

Mech Touch 6351

Chapter 6351 Doomspreeder Torpedo Launcher

Letting Saint Tusa and the Dark Zephyr go on a trip might cause the enemies to launch their attack sooner rather than later.

If the Dark Zephyr managed to sniff out the hiding place of the ambushers, then that may be enough to drive them into action.

The departure of a powerful ace mech from the Bluejay Fleet may also lure the cosmopolitans and the native aliens to take advantage of the situation and go on the offensive.

While time was technically on the side of the Bluejay Fleet, there was not much point to waiting around any further.

Fort Rock had come online. While there were still many areas of improvements, the engineers and construction crews had already plucked the low-hanging fruit. They were spending gradually more time on reconstruction efforts that yielded increasingly smaller gains in return.

They had already exhausted all of their stockpiles of high-grade materials and parts. They could only improve existing systems as opposed to constructing new ones. The low-grade materials mined from nearby asteroids were only useful for bulking up the asteroid and adding more physical buffers to the existing defensive works.

Since this was the case, the Bluejay Fleet might as well make it a little more enticing for their enemies to launch their attack sooner than normal.

Just as the delay was buying time for the mechers and fleters to cook up more defensive solutions, their adversaries could also make use of the downtime to improve their sieging capabilities!

This was also why Admiral Tensen agreed to let the Dark Zephyr out. They needed to get a clear view of the enemy fleet's disposition and verify whether it was preparing a counter to their defensive strategy.

Many people were waiting for Saint Tusa to stumble upon the enemy and peel back the surprises that they might have in store.

Ves checked the status of the Dark Zephyr. According to the system map, the ace mech had already arrived at the closest planet and begun to scan its surface and orbit for anything hidden.

This was a lengthy and time-consuming process. The scouting vessels of the Bluejay Fleet had visited it before and found nothing interesting in and around the small, lifeless rock.

The Dark Zephyr's sensor systems were not necessarily better. They were smaller and lower tech. Their only saving grace was that Tusa's powerful true resonance boosted their performance to an unnatural degree.

What Tusa truly relied upon to detect traces of his hidden opponents was his Saint Kingdom and his sharp intuition. As long as the Dark Zephyr flew close enough to a suspecting hiding place, he would be able to sniff out the hidden enemies.

In the meantime, Ves continued his work on designing and supervising the production of battleship-grade hyper torpedoes.

He had already developed several variations of potent warheads, but now that he persuaded Admiral Gori Tensen to bring out a few weapons of mass destruction, Ves truly went wild!

The weapons of mass destruction were already formidable in their base forms, but they were limited by the restrained launching platforms on their respective ships.

The Tarrasque and the Babylon Excavator both reached the size and tonnage of a heavy cruiser, but they had to devote much of their internal volume to other systems.

Fort Rock did not possess this limitation. It was larger than almost every capital ship built by humans and offered an abundance of space to accommodate supersized instruments.

Lord Richard Brownstone's Rosfield Cannons was a typical example of this. The Senior Mech Designer quickly designed and produced oversized kinetic cannons whose calibers were so absurdly great that only the larger battleships could accommodate these guns!

They already placed a lot of strain on Fort Rock. The sections holding the massive triple-barreled turrets in place had to be reinforced in order to prevent the asteroid base from getting torn apart with each attack salvo.

Even so, the first test shots of the mighty Rosfields already caused parts of the interior to crack and tear!

The power of these cannons were so great that Lord Richard eventually had to reduce their power in order to make them more sustainable.

Meanwhile, the upscaled weapon system that Ves whimsically named the 'Doomspreader Torpedo Launcher' generated its own controversies.

The launcher system itself was not that impressive. Ves just made sure that it was robust and protected enough to not accidentally detonate the torpedoes in its launcher tubes if it ever received a firm tap.

Even so, no one serving on the temporary space fortress felt comfortable staying in the same base as dozens of extremely dangerous torpedoes.

Yes, torpedoes. They ceased being missiles when Ves scaled up their physical dimensions and equipped them with their own dedicated azure energy shields in order to increase their resistance to intercepting fire.

The tamest torpedoes that he had prepared were the hyper X-ray torpedoes. These were merely warheads that contained a lot of energy that Ves expressly designed to unleash their power in the form of X-rays in a forward cone.

Their legality in human warfare was already... questionable, but the ambiguity regarding their permissibility allowed Ves to get away with producing them right away.

He was quite happy with what he managed to whip up on short notice. Since he had designed and assembled the torpedoes by hand, he was able to make each of them alive. It was a lot easier to do this when he managed to lace the torpedo with hyper materials.

Ves was not quite sure whether there was any point to making the torpedoes 'alive', but that made this such an interesting experiment!

He created several variations of 'living torpedoes' with the aim of figuring out which one would inflict the greatest damage on the enemy.

The second variation of torpedoes that he managed to create were based on the radical idea of weaponizing unstable superdrives.

Yes, Ves sought to turn superdrives into the most powerful spatial weapons of the Bluejay Fleet!

It was extremely likely that they would eventually confront at least one greater phase lord. This was a formidable opponent that could not be hindered through quantity alone. If the Dark Zephyr was not available to stop this potent enemy, then the Bluejay Fleet and the newly built Fort Rock had to overcome the formidable defenses of such a large and massive opponent as quickly as possible!

Ves had seen what unstable FTL drives could do in the past. Although he did not understand all of the complicated science behind them and their more modern superdrive versions, he was confident he could turn them into effective counters against spatial defenses!

When Ves fleshed out his proposal and presented it to Admiral Tensen, the naval officer and his advisors called him crazy!

It took a lot of begging and persuasion for the stiff admiral to eventually give Ves a limited allowance.

"We have three backup superdrives of different classifications in reserve. You may repurpose them to build your 'Hyper Spatial Crusher Torpedoes', but only if you do not step foot on Fort Rock any longer."

"Great!" Ves grinned. "You won't regret this decision!"

The stability and the engineering behind his Hyper Spatial Crusher Torpedoes was rather dubious, but even if it did not produce the effect that Ves desired, it should at least be capable of giving a greater phase lord a nasty blow!

"I certainly do not want to get anywhere close to these warheads." Ves muttered.

He could vaguely sense the threat posed by the three torpedoes that the automated manipulators had carefully placed in storage.

The next two torpedo types were based on the 'tamer' weapons of mass destruction that the two heavy cruisers secretly stored in their vaults.

The Hyper Nanomachine Plague Torpedo was just as ominous as it sounded. The warhead was filled with an especially virulent type of nanomachines that were designed to devour everything and self-replicate at blinding speeds until they reached a certain time limit.

They were similar to the nanomachines used to make up most of the mech frame of the C-Man, but with all of the safeties removed.

As purpose-built weapons, the nanomachines contained within the torpedo were not designed with defense and control in mind. They were designed for pure malice, and that showed in how difficult it was to stop their spread and disable their activities.

Aside from their time limits, they were hardcoded to cease their operations after receiving only one of two specific signals.

One signal was unique to the Babylon Excavator that originally carried the nanomachine plagues. The code only disabled the specific batch that the warship carried in her vault.

Another signal was in the hands of the Red Fleet. If the Babylon Excavator was no longer able to stop the uncontrolled spread of nanomachine plagues, the higher ups of the RF at least had their own solution on hand.

Although the Hyper Nanomachine Plague Torpedo was not effective against targets protected by energy defenses, Ves had great hope for these warheads in the later stages of a battle.

The more straightforward weapon of mass destruction was the relatively boring Hyper Antimatter Torpedo.

The technical sophistication of this weapon was not all that great. Ves merely stuffed multiple smaller antimatter warheads into the much larger torpedo body to increase their potency a bit further.

Numerous engineers argued that this was a waste of firepower, but Ves did not agree with this assessment.

More antimatter = greater boom. Simple as that.

Ves needed no other reason to stuff multiple extremely dangerous antimatter warheads in the same torpedo!

As high-quality raw materials finally began to run out, Ves was left with only one final torpedo.

This one was arguably the most special one, because it was not designed to deliver an explosive payload to the enemy.

Instead, it was designed to deliver a feline payload to the enemy!

"Meeeeow!"

"Stop complaining, Lucky! If the enemy force is as formidable as I anticipate, then we need to pull out all of the stops. That includes making use of your impeccable infiltration, sabotage and assassination capabilities!"

"Meow meow meow!"

"I don't care that you are not designed to make your way across the battlefield inside a giant torpedo. You will do your part, or you may just die alongside everyone else once the cosmopolitans and the native aliens have their way!"

There were subtler and more low-key ways to deliver Lucky to an enemy warship or whatever, but Ves had little confidence in their viability.

A stealth shuttle trying to approach an unsuspecting enemy warship would probably get shot to pieces or detected in advance on a busy battlefield!

Ves believed it was better to cobble together a tough delivery system even if the enemy could clearly see it coming.

Just as Ves put the finishing touches on his Lucky Delivery System, an alarm quickly sounded in his design lab.

The alarm only rang once before it went off. That indicated that the Bluejay Fleet had caught sight of the enemy, but that conflict was not likely to break out right away.

Ves immediately called the admiral.

"What happened?"

"The Dark Zephyr uncovered a hidden phase whale enclave where the enemy fleet resided. The ace mech almost fell prey to a trap."

"Is Tusa and his mech alright?!"

The projection of Admiral Tensen nodded. "The Dark Zephyr is retreating as fast as possible. According to your ace pilot, he has discovered the presence of at least two greater phase lords and numerous lesser phase lords, as well as a sizable fleet of mixed human and alien origins. What is worse is that the apparent alien leader is more threatening than we anticipated. The more powerful greater phase lord has a 'Saint Piercer'-type weapon at his disposal. It is a spear with an exceptionally sharp and penetrating speartip."

Ves almost froze when he heard that. Prototypes of the so-called Saint Piercer weapons had shown up intermittently ever since Venerable Imon Ingvar's death, but each time they managed to inflict a lot of harm towards human forces!

Learning that he and his forces would have to contend against this weapon on this battlefield was not good news!

Chapter 6352 The Arena Lord of Ya'gwsa

"FILTHY FALSE GOD! STAY STILL SO THAT I MAY BLEED YOUR WORTHLESS BLOOD FROM YOUR PITIFUL PINK BODY!"

Saint Tusa Billingsley-Larkinson did not know how the enemies lurking in the Mazepan System managed to do it, but they managed to emerge from a hidden pocket space and surround his ace mech with a large amount of mechs, phasefighters and warships!

Not only that, but the mechs and the ships hailing from the Cosmopolitan Movement also activated multiple means of trapping his Dark Zephyr into place!

A large amount of space suppression fields and interdiction fields affected the space around the Dark Zephyr.

Multiple remote azure energy shields encapsulated the ace mech in an octahedron cage. The 8-sided diamond-like contraption was not exaggeratingly strong on every side, but it still would have taken the Dark Zephyr a considerable amount of attacks from his knives to create a breach.

In addition to all of that, the cosmopolitan and alien vessels also employed a series of other measures designed to entrap the Dark Zephyr and turn the powerful ace mech into a sitting duck!

The Dark Zephyr was not alone in this cage. Sharing this confining space that was already being flooded with lots of chaotic and interfering energies was a potent greater phase lord.

Saint Tusa did not recognize the alien, but then again he did not bother to memorize the record of all known greater phase lords that participated in the Red War up to this point.

Fortunately, his ace mech contained an extensive database that frequently received updates in order to ensure the ace pilot would not be caught by surprise.

The living mech immediately retrieved the relevant information and fed it to Tusa through the man-machine connection.

This was how Tusa immediately managed to identify the greater phase lord and learn to fear this formidable opponent.

According to his living mech, the nunser greater phase lord that sought to land a killing blow on his Dark Zephyr bore a title that loosely translated as The Arena Lord of Ya'gwasa.

As his name suggested, the Arena Lord was the leader of a famed planet that hosted a lot of bloodsport in the native alien community.

He used to be a former champion himself, and used the prizes he won in many tournaments and competitions to transcend his own mortality and grow step by step as a native god worshiped by many.

The greater phase lord even managed to win his current title by defeating the previous Arena Lord in single combat!

Such a formidable nuser phase lord was definitely an all-around duelist and fighter. He may not have chosen to develop his remote spatial abilities all that much, but he made up for it by persistently training and augmenting his physical fighting capabilities with supporting phasewater organs!

This was the least desirable opponent that Saint Tusa and his battle partner wanted to face.

