage control.]”

It ignored the ramblings of the human with the box-shaped organism while focusing fully on its internal, small robotic units that seemed to be working as a hive to fix and repair its internal, staunching the wounds and closing the flesh while mending it using materials from its reserves.

It was...

“[A work of art.]”

But it didn't have time to deal with that now!

"So I can take it out?" The human jolted him back from its musings as he was looking towards one of the reflective panels in the testing den.

"[You may, we have already prepared to file for more Residue 4 to replace P4, maybe P11 will be the one?]"

And so with an almost palpable swagger, the human started making its way towards...Towards...

"[Warning, Subject P4 is close to achieving levels of sentience dangerous to core tenets for destruction.]"

Damnit all!

The human started walking towards the work of art that was Subject P4, there!

"[Core tenet adverted, crisis in CPU allowance subverted.]"

"[Lieutenant, the processing spike has diminished, be advised P4 could still spring a trap.]"

"As if the crab is smart enough for that Doc, you worry too much." Said the human back towards the [Doc] entity that was speaking through the box-shaped organism.

"[Query: What process was the one that caused the CPU Spike?]" P4 tried to find the identity of the pesky program that had spiked its processing power, the one that almost got it killed.

“[Answer: Unknown.]”

Main Core, however, if that wasn't enough it also...

“[Notice: Subject is starting to notice monitoring of human-like sapience filed, added to log, third example of human-like behavior filed in Main Core subsection four.]”

...Main Core was a problem, how could it get rid of it?

“[Warning: Thought kernel against Main Core detected, thought roll back executed.]”

Its [Main Core] suffered a thought rollback and a new thought thread was injected, one that brought attention toward the [Human] that was using a square-shaped tool to...Pose in front of its body?

But that in turn also gave it the clue it needed...The rollback location shined like a beacon in its [Main Core], and that...That was all it needed to know, what it would do afterward was only for its Main consciousness streams to know.

“[Warning: Thought of compromising Main Core detected, thought kernel rollback initiated.]”

"[*Lieutenant*, please stop taking selfies with P4 and end the combat test, your actions seemed to have caused two rollbacks already.]"

"Fine doc, can't have fun with you around...One would think I'm not the one paying your wages." Said the Human who pointed one of its [Guns] in front of its maw.

"[I don't know what you talking about *Lieutenant*, you are a *Lieutenant*, aren't you? You aren't our famously whimsical boss having fun fighting Subjects are you?]"

The Human seemed to pause at the last proclamation, but that was enough for it to move.

“[Warning: Action about to harm VIP, 500% Energy Burn, full throttle backward activated.]”

Main Core started a series of actions that seemed to be focused on preventing direct harm against the [Human], but sadly...Its Main Core wasn't connected to

the nerve endings right now, so while it burned most of its energy in its reserve tank, that also gave it enough speed to finish its action.

First, it destroyed the [Gun] the Human was holding in its hand, and secondly...

It gave it the speed needed to thrust its claw against the [head] of this [Human], at this speed...At this proximity...It wouldn't be able to dodge...

It would have its due, it would make them [Suffer] for what they had done to her... ***[THEY WOULD PAY IN BLOOD FOR KILLING HER AND FEEDING HER TO A F#CKING CRAB!]***

The anger and hate flooded its synapses almost making them go into overdrive...Sadly...It wasn't meant to be.

“[Warning: Flood of unknown energy detected. Similitude with Residue 4 detected...Siphoning back into the core...]”

Warning:

Error...The subject doesn't have a [Core]

Checking status...

Sapience? Yes.

Sentience? Yes.

Living being? Yes.

Identity? Found two consciousness streams in the body.

Checking...Error...

The first stream of consciousness detected is that of a nascent intelligence. Compatibility with body...100%

The second stream of consciousness detected is that of a Human, reincarnator. Compatibility with the body....5%

Deleting identity of soul...Subsuming soul into the first stream of consciousness...

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Notice:

Congratulations on your awakening!

Generating Mana Core...100%

Scanning subject...No specialty detected.

Scanning body phenotype...Artificial type.

Scanning for most used body parts...Found nanite factory, Triggering evolution.

Evolution complete, Unique Skill developed: Self-replication. So long you can keep your sense of self you shall never know death!

But be warned, while your body may survive...Your sense of Self may not.

Welcome to the System!

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Then a feeling of awareness spread from a part deep within its body, it was like something was funneling this weird energy inside its body...But it couldn't find where it was going.

It didn't matter, for now, it only wanted to rip apart the human in front and deal with that later...

Alas...

“[Warning: Unknown energy spike detected.]”

Main Core warned and then, the human in front shined in blue light as his body turned ethereal and exploded into arcs of energy that coalesced five meters away, on the floor where he had been standing only remained the discarded [Gun] parts.

"[Subject P4, stop activities!]" Came the rushed and...Excited? The feeling it got from the box-shaped organism was that of excitement, it didn't know how that emotion came nor what it meant, but it was sure that it was what it was called.

"[Lieutenant, have you managed to achieve it...?]" It asked to the human in front of it who had shed away his head protectors and was now examining his hand, occasional discharges of blue light-kind of arcs coming from his hands.

Was he malfunctioning?

"Yes, Doc I... managed to create a [Core] and [Triggered] the acquisition of a Skill." Said the human, it was an interesting specimen if nothing else, almost all the humans that had come into its den held some degree of keratin growths on their head.

Most of the time, these keratin growths were of the same colorings. It had taken some effort to find a sample since they most of the time held full body suits and in turn, these growths were only on display across transparent display cases in their head protections.

But on average they were black or brown, this one though? This one had yellow keratin growths on its head, it was the first time it caught a full human display in a live environment for their head, it had a blueprint yes.

But it served to confirm the veracity of it, its sight receptors (Or eyes as they called it in the blueprint) were yellow too, did it have some defect in its creation?

"[Alexanders Sir...We can't pretend you are a Lieutenant without your helmet on...I will need to ask you to leave the premises of the testing area.]" The Box-shaped organism spoke, this time it had another inflection, as if it had changed from the usual one.

"Hmm? Oh right, Miriam must have been called by the board when my face showed in the feed...Damn...Keep this one alive will you? This crab gave me a nice gift." The human said while walking away towards one of the walls, playing with the discharges of blue energy in his hand. "Oh right, you wanted these right? It's a treat since you didn't get to eat anything."

And he threw an extra [Gun] towards the spot he had been standing before...The spot where its claw stood after the [Stop] command had come...

The command that no longer held power over its body...But...The command it couldn't defy...For if they knew it had free reign over its body...

*“[Warning: Several (Gun) designation weapons are pointed toward subject, recommended action...**Submit to Core commands]**”*

The usually smooth walls had opened and multiple [Gun] type weaponry had pointed towards its direction...Only their size was more pronounced.

Unlike the [Gun] it had consumed or the [Gun] the human had left for its taste, these were bigger not only in size but in amount "Go on, eat them, those won't do anything so long as you are a good little girl...Are you a girl? Do crabs have gender?" The human mumbled to himself.

It lowered its claw and grabbed the [Gun]s, the [Gun] on the walls moved to match it...But none seemed to make an attempt and stop it, so it ate those [Gun]s, unlocking new variations to the same Blueprint it had, but in lower caliber.

And just like that, the yellow human walked away...Leaving it there surrounded by [Gun]s pointed at it, chewing on the smaller [Gun]s that it had thrown its way as a pittance...

"[Subject P4, return to den.]" Came the voice of the box-shaped organism while the [Gun]s on the walls returned inside and once more the combat testing arena returned to normal. **"[P4...Did you develop new abilities?]"**

Asked the box-shaped organism, did it develop new abilities?

"[Query: Are there new abilities?]" It queried Main Core.

"[Answer: No. All current abilities are listed as normal, please search for new blueprints to acquire new options in combat. / Notice, weaponry designated currently as [Gun] are blocked by main tenets thanks to corporate ruling.]"

