

Mech Touch 6431

Chapter 6431 Red Collective Factions

An hour before the start of the ceremony, Eliza led Ves and Lucky to a grand reception chamber where thousands of councilors and other high officials had gathered.

Each of them were expected to lead the relatively small but highly promising superorganization that may one day gain parity with the Red Association and the Red Fleet.

They had to do a lot of work before they could turn this dream into a reality, and Ves certainly did not make their jobs easier by introducing the most groundbreaking mechs since the start of the Age of Mechs!

This resulted in a rather ambivalent response towards his arrival.

On the one hand, Ves single-handedly made it possible for the Red Collective to come into existence.

Nobody forgot that Ves had castigated the mechers and the fleeters for their failure to address the needs of the common folk and created a political opening for the rise of a third superorganization.

Groups and individuals who previously saw no way to climb to the top of the hierarchy of human civilization eagerly pounced on this rare and precious opportunity to reform the current order!

Yet not everyone supported Ves because of that. His past accomplishments could not be denied, but his future actions may lead the Red Collective to greatness... or utter ruination.

The release of Carmine mechs was not a good sign, and reminded everyone that he did not always have the best interests of the RC at heart.

Though Ves already provided a valid and perfectly acceptable excuse to Eliza Mo Ragadan, not everyone may be as accepting as his chief of staff.

Still, he remained unrepentant. Not only did the Evolution Witch force him to introduce Carmine mechs to the public in a hurry, but Ves genuinely believed it was for the best for everyone.

As a Senior Mech Designer, he took his duty to his race and civilization seriously. He needed to retain and strengthen this mindset if he wanted to advance to the ranks of Master and Star Designer one day. There was no way he would compromise his bright future in this profession in order to prioritize selfish gains.

A few moments of silence passed as everyone acknowledged that Ves had arrived. Then they resumed their conversations as if nothing had happened. They had already shown the proper level of respect to the 'founder' of the Red Collective.

A familiar figure garbed in a similar but slightly plainer version of Ves' elaborate red robes approached from the side.

"Hierarch."

"Temple-Commander Jackarie."

"I have already resigned from that position after the Pantheon of Modern Gods has completed its consolidation." Oson Jackarie stated. "I occupied an enviable position in the Temple of Destruction, but I eventually managed to become selected to represent the PMG as its senator in the Upper Council. My relationship with you has played a decisive role in my success. You have my gratitude for all of the aid that you have provided so far. I would have gone down with the Temple of Falsehood without your intervention."

It only took a slight amount of effort for Ves to put in a good word for the former temple-commander, yet it was literally a career saver for the opportunistic fellow.

The soon-to-be upper councilor therefore owed a huge debt of gratitude to Ves! This meant that the high-ranking member of the PMG had become one of his strongest allies and confidantes in the Upper Council!

As far as Ves was concerned, he had earned an insane amount of profit from this 'transaction'!

The thought of that put him in a good mood. "The PMG made the right call. I do not know many people, but from what I can tell so far, you are alright. I am quite confident we can get along and cooperate well with each other."

"My thoughts are identical." Councilor Jackarie said in an obviously flattering manner.

The two slowly started to walk across the grand reception chamber.

"Meow."

Lucky felt tired of being carried around. He hopped from Ves' arms and began to sniff about by himself.

Ves was pretty sure that no one was allowed to bring any mechanical pets with them, but no one paid the gem cat any mind.

It was nice to enjoy the privileges of power.

While Lucky embarked on an unknown adventure, Oson Jackarie gently brought Ves up to speed on matters that were not too sensitive to wait until they could speak in private.

"The Red Collective's factions have solidified. Several ones that you used to be familiar with have collapsed. Others have taken their place and attracted enough councilors to gain their own weight in the Upper Council."

"Which ones are there right now?" Ves inquired.

"Well, our Coalition of Faiths and the Guardian Order are still the same as before. We constitute the two largest factions, though we also boast the lowest amount of cohesion due to gathering councilors from a large variety of states and organizations. Still, as long as we are strongly around a cause, we can amass a formidable amount of voting power."

"I see. What else?"

"There are the usual four suspects. There is a faction for the Red Association, the Red Fleet, the Terran Alliance and the Rubarthan Pact. Do note that there are councilors who are a part of the Coalition of Faiths or the Guardian Order that are also members of those four aforementioned factions. Councilor Astrid Jameson of the Red Fleet is a good example of that. None of the factions has prohibited dual memberships, partly because the factions need all of the councilors they can get, and also because none of the factions possess a particularly strong identity at the moment."

Ves shrugged. "I can't blame the councilors for that. The councilors from the Terran Alliance can never ignore the superstate that they are supposed to represent. It is still nice if we can count on them to help our Coalition of Faiths whenever possible. We can keep track of every councilor's degree of support and reward them accordingly."

There was little else they could do about this. Factions did not constitute parties within the Lower and Upper Councils because every councilor got elected or appointed to their positions based on individual merits, and not due to any party affiliations.

The factions therefore served as fairly loose clubs where councilors with shared interests could convene and better coordinate their joint proposals and political actions.

"How is the League of Minor States doing?" Ves asked.

"The League is also diverse, but it has experienced remarkably little upheaval. The councilors of many third-rate and second-rate states know that they are too weak when they are scattered. They do not have egos as strong as their first-class counterparts, so the League of Minor States has the strongest reason to remain united. One factor that you need to take note of is that the League has a much greater presence in the Lower Council."

That made sense. Second-raters and third-raters held little power in today's society. The Lower Council existed to provide proper representation to their citizens, but that helped little with regards to the composition of the Upper Council.