Their offensive power was not that great, so they faced an uphill battle if they wanted to defeat a greater phase lord that not only possessed a thick and heavily resistant body, but also a huge amount of actual combat experience.

If that was not bad enough for Tusa, the weapon held in the quadruped phase lord's upper limbs increased the Arena Lord's threat level even further!

This was because Tusa also managed to identify the spear that oddly did not register as anything unusual.

If not for the fact that Tusa had studied the archival footage of Venerable Imon Ingvar's tragic death dozens of times, he might have dismissed the formidable Saint Piercer weapon as a piece of junk!

The Larkinson ace pilot already figured out that the native aliens went through a lot of trouble to smuggle this experimental but highly effective weapon behind enemy lines not to claim his life.

The opposing force instead sought to make absolutely certain that they would be able to kill Ves!

The infamous mech designer of the Larkinson Clan had already accrued a notable reputation for being a troublemaker, an innovator and also a consistent winner. His ability to snatch victory from the jaws of defeat was almost legendary at this point. He had faced many life-threatening crises, and managed to unravel all of them through one miraculous solution or another.

In order to prevent this from happening, the ambush force lurking in the Mazepan System brought enough capital to kill even the most stubborn of human cockroaches.

The Distance Shaper was an old orven phase lord that heavily preferred to develop his remote spatial abilities over his brawling capabilities. He was known to stay in the rear and manipulate the battlefield from afar.

And this was just one of the lesser forces that the cosmopolitans and native aliens had smuggled into human-occupied space!

Although the Arena Lord of Ya'gwasa occupied most of Saint Tusa's attention, his Dark Zephyr also managed to identify the other phase lords that appeared into sight.

The second greater phase lord was also a known entity, but did not register as an absurdly strong threat.

The Distance Shaper was an old orven phase lord that heavily preferred to develop his remote spatial abilities over his brawling capabilities. He was known to stay in the rear and manipulate the battlefield from afar.

His main threat came in the form of compressing and decompressing the fabric of space over wide stretches. He was able to effectively shrink distances so that it would take a lot less time and effort for friendly units to reach their destination.

He was also able to do the opposite. He could expand space to a notable degree so that it would take longer for enemy units to cross the same distance!

While these abilities turned the Distance Shaper into a nightmare in every large-scale battle, his remote spatial abilities were also easily countered.

The recently developed space suppressors were able to partially counteract the distance manipulation effects.

High-ranking expert mechs were also able to resist the detrimental spatial effects depending on the resonance strengths of their powerful pilots.

Right now, the Dark Zephyr happened to enjoy both advantages, so the Distance Shaper's attempts to stretch the space around the ace mech so that he would effectively become 'slower' largely failed!

That did not discount the threat posed by the Arena Lord of Ya'gwasa. The powerful nunser greater phase lord only spent a brief amount of time on posturing before he proceeded to initiate a charge that was meant to drive the lethal tip of the Saint Piercer straight through the cockpit of the Dark Zephyr!

Despite the lack of warning from his intuition, Saint Tusa knew very well that his ace mech had little defense against this strike. His machine never excelled at defense in the first place, and all of the resonance empowerment meant nothing in the face of a weapon specifically developed to pierce through Saint Kingdoms!

At the same time the Arena Lord initiated his charge inside the cage of azure energy shields, the five lesser phase lords initiated their own attacks.

Tusa hardly paid attention to them, but that did not mean he dismissed their threat.

The five lesser phase lords all hailed from the arche race, which was quite unusual.

The arche generally found it difficult to evolve into phase lords. Even if members of this race managed to luck out, they faced much greater challenges trying to grow stronger because their archeshells had to increase in size and quality for them to grow larger.

Compared to ordinary phase lords who just needed to strengthen and enlarge their bones, the arche had to do all of that as well as upgrade their huge archeshells!

That took a huge amount of phasewaters and other precious materials, making it so that most arche phase lords tended to remain stuck at the lesser stage for a disproportionately long time!

However, arche phase lords also enjoyed a few advantages over their peers. They were much tougher and more massive than phase lords at similar stages of development. Their defenses were

usually top notch, enabling them to survive strong beatings that would have felled any other 'native god'!

Though the arche lesser phase lords were beginning to weave their spatial abilities, Tusa could not afford to get distracted by them. They simply did not matter compared to the more imminent threat posed by the Arena Lord of Ya'gwasa!

Despite having fallen into a trap that could have spelled the imminent demise of many ace mechs and their pilots, Saint Tusa Billingsley-Larkinson showed no fear at all. Even as his focus rose to a peak, he still felt confident enough to smirk.

"Nice try, buddy, but no one can deprive me of my will! Leap of True Freedom!"

His Saint Kingdom flared as it began to exude a sense that it could not be shackled.

Almost all of the hindering and inhibiting effects slid away from the Dark Zephyr as if they could not stick onto the machine.

The Dark Zephyr's powerful Transphasic Hyper Combat Warp System burst into action, providing such a powerful boost of instant acceleration that the ace light skirmisher reached the edge of the energy cage in the blink of an eye!

Yet instead of colliding against an energy barrier that was rated to be strong enough to withstand the attacks of an ace mech for a short amount of time, the Dark Zephyr simply passed through the seemingly impenetrable obstacle as if it was nothing but an illusionary projection!

Even as the Arena Lord of Ya'gwasa missed his charge attack by a huge margin and still found himself stuck inside the energy cage, the Dark Zephyr already began to boost far away from the enemy formation!

"So long, suckers!"

Naturally, the native aliens did not appreciate this humiliating failure.

"PURSUE THIS TINY FALSE GOD!"

The alien phase lords as well as their mixed collection of phasefighters and warships acted on the Arena Lord's orders right away. The most senior and powerful native god's orders were absolute.

The human-built mechs and starships that obviously belonged to numerous hostile cosmopolitan cells responded a lot slower.

Their leaders were evidently a lot less reluctant to engage in a spontaneous pursuit, but they had no choice but play along if they wanted to stay in the good graces of their alien allies.

Thus, the chase kicked off. The Dark Zephyr readily took advantage of his superior mobility to stay in the lead, but his enemies were able to keep up surprisingly well!

The Distance Shaper was not known to excel in direct combat, but his ability to manipulate the fabric space over a large area was quite impressive!

By constantly compressing the space in front and around all of the friendly starships, the orven greater phase lord was effectively able to speed up the forward progress of the combined cosmopolitan and alien fleet.

It was as if the Distance Shaper had generated a huge warp bubble!

This granted a surprising degree of mobility to this force. It may have been one of the reasons why the native aliens managed to pass through humanity's defensive lines and reach the Mazepan System unnoticed.

Whatever the case, the native aliens weren't able to overtake the Dark Zephyr, but they were moving fast enough to take potshots at the ace mech!

Many warships began to open fire on the ace mech. Energy cannons and kinetic cannons attempted to strike the elusive machine in great numbers.

Even though most if not all of the attacks ended up missing the evading Dark Zephyr, they nonetheless succeeded in sapping Tusa and the Dark Zephyr's energies!

The Arena Lord of Ya'gwasa had fought against human ace pilots before. The nuns greater phase lord knew just enough about these confounding opponents to understand that their energies were not unlimited!

"IS FLEEING ALL YOU CAN DO? NO WONDER YOUR METAL SUIT IS SO FAST. ALL YOU CAN DO IS RUN FROM YOUR BETTERS. YOU ARE THE MOST COWARDLY FALSE GOD THAT I HAVE FOUGHT AGAINST IN MY LONG YEARS OF LIFE. I AM ASHAMED TO FIGHT AGAINST AN ENEMY THAT IS ONLY GOOD AT FLEEING RATHER THAN FIGHTING!"

Saint Tusa grimaced as he continued to hear the Arena Lord's translated taunts. The ace pilot knew that it made no sense to turn around and fight, but he still felt bad about the fact that he did not dare to fight the greater phase lord head-on.

He simply did not have the confidence to confront the powerhouse that not wielded a Saint Piercer weapon, but was also surrounded by plenty of supporters!

The only way that Tusa could regain his courage was if he evened the odds.

He needed to return the Bluejay Fleet and retrieve the tier 3 Destroyer spear right away!

Only with a powerful weapon and a group of supporters of his own would Tusa be able to equalize this duel!

Chapter 6353 A 'Prediction'

Ever since the Dark Zephyr managed to draw out the hidden enemies and expose them to the sight of the Bluejay Fleet, Ves and the others immediately started to analyze their opposition.

Several facts immediately stood out. The enemy composition was anything but normal.

"There are not a lot of warships in the enemy fleet, but all of them appear to be stealth capable." Ves immediately noted. "All of them are sub-capitals, which makes sense as it is much harder for them to smuggle capital ships past our monitoring network."

Admiral Tensen nodded in agreement. "It becomes exponentially harder and costlier to apply active stealth to larger hulls. Any capital ship that can enter into stealth is a strategic asset that is almost as important as a dreadnought. It is unthinkable for the cosmopolitans to be able to secretly build or

steal such an extravagant vessel, especially in the Red Ocean where they do not enjoy several millenia's worth of material accumulation."

"The native aliens also cannot afford to build such large stealth vessels." Professor Vector Loban noted. "The native alien contingent consists of 5 archeships of different sizes, but none of them are larger than light cruisers. There are likely more archeships in this star system, but may currently be hiding under active stealth. The native aliens have probably dispatched larger and more formidable ships to other star systems, but it is unlikely. The risk of losing them as soon as they cross into human-occupied space is far too great. The threat posed by these archeships are not that great as long as they are operating in the open."

Ves smirked. "Archeships are quite strong due to their reliance on archetech, but their modest sizes also limit the caliber of weapons that they can carry. Archeships often tend to compensate by carrying weapons of mass destruction, which they often like to launch on unsuspecting targets under stealth. We need to increase our anti-stealth measures to prevent the arche from bombing us to smithereens."

"We are already in the process of diverting resources as soon as we have received confirmation of a sizable presence of archeships."

The mechers and fleeters were already familiar with the devious nature of the arche. The turtle-like aliens and their special archeships had been infiltrating human-occupied space for a long time. The vast majority of alien stealth vessels never got detected because the powerful equipment necessary to uncover their presence at longer ranges were very limited in quantity.

"What is the probability that the cosmopolitans and native aliens have brought more warships, and whether those hulls are more suited for open combat?" Ves queried.

"We cannot rule out the possibility that our enemies have additional battleships of fleet carriers hiding inside an asteroid belt." Admiral Tensen stated. "The probability that this is the case is low. We are deep in human-controlled territory. Squadrons of patrol vessels dispatched by the Red Association and the Red Fleet have been patrolling this entire region. None have detected the typical traces that denote the passage of a large number of capital ships that we have not accounted for. I also believe that the two greater phase lords are unwilling to travel aboard sub-capital archeships when there are larger and more prestigious alien homeships available. The fact that a proud greater phase lord such as the Arena Lord of Ya'gwasa has deigned to travel on a small and cramped vessel signifies that he does not have a better choice."

The only way these phase lords manage to cross the border and sneak so far into human-occupied space unnoticed was if they took advantage of the excellent stealth capabilities of those handy archeships.

The Larkinson Clan already retained possession of a small archeship of their own for a while now, so Ves was much more familiar with their stealth capabilities than most people.

So long as these archeships did not drift too close to any bases and warships that were on guard against stealth infiltration, they could easily roam across all human colonies so long as their development level has not reached an advanced stage!

It was only in highly developed star systems such as the Yernstall and Vulit Central Star Nodes that the Red Two deployed more advanced long-range detection systems that could catch these sneaky bastards.

Although the tech was highly effective at making sure the arche did not sneak into the most important strongholds of human civilization, the tech and materials were so expensive and high-end that it was not feasible to install them everywhere.

The Bluejay Fleet did not possess the capability to deploy these powerful sensor systems. The ones installed on Fort Rock were much inferior and could only guarantee detection at fairly close ranges.

That was still better than what the starships of the Bluejay Fleet had at their disposal!

Ves and many others thought about all of the anti-stealth measures they prepared in the past and did not entirely feel confident about their solutions.

The scarcity of high-grade resources limited their options. There was not much they could do to detect hidden archeships at longer ranges.

"At least our preparations are much more effective at countering the abilities of the Distance Shaper." Jovy Armalon said with a smile. "His abilities are famed for being able to affect large areas, but that also indicates that his power applications are dispersed. The lack of power concentration means that our spatial countermeasures should be especially effective at dampening his spatial abilities. The space surrounding Fort Rock should be especially resistant against his manipulations. If we had not invested in this temporary space fortress, then our Bluejay Fleet would have been much more susceptible to the orven greater phase lord's spatial manipulations."