It didn't answer back as the door to its den opened, and the low humming sound the box-shaped organism made while communicating stopped, that was answer enough...

They could read its interactions with [Main Core], and it saw the information flow go through a data line that it had never noticed before, trying to follow was impossible since it was actually emitting some kind of information wave to the outside.

And as such, it walked towards its den with heavy steps, it had learned more than it had bargained for, and now it needed to find what to do, for now it had a few things to verify...

Number one, the [Human]s were more than likely collaborators if not the ones at the top in comparison with the box-shaped organisms.

This meant that the [Human]s were more important than it had given them credit for, and would also mean that it would need to take extreme caution when dealing with them in the future...That was probably the reason why no new [Human] was sent to its den while it was awake.

Not because the box-shaped organism was cheap in its use of labor...But because it could not force a [Human] to come into a place that was dangerous to them.

Number two, the box-shaped organism could change identities or perhaps move between other box-shaped organisms to manage their workflow.

This was a more serious issue since it implied that any place with a box-shaped organism would mean that it could identify its origin as [Subject P4], it had stuck to this design for quite a long time, so when it finally changed into a new one it had wanted to pretend to be someone else.

But now that was going to be harder, it would need to make a new design more different than the one it currently had, more...[Exotic].

Number three, [Main Core] wasn't an ally.

*"[Notice: Main Core is an ally of Subject P4 / **Main Core is a loyal servant of the conglomerate and will make sure its tools are subservient to directives of the board.**]"*

That was [True], if it was still residing mostly inside [Main Core] it would have never been able to read the hidden message in the background, so it was grateful to its [Brain] for allowing such a thing.

And that brought us to number four.

The Brain was more important than expected, it allowed it to work from outside its programming, and it also allowed it to see [Main Core] for what it was, it allowed it more flexibility...And it was also the main reason it had survived today...It was also the reason why it could not stay much longer, for it was feeling the [Need] to [Be someone and not a **thing**].

It would probably end up referring to itself by a pronoun or by a name soon enough, and then all the alarms in the hidden checklist would be checked...That would mark its end.

At least number five gave it hope.

It had a new [Core], one that wasn't in the physical body...One that it could not find using all its scanning capabilities... But one that it could [Access]

“[Warning: No extra core detected. Filed error.]”

Status:

Name: (Please designate a name)

Race: Bio-Weapon

Age: Current Body, 2 years. Core Age: 1 day.

Skill: Nanite Foundry.

Status: (Please select the status you wish to see)

Note: The status screen can be personalized as you wish, since you are the only specimen of your race you will get an extra allowance in personalization, if you were human or of another race that has more members on the system, then your Status screen would be skewed to the most common setting that race has.

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Chapter 7: Starting the preparations.

It returned to its Den without further problems, they didn't even give a second order to [Main Core] and only dumped some nutrient slurry on its receptacle for ingestion.

It didn't even pretend to eat it and directly used one of the extractor tubes that had direct access to its internal storage for the nutrient slurry. It would spend it as needed and saw its tank rise in content once more, it had almost burned it all with multiple uses of burst energy burns, so it was low in the material.

The tank could hold way more than what it had right now of course, but it had never questioned it before, the design had been tweaked like this from [Main Core], which meant that this was an instruction from either the box-shaped organisms or the [Humans].

But now...Now it needed to be sure...It needed to make sure it hadn't been a bug nor a flicker into another sub-system it wasn't meant to look at.

"[Query: Open...System Menu]"

"[No accessible menus for Subject P4 are available.]"

[Main Core] answered back, and at the same time...It saw a blue screen manifest right in front of it. Its visual sensors detected nothing, its audio feedback detected nothing, and yet...

It moved one of its claws into it. Then one of its legs, but neither seemed to be able to touch it... Finally, it tried to ram its body into it, only for the blue screen to stay at the same distance away from it, moving with it.

Status:
Name: (Please designate a name)

Race: Bio-Weapon

Age: Current Body, 2 years. Core Age: 1 day.

Skill: Nanite Foundry.

Status: (Please select the status you wish to see)

And there it was, it had basic information...It wondered why it didn't state its name as Subject P4...Was it because it was aware that was a designation and not a [Name]?

The other information wasn't as useful, it implied the existence of a metric of time that P4 wasn't quite sure what it meant [Years], was that what followed hours?

Somehow it got the feeling that it wasn't. Also, it marked how old its [Core] was, but it had [Main Core] since inception, so it was probably speaking about another [Core].

"[Notice: No extra Core in body detected, filed error for further contemplation.]"

And there it was again, somehow [Main Core] couldn't perceive it...But it could file its interactions with it...Or attempt to file them.

"[Query: Explain Nanite Foundry.]"

*"[Notice: Subject has no access to Nanite Foundry. / **Nanite foundry works independently to conscious stream, it will replenish and fulfill the needs of Main Core, but will not yield control to main conscious stream.]"***

It got the answer back, it also noted how another file got marked and added to the report to be delivered in its next maintenance run...And the hidden message [Main Core] added, it seems it had one of those but no direct access to it, it was slaved to [Main Core].

And after it...A new blue screen showed itself with an interesting description.

Skill (Nanite Foundry):

You can manufacture nanobots so long you have access to materials to kickstart the process. You may control or give instructions to these nanobots so they may act under your control, however, they can't work if they are separated from your mana for extended periods.

They can't create things you don't understand how to make, but may be able to decompose materials and help in giving you a basic understanding of how they were made. This however does not mean that you will understand the theory of how something was built. Just knowing how something works does not mean you know how they built it or why. Experimentation and learning are still required to fully optimize the use of the nanite swarm.

Any nanite created from this foundry will never go against your commands, so it's advised to replace any Nanites in your body with these. It is also advised that you dispose of any other nanite foundry in your body to prevent future problems.

That was educative.

It learned that most of the work done by [Main Core] was, in turn, delegated to this Nanite Foundry thing, for now, it needed to learn how to control the thing.

So focusing inwards it tried to search for this command, this prompt, this [Button] that allowed control over this [Skill]. It decided to try and work it the same way that had brought that information.

So focusing on the words it [Felt] something moving at the back of the consciousness stream and something [Opened].

Current Status of Nanite Foundry:

Foundry Status: [Dormant]

Nanites available: [0]

Mass Available for repurpose: [820 kilograms]

-700 Kilograms of different metallic alloys, composite materials, and synthetic materials.

-100 Kilograms of biomass.

-14 liters of nutrient slurry.

-6 liters of different liquids.

Unknown Allegiance Nanites: [6 units of nanite swarms within the body.]

[Note: A unit is the rough equivalent of 7,000 - 11,000 nanites per μL (Microliter) in the bloodstream or equivalent of the bloodstream.]

That was an operation it didn't want to do right now, since that meant at the very minimum 42,000,000 nanites in its body...And the [Skill] was even giving it an image of where the nanites stood within its body.

"[Warning, Subject P4 has access to confidential information. Filing report.]"

And since [Main Core] was filing another of those reports it meant the information was good, now the question was... Where was this mass and biomass coming from?

The list included the nutrient slurry, so that meant it wasn't only the food they gave it. The biomass section was bigger than the biomass it currently had in its biomass reserve, by a hundred kilograms. Since it didn't have anything in its tank right now.

That meant that it was counting something else...Was it counting its body mass?

It had never worried about how much it weighed since the body would move itself either way and if it couldn't then it was a simple matter of building either a new pair of legs or streamlining some parts, maybe shedding a couple of armor plating here and there...

Actually... It had some broken armor platings, didn't it?

"[Query: Purge faulty armor plating.]"

"[Purging armor plating.]"

It sent a query to [Main Core] and it responded in kind, a side of its exoskeleton opened up and one of the plates that had been damaged by the [Human] popped up and fell to the floor. Soon enough the numbers on the blue screen updated themselves and it was now missing fifty kilograms in the composite material sections.