This meant that the League of Minor States still managed to become a political heavyweight in the Red Collective. It did not matter if they were lacking in upper councilors. As long as their lower councilors were numerous enough, they could block the passage of all sorts of bills!

"Over there are the councilors that have chosen to form the Collective Authority." Oson Jackarie gestured to a group of councilors that had gathered in a secluded corner. "As the name suggests, the Collective Authority believes in strengthening the Red Collective and centralizing as much power as possible. This faction is where the old authoritarians, centralists and wannabe empire builders have gathered. It has already built up a radical reputation due to its strong opposition towards dual memberships."

"I see."

The Collective Authority sounded like trouble. A large majority of stakeholders did not support centralization unless all of the power got concentrated in their direction.

Since there were so many groups that had a significant stake in the Red Collective, it was impossible for one of them to monopolize all of the benefits!

This should result in an equilibrium where no one could effectively gain decisive control over the Red Collective.

The policies supported by the Collective Authority threatened to overthrow this tentative balance and introduce a lot of uncertainty.

"Any other factions that I should know about?" Ves inquired as he politely nodded his head to a few familiar faces that aligned with him in the past.

"No. There are half-a-dozen minor factions, but they usually consist of two or three individual councilors. They are small interest groups at best and it is doubtful whether they will persist in a few years. They may be worth cooperating with if we are missing a number of crucial votes in the Upper Council, but you can leave them alone outside of that. The fact that there is only room for 150 senators limits the degree of splintering."

"Mhmm. I understand. From our perspective, which factions will we cooperate with the most according to your judgment?"

"It is too early to tell." Oson Jackarie shook his head. "We should be able to gain the cooperation of the Terran and Rubarthan Factions in any proposals that weaken the power of the Red Association and the Red Fleet. Aside from that, we do not have a strong synergy with the other factions. The Collective Authority is strongly opposed to our Coalition of Faiths because we are in favor of decentralizing the Red Collective. Please keep that in mind."

"I will not forget."

Ves had mixed feelings about that. The Collective Authority could actually increase Ves' authority if it had its way.

Yet any form of centralization would weaken the sects, of which many different religious organizations planned to transition into. There were too many advantages to gaining the status of

sects, most notably a legal way to gain power and a license to spread their influence over human society.

Giving more power to sects would result in greater diversity in thought and practice, but it would also shift a lot of focus and important resources from the Red Collective itself.

A balance needed to be found between the two sides. Neither of them could be allowed to gain all of the power.

As Councilor Jackarie continued to explain the most up-to-date power dynamic within the Upper and Lower Councils, a chime suddenly sounded.

A pair of massive double doors slowly parted open.

Just behind the door stood a man with a military dress uniform.

The sergeant at arms loudly bellowed his instructions with augmented lungs.

"ESTEEMED COUNCILORS, PLEASE ENTER THE SHRINE OF LIGHT AND TAKE YOUR ASSIGNED PLACES. KNOW THAT YOUR EVERY WORD AND DEED WILL BE RECORDED IN THE ANNALS OF RED HUMANITY, SO BE MINDFUL HOW YOU ACT!"

The councilors all fell silent and began to exit the grand reception chamber in an orderly fashion. It was rather impressive to see them all move so harmoniously despite the fact that they had already made enemies among themselves.

"Meow."

Lucky returned to Ves' side and chose to hover next to the mech designer as if he was a floating fashion accessory.

His appearance looked quite out of place among all of the solemn-faced and formally dressed councilors, but Ves actually liked how the cat caused him to stand out from the crowd.

As soon as Ves passed the threshold and entered the Shrine of Light, he immediately learned why it got its name.

The rays of light emitted by Yernstall's trinary stars shone through the crystalline materials that made up the Astral Octagon and illuminated the most central and sacred hall with astonishing rays of light.

A combination of beautiful white light rays and a scattering of dispersed rainbow color rays all shone and reflected on the bright and crystalline floor and furniture.

Though the people who were more sensitive towards light than usual had to dim their vision, Ves thought the Shrine of Light looked enchanting.

There was a strong concentration of extraordinary energies, and they did not solely originate from the three stars that powered the Yernstall Central Star Node.

There were a bunch of other strong energy sources buried beneath the crystal floor. Ves could sense their threat and potency much clearer now that he had come close!

Chapter 6432 Pure and Light

The Shrine of Light was a remarkable architectural work.

The enormous chamber that was located in the very center of the Astral Octagon obtained its light from all sorts of external sources, most notably the trinary stars that supplied the Yernstall Central Star Node with a lot of light and energy.

The Dyson swarms that intercepted a significant fraction of the outgoing electromagnetic radiation still let out enough illumination to light up much of the Astral Octagon's interior.

It took precise calculations and a lot of artistic imagination to shape light into art.

This was especially the case when the Shrine of Light had to look good at every hour of the day!

Throw in the orbital mechanics of the Astral Octagon, La Reine and the motion of other large light-reflecting objects, the calculations quickly turned dizzyingly complex!

Ves knew a thing or two about light, crystals and optics, but he felt as if he was a small child compared to the architects and designers who masterminded the creation of the Shrine of Light!

This was because the crystals did not only shape light.

They also shaped the passage of E energy.

Ves did not know what hyper materials had been used to produce this subtle effect, but Ves could clearly feel that the crystals had significantly reduced the passage of negative E energy radiation, while also increasing the concentrating positive E energy radiation towards the center of the Astral Octagon.

This caused everyone to feel lighter, more optimistic and more hopeful.

