

The Mech Touch

#Chapter 7201: Fusion Weapon Arts - Read The Mech Touch Chapter 7201: Fusion Weapon Arts

Chapter 7201: Fusion Weapon Arts

Just as Ves looked forward to receiving a profound lesson from his mother, she soon disappointed him with her next words.

"I will not resort to this solution today, Ves. You have already received numerous gifts from me in the past, but I have yet to do so for your latest iteration of yourself. He has never received a boon from me since he came into existence."

The Superior Mother gazed lovingly at his giant son's face.

"Dark Apostle. You have certainly chosen an interesting name for yourself. Know that this title carries power far beyond what is obvious on the surface. Know that each time you or others invoke this title, they will empower it further, causing what is currently a falsehood to slowly turn into reality. This is... both beneficial and detrimental to yourself."

The recently born entity adopted a humble posture in front of his apparent mother. **"How so?"**

"You should be able to figure out the surface changes with the help of the understanding that you have inherited from Ves. I will not spell it out to you as that would be an insult to your intelligence. What Ves does not necessarily know is that your attempts to avoid the powerful existence that lurks in the darkest layers of reality are superficial at best. It is clever on his part to transfer his 'worship' from this unspeakable existence to Blinky, but he is a fool if he thinks that such a shallow exploit can circumvent the reach of an entity that far surpasses the might of a True God. Names have power. The more it is being used, the more this connection will recover."

"Hey! I was doing my best, alright?!"

The Dark Apostle shuddered. **"Did I sign my own death warrant by choosing this name? Should I change to a different one?"**

"Not necessarily, my son. The risks are great, but the benefits are great as well. Your situation is not unacceptable. It is unlikely for this dark existence to pay special attention to a weakling such as you. So long as this is the case, you can build a transactional relationship with an exceedingly powerful source of

darkness, thereby empowering your actions far beyond what other sources can produce."

Ves understood what she was talking about.

"Are you suggesting for my other self to engage in a form of contract cultivation?

"

The Superior Mother nodded.

"Yes, but not to the extent you are thinking of. No matter what, you must never lose your awe to power, and powerful existences in particular. No force that exceeds the might of a True God is safe to interact with. Any mortal that dares to consort with such an existence can easily be wiped out from existence due to a casual move. This is one of the reasons why mortals are wise to keep their distance from gods."

"What must I do, mother?" The Dark Apostle earnestly asked.

"I shall impart to you a basic weapon art that builds upon what you have already learned and allows you to invoke the power of this dark existence in a restricted and selective fashion." She said. "It is up to you to improve and develop this art to your exclusive advantage. You may also choose to neglect it and focus on developing your other strengths. I will not deprive you of your freedom to choose."

The Dark Apostle would be a fool if he disregarded his mother's gift.

"T-Thank you! I shall definitely cherish this weapon art of yours. What will I be able to do once I have learned it?" He asked.

"You and Ves have developed a shallow understanding of the corruption and demonic aspects of darkness. You can wield great power if you deepen your mastery into these concepts and take the time to refine more advanced techniques. However, there are times when you must confront your enemies more directly. Corruption takes time to do its work and demons are best prepared in advance. This is why I wish for you to wield the power of nihilism."

Ves shuddered as soon as she spoke that word. The Dark Apostle also felt a thrill of fear coursing through his true body.

It was as if the very mention of this concept brought their doom a little closer.

"This concept... is tied to that dark existence... right?"

The Superior Mother nodded. **"The answer is more complicated than that, but you can consider that to be the case according to your current understanding. It takes the least amount of effort to borrow a fraction of the power of nihility from the dark existence. Doing this by performing a weapon art further increases the safety of this operation. Instead of using words to call upon this source of power, you use actions instead. If you speak the wrong words, there is a significant chance that you will attract the great existence's attention. If you fail to execute your weapon techniques correctly, you will generate the equivalent of static, which is not even close to interesting enough to merit any attention. Do you understand?"**

"I do, mother.

"

"Then accept my gift of knowledge."

His mother did something that Ves was not able to detect.

He guessed that she was imitating the process of ingesting an enlightenment fruit to the Dark Apostle.

It shouldn't be too much of a surprise that she was able to replicate or imitate this System function given her vast knowledge and power. Even if her own method was not as good as the genuine article, it was enough so long as it did the job.

The Dark Apostle soon regained his wits. **"I... wow... this is... incredible. I never knew you could draw upon the power of nihility so easily. It is just... I am afraid I cannot execute any of these techniques, especially with a weapon as long and unwieldy as a lance. I need to spend a large amount of time on practice to succeed."**

His mother imparted him with a large amount of theory, but did not instill the muscle memory, physical skills and instincts to perform the new weapon art.

Perhaps she had the power to do so, but deliberately withheld these benefits so that the Dark Apostle would spend the time to master his new art step-by-step.