"That doesn't mean we should underestimate or dismiss the threat posed by the Distance Shaper." Ves noted. "He can still do a lot of crazy stuff further away from Fort Rock. Aside from that, I am sure he has other means of attack that doesn't rely on widespread battlefield manipulation. We need to be on guard on what he will do. We can't forget about those 5 arche lesser phase lords. I think it is safe to assume that the enemy warships are not really that impressive as long as they are not hiding in stealth. Our opponents are clearly relying on their greater and lesser phase lords to get the job done. They are the main fighting force that we need to worry about."

That was a good deduction. The cosmopolitan sub-capital ships were physically fragile, making them much less suitable for direct combat. The archships did not suffer as much from this problem, but their lack of big guns severely limited their ability to wear down the defenses of human starships.

Their weapons of mass destruction were a big problem, but they could easily be intercepted if they remained at a distance. It was when the archships snuck really close that their powerful bombs inflicted the most damage.

The gathered leaders and officers continued to analyze and strategize in the virtual meeting room. Time was of the essence, so nobody spoke anything that they deemed less relevant to the conversation.

Their ultimate conclusion was that the enemy stealth ships posed a certain threat, but not as much as the phase lords.

There were 5 lesser phase lords, each requiring the equivalent of a junior ace mech to fight back with confidence.

There were also 2 greater phase lords, which could only truly be defeated by senior ace mechs.

The Dark Zephyr alone could not possibly defeat or fend off all of these phase lords by themselves!

The only other way to defeat them was to rely on the superior firepower and technology of the Bluejay Fleet and Fort Rock.

"We have no other choice but to make a stand." Ves spoke. "We need to use Fort Rock as our bulwark and force the enemy phase lords to break their backs onto it. We need to reduce their

numbers as soon as possible, which means we have to blow apart the lesser phase lords with concentrated firepower. The new Rosfield Cannons built by Lord Richard Brownstone should help a lot with that, but it might not be enough."

Multiple people directed suspicious glances at him. They already had an inkling of what he had in mind.

"We cannot be the first ones to deploy weapons of mass destruction." Admiral Tensen spoke in an admonishing tone. "You may not fully appreciate it, but we have long maintained an implicit contract with the native aliens not to destroy the dwarf galaxy that we live in by recklessly throwing around weapons powerful enough to ruin planets. There are occasions where both sides have broken this rule, but it has happened infrequently enough that neither side is willing to escalate. Your decision today may tip the advantage in our favor, but it may lead to a large amount of destruction in the future. The fourth defensive band may very well collapse ahead of time as a consequence. Your life is important, but I cannot permit you to put the survival of the human race in the Red Ocean at stake."

Most of the other gathered officers nodded in a clear show of support. Ves knew that he would have no chance of getting through their stubborn minds that a preemptive strike was the best possible course of action.

He inwardly grimaced. This was the problem with relying on others for protection. The Bluejay Fleet did not officially belong to him. Admiral Tensen and his subordinates may be willing to defer to him during normal times, but as soon as the Red Association's core interests were at stake, they would instantly remember where their true loyalties rested!

Fortunately, Ves had already anticipated this sort of response.

He coughed. "We do not necessarily have to strike the first blow. The cosmopolitans are murderous terrorists, right? The arche also have a habit of throwing nukes in order to destroy shipyards and facilities in one blow. Isn't it reasonable to expect that they will definitely launch their weapons of mass destruction at us first? This is especially the case when they want to claim my life so much."

"You are correct that they are not above resorting to these measures, but they do not do so consistently." Jovy responded in a measured tone. "The cosmopolitans and the arche are likely not in charge. It is the Arena Lord of Ya'gwasa that is likely in charge. He will not favor this solution as it will cheapen his victory."

Ves shook his head. "I doubt that they are all aligned, though. The cosmopolitans want me dead a lot more than the native aliens since my kinship network is ravaging their infiltration plans. Let me make a prediction. The cosmopolitans will defy whatever instructions they receive from the Arena Lord. They will attempt to eliminate me right from the start by launching a salvo of weapons of mass destruction at my location, most likely from a ship in stealth. We won't see a vessel coming, but we may have a brief window of opportunity to intercept the warheads in flight."

The looks of numerous officers changed. Subtle expressions overcame their faces. These were all clever people, so they instantly deduced his actual plan, which he could never voice in the open.

It was a good sign that the officers did not shoot down his 'prediction' right away. The threat posed by the 7 phase lords was so great that they did not see a good way to vanquish them unless they pulled out all of the stops!

"As much as I believe in the strength of our first-class multipurpose mechs, we only have 325 at our disposal." Major Jankowski spoke up. "Together with the firepower of our warships and Fort Rock, we may be able to defeat the 5 lesser phase lords at a cost, but I fear the 2 greater phase lords are still beyond us. If the 'prediction' made by Professor Larkinson comes true, we may turn the tables against our adversaries and show them that we are the true masters of destruction."

Chapter 6354 Dark Tidings

Despite the silent controversy generated by the dramatic 'prediction' made by Ves, the leaders and officers of the Bluejay Fleet ultimately 'judged' that it was plausible.

"We will be... ready to retaliate from the moment we detect an apparent strike that involves the use of weapons of mass destruction by the enemy." Admiral Tensen concluded the discussion on this subject.

"What if the source of the strike remains unclear due to remaining in stealth?" Jovy Armalon innocently asked.

"We must act with expedience. We do not have the time to conduct a proper investigation. If the hidden vessel in question has launched a strike at our forces, then the source clearly hails from the enemy fleet. We cannot state with confidence that we have managed to detect every stealth-capable cosmopolitan warship and archeship in this star system. Any hidden craft or vessel that targets our assets belongs to the same side as our more visible enemies. We do not need to wait for confirmation before we unlock the use of our own stock of weapons of mass destruction."

The fact that Admiral Tensen managed to say all of that with a straight face and a completely convincing tone was great!

Ves struggled to maintain his composure. He wanted to grin crazily after knowing that he managed to convince everyone of his scheme, but it wouldn't be appropriate for him to jump with joy at the moment.

At least he could rest assured that much of the work he put into the Doomspreader Torpedo System did not go to waste.

Before the emergency virtual meeting came to an end, Ves commanded everyone's attention once again when he made a surprise proposal.

"I will take part in the fighting as well."

"What?!"

"That is not necessary, sir!"

"You are a non-combatant! You will only get in our way!"

Ves raised his palm, causing the objections to die down, at least for the time being.

This proposal still received significantly less support than the last one. Ves was the VIP that they were tasked to protect. It made little sense to place him in the field where everyone could concentrate their attacks on his true body.

"I know how stupid it sounds, but we have no choice. The ambushers in this star system are powerful enough that we need to make use of every available combat asset. As much as I do not like it, I am one of them as well. As a phase lord, I can fight. I might not be as strong or versatile as a first-class multipurpose mech, but I have my own tricks. I can also cobble together a raiment for myself that is made out of different mech parts in a hurry. While I will definitely be putting myself in danger by appearing in the field, my contributions to the fight may be the only way for us to stop the alien phase lords from running roughshod over your forces."

This proposal still received significantly less support than the last one. Ves was the VIP that they were tasked to protect. It made little sense to place him in the field where everyone could concentrate their attacks on his true body.

Even if he did appear in the field, his combat effectiveness would still be dubious. He had tried to spar against a first-class multipurpose mech before and absolutely got his butt kicked.

The results might change once he was fully equipped with combat gear scaled for phase lords, but that still did not resolve his complete lack of combat skills. The battlefield was not a place for amateurs!

"Let us leave this as a last resort." Admiral Tensen eventually decided. "You may prepare raiment and additional combat gear for yourself. If there are not enough spare materials left, you have my permission to partially strip the hulls of our combat carriers in order to obtain more sturdy materials. Their priority pales in comparison to yours. You do not have our permission to enter the field right away. Let us wait until the enemy phase lords have withstood the attacks of our mechs and warships and exhausted most of their combat power. If we have expended our own options, an argument can be made for you to deploy into space and help us finish off the surviving phase lords."

That did not sound ideal to Ves, but it was a better course of action if preserving Ves' life weighed higher than anything else.

Once the meeting came to an end, Ves hurried into action.

Right now, the Dark Zephyr was actively being chased by a mob of phase lords and enemy warships. The ace mech was heading straight over to the coordinates of Fort Rock, but his progress was partially slowed down by the machinations of the enemy pursuers.

Neither side was able to engage in full warp travel at the moment. They interfered with each other's efforts to form warp bubbles far too much to reach any higher speeds. This bought Ves a bit of time to construct additional gear for himself.

Ves did not prepare any raiments for himself, but it was easy enough to copy the shapes of existing mech parts and plating and mold them to his form.

He had studied the raiments used by enemy phase lords in the past and roughly understood how they worked. It was not particularly challenging for a Senior Mech Designer to spontaneously design a raiment on the spot, especially since it was basically a mech without any internal parts.

The only issue that Ves had to be concerned about was that he would have to do what Admiral Tensen suggested and strip hull plating and other parts from one of the existing combat carriers.

The crew of the vessel likely did not appreciate his act, but he needed the additional protection more than others.

The use of existing plating cut down on the production time a lot. Ves just had to use his own muscles and all sorts of production machines to cut apart or reshape the alloy parts.

Before he knew it, Ves managed to reach his full size, which was roughly 3 times as tall as a typical mech, and manually clad himself in a suit of armor.

His raiment was quite crude. It was heavy, did not fit his contours perfectly and was missing a huge amount of optimization.

Ves was not able to mount any integrated weapon systems or other sophisticated functions to it. He only installed an oversized flight system onto the back, and even that was an abomination as he had to simplify it because he had no actual experience with operating them in any capacity.

Still, the raiment satisfied his most basic requirements, which was to add a layer of protection and enhance his mobility.

As for attacks, Ves did not intend to use any other weapons aside from his Oceancaller.

He already ruled out the option of wielding the tier 3 Destroyer spear. Ves already concluded that the Dark Zephyr had no hope of defeating the Arena Lord of Ya'gwasa unless the machine harnessed the power of this potent weapon.

Ves had theories about how he could safely wield this spear for himself, but it did not change the fact that his foundation was much weaker than that of an ace pilot.

He could close the gap by ingesting an enlightenment fruit that bestowed him instant combat skills and so on. He already decided to do so, but not so that he could better wield the tier 3 Destroyer weapon.

No. Ves merely sought to obtain a combination of general combat acumen along with more specific weapon skills.

He already decided to wield the Oceancaller as a staff, so it would be ideal if he could ingest an enlightenment fruit that taught him how to wield these specific weapons.

Ves would probably still be able to manage if all he could obtain was an enlightenment fruit that taught him how to wield spears, halberds or even shorter weapons, but it was best if he could get exactly what he needed.

Even as he remained on standby while wearing his raiment, Ves silently activated the System and entered the System Space.

He was curious to see what form he took when he emerged inside the System Space.

"I did not expect this to actually work."

Ves entered the System Space in his full size while also wearing his raiment!

He half-expected to be forced back into a semblance of his human-scaled body, but the System evidently abided by different rules!

It was incredibly awkward for him to navigate the mountaintop with a body that towered over mechs.

Ves cautiously removed his raiment pieces and shrunk himself back to human size. He had already memorized how he looked just before, so he was confident he could recreate his exact appearance once he was done with the System Space.

Now that he had returned to his normal form, he immediately began to ascend the steps.

He briefly paused when he passed by the route that led to the Wishing Fountain.

"I still have a radiant lottery ticket and a bunch of golden lottery tickets in reserve." He recalled.

He could use any of these tickets to draw a powerful weapon or a very useful enlightenment fruit!

As tempted as he felt to make use of the lottery tickets since he had fallen into a crisis that was severe enough to make use of them, Ves did not want to be too wasteful.

"Let's see what the Tree of Possibilities has on offer first."

He passed by the Wishing Fountain and continued to move up until he reached his intended destination.

Last he checked, he had 213 Ascension Points in total. He managed to replenish his reserve by completing a few generic Missions with the help of his clan wherever possible.

For example, completing Alien Relic Hunt was as simple as ordering his Procurement Department to pick up a bunch of alien relics from different auction houses.

Ves also managed to complete the Consume 100 Beasts Mission with ease by ordering his clan to deliver a lot of exobeast carcasses to Diandi Base.

It wasn't pretty, but Ves felt it was worth it to gain a lot of Ascension Points in return!