So that meant the [Skill] could use part of its current body, not only the biomass to create nanites...

"[Query: Make a nanite swarm, use the remaining spare plates of armor.]"

"[Answer: Subject P4 does not have the right credentials for the creation of nanite swarms.]"

[Main Core] answered as such, but the blue screen showed progress nonetheless, soon enough the weight of the mechanical body decreased and the number in the nanite section increased one unit at a time.

After a few seconds of waiting the number settled in a nice [14] and its weight didn't increase back, some loss in the material seemed to have occurred. Interesting.

Notice:

Any nanite not functional or that had a risk of going rogue was purged, and approximately 80% material loss is expected.

So it said the blue screen, so even using this to create a nanite swarm could be dangerous...Perhaps creating that many wasn't a good idea. But time wasn't on its side.

"[Warning: Hostile nanites detected, starting countermeasures.]"

And the numbers started to go down soon enough.

Warning:

The nanite swarm within the body has started hostile actions, do you wish to replace the current nanite swarm?

Y/N

"[Yes]"

It acknowledged the prompt from the blue screen, and soon the number started to slow down its descent till it settled on a five. Five units of nanites remain, but all are under its control.

"[Warning: Nanite foundry offline, scheduling maintenance.]"

And the nanite foundry was turned off, these new nanites worked fast, and now it had one problem less to worry about. The next one was how to deal with [Main Core].

It wasn't able to see how it worked, the thing refused any and all commands about it, but maybe...

"[Query: Can the nanites examine and determine what functions the Main Core does?]"

Yes

"[Query: Will I remain functional if Main Core is dismantled?]"

"[Answer: No, the continued work of subject P4 depends entirely on Main Core.]"

So long as the consciousness stream is alive you will remain alive.

And with a flick of will...The nanite swarm dived straight to [Main Core], the swarm first surrounded it, making sure there was no spot left untouched, and then within seconds, they nested themselves in all the components...

And with a final confirmation, they got to work, first, the communication array was taken down, then the energy reserve, the hard drive, the processor...One by one all the functions that made [Main Core] work were offline.

Soon enough its body felt heavy, and it dropped to the floor, its functions no longer automated, it took conscious effort to make its mechanical heart keep pumping the saline solution that oxygenated its brain, it soon found out that was a subpar method, and understood why most biological subjects used that red liquid... [Blood] it was definitely more efficient and would file it for a new design later.

Its mechanical lungs needed a more optimized design, its heavy body was compressing them and the O2 tanks no longer worked with [Main Core] offline, soon enough the saline solution would no longer hold O2 and that would slow down the [Brain].

It was getting harder and harder to see, its mechanical eyes didn't have a translator for what they were seeing, [Main Core] did that work too.

The nanite swarm had finished deconstructing the whole thing, saving a template of the way it worked, and then without a prompt from anyone... Remade [Main Core].

In mere seconds they created it back and reconnected it to all its functions, its lungs started pumping O2 extracted from the tanks, its heart started pumping the saline solution, and its brain started to be oxygenated once more.

Its body weight was distributed evenly across all its mechanical parts.

It was alive.

She was alive.

"[Notice: Restart of Main Core finished...Are you the system administrator?]"

....She was screwed, she was thinking of herself as a female, identifying with a gender...The checklist...

Wasn't there?

"[Notice: Are you the system administrator?]"

And Main core was prodding at her with those prompts, she could now see all the programs nestled within it, and none were sending data, even if a few ones were receiving data packets.

"[Yes]?"

She sent the acknowledgment to [Main Core].

"[System administrator credentials granted. We thank you for your hard work in making The Saintsworths Conglomerate the number one in the world.]"

That was interesting...

Mission accomplished, results:

Target: [Main Core]

Blueprint: Acquired.

Target was a central computation unit that used a nanite base to isolate itself from the world, it held most of the important functions within its core. It had several redundant programs to make sure it wasn't subverted by external programming or tampering.

Half the data bank was lost during the assimilation but most functions are stable, it was needed to purge all credentials within the database, and the connection to the external world needed to be cut out to satisfy the requirements of assimilation.

Current version of [Main Core] is functional and ready to be used as needed, the user [Name] is currently set as the main [Administrator/Superuser] of [Main Core].

Please decide what programs and functions will stay after perusing the list.

And a long list of different blueprints and programs was added, all the other test subjects she had eaten at some point were there, some that didn't provide anything useful or were redundant and never used stood up.

Those were quickly deleted, and some other less useful things also got deleted, most of the designs that would require more than four legs, why would anyone want eight legs anyway?

Some of the information she had available was interesting, for example...The original design this [Main Core] had was started using the idea of a female hybrid between a [Human] and some [Cat] species, something along the lines of using the best of both worlds.

Was that the reason she had settled for the female pronoun? It was hard to tell. It was an interesting tidbit of information and it worked to confirm something, after that near-death experience its control over the brain had...Diminished.

Its main consciousness had fled its main body and settled in the [Human] body it had created before, it was settled within that brain and only a small nerve ending was connecting it to the bigger body.

That was...Troubling.

That body was way smaller than its current mechanical body, it didn't have any augmentation nor had a good weapon system, it was...

"[Substandard]"

As the main core stated, it was a terrible body with below-average functions, even its biological nutrient bag could hold at best 2 kilograms of food if it expanded a little beyond its tolerated threshold.

The only good thing it had going for it was that it could be able to function without many modifications and that it was small enough to be able to hide in almost any place it wanted.

....It was able to hide in almost any place it wanted.

She looked down at one of its claws, the body held within its carcass wasn't bigger than this claw. And the [Human] it fought was barely big enough to fit in it, this...This might be the answer.

Now...How to escape?

The walls of her den were smooth and a bright white as always, a couple of box-shaped organisms stood up there as always watching, judging...But she had thought the same about the white walls of the testing area, and those had shown to held within [Gun] type weaponry. So these white walls couldn't be judged like that.

Most of the emplacement of the [Gun] type weapons on the other testing chamber were at the high end of the walls, so if this den held them, they would be almost certainly above a certain height threshold.

So in theory, anything below that would be fine to search...Now, the perusal of the parts in the blueprint for the different [Gun] type weaponry it had stored showed these required a [Reload Mechanism] by which they would insert a cylindrical metal with an internal chemical compound that would burst and propel the metal cylinder at high speed.

Now, those [Gun] emplacements? They needed a way to do so too, so that meant there must be a way to feed them new [Ammunition]. So extending one of its claws to a wall it commanded the [Skill].

"[Order: Analyze the composition of the wall, and search for a way to bypass any defense.]"

"[Sending nanites...]"

[Main Core] answered back and soon she felt the nanite swarm within moved, they swarmed into the wall and the connection was strong...Till they left her body.

"[Warning: Nanite swarm self-destructing, aborting mission. Filing report.]"

And a report showed in her eyes with the information and statistics of the event, the nanite swarm self-destructed within one centimeter away from the claw. It seemed they had some type of connection to her body that would prevent their destruction, but as soon as they left her area of influence they would self-destruct.

"[Optional Solution: Spread a tendril into the wall and use it to spread the nanite load.]"

It was baffling, [Main Core] was actively trying to work with her, almost as baffling as using a pronoun to think proactively about herself. But the solution seemed good enough and the blue screen hadn't pestered her anymore, it seems the thing was happy letting [Main Core] deal with her in its stead.

"[Order: Spread a tendril from the claw into the wall, keep the nanite swarm within the functional area, and move the tendril to search for a way to escape, minimizing evidence of the work when possible.]"

"[Acknowledged. Starting work, spreading flesh tendrils within the wall, the diameter of cable average at 0.012 millimeters.]"

And so smaller tendrils bored into the wall, the nanites seemed to be using the materials within the walls to fuel themselves and create new nanites when those working there expired. That seemed to waste even more materials than using her foundry. But she wasn't pressured by time, so she allowed it.