"Do not worry. I will help you execute one of the techniques in this duel so that you understand the right feeling and approach." His mother generously said. **"You should be aware that this weapon art is centered around contract cultivation. You are using a fusion of qi and body techniques to beseech the dark existence to share a tiny measure of his power. No matter how many precautions you take, there is always a chance that you will suffer an accident. This is one of the inherent dangers of harnessing the power of darkness. It is an unstable source of power. That is both an advantage and a disadvantage."**

"How so?" Ves asked as he grew very interested in this statement.

He felt as if his mother had just voiced a profound truth.

"If light is associated with order, then darkness is associated with chaos. Darkness encompasses many daughter concepts that are dangerous, unstable, inconsistent and undesirable. Of course, there are exceptions, but they are firmly in the minority. One of the consequences of this truth is that it is easier to draw power from darkness than it is with many other elements. It is difficult to rely on the power of fire to burn through those Krytak Class A Seashells because it has a strong tendency to obey the laws of conservation of energy and all of those other boring laws. The same does not necessarily apply to the power of darkness. It is theoretically possible for you to solely rely on your own strength to completely collapse your opponent's defenses."

That sounded extremely unlikely. Ves and Blinky could only wield so much darkness energy at any time. It didn't seem as if this quantity was enough to produce such a profound effect.

However, that was when they relied on their current proficiency in E energy manipulation.

If they deepened their mastery of the withering curse and improved their techniques until they were able to reach an efficiency rate of over 90 percent like his mother, then it may actually be possible to make this scenario happen!

Unfortunately, Ves estimated that it would take at least several decades of patient study, practice and dangerous experimentation to reach this level of mastery and proficiency.

"I think I understand." Ves said with a hint of gratitude. "More stable elements such as the five classical elements are much more orderly. The input is always proportional to the output. The same is not necessarily the case with darkness. It defies order so much that it is possible to yield an exaggerated level of output with just a small amount of input. The difficulty is trying to make this happen in a consistent manner."

Ves could think of many potential gains if he was able to master this phenomenon!

Breaking the law of conservation of energy should be as easy as eating breakfast for him. This could be incredibly useful if he was able to incorporate into his mech designs as well as his phase lord gear!

"You are on the right path. You will have to learn how to do this on your own. I have given you enough guidance. Now, enough about you. It is time for the Dark Apostle to receive his first demonstration. Open yourself up to me and allow me to guide your body."

"Y-Yes, mother."

The passage of time began to speed up again. The Oblivion Empress had lifted the abnormal state that caused the three's thinking and perception to run a lot faster than normal.

Nothing much seemed to have changed. The Superior Mother had just manifested herself into Blinky's form and the Oscillating Fist had just assumed another defensive stance in order to meet the second charge.

Though he could no longer rely on his energy defenses, the Oscillating Fist still radiated a huge amount of confidence!

He was convinced that he would be able to block the second explosive charge attack!

Once the Dark Apostle had run out of blast lances, the Oscillating Fist should easily be able to run down his opponent in time and win the duel!

Sadly for him, he never understood that he had made a fatal mistake in the previous negotiations.

From the moment the Superior Mother answered the call, Ves knew that the outcome of this duel was already set.

A part of him felt bad about depriving the Oscillating Fist of the 'honorable' duel that he craved, but if he truly wanted a good fight, then he should have abided by the terms of the agreement!

There was no obligation for Ves to make things fair for the current polemarchos anymore!

At this time, the manifestation of the Superior Mother had already merged into the Dark Apostle's true body.

Under her expert guidance, the Dark Apostle began to circle around in order to accumulate momentum for his next charge.

He also began to draw upon a huge amount of darkness energy in the environment.

The energy vortex created by their mother was much larger and more powerful than what they could produce themselves!

A massive amount of darkness energy began to gather in the raiment as well as the blast lance.

This immediately became evident to outside observers as the darkness miasma that formed around the Dark Apostle grew thicker and much more ominous than past manifestations!

It was as if the Dark Apostle had become a genuine darkness deity. Any form of light and radiation seemed to grow progressively weaker until disappearing entirely.

Even the stars in the background appeared to dim in his presence. Those who continued to gaze at him even began to feel a primordial fear that their lives did not matter at all in the presence of this foreboding phase lord!

Chapter 7202: Oblivion Might

This was the second and final charge of the Dark Apostle.

Different from his last power moves, his charge attack was filled with dark momentum.

So much dark miasma emanated from his raiment and his blast lance that it completely obscured his gigantic form!

It looked as if he was being engulfed by a living amorphous mass of darkness, one that seemed to make people feel sick and hopeless just by staring at it through a projection!

The thick and cloying miasma did not just evoke disgust and despair in the mind, but also distorted the reality around it to an obvious degree.

Light and other forms of radiation grew weaker the closer they got to the darkness.

Any specks of space dust crumbled into molecules while the chaotic spatial effects generated by the Ascended Giants became dampened as if they were covered by a dark blanket.

Many sensor and scanning systems struggled to make sense on how the large and concentrated convergence of darkness energy was able to distort the laws of reality to such an extent!

These kinds of phenomena used to be the exclusive privilege of high-ranking mech pilots until recently.

