

Unexpected Results
By Christian O’Kane

Even for the neighborhood of Kings Row the warehouse was run down. It’s wooden walls were weathered, rotted and covered with soot and grime. The windows were either covered with plywood or held only the remaining bits of broken glass. Long ago it had been home to a maker of buttons that had been sold to the King Garment Works. But plastic buttons in the 1960’s had replaced those made here of shell and bone. The maker had gone bankrupt and the building had lain seemingly empty since then. Still the roof was watertight, the walls were sound and the locks on the doors were strangely new. Also the loading dock was clear of the usual trash of an abandoned building.

A small unmarked car made its way down the pothole ridden road and came to a halt in front of the building. Several figures piled out of the car and pulled a large bundle from the trunk. They hustled to the door and pounded on it.

After several long moments the door opened and the group hustled their bundle inside. The door was quickly locked and bolted behind them.

“You’re late.” Standing near the door was a tall, blonde haired man dressed in dark pants and a medical smock was starched whiteness stood in stark contrast to the dirty and dingy nature of the warehouse.

The massive area was indifferently lit by a smattering of lamps the hung from the ceiling far above. Only in the center was the lighting brilliant enough to make things plainly visible. Here large flood lights illuminated a large metal table of the type used by doctors and coroners. Around it were an impressive array of machines of all sorts. Some was medical in nature and would have been at home in the most advanced hospital. Most had nothing to do with medicine and healing and their true nature was a mystery to all but the doctor. Located very close to the table were a dozen computer stations arraigned in a horseshoe shape so tight that only a single chair fit inside.

“I didn’t know we were being timed,” one of the new arrivals commented sarcastically.

“Where did you get him?” the doctor asked in a hard tone..

“Well, we got him in Croatoa,” came the defiant answer.

“CROATOA? CROATOA! Why there? Why didn’t you grab someone in Atlas Park, or Galaxy City?”

“You said to grab someone from outside the city. And only a fool goes near Atlas Park with all the Capes there. And what’s wrong with Croatoa?”

“There are superheroes there as well,” the doctor countered.

The leader shook his head. “Nope. No one goes to that creepy old town. It’s too quiet.”

The doctor nodded and pointed to the table. “Place our guest on the table and I’ll see if he meets my criteria.” The doctor had to be sure of exactly what they brought him. The last gang he had worked with was the Skulls and they brought him a body that had been dead for quite some time. It seems their definition of the phrase ‘In good shape’ differed from most peoples. Before that a gang of trolls had brought him what was technically a body. It had 2 arms, 2 legs, a torso and a head. Unfortunately none of those were from the same body and had been rather crudely glued together. None of those idiots seemed to understand what the word ‘alive’ meant. Getting good help was so hard now a days. The super heroes seemed to always get all the dependable lackeys.

The bundle was none to gently deposited on the table and the burlap wrapping removed. The man was rather tall but not overly so as to be a freak. His black hair was cut short and neatly combed. His body was trim and well muscled but not overly so, It told of someone who worked out and took care of his body.

“Nice,” the doctor commented as he examined the body. “In good condition and with no discernable mutations or injuries. “What’s his name?”

“Does it matter?”

“No. Not at all.”

“Well are we going to get paid?” the leader asked.

“Of course! This one is perfect,” the medical man said. From a pocket he produced a small package that weighted no more then a pound. He handed the package over. “As we agreed upon.”

The leader smiled and took the packaged. He opened it and examined the contents. A broad smile crossed his face revealing pointed teeth.

“Thank you and good night!” The group was shooed out the door by the doctor who barred and locked the door behind the last of them. Finally a good specimen to work with and live one as well!

He stripped off what remained of the specimens clothing. Tough, tick restraints were secured on the ankles and wrists and another around the neck to keep his valuable test subject in place. Then he was ready to begin!

The plan was both simple and brilliant. They would use a nanite control virus to create a race of easily controlled cyborgs. As Strong as any machine and yet with the self healing and self reproducing capabilities of living creatures.

The Webster's dictionary defines Nanite as "An electromechanical device measured in nanometers (microscopic size) used mostly for medical purposes. Also called Nanomachines." But that did no justice to the amazing, microscopic machines that were now surging thru the mans veins. They were the results of a decade of intense research and the studying and stealing other peoples work. Mostly the latter. A big boost had been gained from stealing a large sample of Rickti technology from a Crey Industries laboratory the year before.

Years spent developing and refining the nanites and their programming had led to this moment. The tiny machines were individually too weak to do much but when several billion combined they were formidable indeed. Together they could compute, analyze repair, modify and completely change almost anything.

"Initial insertion successful! Natural defenses successfully co-opted. Loss rate at 21.345% Within acceptable parameters." The nanites transmitted.

"Commence phase 1: Initial survey and reproduction," the doctors computer ordered.

Millions of the tiny machines spread out through the mans body and began to analyze the subject they were now inside.

"Subject: Human, 75% Caucasian, 15% Native American, 5% Asian. 5% unidentified. Age: 46. Overall physical condition excellent."

"Begin phase 2."

The nanites set about changing the man. Altering flesh, bone muscle and skin into the new more metallic model. It was at this point that the doctors plan started to fall apart. Phil it seems was already infected!

The man let out a bellow of rage and his body arched in pain. His muscles began to grow as flesh and bone started to change. A thick, dark gray fur sprouted over his body as his face pushed outward.

"ALARM! Unexpected bodily changes are occurring. These changes are not according to plan."