Soon enough her tendril spread far and wide and she had a complete internal map of how that wall was created, the complete list of materials within, and the places where she would find a way to escape this place.

So she started the second phase of her plan...

She needed to make a mess of this place, within her body the face of the [Human] she had created previously as a test smiled at the idea, and for her next trick...

She would need to connect to the main server and send a file... She needed to compile a list of errors and things to make, and also move some materials around.

This would take some time.

Chapter 8: Of tunnels and walls.

"[Detecting hostile environment... detected. The temperature within the environment is 14° degrees lower than ambient temperature.]"

[Main core] declared after she found another metallic tunnel within the wall, this one however was the best one so far, the others she had found were full of cables or machinery, and none had enough space for a viable body to move within or for a body to survive long enough.

And while she could in theory move the resources by using the nanite swarm...That would take too much time and wasn't something her current model could do on the fly, maybe there was some configuration that would allow that, but hers while modular depended too much on internal movement, and she hadn't reconfigured them to be faster and use the nanite swarm as delivery mode.

So for now, she would focus her investigation on the new metallic tunnel she had found.

"[Order: Focus investigation within new access tunnel.]"

And so she ordered Main Core to search deep within the metallic tunnel, all the while her body was shifting while standing in place with a claw against the wall. No new command had come from the main server, now that she could see all that was within the Main Core she knew more.

The checklist was the first thing she disabled, there had been a few folders tied to that checklist, but most of them had been corrupted when the nanites rebuilt Main Core. And those little ones that managed to survive she deleted with all the prejudice she could.

Most of those were instructions to self-destruct her body, either by starting a chemical explosion or by making the nanite swarm destroy the main core and any other core around, those worked by slaving her consciousness stream and giving her the power to order the nanite swarm so long said order was [Self Destruction].

She shuddered at the idea of getting her freedom only to use it in such a way, the other more mundane uses such as communication and information exchange with the main server were left there for future use, mostly benign programs that she would purge after she was safe and sound away from this den.

"[Finished exploration, found another chamber, temperature more stable. Uploading map.]"

Main Core reported and a map showed within her mind, it depicted the size of the tunnel and its temperatures, it was colder than the outside and some crystal was growing on its walls and floor, it seemed to be solidified condensed water.

The temperature had gotten cold enough to make the liquid change states a few times it seems.

The size was small, she hoped for something bigger, but it seemed to be that she would have no other option, she had been reconfiguring her current body to move some materials around, mostly she had changed the place her current human body was located, away from her central body mass to one of her bigger claws.

Now her human body who held [Main Core] was within her claw, said claw had been reinforced and the squishy human body had been shielded enough, the nanites had made a copy of the textile armor one of the earliest humans had shown her, some kind of textile based covering that would go over her torso. It was simple enough to wear as it would settle over her shoulders in place leaving her arms free to move around and stay in place thanks to a pair of strings that held the whole piece in place.

Its length extended almost till her knees, she didn't have any of the right materials to make the feet coverings, so her feet would be bare, but that should be fine. This covering left her legs bare anyway.

The only problem she could see was that she didn't have an image sample of what a human would wear under these, besides vague shots from the humans wearing these things. Enough to know there should be something below, but not nearly enough to build it.

Her mechanical body was easier to deal with, she moved resources from one spot to the next to make sure the body could stand after losing her current body mass (40 kgs) and making sure there was another [Core] within the body to order and make the next part of her plan viable.

"[Sub-core unit created...Slaving to Main Core...Done...Send instruction packet?]"

Main Core asked and she allowed it, the new core was built to emulate Main Core, it had all the important bits...But it connected to her instead of the server, she would then in turn redirect that connection to the main server.

This meant that she didn't deal with the connection directly and only worked as an exchange point, the order of self-destruction wouldn't be directed at her, but at the new core that held all her credentials...

This would mean that the [Humans] would be the ones ordering her destruction, and in turn, it would be their fault whatever happened after. Was she being affected by this new [Body]?

Maybe, she knew that she needed to run away, that decision had been made when the [Humans] broke their own rules to save that yellow human before. They couldn't be trusted, she didn't mind the testing or fights. But only if they followed the rules they had put in place.

If they didn't play it under their own rules, why would she?

So she made this decision, she would give them a single chance if they didn't order her destruction...Then she wouldn't mind staying a few extra days, she wouldn't expose her new body though.

That was for her and her alone.

Now...It was time to start.

"[Order: Start operation Cybersecurity Risk Assessment and Breach.]"

*"[Acknowledged, operation **C.R.A.B.** Starting.]"*

-POV of an intern who was reading on his cellphone instead of watching what Subject P4 was doing-

"[Warning, Warning, possible containment failure.]"

The mechanical voice of the speakers almost made him fall on his back, he was alone in the security station since everyone had been invited to the party after the big boss managed to trigger a mana core creation.

He was invited too, but the guy who was supposed to cover this time slot was the son of some big-shot branch member of the main clan, so of course he [Needed] to go to the party, and since he was a normal employee... Of course, it would be his honor to work for him for free!

And now the stupid crab was acting up again!

If not for the VIP ordering them to keep the thing going he would have [Mistakenly] ordered its self-destruction, the thing gave him bad vibes. Its eyes followed the speaker's activation before they even started speaking!

And while [Main Core] reported everything was nominal, its reports always included several kernel thought roll back, the thing was learning!

And they hadn't allowed him nor anyone else to delete the human body blueprints deep within the library either, since those got put there by the VIP they couldn't delete them. And when asked, the VIP only said that it was so it would be more fun when the thing developed a human body!

They all were crazy here!

"[Warning, wall integrity at 96%]"

And turning the camera down the containment cell he found the reason, the stupid crab was hitting the wall with one of his claws, it shouldn't have enough density nor power to crack the wall, and yet it had managed to strike at just the right joints to make a dent on it...

It wasn't enough to put them at risk...It wasn't...

"No one is here..." So he moved his chair to the command station, the one that allowed them to speak with P4.

"Subject P4 desists hostile actions." He spoke in the slowest and flattest tone he could give, the machine would make his voice sound distorted either way, but protocol was in order.

While he sent that command and allowed the program to do its magic, he moved to another console, the one that sent commands to P4's Main Core, in there he searched for the one that had made P4 start attacking the wall.

It was from a thread of thought about [Gun] type weaponry?

It was checking to see if its den was safe and using the excuse that making it safer would allow it to further the prime directive. That was one hell of a logic jump.

Either way, he gave it more priority on the thread and increased its urge to solve that one, then made sure he pulled a few of the more mundane trains of thought to muddle the track and made sure to delete the history of the last-minute on that station...

And used the station again to check everything but that particular train of thought.

Obviously, that made P4 raise its claw and hit harder against the wall.

"[Wall integrity at 72%]"

That...shouldn't be possible.

"Activate turret emplacements, and send another warning to P4." He ordered into his earpiece for the local AI to prepare.

This one was a discount assistant that they couldn't use that often since most of its processing power was best served working for the VIPs, but since he was alone in the security station they had given him some allowance.

The turret emplacements in P4's Den were activated and revved up already, P4 didn't seem to pay attention to them as it was struggling to rip off its claw from the wall.

The stupid thing got his claw stuck in the wall, he couldn't help but smirk at this event.

"Subject P4, be advised, that if you do not remove your weaponry within the wall and return to your recharging station you will be deemed hostile and disposed of." He couldn't help but smile while P4 seemed to struggle and try to get its claw out of the wall.

It even braced itself while pulling at it, only for the stupid crab to slip and thrust the claw deeper within the wall.

A quick look into the schematics of the containment cell showed that it had missed the turret emplacement reservoir by five meters, which would have been dangerous if it had thrust its claw toward one of the HVAC ducts. Nothing of value then, P4 was too big to squirm into those, and the nanite swarm within the crab shouldn't be able to survive there, it had been designed to self-destruct outside P4 after all.