After the start of the Age of Dawn, it became more common for qi cultivators to be able to cast a fireball or counter the force of gravity without the use of conventional technology, but these were relatively simple and straightforward manifestations that could easily be calculated and understood.

Even qi formations and more unusual rituals all abided by certain logic that could explain much of what was taking place. Humans still possessed a capacity to understand the relation between input and output.

This time was different. They had never witnessed so much darkness-attributed E energy being mobilized and shaped to produce such dramatic effects!

Even the Oscillating Fist looked disturbed. He took his opponent a lot more seriously and actually prepared to burn his own phasewater!

Doing this would weaken him for quite a while, and it would be difficult to find replenishment as long as the Phase Lord Department remained cut off from any further shipments of phasewater, but he couldn't help it. He needed to leverage the power of his phasewater organs to the limit in order to block this next attack!

As he crossed his gauntlets in front of his fist once again, the Krytak Class A Seashells that covered his entire raiment glistened as they received a mysterious source of reinforcement.

The Oscillating Fist was not like the other Ascended Giants. It became increasingly more clear that he received a substantial amount of support from a third party.

If that third party happened to be the Cosmopolitan Movement, then who knew what kind of surprises he had in store.

Yet for all of his surprises, the Dark Apostle's momentum vastly exceeded that of the Oscillating Fist at this time!

The dark miasma surrounding his form grew larger but also more defined. It increasingly shifted from an amorphous sphere of darkness into the contours of a robed woman.

The darkness formed into the silhouette of the Oblivion Empress!

The appearance of this form caused the darkness to cease radiating as much malevolence as before.

Instead, the Oblivion Empress exerted greater control over this unruly power, causing it to waste considerably less energy than before.

Much of the spare power was being concentrated on the front. The Silhouette of the Oblivion Empress mimicked the posture of holding a lance.

This energy silhouette happened to overlap perfectly with the real blast lance.

More and more energy started to gather at the tip, to the point that it started to resemble a black hole that was on the verge of losing control!

Not only that, but the True God further shaped and refined the energies into an unspeakable application.

The Dark Apostle tried his best to keep up with his mother and remember as many details as possible.

There was no way in hell he could understand or replicate her fine and exquisite E energy manipulation skills, and it was foolish to replicate it considering that her personalized methods only worked well for herself.

However, the Dark Apostle recalled the advice she had given. He did his best to let go of the details and remember the feelings and impressions he gained from observing every step of her process.

So long as he was able to develop his own methods in the future that imitated these distinct feelings, then he would be able to control the power of the darkness just as well as his mother one day!

As the possessed Dark Apostle continued to charge forward, the distance between him and his adversary shrunk rapidly.

He had already built up enough momentum, and now that the Oblivion Empress had gathered as much darkness energy that she could manage under the current condition, she performed the final step.

"Remember this feeling, my son. When you develop the arts in the future, you must walk across a tightrope. Your dance must be powerful enough to open up a connection, but weak enough to avoid attracting unwelcome attention. This is how it is done."

As the final kilometers ticked down, the Dark Apostle suddenly began to make strange but elegant movements.

The Oblivion Empress' concentrated energy manifestation mirrored every move.

Anyone who still had the stomach to observe the charging Dark Apostle by remote strangely found it a lot more bearable to keep their eyes on her form.

Like a siren luring sailors to their doom, the Oblivion Empress performed a subtle dance with the lance in her arms.

Whatever unknown mysteries she evoked with her movements seemed to resonate with the fabric of reality.

The mysterious dance sparked a response from the darker and deeper layers of the universe.

Neither the Oblivion Empress nor the Dark Apostle uttered any words to evoke this power, yet it came to them in an obedient fashion nonetheless.

At the last couple of seconds before impact, the energy-dense tip of the blast lance suddenly turned a little more gray.

An entirely different presence emanated from this contaminated concentration of energy!

It was as if a bigger predator from an unknowable location had briefly reached out and leaked a small portion of its forbidden aura!

Though this window only remained open for a fraction of a second, the changes it wrought to the blast lance and the energies surrounding it was profound.

The brief moment of contamination caused much of the darkness energy to express the properties of nihility!

This had a strong negation effect that directly neutralized the Oscillating Fist's attempts to interfere with the Dark Apostle's flight path!

The dark lance continued to pierce through visible and invisible obstacles as it unerringly closed towards the Oscillating Fist.

Though the polemarchos made a sudden burst movement that abruptly pushed him to the side, the Oblivion Empress immediately corrected for this move and slightly shifted the angle of the blast lance so that it bypassed the crossed arms and eventually struck the Oscillating Fist right in the middle of his abdomen!

Ves paid great attention to the impact. Though it happened too fast for him to properly register with his senses, he believed that he had definitely managed to catch the tip of the empowered blast lance sapping the power of the nearby Krytak Class A Seashells before piercing through them as if they were brittle bones!

Then, he was no longer able to perceive anything, because the ordinary and extraordinary payloads of the blast lance exploded at the same time!

The conventional payload most definitely inflicted a lot of damage, but its blast became completely overshadowed by the silent eruption of darkness!