A spending budget of 213 Ascension Points was not a lot, but Ves believed he should be able to afford a single medium-priced enlightenment fruit.

"Let's hope that the Tree of Possibilities can accommodate me this time."

Ever since Ketis became a user of the System, the Tree of Possibilities started to produce a lot more combat-oriented enlightenment fruits.

Ves previously felt annoyed by that because this shift reduced the amount of fruits that he was typically interested in, but this time was different.

His eyes rapidly scoured through all of the fruits until he finally managed to find a single candidate that tentatively matched his requirements!

[Dark Apostle Self Defense Manual]

Price: 200 Ascension Points

Bestows the skills and related theory to execute the techniques of the Dark Apostle Self Defense Manual. As a herald of darkness and a believer in the nihility of this universe, a Dark Apostle is often unwelcome among others when he begins to proselytize his dark tidings. In order to defend himself against the violent reactions that his controversial speech often evokes, a Dark Apostle must master the basic skills to wield a staff and channel a miniscule aspect of the power of darkness that will one day engulf the universe.

Requirements: Strength must be 4.0 or higher. Dexterity must be 4.0 or higher. Endurance must be 6 or higher. Concentration must be 7 or higher. Spirituality must be 10 or higher.

" ... "

Ves found it rather suspicious that the Tree of Possibilities just happened to produce a single enlightenment fruit that could teach him how to wield a staff.

It just so happened that this enlightenment fruit not only fell within his AP budget, but also happened to be oriented around the darkness element that he recently integrated into his domain!

He hesitated for a few seconds before decisively plucking the fruit from the tree branch.

"There's no point in overthinking this issue. I need it, and that is enough."

He ingested the enlightenment fruit without any further doubt or hesitation.

Chapter 6355 The Source of Darkness

When ingested the Dark Apostle Self Defense Manual Enlightenment Fruit, Ves did not really think about the implications of each word in its lengthy and multi-faceted name.

He should have.

He really should have.

The fighting style was created by an ancient cult — yes, a cult in the truest sense — that was based on the premise that 'darkness' would eventually devour everything in the universe!

While there were plenty of scientists and other clever people that accepted the premise that the current universe had a finite lifespan and that all stars might get snuffed out one day, they argued a lot about the exact causes and mechanisms that would lead to this outcome.

The cult that spawned the so-called Dark Apostles possessed a very particular belief on the darkness that would supposedly engulf everything one day.

Their beliefs were not as superficial as believing in the power of dark energy, a power that was very difficult to grasp and harness due to only showing up in the more desolate places of the cosmos.

The cult believed that there was a reason for dark energy to exist. They assumed without question that dark energy was either the byproduct of an unimaginably powerful 'dark god' or may even be the unfathomable body of that demonic entity itself!

The members of the cult possessed many interpretations of the nature of dark energy, but they were all united by the central premise that there was an immensely powerful dark entity and that he acted on the universe through dark energy and maybe even dark matter.

Ves shook his head in utter confusion and disbelief. The enlightenment fruit dumped all of the possible theories that the darkness cultists had come up with, and many of them consisted of a confusing blend between pseudoscience and superstition about darkness!

Even though the members of the cult clearly had a few screws loose in their heads for worshipping a personification of darkness of all possible choices, there was a reason why the cult managed to persist for a long period of time.

Their prayers and worship actually produced feedback!

No matter what variation of dark god they believed in, they all received a definite if vague and mixed response.

Most of the time, they only received vague injections of darkness energy from a source that was incredibly powerful, but also distant to the point where it probably resided in a far-away dimension.

Whatever the case, this dark entity seemingly affirmed the cult's superstition and encouraged its members to dedicate their entire lives to the interpretations that may or may not have any relations with this mysterious source!

Perhaps the cultists who joined this club since they were young never saw any reason to question all of the dubious explanations, but Ves could not bring himself to ignore all of the holes and wildly irrational beliefs mixed between more reasonable observations.

Ves did not really care too much about this forgotten cult. He also had no interest in worshipping this mysterious dark entity.

However, the staff fighting method taught by the enlightenment fruit was intrinsically designed for practitioners who could actively draw upon the power of this mysterious dark entity!

Many of the more extraordinary techniques relied upon leveraging the power of concentrated dark energies of a much higher quality than was available from the environment.

Unless the staff wielder himself was already a True God-level entity that possessed a good grasp on the power of darkness, his only choice of executing his strongest fighting techniques was to borrow it from the mysterious entity that was supposedly fated to devour the universe by engulfing it in darkness!

There was a reason why the enlightenment fruit cost a whopping 200 Ascension Points. Much of the value of the Dark Apostle Self Defense Manual was invested in the extraordinary techniques that enabled Ves to fight beyond the limitations of a mortal warrior!

It reminded Ves a lot of the flashy techniques of the Shadow Dance Dagger Style acquired by Saint Tusa.

The difference was that Tusa was only able to augment his beautiful and flowing fighting techniques with a modest amount of shadow energy that originated from himself and the environment.

Ves on the hand instantly learned the methods to draw upon a much more powerful but also dangerous source of energy to massively increase the effectiveness and lethality of his own staff blows!

"The Dark Apostle Self Defense Manual is not entirely based on qi cultivation. It is also based on contract cultivation!"

Ves welcomed the former, but felt disgusted by the latter.

It was as if he suddenly opened the curtains that blocked the view of a window for the first time, only to see that there was a gigantic black worm with a frighteningly large mouth sleeping right outside his house!

Ignorance was definitely bliss in this case. Ves really preferred to remain blind and ignorant to the apparent fact that there was an ancient dark god lurking in the darkest depths of this universe!

Yet now that the enlightenment fruit forced him to open up the curtains and take a glimpse at this primordial entity that may or may not devour the cosmos one day, Ves could not get rid of this cursed knowledge.

Yes, it was definitely a curse. Ves knew a thing or two about them. It sounded crazy, but gaining awareness of an incredibly powerful but also malevolent entity that was at least as powerful as a God King may actually constitute a curse!

After absorbing this enlightenment fruit, he unfortunately gained a faint sense that he could easily reach out to the dark entity that the cult worshiped in ancient times at any time!

"There is absolutely no reason for me to do this! I would rather die than get marked by this existence!"

The good news was that the enlightenment fruit may have forcibly made him aware of the existence of this dark deity, but was unable to do so the other way around.

So long as Ves did not actually pray to the dark god, this primordial sleeping giant would have no reason to cast its terrible gaze in his direction!

As much as Ves desired to unlock the full potential of a brand-new extraordinary fighting style, he would never want to obtain it at the cost of selling his soul to a cruel and uncaring entity! That was just a terrible deal!

It was a pity that not everyone could make such a sober cost-benefit analysis, mostly due to the lies and manipulations spread by the Dark Apostles.

The fear that this ancient dark god might wake up and devour the souls of the depraved cultists was a strong reason why the Dark Apostles frantically and fanatically offered their allegiance to this mysterious entity.

Fear as well as awe not only drove the Dark Apostles to worship this dark deity, but also wander around the ancient cultivation community in order to convert more people into the same beliefs!

After all, if the pool of cultists expanded by a lot, then the probability that this dark entity would eat your own soul decreased.

"Isn't this basically an attempt to spread bad luck towards other suckers in order to save yourself from misfortune?"

How cynical. As the de-facto leader of the Interim Leadership Council of the Red Collective, Ves had engaged in numerous discussions about how to make 'sects' more benign and productive.

There were plenty of ways for an organized gathering of cultivators to become a force of good in human society.

However, there were also plenty of ways for sects to degenerate into dens of iniquity where every member turned into opportunistic killers and robbers.

The cult that spawned this manual definitely fell into the latter category!

As much as Ves hated the origin of the staff fighting style, he could not afford to forget about it and never make use of it. The many blemishes did not succeed in drowning out the stuff that was genuinely useful.

As Ves became immersed in the more basic and neutral staff fighting techniques, he couldn't help but call up his Oceancaller and increase its size until it reached the proportions of a typical staff.

The way he gripped the lengthy relic had changed. His mind already began to think about the myriad of techniques he could execute with this weapon. From blocking incoming attacks to sweeping the legs of his opponent from under him, Ves suddenly gained a lot of confidence in his ability to fluently pull off moves that required at least two decades of focused weapon training!

The enlightenment fruits offered by the Tree of Possibilities never granted total mastery of a weapon style.

However, they did not infuse the minds of their users with the bare basics either. The fruit that Ves had just eaten had basically simulated the gains of dedicated training and mastery up to the threshold of the initiate level!

This was the point where practicing standardized moves no longer produced as many gains as before.

A qualified initiate had not only grasped the fundamentals of a weapon style, but also began to adapt it to serve his own needs and inclinations.

That was a process that an enlightenment fruit could not bestow in an instant. Ves would have to dedicate long hours of practice and hope that he would gain an epiphany that would allow him to reach a new level of staff weapon mastery.

Ves did not have a strong desire to do so. He already became enamored by the fact that he had become a qualified weapon wielder all of a sudden!

He understood much more extensively why his weapon instructor expressed so much disgust towards his previous attempts to learn how to wield a staff.

The enlightenment fruit was so thorough that it instantly reformed his entire body, mind and spirit to acquire the developed muscle memory, the brain chemistry rearrangement and the intuition honed through hundreds of sparring sessions!

This not only allowed him to perform the basic staff techniques efficiently, but also judge which techniques he should employ in different situations without needing to put too much conscious thought behind his actions!

"It doesn't necessarily turn me into a qualified soldier or warrior, though."

The enlightenment fruit did not bestow him with actual combat experience or anything like it. The gains were merely equivalent to Ves attending a weapon school for a long time.

It did not teach him how to fight on a battlefield by himself or part of an organized army. Ves still wouldn't be able to fight alongside the soldiers of the Bluejay Fleet in complete coordination.

That was fine. Ves at least gained enough proficiency in wielding staffs and maybe other polearms to be able to pose a serious threat to others with such weapons.

This was what Ves wanted to acquire the most. The enlightenment fruit definitely fulfilled his most essential requirements.

However, Ves could not get over the fact that he would miss out on the greater potential of this extraordinary staff fighting style if he did not actively weave the power of darkness in his more special staff moves.

He could pull off a lot of cool stuff that would definitely give him an edge against the approaching phase lords.

Relying on his meager domain and ambient E energy of a medium-energy environment to fuel his staff techniques was completely inadequate.

Even though it was labeled as a 'self defense method', the extraordinary fighting style was able to turn Dark Apostles into frighteningly lethal killers due to empowering their moves with potent darkness energy!

This actually added to their notoriety and made them even more feared and reviled in ancient times!

Though Ves was too afraid to ever think about drawing energy from the original source of darkness, he might be able to modify the Dark Apostle Self Defense Manual to draw from a different source.

The question was who. The spacetime bubble cut Ves off from most of his existing design spirits, not that it made any difference because none of them were aligned with the darkness element.

"Should I create a new design spirit? No. That is not necessary. I have a much more convenient source at hand!"

Ves quickly figured out that there was no need for him to do anything elaborate. Blinky could serve as a weak but barely adequate source of darkness energy!

"Mrow!"

Chapter 6356 Ves the Incompetent Dark Apostle

As far as companion spirits were concerned, Blinky was not the strongest in terms of direct combat.

The companion spirits of the expert pilots and most notable ace pilots of the Larkinson Clan could easily beat up Blinky if they wanted. Their power was partially derived from their principals, who happen to possess a lot of extraordinary willpower.

Ves on the other hand was a mech designer. He did not have any direct way to complement his companion spirit in battle. The most he could do was to dive deeper into E-technology and craft different forms of equipment for the Star Cat beforehand.

This was fine. Ves did not create Blinky with the intent to empower him. Blinky existed to assist and complement Ves instead.

In this capacity, Blinky had proven to be a qualified companion spirit. The purple spiritual cat not only possessed greater sensitivity towards E energy than Ves, but also possessed a huge reservoir of E energy based on many different attributes.

The Blinkyverse ensured that Ves would never run out of any type of E energy no matter his location. It was also constantly expanding and absorbing more ambient E energies all of the time.

At this time, the Blinkyverse was still in the beginnings of the fourth stage. There was a huge gap between forming a single star system and forming an entire galaxy.

The good news was that the accumulation of lots of E energy sped up the process of absorption and integration. The larger the Blinkyverse, the faster its pace of growth!

The bad news was that the thresholds required for it to reach another stage were also exponentially more demanding!