The people that kept entering the Shrine of Light from different directions all felt as if their burdens had lifted and that that red humanity was no longer doomed.

It was... heavenly.

He strongly suspected that a Star Designer like the Plasma Shaper or the Dimensional Architect was responsible for conceiving this magnificent space.

As a mech designer with a strong appreciation for both science and art, he continued to remain dazzled by the unique and dynamic interplay between white and colored light rays.

Nothing looked artificial. The massive chamber that was large enough to house starships offered a huge amount of space to showcase momentary objects painted by specific combinations of light rays.

From pyramids to peacocks, the lightshow constantly created new illusions that looked so ethereal that Ves felt as if he had stepped into a heavenly theater.

He could tell that he was far from the only person who became impressed by the sight. The Shrine of Light quickly earned its way to the list of heritage sites due to brilliant architectural design!

Soon enough, the councilors split in half.

Those in darker red robes ascended one flight of stairs and sat on their designated crystal seats.

Those in brighter red robes ascended two flights of stairs. They soon stepped foot on an enormous rectangular crystal platform where their crystal seats, no, thrones awaited their arrival.

Naturally, Ves received instructions to claim the crystal throne that was placed in the center of the front row. This was a silent confirmation that he was most likely able to claim the highest position in the Upper Throne.

Ves exchanged a brief look with Councilor Jackarie.

The senator from the Pantheon of Modern Gods did not possess a high status within the Upper Council, so he had to sit much further behind.

The two nodded before they went their separate ways.

None of the councilors were accompanied by bodyguards or assistants at this time. Their followers could only wait around in a waiting room or take their places at the general seating places.

Hundreds of thousands of guests had arrived to witness the founding ceremony in person.

Many of them were leaders in their respective states, but the Red Collective also made sure that enough 'ordinary people' obtained a chance to attend this historic event.

None of the guests made any noise at this time. The chamber deliberately dampened sound waves generated from human speech, thereby causing the Shrine of Light to make an even stronger otherworldly impression.

The unusual changes in the composition of E energy radiation gently suppressed any unrest or uncertainty. All of the people that entered the Shrine of Light found that their patience and forbearance had magically increased.

They could sit in this magnificent chamber and observe the endless interplay of light rays taking place above their heads for hours without growing bored!

Even Lucky grew fascinated as he jumped onto Ves' lap and settled into place.

The seats began to fill up quickly. The process had been planned months in advance by the most competent planners in the Red Ocean. Nothing at all went wrong during this crucial day.

Once all of the guests had arrived and taken their places, the enormous double doors slowly slammed shut.

The Shrine of Light had become an enclosed chamber, at least for the time being.

Absolute silence stretched for two more minutes. People could only hear their own breathing, but nothing else.

No pompous music began to echo across the walls.

No colorful banners emerged to announce the establishment of the Red Collective.

No flower petals fell from above.

Only light and silence dominated the Shrine of Light.

Just as everyone expected for this silent moment to persist for a few more minutes, the largest set of double doors located at the far end of the chamber slowly slid open.

A large number of metal-on-crystal collisions sounded in the chamber. It sounded as if a troop of mechs was about to enter the Shrine of Light.

As the large mech-like shapes stepped forward until they finally began to pass through the entrance, it soon became clear that they were not what everyone thought!

The giant forms initially looked like humanoid mechs, but it became clear that they only shared a resemblance to the classic machines.

Underneath all of the thick layers of armor were giant human forms that had been magnified to the scale of mechs!

Ves along with many other people reacted in complete surprise at the sight!

Those were actual humans moving underneath their well-designed raiments!

Ves could tell that they were humans because no biomechs possessed that distinctive human look. It was extremely unlikely for the Red Collective to attempt to fool the masses by commissioning biomechs that just happened to look extremely human-like.

The obvious conclusion was that the Red Collective had finally decided to showcase its initial unit of human phase lords in public!

Many councilors including Ves had not been deeply involved in the planning of the founding ceremony. At most, they made suggestions or made contributions to specific sections, but none of them were aware of the full program.

If the Red Collective wanted to make a dramatic first or second impression, then it had most definitely succeeded!

It was not just the remarkable nature of human phase lords that captivated observers.

As pairs of human phase lords wearing identical blue-coated raiments with purple accents continued to pass through the enormous entrance, more of them kept approaching from behind.

Their quantity already impressed a lot of people.

As pairs of human phase lords wearing identical blue-coated raiments with purple accents continued to pass through the enormous entrance, more of them kept approaching from behind.

The synchronized footsteps they made on the surface of the crystal floor caused the entire shrine to vibrate and echo at increasing amplitudes.

It was not until a whopping 60 human phase lords managed to get past the opened double doors that the procession finally reached its limit!

A lot of people grew relieved, but there were also viewers who grew disappointed.

Was that it? Did red humanity spend so much time and resources to figure out how to raise human phase lords, only to produce 60 of them in the end?

Their scale also seemed lacking. It was quite impressive for humans to be able to grow to the scale of mechs, but that was trivial in the eyes of a true alien phase lord or phase whale!

Still, not everyone dismissed the combat power of these human phase lords.

What they lacked in size, they made up for it in quantity.

Depending on how difficult it was to cultivate human phase lords, it may be possible for red humanity to counter the threat of alien phase lords by throwing lots of human ones on the battlefield!

Second, human phase lords were still a new phenomenon. There was still room for growth for each of these giant human soldiers. They just needed more time and phasewater to double or triple the height of their true bodies and become as powerful as Ves at his current level of cultivation!

Third, their raiments were much more advanced than the more rudimentary ones utilized by the native aliens.