A much more overpowering orb of darkness enveloped the Oscillating Fist's location. The entire space seemed to descend into an unnatural form of darkness that made it impossible for any sensors to observe anything cohesive in the surrounding kilometers!

As the excess quantity of darkness energy finally faded away, the two duelists finally became visible again.

The Dark Apostle's appearance was not good. An empowered sacrificial blast lance had exploded a short distance away from his true body, so it was inevitable for him to suffer serious damage, just like the last time.

Even with the protection offered by the Oblivion Empress, his raiment could not escape the fate of weakening and falling apart due to the backlash of darkness energy.

Even now, the Dark Apostle awkwardly shook and tore away the remains of his raiment. All of the expensive materials and tech had become undone, but at least they managed to do their jobs.

The Dark Apostle himself remained relatively unscathed. His true body only had to resist a fraction of the invasion of hostile darkness energy as his raiment.

Though he was sad to see his raiment and more importantly the attached powerful linear flight system crumble into pieces, he at least managed to salvage at least one piece of equipment.

His Murder Knife originally remained sheathed in the small of his back, just underneath the flight system. This was the most protected portion of his body in the event of encountering an attack from the front.

Relatively little darkness energy had managed to reach this part of his armored form, and what little managed to touch the small D-arm instantly got absorbed without incident.

The Dark Apostle gripped the Murder Knife as fast as possible as he turned around to see the results of the earlier attack.

Though he was confident that the charge attack had inflicted an immense amount of damage, who knew how many trump cards the Oscillating Fist had left.

"*Damn.*" Ves quietly cursed.

As the darkness from the impact site completely faded away, the humanoid form of the Oscillating Fist became visible yet again.

The fact that he hadn't been torn to pieces or lost his extremities indicated that he had most likely survived the second charge attack!

"..."

Words escaped from his lips without sound. He no longer possessed a functional helmet or raiment to transmit his words.

"At least he has lost his Krytal Seashell raiment." The Dark Apostle looked on the bright side.

The Oscillating Fist incurred much more damage, to the point where there was nothing left of his old raiment aside from his greaves and parts of his abnormally thick and heavy gauntlets!

Even these components had become compromised due to the thin miasma that had completely impregnated their structure.

The Oscillating Fist's true body was not that much better off. His stomach had been rent open and a large amount of darkness energy had spread inside his partially folded true body.

Even if the actual size and mass of his true body made the contamination of darkness energy more manageable than normal, the human phase lord was definitely not in a good condition!

Yet aside from the hole in his abdomen area, the Oscillating Fist did not bear any other open wounds!

Sure, much of his head, his torso, his upper arms and his upper legs bore dark splotches that grew feeble and more vulnerable by the second, but these were all surface injuries that only marginally decreased his combat readiness.

Seeing how he was still able to move his arms and legs, if slower and more painfully, it became clear that he could still put up a fight!

Even now, he slowly turned around and faced the Dark Apostle with bruised but defiant eyes.

The surviving polemarchos slowly raised his naked and darkened fists before grinning with a bleeding and darkened lip.

"..."

He did not need to rely on words to convey his intention.

When Ves compared the condition of his true body with the condition of the Oscillating Fist, he immediately grew suspicious.

He had a growing feeling that it was not a coincidence that both of them ended up this way.

"Mother... tell me the truth. Could you have killed the Oscillating Fist in a single blow?"

"**Yes.**" she plainly admitted with a satisfied smile.

"*Then why did you not finish him off!?*" He practically roared before he suddenly felt a very painful intangible smack! "*Ouch! What was that for, mother?!*"

"You spoiled brat. Do I have to do everything for the two of you? I agreed to lend a hand. I did not promise to solve this problem entirely. The Oscillating Fist has lost his powerful gauntlets and his Krytak Class A Seashell raiment. I have even inflicted enough damage to his true body to level the playing field. Dark Apostle, I shall leave the rest up to you, and only you. Take up your knife and claim your kill. Only after your blade takes away the life of the giant that you wish to usurp will you truly be able to complete the ritual in the most orthodox fashion. Your leadership challenge will be a complete success. The remaining Ascended Giants will pledge their allegiance to you without fail."

The Superior Mother seduced her latest son with her words.

The Dark Apostle became pumped up as he looked forward to the final fight!

He gripped his Murder Knife with a bit of unfamiliarity but plenty of enthusiasm!

"I will finish this myself." He declared!

Chapter 7203: A Fair Fight

Ves wanted to palm his face.

Although most people wouldn't have thought about it, he had never let down his guard towards his mother.

He had learned through many hard lessons that she rarely abided by her promises and always sprung unpleasant surprises to him. This was why he always felt reluctant to call upon her help.

If he hadn't been forced by circumstances this time, then he would have never given his mother an opportunity to screw him over yet again!

Perhaps he should have called upon the help of another design spirit such as Helena or the Phase King.

No. They had no way of recognizing the true nature of those Krytak Class A Seashells.

Whatever empowerment these alternative spirits could bestow to the blast lance would probably get blocked by the abnormally resilient raiment.