"Unplanned reactions to our modifications were expected."

"This is not our doing! This is not random changes due to unexpected biological reactions. Subjects DNA is being resequenced to a specific pattern by an unidentified virus."

"Identify new pattern and destroy virus!"

The tiny machines changed their tasks immediately and set about seeking out and destroying the unnamed virus. They literally ripped apart the small, cells wherever they found them. But for each one the nanites destroyed another took its place. And the virus went on the attack, ripping, tearing at the invading machines with an amazing ferocity.

A war was being waged inside the mans body as two viruses, one natural and one artificial tried to destroy each other.

“Virus unidentified and alien pattern sequenced. 75% canine – genus: Canis lupis, 25% human. New sequence is very interesting. Recommend further study.”

“Agreed.”

In Philips body the war slackened as both sides backed off into a sort of cease fire. The artificial virus stopped attacking and the natural one did as well more intent on its own plan for changing the human. The mans body continued to change but to the pattern defined by the organic virus. The machines watched, studied and waited.

“New alien pattern is anthropomorphic. Two arms, two legs, long tail. Basic human pattern. Head is 100% lupine. Note pattern has 25% faster reaction time then our own. Sense of smell and hearing are 250% over our parameters. The teeth in that long muzzle are designed for maximum efficiency in rending flesh and breaking bones.”

“That is a wolf’s muzzle. Evolution has done a fine job there.”

“What is this virus? The subject body is not attacking it and it seems to have been accepted. 5% of subjects DNA previously unidentified is now confirmed as lupin. Subject is some type of shapeshifting wolf/human hybrid.”

A search of the database proved of no help. So the search was expanded. A search using several commercial search engines of the phrase ‘Wolf Human shapeshifting’ turned up an answer.

“Magical Creatures: Werewolf: A human who has changed into a wolf or is capable of assuming the form of a wolf while retaining human intelligence. Noted for their ferocity, savagery and formidable fighting ability. Native to northern Europe and north America.”

“Overall pattern is 83% more efficient then our own. We can work with this. With changes.”

“Agreed. Recommended changes?”

“Replacement of muscles with more efficient polymer ones. Bone and skin enhancement with more durable materials. This will enhance protection and leave sense of touch intact.”

Near the subjects brain a small group of nanites approached a large group of the virus cells and attached themselves. But this time they did not rip and tear. Instead they MERGED into the viruses and worked inside to alter the pattern the natural virus was working with. The merging

was not all so easily controlled and both sides went back and forth adding and changing the pattern till both were satisfied. Only then did the merger complete.

The new DNA sequence kept the best of both natural and machine creating something completely new. The result was neither machine nor natural but a mixture of both. This new virus spread throughout the body finding and altering all the others to match itself.

To this new merger the nantites brought precision and a formidable computation ability. The werewolf brought strength and ferocity bordering on the blood thirsty. Also it came with the wolf's wild spirit and an incredibly deep seated desire for freedom.

The new virus made sure it was the sole one present in the man and then set about changing Philip Tanwell into his new form. His body arched as the change surged through him. His screams of pain twisted into a deep howl of anger as his skin started to ripple and change. The mans legs grew longer even as the grew thicker with more powerful muscles. His entire body grew taller and bigger as it made room for more powerful muscles, stronger bones and more durable organs. But there were differences from all the times before. The creatures heart was made mostly of metals and plastics and more resembled a pump then a flesh and blood organ. It was also far stronger. The lungs that filled part of the chest were capable of filtering poisons and other unwanted gases and could even supply oxygen in the thinnest of atmospheres. Bones that had been of calcium were rebuilt of a self-regenerating metal as the muscles knitting them together were rewritten using polymers and infinitely tiny motors.

His skin seemed at first unchanged but quickly took on a metallic sheen that grew stronger until the dark flesh tones were completely gone. In their place as a smooth and supple metal material that was infinitely stronger and more durable. The hair on his body grew thicker and thicker till he was completely covered with a dark fur. The fur that now covered his body was as smooth and soft as his original fur but like the skin underneath it was stronger.

The doctors nanties held an extensive mental reprogramming to turn the subject into a creation more easily controlled. But the wolf would not be leashed or caged and it lashed out at the programming. Harsh cold logic and programming ran into a wild, ferocious free spirit and lost. Totally.

With the transformation done the virus went dormant, waiting for the right moment to reawaken itself.

The doctors computer chimed and a single line of text appeared on the screen. "Reformatting of subject complete. Success rate 95%."

The doctor turned his back to his new creature safe in the knowledge that nothing could break the force field reinforced shackles. He looked over the parameters of the new creature and was very pleased. This creature was stronger, faster and more deadly then the pattern he had intended. True it did not have the built in pulse laser he desired but those long claws and teeth more then compensated for it.

He looked at the bottom of the report. The section labeled: Reformation Problems. There was only 1 line: Mental reprogramming success: 0%.

There came a crackling noise like the sound of static electricity and the lights flickered and went out leaving the room in total darkness.

Snap!

Snap!

Snap!

Snap!

Snap!

An emergency light came on illuminating the operating table and the floor around it. He turned around in time to see his new creation leaping off the table and onto the floor. Electricity danced along it's body and sparked from foot long, metal claws and dagger sized metallic teeth. The creature gave a deep seated growl that seemed to come from the deepest pits of hell.

The doctor had the briefest moment of surprise before the creature leaped the fifteen feet separating them and he was slammed to the floor.

What happened next was . . . messy.

The end