Red humanity had access to over four centuries of mech development. Even if phase lord raiments needed to be completely hollow, that still left a lot of external space to mount armor plating, external power sources, flight systems and other modules!

There were also swords, spears, rifles, cannons and other handheld equipment!

Each of these phase lord-adapted products were originally derived from highly optimized and developed mech systems!

Merging mech technology with human phase lord thereby resulted in a much greater synergy between technology and body cultivation!

As such, the gathering of 60 human phase lords equipped with purpose-built raiments exuded a much stronger sense of oppression than 60 first-class multipurpose mechs!

Part of it was because of red humanity's unfamiliarity with the human variant of phase lords, but another part of it was because each of them generated a remarkably consistent spatial energy field that charged the surrounding air in a very subtle manner.

Ves' expression changed a little. As the first human phase lord, he could roughly figure out what these giant soldiers were doing. They were just employing a trick to increase their intimidation factor.

However, the implications were much greater than that. When 60 human phase lords vibrated the fabric of space at nearly the same frequency, they generated a form of spatial resonance that could produce much more devastating consequences if they were being serious!

His head immediately thought about the possible combat applications of this method.

If the Red Collective ever sent out this elite human phase lord unit at an enemy force, the 60 giants could assume a formation and use their Maracos organs to shake the fabric of space at the same frequency but with much greater power than before!

As long as the quantity and power was enough, then they could potentially generate a cataclysmic space quake that could sunder entire alien assault fleets and tear apart the spatial barriers of formidable alien phase lords!

Ves immediately realized the difference between the human and alien approach towards phase lords.

The native aliens all the way to the Red Cabal considered phase lords and phase whales to be literal gods.

No god was the same. Each of them possessed their own legendary stories that propelled them to godhood. Every phase leader sought to create his own divine myth and did all they could to differentiate themselves from their rival gods.

The very notion of gathering a bunch of alien phase lords together and forcing them to develop the same powers and integrate the same phasewater organs sounded heretical to the native aliens!

A god was not supposed to be a faceless grunt!

Red humanity clearly thought differently. The Red Collective's Phase Lord Department had no qualms about cultivating multiple human phase lords in the same way.

This was because humans did not regard phase lords as gods, not even their human variants!

Since humans just regarded them as overgrown people with magical spatial abilities, they did not have any taboos about training them into gigantic elite troopers that fully leveraged the advantage of teamwork and coordination!

Impressive.

Creative.

This was the sort of imagination and planning that red humanity depended upon to overcome their numerically superior foes.

Ves could easily foresee that once the RC started to send out squads or companies of human phase lords in the field, entire war theaters might turn around due to the amazing combat effectiveness of these superhuman assets!

Chapter 6433 Showing Off Muscles

All of the red humans watching the broadcast from their own homes and workplaces became awed by what was taking place in the Shrine of Light.

Unlike the individuals who received the privilege to attend the founding ceremony in person, those watching from remote did not get to enjoy the purifying light and sacred atmosphere of this dazzling grand chamber.

Neither did they experience the subtle spatial manipulation generated by 60 human phase lords working in total unison.

The upsized human soldiers wearing extremely well-designed blue raiments with purple accents looked even more eye-catching due to the spectacular plumes extending from their helmets. Their alternating blue-and-white colorations made them look taller, more special and more uniform.

While the human phase lords mounted a variety of different weapons onto their backs, they currently held giant black halberds in their hands. They all maintained the exact same stances, causing the long weapons to generate a black pattern that emphasized the impeccable training and discipline of these giant superhumans.

Their long and vicious transphasic hyper polearms looked as if they were tailor-made to tear and pierce through phase lord flesh and warship hulls alike!

Ves along with every other red human couldn't wait to see these human phase lords in action.

Even if they only deployed in smaller numbers, they could potentially achieve a lot more results on the battlefield if they compensated their lack of cultivation progress with numbers and teamwork.

However, there may be a chance that the 60 powerful giants might not set foot on the battlefield anytime soon. They may instead be used as an elite guard unit assigned to defend the Astral Octagon and other strategically valuable facilities of the Red Collective.

At most, these initial human phase lords may be used to train batches of subsequent phase lords that emerged at a later date.

The Phase Lord Department had a vested interest in producing more human phase lords. It would never have as much say within the power structure of the RC if the number of human phase lords was not large enough to affect the Red War.

As the 60 giants reached their positions around the center and took up guard stances, they finally announced their designation to the masses!

The lead officer with a more elaborately shaped plume on his helmet bellowed out his words with an earthshaking roar!

"UR-TITAN PHALANX!"

The rest of the giants proceeded to slam their armored feet against the crystal deck and echo those words with their loudest voices!

CRACK!

"UR-TITAN PHALANX!"

"THE MIGHTY SHALL FALL!"

"THE MIGHTY SHALL FALL!"

The entire Shrine of Light seemed to shake as those loud roars intertwined and resonated with each other, causing the people sitting the closest towards the center to feel as if their eardrums were under pressure!

There was power in those roars. The Ur-Titan Phalanx not only announced their identities with pride and conviction, but also set themselves apart from the phase leaders of the native aliens!

The Ur-Titans not only addressed their fellow red humans, but also any native aliens that managed to watch this footage!

By explicitly organizing themselves into formal and disciplined military units, the Ur-Titans completely rejected the deification of phase lords.

As enormous and alien as they appeared, these Ur-Titans nonetheless clung to their identities as red humans and readily acknowledged their own mortality.

The separation between ordinary humans and human phase lords was much smaller than the enormous divide between native aliens and their high-and-mighty gods!