Perhaps the brute force of the charge attack might eventually overwhelm the defensive capacity of the nearby seashells, but by then not much attack power should be left.

The Oscillating Fist would probably remain in a much better condition than now!

At least his current state made him a lot more vulnerable than before. He not only lost all of his weapons and armor, but also incurred just enough physical injuries to give him a physical handicap.

Ves had no doubt that his mother precisely aimed for this outcome. Her goal was to weaken the Oscillating Fist to the point where his superior boxing skills got dragged down by his injured physique.

If he remained physically healthy, then there was no chance for the Dark Apostle to finish the job in his current state!

The gap in skill and combat experience alone was more than enough for the older Ascended Giant to completely beat up the Dark Apostle, especially when the latter was not able to wield a spear that he could wield proficiently.

As both Ascended Giants gradually took stock of their circumstances, one of them suddenly laughed.

"..."

Although the Oscillating Fist was not able to communicate verbally at the moment, his frustration at the current situation became evident.

He glowered not at the Dark Apostle, but at the manifestation of the Superior Mother that floated beside his opponent's head.

Ves did not like the enemy's mocking expression at all. He wanted to work together with the Dark Apostle to crush the Oscillating Fist as soon as possible!

Yet before the two duelists could come to blows, the Superior Mother reached out with her arm and began to exert her power over the Oscillating Fist.

The giant widened his eyes and pressed his hands against his head.

It soon became evident why he came under pressure.

An invisible hand plucked his companion spirit from his head!

It turned out that the Oscillating Fist's companion spirit had developed into a phase whale, or at least a spirit that assumed the appearance of one.

Though his companion spirit did not possess all of the powers of a real phase whale, it happened to possess a rare and precious affinity towards space!

It was not easy for an individual to develop such a rare connection to such an abstract element.

The Oscillating Fist did not seem like an intellectual who developed a lot of theoretical understanding of physics. The more likely explanation why he managed to develop this talent was because he made use of rare and powerful reagents that were affected by the space attribute.

This was an extremely luxurious treatment.

The cost had to be significant.

Had the Oscillating Fist embezzled the funds of the Phase Lord Department in order to mutate his young companion spirit in this direction, or did he receive lots of help from a third party?

Ves felt that the latter explanation was much more likely than the former.

"For the sake of your cooperation, I can allow you to speak for a minute." The Oblivion Empress imperiously told the Oscillating Fist.

The phase whale remained unwillingly fixed in place. It opened its maw and steadily figured out how to speak in a similar manner to other companion spirits.

"You witch. You are the mother of this boy. For the sake of your son, you brought down your power onto me so that you could turn me into his stepping stone."

The manifestation of the Superior Mother shook her head.

"You are almost correct. It is true that I reduced you to this condition, but not for the purpose of turning you into a stepping stone. You are not qualified. My intention is to turn you into a more appropriate challenge for my son. A sharpening stone in other words. I have reduced your advantages to the point where you should have a 50 percent chance of defeating my son in hand-to-hand combat. You still have a chance to win. If you do, we will abide by the terms of the contract as previously agreed and let you enjoy freedom."

It was understandable that the Oscillating Fist did not trust her credibility. His phase whale companion spirit let out a huff.

"Hmph. Why should I believe in your words? I never volunteered to become his sharpening stone."

The Superior Mother's manifestation crossed her arms. **"You have no choice but to believe me, because doing so is the only way you have a chance of survival. You also have no choice but to serve your new purpose. If you wanted to avoid this fate, then you should not have forced my sons to accept your challenge. This is karma as far as I am concerned. All I can promise you is that the two of you will fight each other in the purest possible fashion. No tech. No armor. No companion spirits. Just pure flesh and skill."**

The Oscillating Fist looked calculatingly at the Superior Mother and the Dark Apostle. What she said appealed to him in a way that made him loosen his resentment at being reduced to a sharpening stone.

He still felt pissed off about this situation, but there was nothing he could do about it. The best way to take revenge was to take the Dark Apostle's life!

"If you truly will not interfere... then your terms are acceptable. Are you truly willing to let him die at my hands?"

The mother did not hesitate to make her stance clear.

"I can promise you in the name of the Oblivion Empress and the Superior Mother that I will not intervene. I shall ensure that others will not be able to interfere, including your companion spirits. You may not trust me, but you can trust my motives. The Dark Apostle has chosen to rise above obscurity and assume great responsibility. He must learn that such responsibilities always come at a cost. He must shed his weakness sooner rather than later. Instead of letting him fumble on a chaotic battlefield, it is best for him to build up his mettle under more controlled circumstances. In order to make this teaching moment as authentic as possible, I truly do not intend to save my son if he is losing."

Ves felt incredibly disturbed by that statement, but she somehow managed to sway the Oscillating Fist.

The battered but not unbroken Ascended Giant looked more combative than before. He regained his fighting spirit and became motivated to win the right to live!

The Oscillating Fist directed a respectful look at the Superior Mother.

