ST Data Fragmentation

Fragmentation of Soul Transfer (ST) Data is a medical condition discovered by the Department of Health and Medicine of the Yamatai Star Empire in YE 40. It is believed to be caused by an anomaly in the Nekovalkyrja Operating System that causes fragmentation of the ST data that quantifies the 'soul' of a digital being. At the time of its discovery, it was believed that only one in several millions of the artificial lifeforms that use systems based on the Neko OS will ever be affected, thus making the condition rarer than the very rare male NH-27 Nekovalkyrja. Due to the understanding that only Neko OS-based minds can be affected, the condition is thought to be limited to those of the Nekovalkyrja or Minkan species.

History

Researchers theorize that the ST Data Fragmentation condition has been around for longer than the Department of Health and Medicine can trace due to the extremely small number of cases found. Of four confirmed cases as of YE 40, two confirmed sufferers were institutionalized for hyper-aggressive behavior and extreme paranoia. Another was found in counseling after committing suicide, and receiving post-suicidal counseling after being transferred into a new body. The last confirmed case happened to be an intern working in the same office as the team researching the disorder; the intern exhibited the symptoms of increasing social awkwardness and an unusual surge in measurable intelligence.

The Department of Health and Medicine was not alone in their discovery of the condition. Other scientists separately and independently began to report concerns about ST Data Fragmentation. Among them was Dr. Shinobu Kenja, who expressed concerns that the condition could be accidentally, or deliberately, spread using wireless and telepathic means. The Department, who had yet to be shown convincing evidence of the transfer theory, rejected Dr. Kenja's assertions. Some members of the scientific and medical community went so far as to take acts to silence and discredit the man; their motives vary, as does the nature of the entities who spurred them to silence the Doctor's claims.

In YE 42, after the death of Candon Suites during the Battle Of Glimmergold the Star Army Intelligence R&D branch, known as Hera Group, confirmed that ST Data Fragmentation had indeed been weaponized, just as scientists like Dr. Kenja had feared two years earlier. This revelation gradually led to the foundation of a project to investigate this issue; it was under these circumstances that Operation La Prossima was launched.

Symptoms

The symptoms of this condition are not unique to fragmentation, nor are they exclusively negative. Symptoms experienced by those afflicted have not yet been completely identical, though some common features include anxiety, depression, hallucinations, paranoia, intermittent psychosis, hyper aggression, and Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder, each to various degrees. While the net of symptoms is quite broad and can be confused with common personality disorders, these symptoms are always accompanied by subconscious victim-induced edits to their own operating system. These unintentional edits alter their

own code in ways that have negative consequences. In the early stages of the condition, some of these symptoms might be unnoticeable or even beneficial to a Neko's occupation. Long-term degradation of the person's data can cause these symptoms to become so severe that the sufferer eventually dies from suicide or complete fragmentation of their ST data that results in permanent death.

While many of the studies have been from only a handful of people, researchers investigating the disorder have hypothesized that the most severe of the symptoms include a reduced ability or inability to heal, permanent psychosis and/or hallucination, seizure, coma, or sudden death. Although the condition may be benign initially, the uncontrolled alteration of the Neko OS has resulted in the intensification of all aforementioned symptoms in every confirmed case thus far.

While the list of negative symptoms is staggering, there is one noteworthy telepathic symptom. Sufferers tend to create abnormally strong telepathic connections to other digital beings. While still being impossible to host a psionic attack under the influence of a Psionic Signal Controller it is theoretically possible to barrage another digital being with harmful psionic data, or possibly even corrupt another's ST data. This naturally caught the attention of the Star Army of Yamatai, though due to the difficulties in finding mentally fit people with fragmentation, no tests have ever been conducted on the viability of military applications. Researchers theorize that the strength of a telepathic connection formed by an individual suffering from ST Data Fragmentation varies based on the level of willpower of the sufferer. Further, such a connection may be difficult to resist or sever. Researchers further believe that a fragmented mind making such connections could become open to a counterattack over the very same connection. Finally, it is suggested that the aggressive use of telepathy for any reason likely accelerates data degradation in the OS of the individual suffering from ST Data Fragmentation.

Cause

It is unknown how the condition is contracted, though it is confirmed that it is present from birth and is not inherently contagious. The disorder is naturally-occurring disorganization of ST data that causes intellectual degeneration and loss on sanity before deviating so far from the format of the Nekovalkyrja Operating System that a person becomes an unrecognizable and unsupported program. Due to the digital nature of the disorder changing into a new body will not help and it is impossible to correct the faulty lines of code without fundamentally changing the person, in short causing a new person to be created in place of the old one.

The only way for an otherwise healthy Nekovalkyrja or Minkan to contract this affliction would be from having an accidental or deliberate alteration of their OS occur or possibly the insertion or removal of memory go wrong. Unlike a being born with fragmentation this unnatural alteration could be corrected and could not be spread from such a person. The likelihood of such a situation occurring is extremely unlikely though doctors would urge patients diagnosed with fragmentation to use extra caution when using telepathy.

Cure

If detected in a fetus it can theoretically be treated by careful manipulation of the baby's operating

system via the mother. It is notable that, because work on the baby's mind must be conducted through the mind of the mother, there is a perceived risk of damage to the mother's ST data. This risky procedure is only theoretical, and the skill-set needed to identify the problem and correct it has never been developed by a professional due to the extreme rarity of patients and current difficulties in detecting fragmentation.

Treatment

Those afflicted with ST data fragmentation cannot be cured without overwriting their own 'soul' as it were. Those who choose to live with the condition are believed to be doomed to eventual insanity, body incompatibility, or eventual permanent death. From a medical standpoint, the condition is a death sentence with the only hope for survival being a state where the person may not even be who they really were before.

As yet unknown by researchers is the slim chance of an afflicted person's ability to self-correct the fragmentation. A sufferer may, with practice, time and a great deal of meditative and telepathic effort, mentally "step outside" the confines of their mind and make adjustments to it. By entering a meditation-like trance, a person can see their own code and, with great caution and focus, "defragment" their code to a more stable state. Without self-discipline and focus, this could be self-destructive and in fact worsen the condition or render the mind nonfunctional or utterly insane. Though it will never solve the cause of the problem, it can give the sufferer the ability to survive and maintain their sanity.

OOC Notes

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