Ves guessed that this fundamental attitude caused the Ur-Titans to adopt such a strange motto. It initially sounded as if they were belittling their own combat effectiveness, but it was actually aimed straight at the phase lords and phase whales among the native aliens!

The use of the word phalanx was another interesting choice. It evoked the image of hundreds if not thousands of soldiers holding out long spears in the same direction. Every soldier looked and moved identically, making it impossible to distinguish any single individual from the formation.

This was a clear signal that the Phase Lord Department adopted combat doctrines that relied upon drilling phase lords into army units.

This contradicted sharply with the practice of nurturing every talented fighter into individual champions as was common among mech pilots.

As the Ur-Titans settled into their places, the next unit of cultivators emerged from the open entrance!

Everyone shifted their attention to the much smaller but vastly more numerous infantrymen that marched into the Shrine of Light.

These human-scaled soldiers were all clad in ominous black transphasic hyper armor plating made of very impressive materials. Fiery orange highlights shone between the seams, each of them exuding a strong sense of fire.

The temperature seemed to grow hotter around them as hundreds and eventually a thousand of them entered the Shrine of Light.

As far as equipment went, they carried long rifles on their backs, tower shields in one arm and short but thick hammers in their other arm.

Their footsteps were much softer than the ones made by the Ur-Titans, but the human troopers were so much more numerous that they generated a different kind of momentum.

Different from the Ur-Titans, a handful of black-and-orange soldiers also carried tall banners that proudly displayed their insignia as well as a big '1st', which indicated that this military unit was just the first of many.

The most striking part about the banners was that they depicted a broken planet in flames. That certainly hinted that this unit meant business.

The soldiers marched in lockstep with each other, but since their human-scaled legs were much smaller than that of the Ur-Titans, they took a lot longer to approach the center.

Nobody minded the delay. People continued to grow more and more fascinated by this troop of elite soldiers.

It went without saying that they should be anything but ordinary footsoldiers. Infantry still played a vital role in many military organizations, but their prestige was always the lowest due to the suppression of mechs.

Now that Carmine mechs entered the scene, it became questionable whether it was worthwhile enough to invest in the establishment of elite infantry units.

Even so, that did not diminish people's appreciation for this top elite infantry force. With the introduction of the Ur-Titan Phalanx, most people managed to figure out that these black-and-orange soldiers had to possess special abilities of their own in order to earn their place in this founding ceremony.

In fact, calling it a founding ceremony was not quite comprehensive. The planners actually turned the first phase of the event into a military parade of sorts!

The reason for that was easy to figure out. Few people took the Red Collective seriously. It was too new and relied on the handouts of the major players in order to build its headquarters and staff its offices. It lacked the might and deterrence that the mechers and the fleeters built up over 4 centuries.

Starting off by showing off the elite military units that it had raised in the last year was a good way to reverse this prevailing image.

The Red Collective needed to show its muscles, or at least the hint of them, in order to get taken seriously in today's society!

Only when people feared the chance that they would receive an unwelcome visit from a few Ur-Titans or other powerful cultivators would they put away their bag of dirty tricks and do their business honestly with the new superorganization.

At this time, the 1000 armored troopers finally came close to the center of the Shrine of Light. Their black and fiery plating contrasted sharply against the bright and crystalline interior of the ceremonial chamber.

The banner holders raised their poles higher while the leading officer took a few steps forward, thereby drawing everyone's attention.

He slowly raised his ornate black hammer and proceeded to activate a function that caused the weapon to light up in flames!

The hot flames already caused the air above the weapon to shimmer, but the infantry commander was not done.

He began to exert his cultivation to add a spiritual quality to the flames!

This caused the flames to grow larger and more extraordinary, though the hammer itself remained unharmed!

This was not all. What the commander did next surprised Ves and many other people.

His companion spirit sprung forth from his chest!

What was interesting to Ves was that the companion spirit did not take the shape of a cat, a bird, a human or any other organism.

Instead, the commander's companion spirit came in the form of a hammer whose shape was identical to the weapon in his grasp!

The weapon-shaped companion spirit floated in the air for a few seconds before it flew into the physical hammer.

Everything seemed to change after that. Now that the hammer received a very welcome guest, it lit up and evolved into a more advanced form.

The commander held up his torch-like hammer before crashing it onto the front surface of his tower shield.

The fire that blazed from the hammerhead underwent a qualitative transformation!

Though it still burned orange, the size of the flames and the heat emanating from them had drastically risen!

Not only that, but the flames seemed to come under the control of a conscious being, causing them to assume shapes that natural fire could never produce!

The commander held up his torch-like hammer before crashing it onto the front surface of his tower shield.

Clang!

Not only did the impact produce a loud noise, but it also caused the flames to crash and spread across the front in a cone-like blast!

At this time, the 999 troopers standing behind the commander proceeded to raise their own hammers and made the same actions!

Each of them practiced the same fire-attributed qi cultivation method.

Each of them possessed hammers that burst into flames.

Each of them developed the exact same fire hammers as their companion spirits.

When these fire hammers inhabited the physical hammers, the latter came to life and started to produce much more powerful and exotic flames!

As the fire cultivators slammed their fire-empowered hammers against their tower shields, they produced such a massive wave of fire explosions that it engulfed much of their formation!

WOOSH!

The flames looked powerful and deadly enough to kill hundreds of thousands of people if they happened to fall within the range of those destructive fire bursts!

The power of a single fire burst might not be impressive, but when so many fire cultivators pulled off the same move in close proximity, they somehow managed to amplify each other's actions, enabling them to inflict greater damage in combination!