"You're a cold one. I get it now. I won't show any mercy to him. I will fight to the bitter end. Get ready, kid, because only one of us is getting out of here alive!"

Unlike Ves, the Dark Apostle did not dislike this arrangement. Instead, he grew more and more excited as he held the Murder Knife in his grip.

"Thank you, mother! I love this gift!"

His savage phase lord instincts took over and prompted him to utter a combative roar before charging straight at his opponent!

Ves naturally grew horrified at the prospect of letting his other personality enter into a fight without any advantages!

He tried his best to help the Dark Apostle channel his E energy, but found that his control over Blinky remained completely frozen.

The Superior Mother prevented him from regaining control and exerting any influence over the final phase of the duel!

"*Are you serious?*" He growled.

"I am.

" His mother whispered back to him as the two human phase lords finally exchanged proper blows for the first time. **"Both of you are the same individual in essence, but he is much younger and less experienced than you. His ambitions do not match his strength. He will meet with disaster by aspiring to become the leader of the Ascended Giants. The best we can do is to raise his qualifications as best as possible. He needs to struggle by himself, just as you have done in the past."**

Ves did not bother to argue with her any further. He knew that nothing he said could change her mind. He also knew that she disdained to lie in these situations. He had no doubt that he would truly let the Dark Apostle perish if he failed to pass her test.

A normal mother would feel horrified.

His mother on the other hand thought that it made complete sense!

In the end, Blinky could do little but maintain his distance while the Oscillating Fist's own companion spirit remained fixed in place as well.

The Superior Mother did not hesitate to exert a lot of energy and strain to maintain her current descent and prevent Ves from kicking her away.

The Oblivion Empress continued to observe her latest son with scrutinizing eyes.

Perhaps aware that his mother was watching him and judging him at the same time, the Dark Apostle gained a surge of confidence and fought more aggressively!

Unfortunately, he was nowhere as good in knife fighting as Saint Tusa Billingsley-Larkinson.

The Oscillating Fist found it easy to read his opponent's moves and evade in time. He even took advantage of a number of openings to land a handful of quick jabs at the younger phase lord's face and sides.

He even tried to capture and pry away the Murder Knife at one time, but all he got out of the attempt was to prick his palm against one of the spikes of the D-arm!

Despite this failure, the Dark Apostle knew he had been close to losing his only remaining weapon.

"I would have disarmed you and carved your head into pieces by now if your mother did not injure me to this extent." The phase whale companion spirit growled.

The fact that he was completely right shamed the Dark Apostle for a moment, but he quickly shoved this thought aside.

He did not have the luxury to feel shame when he truly needed all of the handicaps he could get.

Although he was able to move faster and more fluently than his opponent, the Oscillating Fist relied on his exquisite skills, judgment, experience, instinct and control to leverage the utmost of his injured and weakened body!

Even as the lingering touch of darkness continued to afflict his flesh, his strong willpower enabled him to push through the pain and put up the most desperate fight of his life!

The way he moved and the way he instantly took advantage of every opening was impressive.

Though the Oscillating Fist only restricted himself to relatively modest probing attacks at first, he soon amped up the pressure once he gained the measure of his opponent.

His pained lips curled into an increasingly confident smirk as he performed a faint that he had never employed before.

In his impatience and eagerness to draw blood with the Murder Knife, the Dark Apostle fell for it like an idiot, causing him to overextend himself and briefly make his body vulnerable!

The counterattack came in an instant. The Oscillating Fist had already anticipated this sequence in advance. He managed to accumulate enough power before unleashing his dominant fist straight against his opponent's chest!

"Ahhh!"

This punch was different from the ones before!

Not only did it land with greater power than the man's previous attacks, but he also executed a strange technique that transferred a painful vibration force!

The Dark Apostle coughed as he felt as if his lungs and other organs had been rung like a bell!

Chapter 7204: The Brutal Clash

Many observers, particularly the soldiers and warriors among them, grew disappointed at the Dark Apostle's performance.

His lack of skill in unarmed combat, knife fighting and general combat became painfully evident.

His shortcomings hadn't been as pronounced in the last 3 duels due to his heavy reliance on technology, but now that he had lost almost all of his gear, there was no way to hide them anymore.

His flaws became incredibly obvious to those who knew a thing or two about actual fighting!

Sure, there were still plenty of people who understood that their prospective new leader was not supposed to be able to match a professional soldier in the art of combat.

The Dark Apostle was supposed to be a mech designer after all. He was also fairly young. It would have been unreasonable to assume he could match the Oscillating Fist in terms of martial prowess.

Yet his performance was still very bad compared to how he previously fought. He was nowhere near as slick and proficient as when he wielded a spear in the previous duels!

"This is embarrassing..." Ves palmed his face. *"Can't you make it even more embarrassing for myself and my other self? How will we ever command the respect of the Ascended Giants if we are getting our butts kicked to such an extent?"*

"Trust me, my son." The Oblivion Empress softly spoke to him. **"Showing weakness and vulnerability every now and then is not always detrimental. The two of you are not qualified to dominate the Ascended Giants by projecting invincibility such as the man you wish to usurp. It is better for you to gain their loyalty through a combination of sincerity and empathy, just as you have done with the Larkinson Clan."**

"That makes a certain degree of sense, but at least let us make this choice ourselves!"