Ves had little idea how long it would take for the Blinkyverse to reach the fifth stage under normal circumstances. It may take decades at the very least. He needed to find a way to speed up Blinky's cultivation so that he could provide even greater help than what he was capable of at the moment.

When Ves casually bastardized the Dark Apostle Self Defense Manual to turn the object of worship from a terrible ancient dark god whose name he did not dare to speak to Blinky, the process was not as difficult as he thought.

The cultist staff fighting method was unfortunately embedded with a lot of foreboding and nonsensical prayers, each of which was designed to put the practitioner in the right mindset to harness a specific aspect of the darkness element.

Ves wanted to remove all of these crazy components, but doing so was counterproductive because he wouldn't be able to produce any cool effects anymore.

He had no choice but to leave all of the overt religious components untouched. He instead chose to work around them by changing the target deity into his own companion spirit.

This wouldn't work with any other spiritual entity, but Blinky happened to be special!

As Ves began to replicate the more advanced techniques with the Oceancaller, he actively put himself in a special mindset while trying to draw from Blinky's darkness energy reserves.

"Oh mighty Blinky, I beseech you to bring forth your terrible gaze so that you may drown these souls with your dark embrace!"

Ves adjusted the grip of his Oceancaller and began to perform a horizontal sweep!

This attack was different than usual due to the darkness energy that launched from the relic!

The wave of darkness energy crashing against the side of the mountaintop did not particularly look impressive, but it was enough for Ves to gauge the effectiveness of his hasty modification work.

"I knew it wasn't so simple."

A proper Dark Apostle with this level of skill would have been able to call forth a much wider sweep of corrosive dark energies that would have inflicted much greater harm!

Ves already knew why his bootleg version of this move paled in every aspect.

First, he used the wrong language. The original techniques were supposed to be performed alongside prayers with the use of a long-dead language. Ves assumed that intent alone was enough to generate greater harmony, but this assumption turned out to be inaccurate.

Second, changing the subject of contract cultivation to a much different entity messed up a lot of different stuff.

The Dark Apostles fine-tuned their fighting methods to the specific brand of darkness produced by their ominous deity.

Blinky's variation of darkness was like a very cheap and poor-quality version!

The disparity in strength, quality and accents threw the original extraordinary staff techniques completely out of whack.

Ves would have to spend a lot of time on breaking down the original staff fighting style and build an entirely new one that was optimized with Blinky as the principal source of darkness energy.

He did not have the time or interest to go through all of that trouble. The story may be different if he was more like Ketis, but he never intended to become a serious soldier. He only wanted to become strong enough to fend off a hostile phase lord.

"I am not getting my money's worth." He concluded.

There was a huge depth to modifying extraordinary fighting methods. It was not as simple as he assumed. He developed a lot more respect for Ketis as a result. Her mastery, insights and passion into swordsmanship was so strong that she was able to create all kinds of extraordinary sword styles!

Ves did not possess an equivalent foundation, so he could never replicate her kind of work unless he became a lot more serious about becoming a warrior.

If he wanted to increase his combat power in the short term, he could think of only two viable options.

The first was to revert to the original method and form a pact with the ancient dark entity worshiped by the extinct cult.

Suffice to say, Ves was far too afraid to resort to this solution!

The second was to find a way to improve the other variables that affected the height of his combat power.

He looked at the relic that he used as his staff. "I'm sorry, Oceancaller. I can feel your disgust. I know you don't like to channel darkness energy, but I may not have a choice."

The replica of the Oceancaller was a flute that was largely aligned towards the water element, with a special focus on oceans and other related sub-attributes.

Even though the Mistress of the Oceans used the original relic to murder the populations of entire planets to satisfy her greed, the Oceancaller did not actually possess a relation to the darkness element. It was not designed to channel this power, and trying to do so anyway not only displeased the high-level relic, but also reduced the efficiency of his actions.

However, Ves had no other choice. There was not enough high-quality materials left for him to design and fabricate a large staff that would be sturdy enough to stay in one piece in a clash between phase lords.

"It would have been great if I learned a staff fighting style that is based on the water element instead." He sighed.

Unfortunately, he could only make use of what the Tree of Possibilities had on hand.

If changing the staff was not an option, then maybe he could improve Blinky or his own darkness qualifications.

Ves briefly thought about whether it would be possible to pluck the Iron Resonant Crucifix Crown from Vulcan's Divine Core and place it on his head.

He immediately shook his head. "I'm not that crazy!"

Besides, the crown was a relic that was obviously biased towards the metal element, so even if it made him stronger, it wouldn't synergize with his new fighting skills.

What else could he improve?

"Maybe I can increase my own comprehension of the darkness element."

He already gained a lot of admittedly unwanted insights and understanding of the power of darkness. That subsequently affected his domain, causing darkness to become slightly more prominent in relation to life and mechs.

If he strengthened the darkness component even further, Ves would be able to channel the power of this element a lot more efficiently than what he was capable of at the moment.

In fact, compared to real Dark Apostles, Ves was incredibly incompetent in comparison!

"How can I do that in a hurry? I have already exhausted my AP for the time being."

Only one solution came to mind.

His lottery tickets.

The golden lottery tickets were highly inconsistent, but Ves was bound to obtain at least a decent prize from his radiant lottery ticket!

While he still felt the urge to keep them in reserve so that he could save them for a rainy day, his current circumstances could already be characterized as such a terrible occasion.

Given that the Dark Apostle Self Defense Manual did not give Ves the confidence he needed to fight and win against an enemy phase lord, he was seriously thinking about whether he should expend those lottery tickets!

"It's not necessary!"

Sure, Ves' hastily modifications to the staff fighting style may have caused him to lose a lot of power, but that did not mean he lost all of his combat effectiveness. He had already turned into a competent staff wielder, and that was enough for him to hold his ground against an equal opponent.

Ves was not actually a Dark Apostle or a soldier. He was a mech designer who just happened to be a lot more versatile than usual.

The right approach that he should take was to stop thinking about replicating the strength of others, and develop his own combat system based on his own unique qualifications.

He was a phase lord, for example.

Was it possible to blend in the power of space with the power of darkness to produce a stronger compound effect?

He also had other means such as Blinky and his first Chosen Envoy. He was sure he could employ Blinky in another fashion as well. The remnants of Imon Ingvar had already recovered a decent bit after resting in the Sacred Temple.

His raiment and other external equipment could also provide him with additional advantages. He just wished he had more time and resources at his disposal so that he could have built a proper phase lord-sized suit of armor for himself.

"I also can't forget that I am not alone."

He could count on the support of plenty of friendly mechs and warships if he chose to deploy onto the battlefield.

This was useful in many ways. If he was weak at offense, then he could just focus on defense and do his best to create openings for his comrades in arms.

In short, Ves may still be relatively weak as far as lesser phase lords were concerned, but he should no longer be a liability on the battlefield!

"It would have been great if I had access to a virtually unending source of E energy like the time I fought to preserve the Dominion of Man during her tribulation, but..."

Was it possible that he could obtain a substitute from a radiant lottery ticket?

Maybe.

Ves did not have complete confidence that he would be able to draw such a prize. The random and uncontrollable nature of lottery draws still deterred him from using up his radiant lottery ticket.

In the end, Ves decided to bet on his current strength and decided to leave his lottery tickets in reserve.

His mentality drove him to challenge himself on the battlefield.

The enlightenment fruit was so powerful that it had hardened his bones and strengthened the muscles of his gigantic true body.

The changes were not drastic, but it was as if Ves had turned from an erudite phase lord to a martial phase lord!

This allowed Ves to perform movements and withstand shocks a lot better than before, even if his physical Attributes had not actually changed.

This wave of optimization not only tuned his body into a much finer organic combat machine, but also boosted his confidence in a way that Ves could not resist.

He was not a true soldier or warrior, but his newly gained fighting skills granted him a sense of courage that he previously lacked.

"It's no wonder that high-ranking mech pilots like to push their limits all of the time. They must be subjected to much stronger impulses!"

Chapter 6357 Direct Assault

Before Ves exited the System Space, he made sure to transform back into his actual size and put his jury-rigged raiment back onto his body.

He even made sure to adopt the exact same posture before he finally returned to realspace.

Perhaps a careful observer might still be able to spot a few incongruities between his former and current state, but people had better things to do than to investigate such an important incident.

Despite his attempts to make it seem as if nothing had changed, Ves could not hide his sharper and more condensed edge.

He had spent a lot of time with mech pilots, so he was quite familiar with how extensive mastery in any combat arts could harden one's posture and demeanor.

The entire way in which he viewed reality had shifted.

For example, he no longer gazed at a first-class multipurpose mech with the attitude of trying to understand what made it tick.

He actually began to estimate whether he could beat it up in a duel!

His newfound sense of confidence and courage even gave him the illusion that he could win this bout, thereby validating his strength and making him feel more secure in his own martial might!

Ves tried to temper these strange and foreign impulses. He was not a warrior and did not intend to become one.

He tried his best to stick to his original goal of becoming proficient in self defense. He only needed to fight well enough to preserve his life.

There was no need for him to degenerate into a muscle-brained idiot who wanted to seek insane challenges in an attempt to overcome his limitations and a fighter.

Even so, when Ves tracked the progress of the Dark Zephyr and his pursuers, his oversized Jutland organ couldn't help but beat harder in anticipation of participating in his first proper battle as a phase lord.

The previous times did not count!

He may have relied upon the power of a phase lord to fend off different threats in the past, but he definitely did so as an amateur as opposed to a competent fighter.

Now that he knew his way around a staff, Ves should be able to contend against enemy lesser phase lords on a much more even playing field!

"I really need to control myself better." He reminded himself.

He learned the importance of discipline today. It was far too tempting to make use of his greater might even when it was not justified. Having lots of power but refusing to make use of it was extremely frustrating to Ves. He could not even bring himself to decide to sit out this battle.

He had grown too powerful too quickly. Ves couldn't help himself. He often looked down on mech pilots as brutes who were driven by their baser urges, but now he was beginning to resemble them an awful lot!

Time passed by. The Dark Zephyr continued to flee back to Fort Rock while the mixed enemy force continued to pursue and pelt the ace light skirmisher with attacks.

Both Saint Tusa and his chasing enemies were expending resources against each other, making it so that they would no longer be fresh by the time they reached Fort Rock and the Bluejay Fleet.

This was bad because the Dark Zephyr would not be performing at its best.

However, most people believed it was worth it because the pursuing lesser and greater phase lords would no longer remain in peak condition either!

The analysts serving in the Bluejay Fleet continued to analyze a lot of data. They made a lot of estimates and learned a lot more about the capabilities that the pursuing alien enemies exposed.

Saint Tusa was doing his job as a scout. Perhaps his Dark Zephyr already had the speed to outpace his pursuers and return to the Bluejay Fleet sooner, but he may have deliberately chosen to control his speed in order to expose more of the enemy's strength!

"Great! With all of this additional information, we can fine tune our battle plans and reduce the occurrence of accidents!"

Ves also studied the data and live feed. The Dark Zephyr constantly looked as if he was tethering on the edge of the abyss.

The enemy warships and phase lords chasing from behind used a mix of different attacks to pressure the ace light skirmisher.

Many attacks missed, but the density of firepower was so great that the Dark Zephyr could not avoid getting hit at times.

Perhaps the ace mech could have evaded the attack if he chose to exert himself a lot more, but the added stress and drain to his systems was not worth getting struck.

The Saint Kingdom and the space suppressor weakened most incoming transphasic attacks until they collided against the Dark Zephyr's archemetal exterior plating.

The damage usually ended up being superficial, which was a testament to how much tougher the living mech had become compared to his Mark II iteration.

However, much of this would only last as long as the Saint Kingdom remained active. If Tusa had to resist too many attacks with his domain field, it would eventually become exhausted.

That would be bad as any subsequent attacks would be able to hit the frame of the ace mech at full strength!

Therefore, Saint Tusa was definitely playing a dangerous game at the moment. He was helping the Bluejay Fleet learn a lot more about their enemies at the cost of wearing down his own Saint Kingdom.

Fortunately, the chase did not last too long. The Dark Zephyr eventually managed to close in on Fort Rock without suffering any major mishaps.

"Get ready to meet our guests!" Saint Tusa transmitted to the Bluejay Fleet. "Hand me the tier 3 Destroyer spear! I will do my best to keep the greater phase lords occupied, but I can't make any guarantees!"

The Terrans had already brought out the powerful spear into space. A pair of first-class multipurpose mechs hailing from the Devos and Streon Ancient Clan carried the container of Destroyer-resistant materials in their hands.