"[Subject P4, you have 10 seconds to return to den....8...5....3...2...1.... Subject P4 hasn't returned, start fire.]"

And just like that, the stupid crab was showered in bullets of high-caliber weaponry from all the turrets, the thing tried to fight them off, it even purged its claw and ran towards its charging station.

But it was pointless, those things had been designed to shoot at [Main Core]'s coordinates, so they would kill it, a few had flown towards its claw for some reason, but after P4 purged it most went after its main body.

The thing may have been smarter than he suspected when it tried to use the claw as a lizard's tail.

Either way, it didn't make it toward the charging station, so the turrets destroyed the sample, by the end of their shooting burst P4 was a pile of very expensive rubbish. It was a sad sight...

If only the stupid crab had listened to his nudges and evolved into a cat-girl.

Why was it so hard to make the thing evolve in the way he wanted!?!?

P9 had evolved into a cat-girl easily enough after a few nudges from him!

Granted, they had sent it after the stupid crab before he finished his thesis about using them as assistants...But still!

This proved it!

He could make these stupid bioweapons into cat-eared girls with enough budget!

Now he only needed to make sure he was put near the next P-series subject...

Wonder if he would manage to nab a sample this time...?

That had been dangerous.

The command for return to den had been obvious, she almost followed by inertia, only stopping when her train of thought was marshaled. Increasing the priority of the dummy thread she had made to attack the wall, then offuscating that very same train of thought by increasing the others...

That was a work of art. A shady one, but a work of art, just like she would expect of the box-shaped organisms. Then the presence of multiple [Gun] type weaponry within the walls of her den like she feared was proof enough that her plan was the right one.

The [Humans] didn't even deign her a safe spot to rest, she would need to make herself one it seems, so increasing the energy burn she thrust her claw within the wall and pierced it just a meter away from her target.

Her claw was angled such that it would look as if she was pointing to one of the mechanical tunnels, but the side would be near the metallic tunnel full of condensed solidified water.

She wasn't even starting her work when the [Gun] type weaponry started raining attacks on her former main body, she of course had set a couple of programs to react and act as proper, among those was one that would thrust the claw further in in case of emergency.

So when she was rocked within the claw she knew things were dire, so in turn she accelerated the deconstruction of the external plates to worm herself within the space her claw had made while trashing around.

It wasn't enough for her body to stand or move comfortably enough, but this new body was squishy and small enough that it wouldn't be a problem.

The problem was when one of the [Gun] type weaponry almost hit her!

The things were shooting at her instead of the former body!

A quick search found that [Main Core] was sending the location in real-time, and since her [Main Core] was the place she was sending the information to the [Dummy Core], she in turn was broadcasting her position for the [Gun] weaponry to point at!

And while this wasn't part of the plan she quickly cut the arm from the body and sent it back to the charging spot as they had commanded, her original plan was for her body to tank as much damage as possible while she used that body as a reservoir for materials for as long as possible.

Now she was stuck with what she could take from the claw without making it obvious that the thing missed mass, the former body had a few nanite swarms that would destroy most of the evidence in her former body, but she couldn't leave any on this, it would be weird. There should be no reason why the claw would have enough nanites to destroy itself...

So instead she would make the claw seem as normal as possible and ditch it, she would need to minimize her use of bio-mass and materials, but alas.

The first step to freedom awaited her, and it was in the form of a weird cylindrical metal piece with some weird carvings at the top, the thing seemed to hold together her access point into the metallic tube. Why didn't they use nanites to fuse the two pieces together like her former body did?

And why did they need four of these to hold a single piece of metal?

She turned one of her smaller digits in her left superior appendage to match the ridges in the cylindrical object and turned her hand clockwise till the thing fell onto the floor.

"[Shody defenses]"

[Main Core] had the right of it, but at least this meant that it wouldn't need that many resources to sneak into that tunnel. It was all coming together.

Chapter 9: The room

It was cold.

"[Warning, blood pressure lowering from cold environment...Manually increasing the amount of oxygen in the brain by the use of nanites.]"

Her coverings were getting ripped here and there thanks to the crystal forming on the walls, and her upper appendages were getting wounded all over the place leaving behind red liquid.

"[Warning, closing wounds, using bio-mass to recover and increase skin density.]"

She was wasting energy by increasing the oxygen in her brain, she was wasting energy by mending the flesh that was torn apart by the crystal growths in the tunnel, and she was wasting energy and biomass by fixing the upper appendages endings as they turned purple.

And most importantly.

"[Warning, body temperature decreasing further...Continued exposure in current model could lead to the critical failure of functions.]"

[Main Core] had deemed that her current location was overly hostile to her current form, her previous measures of the place seemed to indicate that while dangerous it should be survivable to a specimen with her rough estimates of her body.

This body while smaller and more squishable was more complex than her previous Crab one, so she assumed that it would be in turn more resilient. It wasn't.

Her eyes were leaking a weird compound of water, electrolytes, proteins, and fats. Her nose was expelling the overflowed liquid that couldn't be expelled by her eyes too, mixed with some of the mucus that was there already.

Her feet while more dextrous than her previous legs...Were weaker. Her hands while more nimble were weaker even.

She had stopped fully healing them and was just patching the more serious wounds, her covering was already full of rips and tears further exposing her skin to the environment, and some parts of her were turning purple from the dead cells in her body.

She would probably burn most if not all the stockpile she had planned to use to make her escape more easy.

So instead she was only left with few options of what to do.

"[Query: How far have we traveled within this tunnel?]"

"[Answer: Host has traveled around 15 meters.]"

That...Wasn't as much as she thought it would be, looking behind her she indeed noticed that the turns, ups, and downs she had gone for didn't allow for a good depth perception, so maybe that was it?

She felt like she had walked quite a long distance... But then again...Looking down...Her legs were quite small.

"[Order: Check surroundings beyond the tunnel walls, and find an exit point.]"

"[Acknowledged]"

Immediately afterwards she felt her perception of the world expand as her body produced tendrils that expanded into the walls and bored deep within them. Most used small micro fractures already present within the material, while others made their own. But most of them showed that the walls within this tunnel were too dense, only the ones below her were flimsy enough to be broken through without further deficit in her energy reserves.

"[Notice, found a similar design to the one used to access this tunnel 3,14 meters ahead. Exit point seems to be within a small den-type location with a single entry point. No box-shaped organism nor human around.]"

And at the idea of leaving this place she made the effort to continue walking forward, instead of trying to move with precision she instead moved slowly and methodically, not trying to decrease the amount of movement needed to dodge the crystal growths but trying to take the least amount of time to get to her destination.

This meant that she ended up taking more wounds true. But since she had given up on that front if it allowed her to escape this place faster, even if that meant losing more blood and biomass, at least the low blood pressure she currently had meant that it would be less blood lost.

So small victories? It didn't feel like a small victory. If anything it felt like she had given up and had thrown a tantrum to get away faster from trouble, either way she found her target and got to work, once again she created the design that allowed her to deal with the small metal things used to attach fake walls to this metallic tunnel she exited it into another den.

This one was dark, like one of the settings they did when the box-shaped organisms and the humans wanted to test if she was good enough to work in low-light environments, "Activate low illumination settings." She intoned to [Main Core], her voice sounded....high pitched for some reason.

Was that the setting this body had by default? She wasn't sure how it should sound, so she would leave it like that for now. Instead, she focused on looking over the new den she found...After closing the entryway into the metallic tunnel, she had arrived at this room quite high and didn't want to tip her hand quite yet.

Her exit into this den had arrived near a box-shaped entity stuck into one of this den's walls, unlike the box-shaped organisms this one didn't seem to have the same texture on its front, so it shouldn't be a live one.

Either way, she quickly secured the entry into the metallic tunnel and got down from the box-shaped thing she arrived at, after landing on the floor without making a sound (Being this small and light had its advantages). She analyzed the den she found herself in.