"I am doing this for your own good." She mercilessly declared.

While they talked, the Dark Apostle continued to suffer one setback after another.

The initial punch to the chest was probably the signature move of the Oscillating Fist.

Even without his high-tech gauntlets, he was able to rely on pure technique along with a bit of phase lord magic to land punches that shook his adversary's body.

Though the vibrations were not particularly strong, they were still able to cause bruising and other forms of damage on organs that were much less able to take hits!

The Dark Apostle winced and groaned in pain several times as he failed to prevent the Oscillating Fist from landing another punch to his sides.

It felt as if one of his kidneys was about to explode!

If not for the fact that phase lord bodies were naturally big and resistant against damage, he was sure that the last punch would have incapacitated him long enough to let the Oscillating Fist finish him off entirely.

Fortunately, he was able to resist the pain just enough to back off and swipe his knife in front of him in a defensive manner.

The Oscillating Fist made a frustrated expression. It was clear that he could have made his punches snappier and strike with greater force if he wasn't being held back by his slew of injuries.

Still, he was becoming more used to his condition with every passing minute. The more he moved, the more he was able to understand his current limitations. This allowed him to plan ahead and plot more effective moves against his inexperienced opponent!

This did not escape the Dark Apostle's attention. He was forced to rethink his approach towards this fight.

Simple enthusiasm did not cut it. While his body was still in a much better condition, all of his attempts to strike at his adversary's weak points or simply land a cut anywhere on his opponent's body had utterly failed.

Why was this the case?

Bad technique was just an excuse. Due to his acquired weapon skills, he gained a general understanding of combat that was universal no matter what sort of weapon he wielded.

Even if he restricted himself to simple stabs and slashes, he still should have been able to cut his adversary at least once.

As he continued to fly around while trying to keep his adversary at a distance, the Dark Apostle tried his best to deduce why he was truly failing.

With a powerful opponent right on his tail, he quickly managed to come up with a possible theory.

He was fighting too cautiously.

His true body was much more intact and in a better shape than his adversary, yet he tried his best to maintain his distance and launch half-hearted attacks for fear of overcommitting.

This was not a bad approach if his opponent was less skilled and lacked the solutions to counter his attacks, but the Oscillating Fist definitely did not fall into this category!

His approach placed a greater emphasis on technical fighting as opposed to brute force.

In other words, the Dark Apostle tapped into his weaknesses while playing into the Oscillating Fist's strengths!

How could he turn this around?

By adopting the opposite approach!

A metaphorical lightbulb suddenly lit up in his head.

He briefly glanced at the manifestation of his mother. The Dark Apostle may have figured out one of the lessons that he was supposed to learn from this fight.

When two irreconcilable enemies were locked together in a cage, the one who came out alive was not necessarily the one who possessed the greatest skill, but the one who was most willing to put everything on the line for the sake of winning!

After the Dark Apostle received this miniature enlightenment, his eyes narrowed. He no longer thought about doing anything fancy anymore.

He immediately turned around and let out a roar as he charged straight at the Oscillating Fist!

His experienced opponent immediately picked up on his change and tried to punch the Dark Apostle straight in the head!

If that fist generated an oscillating force that affected his brain, then the Dark Apostle would most certainly lose!

He therefore swiped his knife upwards in an attempt to intercept the fist.

The older fighter diverted one of his fists, but still managed to land his other fist into the Dark Apostle's stomach!

Blood spurted from the Dark Apostle's mouth!

He could feel some of his phasewater organs incurring serious damage from this punch!

Yet he still grinned as his Murder Knife managed to sink into one of the shoulders of his opponent!

The Dark Apostle tried to cut a deeper wound, but found it difficult to do so as the resistance was too great. He was forced to pull out his weapon and attempted to land a second stab, but his bleeding opponent took advantage of his proximity to hunch over and unleash a flurry of punches that continually struck his abdomen and sides!

The rapid series of punches did not land with as much oscillating force, but the damage they inflicted rapidly accumulated!

The Dark Apostle kept spurting out blood from his mouth as his torso gained more bruises while many of his internal organs were screaming in pain!

Yet despite all of this suffering, the Dark Apostle forcibly withstood the punishment.

This was not easy!

The main reason why he was able to bear it for the time being was that Ves possessed a surprisingly high pain tolerance.

Much of that had become imprinted into his true body, which grew and evolved with the prospect of suffering further pain in the future.

The Dark Apostle benefited from this. He even found that subsequent applications of pain felt weaker on a subjective level.

In any case, he single-mindedly ignored defense and solely focused on stabbing his opponent as much as possible!

Since the Oscillating Fist sought to pummel his opponent into submission as soon as possible, the Dark Apostle grew determined to make his opponent bleed!

His Murder Knife rose again before stabbing into the same shoulder!

This time, the Dark Apostle sought to exacerbate his opponent's muscle injuries.