Fortunately, their black-and-orange armor was highly resistant towards fire damage, so the soldiers did not suffer any injuries as far as anyone could tell!

Ves' eyes lit up in interest!

He already had a theory of what just happened.

The physical hammers were excellent technical products, but possessed low metaphysical properties.

They were not comparable to the likes of the Oceancaller and the Flower Parasol.

However, once the soldiers inserted their companion spirits into their hammers, their weapons temporarily turned into high-level artifacts, thereby gaining new and more effective capabilities!

Although the hammers could not pass off as authentic high-level artifacts, they gained enough of a boost that it didn't matter too much!

There was huge potential in this approach. The cultivation of the infantry soldiers and their companion spirits was currently a little low, but once they had more time to build up their power, they could unleash an unimaginable amount of power, especially when they fought as an army!

The fire soldiers began to make their next move.

The commander raised his flaming hammer before his companion spirit shot out and rose into the air.

Once the lone fire hammer reached a commanding height, 999 other troopers pulled off the same move.

1000 fire hammers rose in the air and formed a perfect array that mirrored the column of fire soldiers.

Then, almost all of the hammers began to fly forward. They slowly converged upon the fire hammer at the front that belonged to the commander of the unit.

Ves and many other observers grew surprised when they saw that the hammers seamlessly merged with each other.

There was no sign of rejection!

The sight initially did not appear to be too special, but then the sequence kept repeating. One fire hammer after another kept merging into the commander's fire hammer.

This subsequently caused the leading fire hammer to grow larger, hotter and more imposing than before.

Once there was only 1 fire hammer left, it had reached a scale that made it look as if it could dent a mech!

The infantry commander kept his free arm raised before decisively swinging it downwards.

At the same time, the massive fire hammer descended from the air like a falling meteorite and slammed against the crystal floor with apocalyptic force!

BOOOOOM!

The collision produced such an enormous release of kinetic force and flames that it was as if a giant incendiary bomb just exploded at the impact site!

Destructive flames and shockwaves spread everywhere and threatened to kill the people sitting closest in the center of the chamber!

Fortunately for everyone, multiple strong azure energy shields came to life and easily contained the pre-planned display of power.

Soon enough, the 1000 fire soldiers came into view once again. The flames and shockwaves had spread to them as well, but they all managed to stand their ground and resist the energies with impeccable confidence.

By the time the flames completely subsided, the leading officer proudly announced his unit name!

"1st APOCALYPSE WARDEN BATTALION!"

A thousand armored feet slammed against the crystal floor!

Crack!

"1ST APOCALYPSE WARDEN BATTALION!"

"RUINATION BEFORE DEATH!"

The soldiers all slammed their flaming hammers against their tower shields!

CLANG!

"RUINATION BEFORE DEATH!"

Chapter 6434 The Advantages of Cultivation

The Apocalypse Wardens made an explosive first impression.

The black-clad soldiers proceeded to part in half before taking up positions on both sides of the central avenue.

They stood just before the giant feet of the Ur-Titans.

The Apocalypse Wardens looked tiny in comparison to the Ur-Titans, which caused them to look a lot weaker.

However, their quantity was much greater, which immediately conveyed multiple different meanings.

It was clear that it took a huge amount of resources to cultivate just 60 human phase lords.

Sure, the investment was far greater this time because red humanity was going in blind. Now that they successfully explored a viable pathway to turn humans into bonafide phase lords, the department responsible for raising them could train subsequent batches a lot more efficiently.

Even so, the demand for phasewater would always remain. The body mass of just a single human phase lord already encompassed the body mass of lots of Apocalypse Wardens!

Multiply that by 60, then the absolute amount of phasewater required to produce all of these human phase lords was astronomical!

What was even more troublesome was that the Ur-Titans were all at the low end of the lesser phase lord stage at the moment. Their body cultivation had made relatively little progress. None of them had reached the size of more combat capable alien phase lords such as the Trampler of Stars or the arche lesser phase lords.

The cost to increase the cultivation of the Ur-Titans by a noticeable degree would probably take 3 to 10 as much phasewater!

While the Ur-Titans may be able to reach the size of Ves or even more, the benefits of doing so were questionable!

Right now, it was clear that the Phase Lord Department saw more merit in making human phase lords as large as mechs before equipping them with mech-like gear.

This was the poor man's approach towards weaponizing phase lords, but Ves did not blame the Phase Lord Department.

Phasewater was still a scarce resource, and the major players were extremely reluctant to donate tons of this exotic substance just to pursue an incredibly resource-heavy method of body cultivation.

Even if it was not cost effective to raise human phase lords for the purpose of raising special combat units that could make a difference in the ongoing war, the Red Collective still had to engage in this research, if only to understand their enemies better.

Compared to the giant soldiers, the much smaller Apocalypse Warden troopers appeared much more reasonable.

The fact that the Cultivation Method Department managed to train 1000 soldiers in a consistent manner and have them develop the exact same traits and abilities was a testament to the universality of their solutions!

It showed that the difficulty and resource intensity of raising a battalion of fire-attributed qi cultivators was likely not as expensive!

In fact, even if the Apocalypse Wardens were equipped with excellent first-class combat equipment made out of expensive exotics and hypers, the small scale of every soldier meant that the total resource usage was quite low, especially compared to mechs!

The unveiling of the Apocalypse Wardens therefore highlighted the advantages of fielding militarized qi cultivators. They derived a lot of strength from absorbing E energy radiation that was always freely available. They were much less reliant on high-grade resources that red humanity was short of at the moment.