Once the container slid open, a gentle gravitic field flung the dangerous spear into space.

This time, the Dark Zephyr gripped the shaft of the formidable weapon without any hesitation.

"Blackwing!"

"Chip chip!"

Blackwing did not dare to occupy the potent weapon itself. He only occupied one of the Dark Zephyr's hands and tried his best to pretend to be the wielder.

Even though it sounded silly, it truly made a difference. The Dark Zephyr began to exude more shadow power, causing the living mech to appear a little less substantial.

At the same time, the powerful Destroyer spear also remained fairly tame and dormant. The weapon still exerted a lot of pressure towards Tusa and the Dark Zephyr, but it was a lot calmer than the first attempt to wield this polearm.

Though Saint Tusa had grown a little winded during the chase, the adrenaline circulating through his body and the pressure exerted by the Arena Lord of Ya'gwasa kept him on such an edge that he no longer feared this formidable anymore!

For these reasons and more, the Dark Zephyr actually looked as if he was able to maintain adequate enough control over the tier 3 Destroyer spear!

Ves smiled at the sight, but paid more attention to the enemy force that had since paused their pursuit and slowed down outside of normal striking range.

The cosmopolitans and native aliens could not possibly miss the implications of assaulting an ace mech and a fleet backed up by a spontaneously constructed space fortress.

Just the strong active sensors and spatial suppression fields produced by this fort was enough to inform the enemies that their most useful solutions would probably lose a lot of effectiveness if they tried to get any closer!

Ves expected for the Arena Lord to posture and hold a self-centered speech, but the alien leader was quite rational and decisive when it counted.

The powerful nunser phase lord pointed the tip of his Saint Piercer towards Fort Rock and issued a single directive.

"CHARGE! SPLIT OPEN THEIR FEEBLE CASTLE AND GRIND THEIR MINISCULE PINK BODIES TO DUST!"

"So that is how they want to play it." Admiral Tensen noted on the command channel. "Be prepared to go all-out. Be on the lookout for weapons of mass destruction. They may decide to launch them to finish us off in one fell swoop."

A direct assault was extremely risky.

The enemy force could have chosen to linger at a distance and besiege Fort Rock. The space fortress did not possess any mobility and could easily be ground down by bombarding it from afar.

However, this exchange was likely to disadvantage the attacking side a lot more. They had less warships and their phase lords would all have to expend significant energies to produce underwhelming results due to the prevalence of strong space suppression fields.

It actually made a lot more sense for the enemies to take advantage of their superiority in phase lords and use their immense physical bulk to crush Fort Rock by relying on pure mass and momentum!

Fort Rock did not have the energy of physical defenses to withstand multiple collisions from large and heavy phase lords.

The defending side needed to repel the phase lords and keep them at bay somehow!

"Warships, open fire on your designated targets!"

Their formidable primary transphasic gun batteries unleashed volleys of warship-grade positron beams, kinetic rounds and plasma bolts at the approaching phase lords!

The enemy champions did not bother to evade the attacks. They all resisted the potent attacks with their spatial barriers. While their defenses incurred a bit of losses, the attacks were not strong and plentiful enough to break them down anytime soon!

The Tarrasque and the Babylon Excavator opened fire first!

Their formidable primary transphasic gun batteries unleashed volleys of warship-grade positron beams, kinetic rounds and plasma bolts at the approaching phase lords!

The enemy champions did not bother to evade the attacks. They all resisted the potent attacks with their spatial barriers. While their defenses incurred a bit of losses, the attacks were not strong and plentiful enough to break them down anytime soon!

That changed a little when the Rosfield Cannons opened fire!

The triple-barreled cannon unleashed a trio of enhanced hyper gauss rounds that crossed the distance in an instant and slammed against the spatial barriers of the Distance Shaper with great force!

The resulting impact and explosions of energy were so violent that the orven greater phase lord couldn't help but become a little frightened!

The second alien leader couldn't help but slow down as he was not the sort of phase lord that liked being in the thick of action.

"Great job! The Rosfield Cannons should focus on suppressing the Distance Shaper. If that is not possible, try and pressure the Arena Lord."

"What about the lesser phase lords, admiral?"

"Let our first-class multipurpose mechs take care of them. We cannot afford to divert other assets to slow them down."

The fight began to commence in earnest as more warships began to open fire on the cosmopolitan warships and alien archships. The vessels of both sides engaged in destructive exchanges of firepower that initially collided against transphasic or azure energy shields, but only for a certain duration.

The first ships that lost their energy defenses were liable to get bombarded into pieces!

The Dark Zephyr, now armed with a Destroyer spear that was not much less threatening than a Saint Piercer spear, confronted the Arena Lord of Ya'gwasa with confidence. The ace light skirmisher did not try to do anything fancy and initially circled around and tested the enemy's spatial barrier with brief contacts with the destructive spear. In the meantime, alien phasefighters swooped closer, only to get intercepted by first-class multipurpose mechs.

The contest between the two was uneven as the humans dared to send only a fraction as many first-class multipurpose mechs against a swarm of hundreds of phasefighters.

The fight was not even fair! The first-class multipurpose mechs were not only stronger in almost every parameter aside from straight-line acceleration, their pilots were also much more professionally trained and experienced!

The powerful phasefighters still put up a decent fight as far as strike craft were concerned, but it was clear that they were outclassed by a race that had perfected the use of mechs over multiple centuries!

Ves remained on standby inside Fort Rock. He was itching to confront the five arche phase lords that were only somewhat hindered by the swarms of first-class multipurpose mechs buzzing over their gigantic archeshells.

It was not time for him to make an appearance.

He waited until a sudden incident occurred that briefly caused a lot of soldiers to pause.

An alarm rang through Fort Rock and every mech and ship!

"DETECTING THE LAUNCH OF AN INCOMING ANTIMATTER WARHEAD FROM AN UNSEEN ENEMY CRAFT! IT IS CLOSE! INTERCEPT!"

Automated point defense turrets as well as intercepting missiles instantly came to life!

They had already been primed for an event like this, so they worked especially quickly to wear down the transphasic energy shield that covered the antimatter warhead and forcibly shattered the containment that kept the relatively small quantity of antimatter in a stable condition.

Many sensors temporarily became overloaded as the explosive release of a huge amount of heat and other energies swept across every asset on the battlefield!

The first-class multipurpose mechs and alien phasefighters that happened to fight in the vicinity of the blast immediately incurred severe damage that forced them to disengage and retreat to their respective motherships!

For a moment, the Arena Lord and many others could not believe what had happened. Even phase lords had to be wary about the use of weapons of this magnitude.

Admiral Tensen broadcast his announcement in the open. "The cosmopolitans and the native aliens have broken the accord first. Since that is the case, we shall pay them back a hundredfold for their violation! Commence the launch of our WMDs!"

One of the cosmopolitan starships urgently transmitted a reply!

"We are not responsible, and neither are our alien compatriots! You are slandering us, you hypocrites!"

Too late!

"Launch the first spread of antimatter missiles at the lesser phase lords!"

"Launch the torpedoes currently loaded in the Doomspreader Torpedo System at the same targets!"

Fort Rock and multiple human warships began to launch so many threatening munitions that the cosmopolitans and aliens were scrambling to activate their countermeasures!

Unfortunately, the surprisingly fast development along with all of the space suppression fields exerted by all of the nearby first-class multipurpose mechs directly weakened the defensive measures employed by the arche phase lords!

They could only fall back to their most primitive defensive method, which was to retract their heads and limbs inside their large and extraordinarily sturdy archeshells!

Multiple titanic explosions soon engulfed the lesser alien champions!

Chapter 6358 Explosions Galore

Explosion after explosion engulfed the five arche lesser phase lords!

The antimatter missiles predominantly launched by the Tarrasque and the Babylon Excavator arrived first.

Filled with high technology, the missiles were so advanced that the native aliens had little luck with intercepting them, especially when they only had to traverse a relatively short distance before they struck their targets. Their recently upgraded azure energy shields resisted a bevy of point defense attacks, their ECM systems managed to fool the tracking systems of intercepting missiles and their powerful rocket engines had recently been tweaked to provide a much more potent boost at the cost of drastically reducing their range.

If there was one downside to the antimatter missiles, it was that their warheads tended to be on the small side. The two heavy cruisers that carried the most weapons of mass destruction lacked the internal volume and the capacity to safely store much larger and more potent destructive payloads.

Much of the structure of the delivery vehicles were already taken up by propulsion systems, shield generators, ECM systems, sensor systems, communication systems, advanced processing systems and other tech that Ves could not even begin to know.

The point was that the missiles were primarily designed to prevent the enemy from stopping them from reaching their target coordinates. They placed so much emphasis on achieving a successful hit rate that there was not that much space left to safely contain a lot of volatile antimatter.

Still, even a tiny amount of antimatter was enough to unleash astronomical amounts of energy, and having dozens of them explode against the spatial barriers of the 5 lesser phase lords at once produced a cataclysmic spectacle!

While the near-simultaneous detonations failed to destroy any phase fighters or warships as they maintained a healthy distance from the native gods, both friendly and enemy units did not get away without suffering at least some form of difficulties.

The explosive release of heat and radiation was so exaggerated that the energy shields and sensor systems of many strike craft and warships became a lot more stressed!

The sensor systems of the mechs and warships of the Bluejay Fleet generally fared better as the humans had prepared additional precautions ahead of time.

Their enemies were a little less fortunate as they had not expected the battle to escalate to this level right away.

The Doomspreader featured 4 giant launch tubes, and had therefore launched 4 Antimatter Torpedoes at the same time.

These hardy munitions arrived at the right time. They were tough enough to resist the remaining energies unleashed from the previous wave of weapons of mass destruction and exploded just after the first layer of defenses of their targets had taken a beating.

Before everyone and everything could recover to get a clear view of the damage, the much larger Antimatter Torpedoes launched from the Doomspreader had pierced through the expanding energies and struck whatever was located in the center!

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All of the sensor systems became blinded once again!

Heat, radiation and other intense sources of interference swept through the battlefield and prevented anyone and anything from doing anything productive. The warships that had just begun to slug at each other with their primary gun batteries had been forced to suspend their fire!

As the optical sensors of most craft gradually recovered from the first and second bursts of intense release of high-energy radiation, both humans and aliens beheld the damage that all of those antimatter warheads had wrought.

"No way..."

"The archeshells are still intact. The phase lords hardly look hurt!"

Ves grimaced as he gripped his upsized Oceancaller. He knew that phase lords were unusually resilient, but the 5 arche phase lords were much tougher than the norm!

The 5 lesser phase lords had lost their azure energy shields as intended, but their large and thick transphasic archeshells did a marvelous job of resisting the remainder of the energies unleashed by all of the explosions.

The archeshells at least showed signs of being fallible by showing at least a bit of surface damage. The arche phase lords had invested so much into growing their archeshells, so Ves knew that even minor damage represented the loss of a lot of phasewater and high-grade exotics.

"It's not enough, though." Ves sighed.

Although the antimatter missiles did not possess any phasewater enhancement due to conflicting properties, the magnitude of energies they released upon detonation was still immense.

Perhaps the antimatter missiles and torpedoes would have been able to generate greater cracks in the archeshells if they were able to unleash their explosive might in a single direction, but that was beyond red humanity's technological capabilities.

The human defenders had already used up a huge amount of firepower, but more was needed to eliminate the lesser phase lords before they could get close enough to use their immense bulk and physical might to their advantage.

"Load the remaining two Antimatter Torpedoes in tubes 1 and 2." Ves instructed. He would have liked to load more Antimatter Torpedoes, but he knew that there were not enough of them left to use. "Load two Hyper Spatial Crusher Torpedoes in tubes 3 and 4."

It took a relatively long time to load in the torpedoes because they were large, heavy and makeshift creations. Ves lacked the time and resources to construct a proper automated loading system, so he had to rely on bots and gravitic manipulators to do the job.

Meanwhile, the Bluejay Fleet was also in the process of preparing their next salvo of WMDs.

"Load and arm the next volley of antimatter missiles." Admiral Tensen ordered. "Calculate firing solutions for both the arche lesser phase lords and the greater phase lord known as the Distance Shaper. The latter is beginning to assist the other phase lords!"

The Distance Shaper may encounter a lot of hindrances in his attempts to manipulate the space around his well-prepared enemies, but he was still able to provide help to his unresisting allies.