One of his adversary's arms quickly lost force! Its punching power had weakened by over 50 percent and lost the fine control necessary to generate oscillating force!

The Dark Apostle grinned with phasewater-infused blood spilling from his mouth. Before he could land his third attack, the Oscillating Fist abruptly changed his approach.

He shifted his body and used both his injured and uninjured arm to capture the Dark Apostle in a hold!

The latter phase lord grew alarmed. Hardly any time had passed, but already the Oscillating Fist expertly used his arms and legs to gain leverage and hold the knife arm!

The Dark Apostle cried out in pain!

He knew that the Murder Knife was his only lifeline. If lost his grip on it, his chances of winning would definitely plunge to the bottom!

He concentrated hard.

For a moment, he sought to expend all of his remaining Worclaw energy that was circulating in his chest.

Yet even as he tried to draw upon the energy that was being circulated by his mutated Jutland organ, he found that he could not draw upon it at all! An invisible wall blocked him from accessing its power!

It didn't take much guessing to deduce that his mother had denied access to this potent energy.

She truly did not want him to resort to this potent energy to win this duel!

This discovery put the Dark Apostle in a bad mood because he had very few options left to get out of this compromising position before his opponent broke his arm.

Wait. He still had another phasewater organ that might be useful in this situation. It hadn't been developed for this purpose, but he would take anything he could get at this point!

He hastily activated his Acris organ and allowed it to accumulate energy just long enough to discharge it across his true body in the form of electricity!

Crackles of electric energy sparked from his body, causing him to suffer a second sort of pain, the pain of being electrocuted!

Yet since his true body integrated the lesser Arcis organ, he also gained a notable amount of resilience to getting shocked.

The same could not be said for the Oscillating Fist!

As tough as his true body might have become, he had no reason to integrate an Arcis organ into his body, which meant that its tolerance towards electrocution was not as high!

Although the Oscillating Fist possessed more than enough willpower to resist the pain, the same could not be said for his injured and weakened true body!

Though his nerves did not outright falter, he was no longer able to control his limbs as well as before!

The Dark Apostle soon managed to wrench himself free from the spasming limbs!

"ENOUGH OF THIS! DIE FOR ME, YOU STUBBORN OLD FOOL!"

Though his body was not in a good shape, the Dark Apostle gritted his teeth and ignored all of the screaming from his true body to stab at whatever body part was closest!

The Oscillating Fist released a soundless cry as the blade of the Murder Knife plunged into his chest!

Though the blade did not sink deep enough to hit anything truly vital, the corruption spread by the weapon exacerbated the original stabbing wound and weakened the giant's body even further!

Before the Dark Apostle's bruised and injured body could falter entirely, he continued to fly forward and sink his Murder Knife into his enemy yet again!

This time, he managed to disable the Oscillating Fist's already wounded arm!

Now left with just one functional arm, the Oscillating Fist tried his best to unleash a powerful punch that could exacerbate his opponent's already serious internal injuries, but the Dark Apostle grinned as he anticipated this predictable move.

He had lowered his knife just enough for it to score and cut into the flesh of this arm!

However, it turned out that the Oscillating Fist had made another feint. He pulled his punch at the last moment and instead unleashed a powerful kick that not only unbalanced the Dark Apostle's organs further, but also pushed him away!

"AH! THAT HURTS, BUT YOU DON'T GET TO RUN AWAY!"

The Oscillating Fist desperately tried to put more distance between himself and his aggressive opponent.

The Dark Apostle tried his best to catch up, but his injuries seriously affected the efficiency of his flight!

"YOUR LIFE IS MINE!"

Both human phase lords had been pushed to the brink of defeat.

The Dark Apostle knew that he did not have much power left, so he decided to perform one more gamble.

He threw his Murder Knife forward.

Though he never trained in knife throwing, the skills imparted by the Sacrificial Spear Throwing Method still came in handy!

Though his aim was off, the knife still drifted straight enough to sink into the Oscillating Fist's retreating back!

This time, it was the older phase lord's turn to spurt a little blood from his mouth!

Normally, the thrown knife should not have enough force to sink too deep into the Oscillating Fist's flesh.

The reason why this happened anyway was because the Murder Knife happened to sink into a portion of abnormally weakened and blackened flesh!

Its resistance was much lower than the healthier portions of flesh. There also did not happen to be any hardy bones in the way that could impede the D-arm.

All of this ultimately caused a serious enough injury that the Oscillating Fist momentarily slowed down.

The Dark Apostle quickly managed to catch up and grasp the hilt of his weapon.

He even managed to wrap his other arm around the Oscillating Fist's neck.

The challenger grinned as he brought his bleeding lips closer to his opponent's ear.

"Everything that used to be yours has now become mine. Now die."

The Dark Apostle repeatedly stabbed the Oscillating Fist in the back and sides.

The Murder Knife drew so much blood and corrupted so much flesh that the Oscillating Fist quickly lost much of his strength!

He could do nothing but release soundless cries as the Murder Knife slowly drew out of the life from his true body!