Of course, not every sect or organization could raise a troop as luxurious as the Apocalypse Wardens.

The Red Collective had much greater access to phasewater and other high-quality resources.

The RC had also taken over the management of companion spirit fruit trees, so it could easily supply a lot of soldiers with companion spirits.

Other forces would have a much harder time to raise troops as strong as the Apocalypse Wardens.

However, there was no need to reach their level of strength. It was already good to raise lots of soldiers that possessed half or even a quarter of the combat power as the Apocalypse Wardens!

As long as the price of raising them was much lower as well, this could still turn into a profitable exchange!

Of course, the bigger question was where all of these powerful qi cultivation soldiers should fight.

They could not fight in open space, and they were not that useful in planetary battles unless they fought in urban regions.

Ves personally figured that there were three good uses to these enhanced infantry soldiers.

First, they could serve as excellent guards and defenders of urban settlements.

Second, they should be able to board and take over enemy warships a lot more effectively.

Third, they could raid enemy cities and sneak into deep and well-protected facilities without inflicting excessive collateral damage.

Finally, they could be used for infiltration. Nobody would be on guard against ordinary humans.

Even without any combat gear, the Apocalypse Wardens should still be able to inflict a lot of damage by themselves!

Perhaps there may be other uses for qi cultivation soldiers, but this was what he could think of at the moment.

The parade continued onwards, though the subsequent formations of cultivations did not make impressions as shocking as that of the Ur-Titans and the Apocalypse Wardens.

Perhaps that was all the Red Collective had been able to produce in a short amount of time.

It could also be that the RC still wanted to keep its trump cards hidden and avoid showing off too much strategically valuable information to the native aliens.

Whatever the case, the next groups of cultivators showcased different strengths and possibilities.

For example, there was a troop of robed women who elegantly danced and spun across the air without the use of technology. Each time they swung their fans, they released gusts of winds that could blast people away.

There was a group of humans who wore ordinary clothes, yet made themselves completely invisible and unnoticeable. They managed to do this without wearing any devices on their person!

There was another group of people who were able to generate force fields, allowing them to act as hidden bodyguards so long as they did not expose their true identities.

The power of these qi cultivators was not high, but their lack of dependence on technology made them very suitable in situations where heavy hardware could not be relied upon.

They also became even more effective if they did make use of modern equipment. Their cultivation-derived abilities could easily synergize with a lot of useful technological solutions!

After the Red Collective was done with showing off some of its muscles, the parade began to change in tone.

Instead of presenting soldiers, the Red Collective began to unveil a variety of non-combatants.

The first group of non-combatants consisted of people that gave off a familiar impression to Ves.

These were green-robed figures who all brought small-sized trees and plants with them. Their plants were transported by floating bots of various sizes.

Once the wood cultivators reached the center of the Shrine of Light, they briefly showcased their abilities.

"Grow."

A sapling rapidly absorbed the energies of multiple cultivators and frantically drew on the nutrients locked inside the soil. It grew taller at such an astounding speed that many people would have called this demonstration fake!

However, Ves could clearly sense that the sapling was truly alive, and that the huge influx of structured wood energy forcefully promoted its growth!

The wood cultivators apparently mastered a technique that could forcefully grow and age a plant without causing it to burst apart, lose its vitality or suffer severe defects!

The only downside was that the wood cultivators were too weak to sustain their effort. The sapling eventually grew into a tree that was only twice as tall as a human.

This was an amazing result considering that only a handful of humans managed to produce such a result without resorting to high technology.

Once their cultivation improved, these wood cultivators may be able to revive an entire planet's worth of forests!

The wood cultivators demonstrated a few other abilities.

"Wither."

A remarkably familiar withering curse caused another tree to age and dry up before it finally cracked and fell apart.

"Ripen."

Ves sat up a little straighter. He already noticed that one of the trees the wood cultivators had brought was actually a companion spirit fruit tree!

Even though its biological composition was closer to an exobeast rather than a real tree, the wood cultivators still managed to promote the ripening of a dozen or so fruits!

The immature companion spirits seemed to fast-forward their development by more than a week!

Though the efficiency of the cultivation technique was ultimately a lot lower due to the special and abnormal properties of the companion spirit fruit tree, the wood cultivators succeeded in harvesting a batch of precious fruits ahead of time!

Amazing!

These wood cultivators could play a critical role in the care of companion spirit fruit trees and the production of their bounty.

They were the perfect caretakers of these highly valuable trees!

Although the wood cultivators ultimately did not demonstrate any combat techniques, it was completely unnecessary as far as Ves was concerned.

He understood the purpose of this display.

Who said that cultivation had to be all about fighting?

Only a minority of red humans were suited for combat.

There were many other people who did not have the guts or other reasons to fight on an actual battlefield.

In that sense, the Red Collective offered pathways towards extraordinary power that did not involve violence.

This was one of the RC's strongest advantages.

Currently, the Red Association and the Red Fleet overwhelmingly oriented itself towards combat and warfare.

The Red Association held an additional advantage in that it offered a path for mech designers to ascend to greatness, but not everyone was willing and able to study and devote their life to mech design.

The Red Collective on the other hand could turn almost every peaceful professional into a cultivator that excelled at his respective craft!

This message became increasingly clearer to everyone as other groups of non-combatants emerged and showcased their talents.

There were baseline human scientists and engineers who demonstrated vastly superior memory, calculation and other mental processing capabilities.

Their raw performance rivaled the likes of first-raters that could only reach this level of performance by investing thousands of MTA credits in augmentations!