His first action was to stretch and unbalance the space in front and around the arche phase lords, making it more difficult for missiles to successfully reach the recovering alien champions.

The arche phase lords also began to take matters into their own hands. Their spatial barriers blew up due to being subjected to overwhelming forces, but their archeshells still remained most intact!

Now, the arche phase lords began to work together in a way that was unique to their race.

They began to press together until the sides of their shells pressed against each other. This caused the arche phase lords to interface each other in a way that made them a lot more coordinated!

"Their shells! They are beginning to regenerate! Their cracks are already starting to close!"

"Hahaha! Our phase lords are immortal!" A radical cosmopolitan leader boasted. "I have to become one at all costs! Only by claiming the head of the Devil Tongue will I be able to obtain the Red Cabal's aid in becoming a greater phase lord. Press the attack! Let us show these misguided human supremacists the power of alien mass destruction!"

Soon enough, both sides began to fire large amounts of nuclear, antimatter and more exotic weapons of mass destruction!

The Bluejay Fleet neglected to target the enemy warships, dismissing them as the lesser threat, in favor of targeting both the arche phase lords as well as the Distance Shaper. Admiral Tensen trusted the Dark Zephyr armed with the tier 3 Destroyer spear to keep the Arena Lord of Ya'gwasa occupied and focused on containing the other phase lords.

A multitude of explosions engulfed the enemy positions, but when the optical sensors managed to get a good look at them again, the 5 arche lesser phase lords and the single orven greater phase lord only incurred moderate damage after withstanding all of that firepower!

The enemy phase lords were hardly ideal targets for relatively powerful but dispersed weapons of mass destruction.

It was almost useless to employ these mundane means towards the Distance Shaper. The Bluejay Fleet had no choice because they needed to keep the powerful orven phase lord occupied and distracted to reduce his manipulations.

Even so, the antimatter missiles sapping the integrity of his spatial barrier did not stop him from helping the arche phase lords cope with the powerful explosions and help them limit the damage to their precious archeshells.

In the meantime, the weapons of mass destruction launched by the enemy had begun to strike Fort Rock and the larger ships of the Bluejay Fleet!

Ves braced his giant true body as he could almost feel the space fortress rumbling. The absurdly strong latest generation titan shields tried their best to do their jobs and withstand the explosive might of the weapons of mass destruction employed by the enemy.

The arche had invested a lot to develop better missiles with absurdly strong payloads. It was never safe to transport them without taking a huge amount of precautions, but all of the investment was worth it as the arche somehow relied upon an alternate means of target guidance to keep the missiles on target. None of the sophisticated ECM systems employed by the Bluejay Fleet could divert the course of those dangerous missiles.

"What the?! There is life in those alien missiles! I think... an arche has actually interfaced in those missiles. They are guided by sacrificial aliens!"

The arche prioritized the downfall of Fort Rock the most. The space station had quickly turned into a huge annoyance due to its strong facilities, such as their constant active scanning and data processing capabilities.

However, Fort Rock was designed to take a beating even if the mechers and the fleeters erected it in a hurry. One of two Titan Shields got overloaded, but there was just enough redundancy to allow other Titan Shields to resist the remainder of the explosive forces.

The fact that Ves continued to remain on standby in Fort Rock was a strong show of confidence in the facility's defenses!

"It's my turn now."

Even though the Bluejay Fleet still needed to prepare for the third volley of weapons of mass destruction, it was time For Ves to employ his own solutions.

"Wait for the Bluejay Fleet to launch their own WMDs. Fire tubes 1 and 2 two seconds after the initial explosions."

Both sides slugged each other with highly destructive warheads again!

So many of them had already detonated on the battlefield that it had produced far greater interference than before!

Hyper technology started to behave wonky due to the unforeseen changes in the environment.

Transphasic technologies and spatial abilities worked less well as the dimensional environment had turned into a temporary mess.

Ves chose to add to the chaos by making his own contributions!

"Fire the torpedoes loaded in tubes 1 and 2! Wait 15 seconds before launching the torpedoes loaded in tubes 3 and 4. Do not launch the latter any second sooner. The timing is crucial!"

Although the 5 interfacing arche phase lords were doing an admirable job at withstanding so much firepower, the third series of explosions began to produce even greater cracks to their shells.

However, their thickness and resilience was beyond unreal. Their physical toughness easily exceeded that of the flesh and bone of a typical greater phase lord!

Though the latest series of antimatter warheads failed to make a good impression, the latter two torpedoes that had been launched after a brief delay arrived in front of the lesser phase lords and unleashed their power as well!

This time, the warheads were much different than before. Instead of producing insanely powerful direct explosions, the warheads of the Hyper Spatial Crusher Torpedoes began to produce violent spatial fluctuations!

The strong anomalous spatial activity did not hit the arche phase lords like a hammer, but instead seemed to shake and destabilize their resisting shells as if they were being subjected to a powerful earthquake!

The massive phase lords began to look pained as the pair of Hyper Spatial Crusher Torpedoes did exactly what Ves intended, and that was to completely mess up the spatial abilities of the enemy phase lords! Not even the Distance Shaper was able to suppress the strong activity generated from the last two torpedoes!

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Chapter 6359 Hyper Spatial Crusher Torpedoes

Ves almost felt sorry for his enemies for becoming the target of so many weapons of mass destruction.

Both sides happened to stock them in abundance, but the problem was that the enemy fleet generally consisted of smaller and more cramped vessels. That meant that the weapons of mass destruction they were able to safely contain and deploy against their targets were generally less destructive on average!

Fort Rock happened to become the focal point of enemy weapons of mass destruction because the cosmopolitans and native aliens at least figured out that its continued existence inhibited their greatest strengths far too much.

So long as this space fortress was knocked offline, the enemy craft and vessels could unleash a much greater portion of their true capabilities!

Unfortunately, Fort Rock was such an obvious target that the mechers and the fleeters had invested a lot of spare resources to fortify it in a short amount of time. The asteroid base practically welcomed the incoming nuclear and antimatter missiles with open arms, because there was more to the torpedoes than was apparent on the surface. Ves had tried to apply spiritual engineering to the munitions in an attempt to make them alive and see if he could make them more potent and destructive.

Unfortunately, the results were mixed.

The Antimatter Missiles generated a lot of energies, but had very little influence on E energy.

It couldn't be helped. They were simply containers for relatively minute quantities of antimatter. Their technological complexity was predominantly in their containment, safety measures, guidance systems, ECM and ECCM systems and other auxiliary functions.

In short, there was very little Ves could do to augment the most important explosive components directly with the use of E-technology. It also didn't help that Ves had not been involved with the design and production of the original antimatter warheads.

Ves silently lowered his evaluation on antimatter missiles. They were still useful, no doubt. Their production was relatively simple once a group was able to produce antimatter on a reliable basis. Antimatter munitions could easily be scaled from obliterating starships to cracking the crust of entire planets!

Unfortunately, the annoying properties of antimatter and the extreme difficulty in trying to do anything else with it made it incompatible with phasewater technology, hyper technology and more important E-technology. Ves could only think up indirect ways to augment their effectiveness beyond the sheer amount of energies they unleashed when they came into contact with ordinary matter.

Antimatter munitions were therefore a 'dead-end tech' in his eyes. Perhaps a Star Designer like the Missile Messiah might be able to come up with an entirely new paradigm that successfully blended antimatter weapons with the aforementioned techs, but this was probably a low priority issue to him since neither side wanted to make too much use of weapons of mass destruction.

The Hyper Spatial Crusher Torpedoes launched by the Doomspreader yielded much more fruitful results to Ves.

Ves had hastily stuffed each of these special torpedoes with spare superdrives that he and a team of naval engineers had deliberately messed up. They removed the safeties, scrambled the settings and even inflicted physical damage on a number of subcomponents just to make them more volatile than usual!

He then proceeded to stuff the torpedoes with a strong and compact but short-lasting power source as well as vaguely relevant hyper materials to amplify the instability of the 'warheads' even further.

The use of hyper materials made it much easier to make this torpedo alive.

Since the Hyper Spatial Crusher Torpedoes weren't actually designed to explode, the living munitions were actually able to make a more substantial difference this time!

The 5 arche lesser phase lords had been able to resist a multitude of antimatter attacks by relying on their absurdly strong transphasic archeshells.

Regular archeshells were already resilient enough, but the ones cultivated by phase lords were many times more resilient!

It did not surprise Ves at all that arche phase lords tended to be famed for their damage resistance. They were literal tanks that could withstand ten times more punishment than the phase lords of other species so long as they were able orient their archeshells towards the incoming attacks.

They were especially great at resisting unempowered attacks, which explosions generated by antimatter warheads happen to fall into. This was another reason why red humanity did not really like to throw around antimatter weapons during the Red War.

However, the deviously designed Hyper Spatial Crusher Torpedoes were different. As long as they continued to hover in front of the 5 turtling phase lords, the unstable superdrives were clearly exerting very strong stresses onto their archshells!

The rudimentary living entities that Ves had imparted in the torpedoes increased the suffering even further. Even though they were very crude and simple, he had made sure to infuse the living weapons with malice, causing them to subtly control and direct the unstable spatial activity even further towards the phase lords!

Pain clearly radiated from all 5 arche phase lords as their archshells were more important than the rest of their bodies as far as they were concerned!

Any crack or major break in their archshells produced agony to a level that could drive mortal arche to suicide!

The phase lords became so wracked by pain that none of them could muster the concentration to destroy the Hyper Spatial Crusher Torpedoes that were continually creating more and more gaps in their shells!

If Ves knew that his attempt to create a pure transphasic weapon worked so well, then he would have begged Admiral Tensen to strip a few superdrives from the hulls of the less important combat carriers of the Bluejay Fleet.

The Hyper Spatial Crusher Torpedoes not only induced a lot of stress on the phase lords that foolishly stuck close to each other, but also hindered the Distance Shaper from working his magic!

The orven greater phase lord were already being hindered by all of the space suppressors and warp interdiction fields. The volatile activity generated by the Hyper Spatial Crusher Torpedoes completely deprived him of a way to relieve the pain on his allies!

The greater phase lord cautiously started to advance. He was clearly reluctant to do so, but the only way for his power to take effect under all of the suppression was to reduce the range.

However, this was ultimately a redundant move, as the Hyper Spatial Crusher Torpedoes eventually got shot into pieces after a number of archships hastily diverted their cannon fire from the Bluejay Fleet to the stationary torpedoes!

"Damn." Ves cursed. "I don't even want to know how much money crumbled into pieces."

The absurd effectiveness of the Hyper Spatial Crusher Torpedoes was largely attributed to the powerful properties of first-class superdrives. These were extremely expensive ship systems that demanded a lot of phasewater. The only way that first-raters could justify the expense was to assume they would get used for a long time, possibly for over a century.

To use up these superdrives in less than a minute was a massive waste, though Ves personally did not think so. He still believed it was worth it to throw so much money away to inflict severe wounds on the 5 phase lords!

The aftermath of this wave of weapons of mass destruction looked a lot worse for the lesser phase lords. The beautiful and radiant archshells of the lesser phase gods all looked cracked and broken.

Yet despite the terrible looking appearances of these native gods, Ves could still sense the strong stubbornness and resilience from these enemies!

"Be careful! The arche phase lords are hardly down for the count! Their archshells have received severe damage, but it is regenerating even now. Their phasewater organs as well as most of their flesh remains unharmed, and they had shed remarkably little blood due to their archshells taking the brunt of the damage."

Their combat effectiveness still remained intact for the most part, which was bad because that still gave them the capital to approach and bulldoze Fort Rock with their bulky bodies alone.

Ves gripped his Oceancaller tighter and estimated whether he had a chance of stalling or defeating them. He soon shook his head.

"Stripping their spatial barriers and cracking open their archshells has removed a lot of their defensive buffers, but that is exactly what they are for. I don't think I can defeat 5 of them in their current state."

His experience combined with his recently acquired fighting skill enabled him to estimate his chances against other opponents a lot better than before. Judging how he would fare in a fight against others was partially based on data analysis, but also partially based on pure intuition.

He just knew that he would get beat up by these seemingly injured but still ferocious phase lords!

To him, the arche phase lords were just putting up an act. They were cunning enough to deliberately show signs of weakness so that they could lure a person just like Ves who greedily wanted to finish the job in person!

The arche phase lords may excel at defense, but they could not rely on this role to win their bouts. They needed to possess offensive solutions as well in order to stay alive.

Since that was the case, Ves tried to rein in his eagerness to confront them himself and instead focused on his Doomspreader.