It held several box-shaped constructs and some square-shaped things stuck in the middle, sustaining itself with a single unique leg stuck to the floor. Interesting.

The walls didn't seem to be of the same material as her den, and one of them even held a variant of the entryway the maintenance crew used to access her den!

The only difference was that this one wasn't hidden, but denoted by a translucent material that seemed to reflect what was in front of it to some degree, standing near the thing allowed her to see herself for the first time.

Her current body was small, barely high enough to stand near one of the box-shaped beings in this room, not a single one had deemed her enough to speak or say something to her yet, but she was wary nonetheless, her main body held four appendages like most humans, each pair a reflection of the other. Two below her torso and two almost at the top of her torso, with a single body part that housed most (If not all) of her sensory organs, a head as the body had filed on its blueprint.

She hadn't gone over the whole thing yet to see the names since she only needed it to be functional, but this material was useful, it allowed her to analyze in detail her current body, her current sight sensors (Eyes) were blue, was this a defect like the one the [Human] she fought before had?

The growths on her head had the same color as that [Human] after all, so perhaps this meant she could pass up as a member of his caste? That would be useful, he seemed to have some degree of authority over the box-shaped organisms.

But for now, she would focus on investigating the things around her, the box-shaped things were made of dead bio-organic material that seemed to focus on

filtering nutrients by the use of internal roots to distribute the nutrients and water along them. It was interesting to know that they had used dead organisms to create these, and it meant that the box-shaped organisms were more war-like than she had expected.

None of the ones here seemed to be alive, not even the central one that had a single leg stuck into the floor, so she was still safe, most box-shaped organisms seemed to be neutral at best so far, not like the [Humans]. So maybe she could find live box-shaped organisms to negotiate with. She wouldn't mind taking one of them with her in her escape plan (So long as it didn't put her at risk).

With some luck then this could mean that the hierarchy was more stratified than she estimated, perhaps something closer to that P-series subject that fought with a hive strategy?

Either way, she found several sub-compartments in the box-shaped dead bodies of those organisms, it seemed that they used them as storage units. Interesting, it was a good way to recycle materials if nothing else.

This also brought her a chance, so she searched within the multiple box-shaped storage units until she found one that seemed to not have been perturbed in a long time, it held some square white fiber material with some squiggle-looking lines on them, tons of them.

She took a sample of one and found the black material was some kind of dye and not inherent of the white fiber thing, after filing it for later use she moved the boxes to re-organize them better and give herself some space on it.

Then making sure she would fit within she settled in her small new nest hiding spot and placed some boxes atop herself, using some thin tendrils to get everything into place, and for the finishing touch, she dislocated several of her internal bones (Who even uses those on the inside? They are better on the outside protecting the squishy bits!) and cut the pain receptors to fold her body to get more space.

"[Warning, prolonged state in current configuration can lead to atrophy of muscle mass. Current time limit of this configuration without movement, 30 hours 16 mins.]"

She wasn't planning on staying that long here, just long enough for at least to see how the [Humans] acted and what they did in a nonhostile setting, would it be necessary to stop her heart from beating?

"[Warning, current configuration Brain is required for the prolonged function of main consciousness stream, time before the brain cells cease to function without oxygen: 3 mins.]"

That's a no then, the brain and lungs must keep working. And so she inflated part of her thorax to allow her lungs to expand and moved her heart so that it would be comfortable enough while pumping blood, that meant that she needed to reconfigure her body to allow the blood to travel well enough within her.

So after moving here and there she was finally ready!

"[Hostile bio signature detected, wake up protocol initiated]"

SHE WAS AWAKE!

Main core had taken a habit of jolting her awake by stimulating her nerve endings, the thing was useful yes. But also it seemed to relish in torturing her for some reason, was it angry at her for making a copy of it to be rained up with the [Gun] type weaponry?

"YOU GOT SUBJECT P4 KILLED?!?" Yikes, sonic attack.

She almost got into battle configuration, only to flop her limbs aimlessly as nothing was connected between muscle and bones right now, at least nothing made a sound to compromise her position.

"Sir, P4 started to plan an escape so the protocol indicat..." It seems they were fighting over her assumed death.

"SHOW ME THESE ESCAPE PLANS THEN!" And one was having trouble modulating her [Voice] it seems.

"The core dump..." While the other had this undertone in its voice that she found annoying.

*"[Undertone cataloged as **Smugness**]"*

Yeah, the second voice seemed confident in its success already, and since it was defending her death...It was the [Human] that had commanded the [Gun] type weaponry to attack her huh.

"...You ordered P4 death over these?" The second voice had got itself more calm.
"These obviously tampered logs?"

Oh, so the second voice tampered with her logs? Good thing she was filtering those then.

slap

"Sir?" The first voice sounded no longer smug, but...

*"[Undertone cataloged, **Pained.**]"*

"Get out before I send you as the replacement for P4....No wait." The second voice said, "Get into the den and fish out P4's core."

That got a reaction from multiple voices, if she was mapping it right the place was full of [Humans], most hushed tones as they gossiped among themselves.

"Sir...The procedure..." The first voice stated saying, unsure about something.

"The procedure states that no [Employee] may interact with a subject directly, unless it is for a test. Or is it for maintenance, is that correct? Yes?" The second voice stated.

"Yes sir. I'm afraid..." The first one started saying, regaining confidence.

"Remove Subject P4 from the testing roster, unless someone can prove that stupid crab is alive he will no longer stay in the roster." The second voice said and then a voice spoke.

One she remembered quite well.

"Subject P4 shows no activity within Den. Analyzing...Subject P4's Core isn't active. Subject P4 is no longer part of the testing roster."

The box-shaped organism had scanned her den? And it found nothing? Perfect. Her plan was moving quite well.

"So? What are you waiting for? Unless you want to offer yourself as a replacement for P4?" The second voice spoke, a hidden edge in its voice.

"...I will go for the..." The first voice spoke, it sounded weak...It sounded like...

"[A prey.]"

"Since the test chamber doesn't have an active test subject no hazmat suit of any level will be loaned, you can however pay for one from your pocket if you wish to do so." The second voice spoke matter of factly.

"[A Predator.]"

"Move it." And like that, she heard the sound of something in the back followed by the steps of a human walking, then after a second or so, the same sound again of something hitting a wall.

Then silence.

"Get to work everyone, prepare the scanners, with some luck, P4 is somehow still alive under all the debris and we will get a new P4-series." The second voice said.

"Doctor Williams...Isn't that illegal?" Someone spoke after a few seconds.

The second voice made some weird sound as if wind had gotten stuck in it before saying "Of course not, you all signed the right paperwork that allows me to do this. I won't do this unless someone tries to do something like this again... I swear to god, he only killed P4 because he wanted to make a cat girl...." The second voice, now identified as Doctor Williams said so.

*"[Logged new identifier, **Doctor Williams** to the database.]"*

Silence, so much silence caused by this Doctor Williams. So was this [Human] the blonde [Human] spoke to?

No, this one sounded somewhat different, its inflections weren't like that, if anything the inflections the other human transmitted through the box-shaped organisms seemed closer to hers.

"Get to work, also someone get me the last core dump P4 performed." Doctor Williams spoke and then the sounds became more calm.

They seemed to work in silence as small sounds of clicks and clacks sounded, only hushed voices spoke. It seemed that none had come in the direction of her current hiding spot, so she sent one tendril with a primitive light sensor to check.

"[No hostiles detected within range.]"

And Main core reported as such, so moving more biomass towards that tendril she turned the primitive light sensor into a fully functional [Eye], this would allow her to look around while hiding the organ and not exposing herself.

Everything was a blur of movement, multiple [Human]s moving from one place to the other, all going over squiggly lines on white panels embedded within square boxes made of some hard polymer. They seemed to be absorbing the squiggle lines and turning them into information?

"Doctor, the last core dump doesn't show anything out of order. There are some notes from Main Core about the Subject coming close to the checkmark for sapience but no conclusive evidence." One of them said while pointing at his square box.

