

THE MECH TOUCH

Chapter 7206: Who Is In Charge?

Eventually, his children had to go.

Ves may still be bedridden for the time being, but he had to take care of a lot of business.

A man of his status and importance could rarely afford to let issues pile up for 5 straight days, at least not without making prior arrangements.

While he was sure that his assistants and staff were doing their best to deal with the more routine and low-level issues, they lacked the authority to decide on anything of importance.

This was why Ves only reserved an hour of family time before he was ready to deal with serious business.

He kissed his children one last time before sending them away.

A small group of colliers waiting outside the hatch soon stepped inside the compartment.

Ves slightly grew disappointed when he did not spot the presence of the chief enforcer, but quickly shrugged this feeling aside.

The Patient Builder was a busy man who was chiefly responsible for the Red Collective's participation in the Red War. He could not afford to remain aboard the Tarrasque and wait for Ves to wake up again.

Instead, four collies chose to visit him first.

Eliza Mo Ragadan, his chief of staff back when he held the officer of chief councilor

Zariel-775, the secret keeper assigned to help him understand the intelligence related to the Phase Lord Department.

Divine Harpoon in his human form, the strategos of the Faceless Giants.

Andrea Vos, a formation master who served as the head of the Moloch Squadron.

Two of the gathered collies pretty much served as his trusted aids and could be considered as reluctant members of his inner circle.

Ves did not know the other two collies as well, but both of them had the potential to join his inner circle in time.

The RC had chosen its envoys well.

"Before we begin, I need you to refresh my memories." Ves said as he continued to lie on his large and ruffled white bed. "My memories of the end of the leadership challenge are rather fuzzy. What happened?"

The collies remained silent for a moment.

"What do you last remember?" The dark robed spy eventually asked.

"I think... I observed my other self grab hold of the Oscillating Fist before stabbing his Murder Knife into his opponent like crazy. I suppose that is the last I know."

Several collies frowned.

"That is odd." The Farseer spoke. "The Dark Apostle lost consciousness not long after we confirmed that the Oscillating Fist had lost his life. The Superior Mother left you after she did something to your incapacitated true body. When your companion spirit regained his original feline form, you apparently found it difficult to maintain your state at the time. You strongly insisted on claiming the true bodies of both the Unshakeable King and the Oscillating Fist. We... shipped them over to you despite the fact that it would have been more

appropriate to surrender them to the Phase Lord Department to give them a dignified burial."

Ves wanted to scratch his head. Why did he make such a spontaneous demand?

The powerful pharmaceuticals used to dull his pain was also dulling his thinking. He couldn't recall why he wanted to obtain their corpses so urgently.

"What happened next?"

The formation master directed a concerned look at him. "Do you truly not remember? You transferred them to your private pocket space, something which we have always suspected that you always had at your disposal, but only obtained proof of its existence for the first time. You lost consciousness soon afterwards."

Ugh.

This time, Ves wanted to palm his face.

Although it may be true that Ves had never done a good job of hiding the functionality of the Vault of Eternity, there was a difference between being discreet about it and showing off the capacity to disappear two phase lord corpses in front of the Red Collective!

Wait. This did not make sense.

The volume of the two corpses was quite notable. Ves only rented so much storage capacity from the Vault of Eternity. He definitely did not have enough AP to expand his allowance.

What did he do with the two true bodies?

Ves felt more and more frustrated at his inability to remember these crucial moments.

Was there something wrong with him? Had the previous battle caused injuries that impaired his cognition in any fashion?

He paused in thought.

He eventually recalled that the Oscillating Fist had managed to land a few fast punches onto the Dark Apostle's Head.

Since they were merely quick jabs, they did not convey much oscillating force, so the punches shouldn't have rattled his brain too much.

However, the Oscillating Fist was so skilled and so practiced that even his quick jabs conveyed at least a small amount of oscillating force!

So it was still possible for his true body's brain to suffer strange effects.

Since this was not the right time for him to enter the System Space, he decided to shove aside the matter of this confusing incident.

"Have the Ascended Giants complained about the missing bodies?"

"Not as far as I know of. They are much more focused on the present and the future. A new era has already begun for them as far as they are concerned."

Ves smiled. "Let's leave the matter of the bodies of the two deceased giants aside. We have much more important business to talk about. Give me a clear answer. Do I have control over the Phase Lord Department?"

This was a question that his chief of staff could answer the best.

"I have been working on this in the last 5 days." Eliza Mo Ragadan said.
"Although I am officially no longer assigned to you after the two councils have revoked your position as chief councilor, you have yet to formally take office as the department head of the Phase Lord Department. Only you have the power to sign the right documents that will make it all official. We decided that if you did not wake up in 14 days, we would appoint an interim department head to take charge of the most immediate issues."