Ves needed to take advantage of the vulnerabilities of the enemy phase lords while they still existed. This appeared to be the perfect opportunity to test the Hyper Nanomachine Plague Torpedoes!

He had not yet exhausted his stockpile of torpedoes!

"Load 2 Hyper X-Ray Torpedoes in tubes 1 and 2. Load 2 Hyper Nanomachine Plague Torpedoes in tubes 3 and 4."

Ves needed to take advantage of the vulnerabilities of the enemy phase lords while they still existed. This appeared to be the perfect opportunity to test the Hyper Nanomachine Plague Torpedoes!

As their name suggested, the nanomachine plagues were extremely virulent and fearsome. They were like plagues in the form of tiny machinery. They were unscrupulous about devouring any materials that their tiny nanomachines could break down and absorb, either on their own or through cooperation!

The fight raged on. Both sides appeared to have exhausted their initial stockpiles of weapons of mass destruction. They may carry a few more devastating weapons in their vaults, but they were not in a hurry to deploy these exceptionally cruel and destructive solutions.

The Dark Zephyr Mark III Revision 2 continued to play hit-and-run games with the Arena Lord of Ya'gwasa.

Cosmopolitan mechs combined with alien phasefighters had begun to exchange fire with red humanity's first-class multipurpose mechs.

The warships hailing from both sides continued to slug each other with their gun batteries and missiles, though the hulls belonging to the enemy fleet were clearly faring worse in this contest.

One of the most acute shortcomings of the enemies was that they did not employ support link technology!

The warships and combat carriers of the Red Association and the Red Fleet had all linked up using the three common variations of support link technology.

Shield link technology had massively helped the RA and RF hulls withstand the salvos of weapons of mass destruction sent in their direction!

Though the shield link arrays had endured too much stress and no longer worked at full effectiveness, they had served their purpose and enabled the Bluejay Fleet to weather a part of the storm.

"Tubes 1 to 4 are loaded, sir!"

"Target the arche lesser phase lords. Prepare to launch the Hyper X-Ray Torpedoes in tubes 1 and 2. Wait 7 seconds before firing the Hyper Nanomachine Plague Torpedoes in tubes 3 and 4."

"We have dialed in the settings, professor."

"Launch!"

Four torpedoes launched from Doomspreader in a staggered pattern!

The archeships crewed by aliens concerned about the state of their gods tried to intercept the torpedoes before they could reach their destinations, but the mechs and warships of the Bluejay Fleet did their best to run interference!

Only a short time passed before the two torpedoes reached their programmed coordinates and began to pump concentrated X-ray radiation into the prepared archeshells of the alien phase gods!

Chapter 6360 Giant Defenses.

"Our enemies have raised the threat level of the torpedoes! Their phasefighters are dying in droves in an attempt to get past our blockade and physically ram the torpedoes in flight!"

The repeated use of weapons of mass destruction escalated this battle at a very rapid pace. The absurd effectiveness of some of the more special types of oversized torpedoes especially alarmed the leaders of the alien fleet.

The phasefighters deployed from the archeships were not high in number, but they were all top-notch elite craft that could put up a decent fight against a first-class multipurpose mech.

They had managed to perform fairly decently so far, but once they no longer prioritized the opposing first-class multipurpose mechs and instead tried to save their injured gods, they began to incur greater casualties!

"Don't let them intercept the torpedoes!" Ves urged the mech pilots. "Major Jankowski, stop them at all costs! If you cannot stop them from destroying a torpedo, then make sure they do not target the trailing ones!"

"On it, professor!"

All of the first-class multipurpose mechs performed well so far. The ones deployed by the mechers and fleeters especially stood out due to their use of a more limited form of support link technology to keep them alive and powered up to a much greater extent.

The first-class multipurpose mech piloted by Major Jankowski performed a bit better than the others. As an expert candidate, Simon Jankowski was able to draw out the greater potential of his fast and versatile machine and managed to take down more phasefighters than others!

Even so, the single-minded determination demonstrated by the arche phasefighter pilots made it a lot harder to take down all of their craft before they opened fire at the torpedoes!

The azure energy shields that protected the oversized munitions managed to resist the attacks for a while, but soon enough one of them started to falter and detonate prematurely!

Fortunately, the torpedo in question was pointed at the enemy phase lords, so more than a dozen highly concentrated beams of X-ray radiation struck the damaged archeshells and inflicted a variety of energy damage!

The effectiveness of this attack was relatively limited, unfortunately. Archeshells resisted energy attacks especially well. At most, the gaps and holes in the more damaged shells caused a bit of X-ray radiation to damage the tissue underneath, but even that was relatively shallow.

This was the only success the desperate alien phasefighters attained. The first-class multipurpose mechs finally managed to overtake the enemy craft. The more agile mechs then proceeded to use their space suppressors to drastically weaken their energy barriers before breaching them with overwhelming firepower, allowing them to carve up the surprisingly resilient but ultimately vulnerable alien craft!

The second Hyper X-Ray Torpedo blasted concentrated high-energy radiation at the beleaguered arche lesser phase lords.

Though they had already been struck by this type of attack just before, the lesser phase lords rapidly adapted to this damage by filling the gaps of their shells with thick fluid.

When the X-rays struck again, the fluids evaporated in an instant, but successfully managed to bleed away energy that would have otherwise inflicted more serious material damage!

Even so, this response left the overly passive arche phase lords ill-prepared to block the next two torpedoes!

When the Hyper Nanomachine Plague Torpedoes struck the arche phase lords, they exploded with surprisingly little fanfare.

Only a lot of 'dust' had sprung out of the impact sites.

It only took a few seconds for the arche phase lords to understand what was wrong.

Their archeshells started to 'itch' as they felt it was being eroded at a very slow but concerning rate!

The alien phase lords tried to use their limited spatial abilities to get rid of the creatures, but the space suppression and the damage they incurred beforehand limited their ability to cleanse their own shells!

The nanomachine plagues did not even bother to act subtle as they frantically dug into the hardy shells and tried to devour them one microscopic bit at a time.

Since the transphasic archeshells were still so damn hard despite having cracked in many places, the nanomachine plagues began to combine their forces and condense into larger smart metal constructs.

It just so happened that they took on the form of differently sized cats!

"Hehehehe..." Ves grinned.

He had personally overridden their programming to favor cat shapes. This little personal touch not only gave him a lot of satisfaction, but also enabled the hyper nanomachines to better channel the malevolent spirits that he had imbued in their collective mass!

The evil cat-like smart metal monsters continually tried to bite or grind away at the damaged portions of the archeshell that were a little more vulnerable than other pieces of shell.

Although their progress was still awfully slow, they caused a lot of distress to the arche phase lords in question.

Their archeshells were too important to them! They could not afford to let their precious shells degrade!

Although the powerful phase lord attempted to crush or dislodge the nanomachines through various means, they were too large for their own good!

They were unable to exercise their power on a fine level with great strength or precision.

Even if they managed to blast trillions of nanomachines, there were many more continuing to chew on their archeshells elsewhere!

Their numbers had not even decreased. With every piece of archeshell they devoured, they subsequently worked together with other nanomachines to produce more of their own kind!

The new nanomachines may lack some of the materials and miniscule components that turned them into abhorrent plagues, but they still posed an escalating threat so long as they continued to grow in number!

The arche phase lords experienced double torture from the infection of hyper nanomachine plagues. Not only were they overly sensitive to the growing deterioration of their archeshells, but the spiritualities of the nanomachine plagues were tormenting them on a mental level as well!

The pain was not too great for the resilient arche lesser phase lords, but they generated additional distractions that hindered them from leveraging their abilities with greater focus and cohesion.

Still, as much as the horrible nanomachine plagues tormented the 5 lesser phase lords, they were working too slow for Ves' liking!

It would probably take at least a day for the nanomachines to chew up the archeshells and produce enough copies for themselves to completely engulf the lesser phase lords, assuming that nobody helped them get rid of the infections.

Ves knew that the hyper nanomachine plagues were capable of inflicting much more damage. The RF mainly employed them to 'efficiently' destroy the surfaces of every planet by devouring every structure and organism in a rapidly growing tide of hungry nanomachines!

They were not designed to chew on so much overly hard materials. They would have better luck if they bit into the flesh of the arche phase lords, but not that many of them had managed to bypass the shells.

As long as this remained the case, the 5 lesser phase lords would remain debilitated, but they were far from taken out of action!

"The arche phase lords are beginning to move! They are no longer content with remaining passive anymore!"

That was bad news. All of the weapons of mass destruction flung into their archeshells had caused them a lot of pain, but ultimately failed to cripple them. This allowed them to move forward with greater confidence now that the Bluejay Fleet had exhausted its stock of antimatter missiles.

"The arche phase lords are on a collision course with Fort Rock! If they are able to ram into our half-depleted defenses with sufficient momentum, they can crash through our remaining Titan Shields and shatter at least a third of the base structure on the spot!"

"Don't let these alien phase lords get close!"

Several squads of first-class multipurpose mechs began to attack the arche phase lords. They tried their best to target the weak points in their archeshells or strike at their relatively vulnerable sides.

The arche phase lords had a simple response to that. They altered their formation so that they formed a crude ball with 5 sides. Together with merging the sides of their shells, they formed an almost seamless whole that made it a lot more difficult to target their weak points!

While the cracked and nanomachine-infected archeshells still possessed numerous vulnerabilities, the first-class multipurpose mechs lacked the power or extraordinary factors that could allow them to inflict serious internal damage to their targets.

"Where are the Rosfields! We need the big guns to help us crack open these archeshells further!"

"Our only battleship-grade gun battery is preoccupied with suppressing the Arena Lord and the Distance Shaper. We cannot divert their firepower, or else the greater phase lords will have more space to showcase their power." "We need to direct more firepower at the advancing arche phase lords, or else Fort Rock will turn into pieces!"

As the arche phase lords imposed an ultimatum on Fort Rock, Ves mentally sighed.

All of the potent but ultimately mundane solutions had run their course. There was only so much that he could do against not 1, but 5 lesser phase lords, each of which happened to excel at defense.

Ves saw no other way to turn this situation around unless he entered the battlefield in person. No more excuses stood in his way to expose himself to a collection of enemies who really wanted him dead.

"Load 2 Hyper X-Ray Torpedoes in tubes 1 and 2. Load the final Hyper Spatial Crusher Torpedo in tube 3 and place the Lucky Delivery System in tube 4."

"Meow meow meow!"

"I am not going to launch you towards the enemy phase lords. It's too dangerous for you to attempt to blend in with the nanomachine plagues and chew on the exquisite archeshells of the enemy phase lords. You must stick to your original mission and infiltrate one of the flagships of the combined enemy fleet."

"Meoww..."

Ves did not stick around for long. He waited until he saw the right torpedoes being loaded in the right tubes before he decided to set off with his shabby raiment and his flute that he intended to use as a blunt force instrument for this coming engagement!

He found it rather surprising that his appearance on the battlefield did not generate any reaction.

The Arena Lord, the other phase lords and the cosmopolitans were way too preoccupied with their own immediate fights to notice that their primary objective had come out in the open!

Perhaps the only enemies that truly registered Ves' arrival were the 5 arche phase lords!

They had merged into a ball that was able to spin remarkably easy, but also made it a little difficult for them to maintain situational awareness.

All they saw was that a human phase lord had emerged with the clear intent on stopping what they deemed inevitable!

Ves pointed the staff in the direction of the approaching enemy phase lords.

"You shall go no further, aliens!"

First-class multipurpose mechs continued to harass the collection of archeshells, but only inflicted moderate damage to the absurdly strong physical defenses.

Interest in archetech had most definitely skyrocketed now that people witnessed the greater splendor of this deep and alien technological branch.

Ves had worked enough on archetech to know how much of a nightmare it was to attempt to break past transphasic archeshells.

His staff lacked the penetration power to pierce through those shells, so Ves either had to rely on cracking pieces of the shell apart with repeated strikes or figure out a more convoluted way to inflict real damage onto the aliens.

His lips already curled into a smirk as he already thought of a potential solution.

"It seems these arche phase lords fare best in resisting head-on attacks, but perform significantly worse when trying to fend off vastly undersized threats."

This gave Ves inspiration on what he could do to crack open a shell and stop the 5 phase lords from completing their collision course.

His body and staff already started to darken as Ves deliberately channeled it in order to grant him the special strength needed to inflict telling blows on the hardy arche phase lords!

"It's my turn now! Let me validate my new fighting skills!"