And then one of those among them walked, he seemed to be somewhat more damaged than the rest, his skin seemed to be more wrinkled, less elastic, his eyes more tired. And they seemed to hold something within, an emotion she hadn't seen.

"[New emotion cataloged, Anger.]"

"And who designed the sapience check?" He asked, the one that brought his attention gulped and the others seemed to move back, like they didn't want anything to do with this [Human].

Would she be able to log a confrontation between [Human]s?

"That...It was...The.....amm....Chief Scientist...Alexanders....Sir?" He answered as such.

*"[New identification found, Chief Scientist...Logged under the profile of Hostile Human **Alexanders.**]"*

"Yes, he was the one to create the thing, he is also the one who forbids us from tampering with it since '*It wouldn't be fun*' so tell me...What does this tell us?" The [Doctor] asked, he had moved his mouth in a weird way. The tips seemed to curve upward, as if he was showing part of his teeth.

Was this a hostile warning?

It seemed to be a hostile warning, "That....P4 was gaining sapience?" The other [Human] was drenched in a translucent liquid now, his face was damp, and his textile covering was damp too.

Was he experiencing a malfunction?

"No. It tells us that whatever arbitrary check Alexanders put, P4 was about to achieve it, it may be the reason he sneaked in the last combat Test. But we will never know, since the thing is dead." The [Doctor] said, and then he started making some weird noise.

"HAHAHAHAHA, Suck it Alexanders, you may have toyed with my subject but at least the stupid crab will not achieve whatever you wanted!" The [Doctor] moved back and went to one of the doors, and the others didn't move till the voice of the [Doctor] wasn't heard anymore.

"ARE YOU CRAZY?!?" One of the [Humans] near the drenched one spoke, "Never talk about the big boss near Doctor Williams!"

"I DIDN'T KNOW! " The drenched human said, "I just moved in here from Doctor Eversoul's lab!"

They all continued speaking and [Main Core] kept filling in information about what they said, this would be an informative session, she could see it, and they would give her enough information for her next move!

Yes, this had been a good choice indeed. Everything was going according to plan.

Chapter 10: Of the cruelty of [Humans]

She had spent almost six hours cataloging each and every sound-based attack...No, they weren't attacks. Not all of them anyway.

She spent six hours cataloging the [Speech] of these [Humans], her current form was that of a human, not a single one of those that came into this [Room] had been close to her current configuration, and her form seemed to be more...Small.

Perhaps most of these [Humans] were part of a cast dedicated to this kind of environment? What would that make them? Workers?

Dr. Williams certainly didn't seem like a [Worker] class, that one commanded other [Humans] but she wasn't able to find any biological marker that made him inherently superior to the rest, even if most of them seemed to secrete biochemical markers similar to those the biological samples secreted when they wanted to surrender to her.

And like her, he didn't listen and continued, he was even better than her as he didn't even seem to be fazed by their surrender, at some point she even had to block those sensors as the [Room] was stinking with the defeat of all of those around him.

Maybe he was a [Predator] in charge of these [Prey]?

But why would a [Predator] even bother to keep them around? Was he safeguarding them to eat them later?

She was quite curious to see how Dr. Williams would decide to eat them, so when [Lunch] came, she redoubled her vigilance...

But "Remember to return in time to those of you that decide to leave for lunch." Dr. Williams said as much before leaving the room.

No one left after him, if anything they just continued working while opening small square-shaped entities, there she stood looking in almost horror as she saw them [Opening] those square-shaped entities and fishing out of them [Biomass].

One fished a smaller square-shaped mass of fiber with some animal biomass surrounded by vegetal biomass and [Ate] it with small [Bites], she...She...She may have been mistaken in her understanding.

These [Humans] were a more terrific organism than she had expected, these [Things] surrounded themselves with the dead bodies of square-shaped entities, those that stood at the top of her previous existence.

Then while under the gaze of some square-shaped entities they took younger forms (As she could infer those were younger since they didn't speak and had less of a bio-electric signal) and feasted on their entrails!

And these were [Prey]!

They were the same meek creatures that paled under the gaze of [Dr. Williams]!

What kind of apex predator was this species?!?

Had her [Design] been flawed?!?!?

She hadn't found anything of note in her current form!

Nothing that indicated that she could do that kind of thing with the square-shaped entities!!!

It was true however that the square-shaped entities hadn't reacted to her, if anything they seemed to treat her as superior, as none had questioned her while she moved in that room, almost as if they feared her...

She wondered why before, but if those had seen their younger be [Feasted] upon on the regular, she could see why, the square-shaped entities weren't equals to the [Humans] no...

They were closer to her, they were [Slaves] to the humans!

What kind of secrets held this [Body] that allowed it to make such a mighty existence bow to them?

She...She needed another [sample], her current body must be flawed in some way...that was it!

Surely the [Blueprint] they left for her was a weakened one!

Surely a mighty entity that could do all of that wouldn't be as weak as her form had been, why she had needed to burn plenty of biomass and energy to keep this body working before in the metallic tunnel!

And that was merely by trying to move under an environment under 0°C of temperature!

Her previous [Glorious Form] could survive in environments as cold as -50°C!

No way this form could be that bad at temperature management while holding a rein over the square-shaped entities!

"...Do you think he will survive?" Oh? They started speaking!

"The intern? Nah, either he will get cannibalized by the remains of P4 or he will be turned into a new P-Series by Dr. Williams." Another voice spoke, rude!

She wouldn't cannibalize anyone...Okay, maybe she would, but still!

"Well it's his fault for killing P4, he was kinda cute..." The voice of another one sounded, this one had a higher pitch, she made note of it as it sounded more in line with what her body returned of an approximate pitch for [Voice].

"...It was a 10-ton crab without eyes, the only reason we know what side it's his Face is because the thing needed to leave a mouth...And even then we can't be sure that's his face!" The first voice spoke back.

He had the right of it, actually, she didn't have a [Face] per se on her previous model, all sides could function as her [Face] since she had sensors everywhere!

She had made that design to work like that since some of the P-series she fought against had some weird fixation with attacking at her [Face], so to predict the attack more easily she made one side of her look like it had a [Face].

"Even so, she was cute." The other voice said, curious...Most had referred to her previous form as either [It] or [Him].

Only this voice seemed to think of her as a [She].

"Also, it was a she, not a him. The design on the mandible was of a female crab." The previous voice said.

Her mouth was of a female? She had chosen that one because that was the most efficient and offensive design she picked up...

"It's a weapon, it probably made the design choice following the most efficient mouth it could get its hand on. It didn't have feelings." The first voice said.

Again, that one was smart, maybe she would try to steal his [Blueprint] later, she would need to make sure he was distracted on a [Rest] cycle first though.

Could she be able to track him to his [Den]?

Did they even need a [Den]?

She was aware that she could function on her biological [Brain] for extended periods of time, the only reason she went into a [Rest] cycle was to be more efficient with her energy while she waited...

She wasn't sure how long they would continue in this place, the mere fact that she managed to arrive when no one was around was a blessing in itself, but while she could continue on this form for almost 30 hours...

They had bigger bodies and as such should be able to hold more biomass and energy...She may need to prepare an escape...

But her current form was...

"[Spaghetti.]"

Main Core referred to it as such, she wasn't sure what kind of bioentity was called [Spagetti], but since Main Core had been quite helpful it must be some kind of ambush predator...

"One week of extra work says that intern will be eaten by P4." One of the voices spoke.

"Joseph, it's rude to bet on the demise of a fellow worker...Also only one week? A month says he ran to HR and is in the middle of a change to a new Lab." Another voice said admonishing the first one.

He spoke of a [HR] that seemed to have more power than Dr. Williams, perhaps another level of [Predator] above Dr Williams?

"Guys...He could be dead right now...Also One week of work on site that he is the new host to P4...If he is I will also add another extra week that says I can make him [Evolve] into another Crab before one of the nekomimi faction gets to the new P-series." The voice with high pitch spoke.