"We feared that if you remained absent for too long, a number of Ascended Giants would lose confidence in you and defect to the Red Cabal on their own accord." Zariel-775 mentioned. "It is imperative that you appear before your new subjects as soon as possible. They are still immersed in your successful leadership challenge and wholeheartedly acknowledge you as their new polemarchos, but their jubilation is fading with each passing day."

That was why they stormed into his room as soon as his children left. Matters like this really could not be delayed for too long.

"I will pay a visit to the Phase Lord Department once we have dealt with the most immediate issues." Ves promised. "I am not sure whether I can unfold my true body in my current state. It is more appropriate for the Dark Apostle to introduce himself to his new domain. While I intend to repeal the stupid demand that human phase lords must keep their true bodies partially unfolded, it is too soon to enact such a radical change."

Not enough time had passed to make the Ascended Giants accustomed to his new rules.

For the time being, Ves had no choice but to abide by the rules and traditions set by the first-generation polemarchos.

A pair of bots emerged behind Eliza Mo Ragadan and floated over to Ves.

It turned out that they carried a stack of very fancy and official-looking documents.

"Before you can enter the headquarters of the Phase Lord Department, let us confirm your ascension first." Eliza Mo Ragadan said. "In cooperation with the surviving staff of the Oscillating Fist, we have made a number of hasty changes and amendments to the appointment document. There is no need to worry. Most of them deal with the special terminology and organizational changes implemented by your deceased predecessor. As long as you sign these documents, we will recognize you as both a polemarchos and a department head."

That was a practical decision. Even if Ves did not particularly like these pretentious titles, the Ascended Giants had become way too attached to their new culture to accept a reversal.

He let out a sigh. "Okay. Let's get this over with. Where do I sign?"

He began to use an autopen to leave behind a series of 'perfect' signatures at every important document.

Though Ves tried his best to skim through the paragraphs and look for anything suspicious, he failed to detect anything amiss.

He still had not regained his full mental acuity yet. He knew that his condition had slightly improved compared to before, but it would still take a notable amount of time where he could bring his entire brain online.

He could only place his trust on Eliza and the other 3 collies that the documents were authentic and did not contain anything improper.

Ves definitely intended to go over them at a later date and verify that they were all in order.

If that was not the case, then he would personally bring a bunch of Ascended Giants right to the headquarters of the Enforcement Department in order to obtain answers!

Eliza passed one more document when Ves was almost done.

"You may sign this document as well if you think I am the right fit to serve as your chief of staff in your new office. This is an optimal decision. You may choose to start a selection process to find a replacement if you wish."

That sounded like a waste of time. Ves had a good impression of Eliza. Her competence was excellent and her attitude towards him was just right. He was sure she would work just as well at the Phase Lord Department.

He signed the optional document without hesitation.

"Congratulations. You have formally accepted the appointment as the department head of the Phase Lord Department." Eliza said in an uplifting tone as the bots carefully gathered the papers. "Your term will last for 20 standard years starting from today. The relevant documents will remain valid even if the Red Collective becomes defunct in the future for whatever reason. Other powers such as the Red Association, the Red Fleet, the Terran Alliance, the Rubarthan Pact as well as the Cybernetic Empire will still recognize your right to lead the only legal and authorized force of human phase lords."

That actually sounded quite generous.

Ves hadn't thought about what would happen if the RC collapsed. Would his original deal still hold?

It appeared that the collies had thought ahead and took multiple different contingencies into account.

"I am happy to keep the Ascended Giants in check for the next 20 years." Ves wearily smiled before he recalled a troublesome issue. "Wait, what about the Dark Apostle? Who is actually in charge?"

"You." Eliza said. "The documents you have just signed contain clauses that officially recognize your dual identity as both Ves Larkinson and the Dark Apostle. This was one of the complications that we had to solve in the past 5 days. We do not fully understand your abnormal condition, but we have little choice but to adapt to it given that the Ascended Giants mainly recognize the Dark Apostle as opposed to your human identity."

Ves looked confused. "How does that even work? Give me the short version, please."

His newly reappointed chief of staff looked troubled. "It is not easy to succinctly summarize the legal principles that we have employed to solve your issues. The best I can do is state that we believe that Ves Larkinson and the Dark Apostle consist of a single legal identity, but function as two distinctly

different individuals. We have borrowed heavily from unfinished regulations related to companion spirits to make this work."

"So you are all behaving as if the Dark Apostle is another companion spirit of sorts?"

"Yes. We understand that this is not a completely correct description of your current state, but it is the best we can do on short notice."

This interim ruling had many implications for Ves.