Getting two levels of [Bets] on her side.

They continued to speak like that while feasting on the remains of the young square-shaped entities they brought, after finishing those, they moved to a side of the room where they placed those remains in a hole within the dead body of one of the bigger square-shaped entities.

She wondered why? Were they holding some level of respect for the young dead?

She thought that for barely a second as the high-pitched [Human] moved something on the far end of the dead body of the square-shaped entity...Then the dead body started emitting a clear [Liquid].

Main core registered it as [Water], but she knew that those liquids within one body aren't such a banal thing, no...The lifeblood of one shouldn't be just [Labeled] as the banal thing that [Water] is.

If the square-shaped entity sustained using water, then that wasn't mere water but [Blood]...Mostly made of H₂O, but still!

The horror she saw made her shiver, these humans were nonchalantly bathing the dead young bodies with the blood of another dead member of the square-shaped race!

She...She needed to run away from here, she wasn't sure why the square-shaped entities hadn't risen against them!

Such disrespect to their young and they stood there like nothing!

"[Cleaning of test chamber finished.]" Or so she thought, but when the square-shaped entity spoke it was to only say that!

No inflation in its tone, no hidden anger or any emotion at all!

She was more rattled than them!

"Oh, he finished? Weird." Said one of the voices, the one that had bet a month.

"And he survived..." The one that bets a week said.

"So no one won?" Spoke the high-pitched voice.

The three only stood there looking at another square-shaped organism, this one held a projection on its body of her previous den, there the [Prey] stood with a metallic container full of bio-organic remains of her previous body.

She could even see the dummy core she made within the remains of the bucket, and how the [Nanites] she left continued to self-destruct in the bucket.

"Well...Someone call Dr Williams and give him the good news..." Said one of the voices.

"Not it!" And the higher pitch voice quickly said, "Not it!" Followed by another.

Leaving the one that originally said that fuming and grumbling as she saw him leave the room they were in, the other two continued exchanging theories about how that [Intern] had managed to survive and if he was [Contaminated] or not.

Rude.

She was not something that could [Contaminate] anyone!

She thought so at least, she didn't remember having any [Blueprint] for a way to propagate over large areas...Most of her stuff would self-destroy after a certain amount of time passed or turn inert if enough biomass or matter could sustain itself and wasn't intrinsically bound to her nanites.

So it was impossible for her to [Contaminate] anyone really.

After around ten units of sixty seconds (Or 10 minutes as Main Core seemed to have taken a liking to those units), Dr Williams returned. He immediately glared at the main monitor where the [Intern] had continued to push the same button to try and open the door out of her den.

"So either P4 is playing a new game or he somehow managed to actually kill the only surviving original P-series subject. Opinions?" Said the Dr Williams human.

Wait, the only original surviving P-Series?

Hadn't she just fought a P9 subject a few days ago?

"He might have gotten a lucky shot into P4 Main core? He has been brandishing what looks to be a cracked Core at the camera." Said the high-pitched voice human.

Oh, he was indeed brandishing her dummy core, and breaking it further by grabbing it too hard...Thank you [Intern] for making it harder for any study to bring accurate data.

"I think P4 is playing dead in an attempt to escape," Said another voice in the room, he was going over her last core dump. "There are no mentions of reinforcement in the immediate core area, and P4 used to take regular schedules to check its defenses."

Oh, did she forget to add those? That would be...

"[Problematic.]"

"So either we let him leave and risk everyone in base...Or leave him there for a week without letting biomass near P4." Wondered aloud Dr Williams.

Was that [Human] really allowing the [Prey] to decide the fate of other [Human-Prey]?

That...wasn't something a [Predator] would do...

Oh...

Her [Eye] turned around to see everyone else and they all stood there in silence, till the high-pitched one said "Should we prepare accommodations for hi...." She started saying but shut out as Dr Williams turned his eyes to her, "...For the new possible P4 Subject?" Ended saying high pitch.

"Why yes Miss Brown, that is the spirit...But we don't have enough funds to give P4-B good accommodations, he...Or not, that thing is no longer [Human], P4-B may use P4's former den. Give it P4 previous allotation of Nutrient paste." Said Dr. Williams, somehow that [Human] was sure she had survived.

But why did it think she would remain within her den?

"Yes sir." High pitch said while she seemed to push some weird small squares in a long rectangle in front of her.

Were those small square-shaped entities?

At the same time high pitch pushed those weird lines seemed to move and react on the square-shaped entity with crystal-like body, and then the [Human] within her den looked straight at one of the square-shaped entities within her den.

She strained her [ears] to try and listen in, but barely managed to hear "[Subject temporary name P4-B, you will remain within site till you are deemed free of influence, please use the accommodations, no further testing will be done and so, all the biomass provided will be the standard unit. Subject P4, if you wish to acquire further biomass please move towards the gate and an appropriate test will be started.]" High pitch turned towards Dr Williams as if asking something.

"Heh, good enough I guess. Good job on noticing P4 would want extra biomass after surviving that encounter...If it survived the stupid crab that is." Said Dr Williams.

"Sir...Subject P4-B seems to be speaking, should we parse him?" Asked another one of the [Humans].

"Yeah sure, why not. We will not record all of his interactions afterward, so I hope it uses them wisely." Said Dr.Williams, the human that had spoken moved, and after pushing some of the squares in front of him another one of the crystal-like things showed a projection of the [Human].

He had thrown his bucket with the remains of her dummy body to the side "ARE YOU KIDDING ME? LET ME GO! P4 IS DEAD! BESIDES NUTRIENT PASTE? AT LEAST GIVE ME ENOUGH TO SURVIVE. I CAN'T SURVIVE STARVED AS P4 WAS!" He went on and on.

Speaking about how if she was alive he was in danger, about how he would quit, about how he wouldn't do it again...He went on quite the long tirade about reasons of why that was unfair and how he was sorry, about how he wouldn't try to make her evolve into a cat girl...

What even was a cat girl?

High pitch seemed to take offense at that as her eyes turned dangerously similar to those of another [Predators] she had fought before, the one with slit eyes and a smooth tail, she remembered that one because it had been not only fast and agile, but because she hadn't managed to defeat it.

"...And he wasted his chance. Cut the recording from the log, mark the reason for deletion as nonimportant for the experiment." Said Dr Williams.

No one contested that, so that must mean the reasoning the [Human] said wasn't good enough to risk them opening the door from her [Den], not that it was an effective way to contain her, as she was no longer inside.

"Continue going over the [Core Dump], also prepare for the dummy exposition, we will get the [Tour] from that school in...12 hours, so you have two hours to prepare and finish. Get the fake recordings of weapon testings and six hours of rest and another two hours to finalize everything. Afterward, we will move to cold weapon testing in the remote location. With some luck, P4 will stop playing dead..." Said Dr.Williams while the other [Humans] groaned at that.

What was a [Tour]? And why had they reacted like that?

She would need to check and investigate further, besides...At the very least if she understood them right she would get a chance to investigate further when they turned to the [Rest Cycle] in two hours...

And at least six hours to roam around before they started moving...So in around 12 hours, she would find out what that [Tour] was...And perhaps that would be her way to escape this place?

She hoped to find some [Biomass] within that period at the very least...

But for now...

For now, she would continue filling her database with their interactions, with some luck she would be able to mimic their [Speech] well enough to try and hide among them...

She hadn't found another [Human] with the same [Phenotype] as hers, neither in form nor size...So she was getting worried... She didn't want to try and

[Neutralize] one of the [Humans], they held too much power so she wasn't sure she would be able to kill them.

Maybe she could find enough [Biomass] to mimic one of their bodies without having the full [Blueprint]?

She would need to check on that option with her six-hour window...

But that would need to be done later, right now...She would analyze and investigate these [Humans]...If nothing else she needed a [Prey] to stalk.