The performance of these baseline humans would constantly improve so long as they kept making progress in their cultivation.

They could definitely speed up their improvement by making use of cultivation resources, but they should also be able to make progress without spending any further money!

The next group of non-combatants consisted of singers.

Everyone in the Shrine of Light felt more relaxed as they listened to the ethereal voices of the singers as they elegantly glided towards the center of the grand chamber.

If people still bore a lot of stress and concerns even after they became subjected to the special circumstances of the Shrine of Light, then this time they completely managed to shake off their burdens!

It was hard to imagine that the singers could make all of this happen without looking as if they exerted themselves.

Their voices were all empowered by E energy. These sirens not only knew how to manipulate their audience's emotions and perception, but also managed to amplify the cleansing and purifying effect of the Shrine of Light!

These singers could easily serve as the extraordinary choir of this sacred shrine!

More extraordinary professionals appeared. That meant that more and more people found that they could vastly improve their performance at work as long as they practiced a cultivation method that was tailored for their jobs!

The individual message of this parade was that cultivation was too valuable for civilians to pass up. If they could not become Carmine mech pilots, then why not practice a basic cultivation method that could directly improve their work performance?

The overall message of these demonstrations went a lot deeper. The Red Collective basically suggested that as long as civilians practiced basic cultivation methods on a wide scale, red humanity's productivity would skyrocket!

Everyone would be able to get so much more stuff done that human civilization should partially be able to reduce the disadvantages of being outnumbered by the native aliens!

On this aspect alone, the Red Collective had already proven its worth to society!

Chapter 6435 The Arrival of the Witch

A lot of people underestimated the Red Collective.

The Red Association had mech pilots, Carmine mech pilots and mech designers on its side, each of whom had a chance to become exceptionally powerful or versatile True Gods.

The Red Fleet did not currently feature prominent cultivators, but if they did manage to develop and embrace a few cultivation methods, they would probably focus all of their resources on raising better officers, spacers and naval engineers.

While all of that sounded great, the greatest disadvantage of the RA and the RF was that they were almost completely oriented towards military development and military industrial development.

Neither the RA or the RF put too much emphasis on civilian industries. While its members started up a lot of businesses that encompassed many different sectors, they always existed to support their main activities, which was to support the development of mechs or warships.

Even if they chose to branch out, there was no confidence that they could do a good job. What did mechs have to do with cooking? What did warships have to do with music?

Only the collies could cover all of the areas that the mechers and fleeters missed out. The Red Collective not only promoted cultivation for the purpose of raising soldiers, but also to promote the development of humanity's civil society.

E energy radiation was ubiquitous and completely free. There was no reason to squander this valuable resource while it was so widely available. Giving every professional a safe and effective way to increase their intelligence, reaction speed, physical strength and so on could make them a lot better at their jobs!

Of course, the cultivation methods released to the public had to be extremely basic and easy to practice. The simpler the scriptures, the lower the chance that anything could go wrong.

Ves knew that the Red Collective was also reluctant to hand over strong methods to the masses. It was better to keep them busy with the basic stuff while leaving the responsibility of teaching more advanced methods to sects or the collies themselves.

As the parade came to an end, the Shrine of Light had become a lot busier.

The arrival of a large number of combatants and non-combatants of the Red Collective showcased the strength and versatility of human cultivators.

A decade from now, a collection of humans with the power to summon fire hammers, accelerate the growth of plants and hypnotize people to sleep with their voices would become a lot more common across human-occupied space!

The various cultivators may have developed vastly different strengths and powers, but one trait they shared in common was that they had far surpassed their human limitations!

The large group of cultivators essentially served as a harbinger of the future.

A decade from now, a collection of humans with the power to summon fire hammers, accelerate the growth of plants and hypnotize people to sleep with their voices would become a lot more common across human-occupied space!

The proportion of people without any attainments in cultivation would become a rare sight. Perhaps only children, disabled people and so on would retain their human limitations.

Many people looked forward to entering this future. Birth, capital and connections should no longer determine the height that most people could reach.

Third-raters and second-raters had a much easier chance to catch up to first-raters as long as they made enough attainments in their cultivation methods!

Space peasants might not be able to afford the expensive implants and genetic modification treatments that the first-raters took for granted, but even the poorest third-rater could outperform any first-rater as long as he possessed enough talent!

Of course, Ves did not expect the gap to narrow too much. Since third-raters could benefit from cultivation, then first-raters definitely had access to the same benefits as well!

First-class citizens may even be able to enjoy greater advantages if they could afford to spend their money on expensive elixirs and other products that could promote an individual's cultivation progress.

In the end, the same factors that set the wealthy and powerful apart from the rest still applied.

At least third-raters had access to more accessible means to catch up to the first-raters.

The Red Collective appreciated talent the most. Background and augmentations were almost worthless in comparison.

Third-rate states generally possessed the largest populations, so there should be a lot of hidden gems among them. Each of them could become an amazing cultivator so long as their talent became known and practiced fitting cultivation methods.

This meant that there should still be many opportunities for third-raters and second-raters to rise up and become just as powerful as first-raters one day!

The expressions of some, but not all, people sitting around Ves shifted to varying degrees.

If an amateur politician like Ves could figure this out, then a lot of other clever councilors could do so as well!

In fact, there was a notable number of upper and lower councilors that had already foreseen these trends. They just weren't sure about the scale due to lacking enough information about how successfully the RC managed to train enough cultivators that excelled in many different fields.

From what everyone had seen so far, the Red Collective was bound to become the most dominant civilian institution!

That did not mean that the RC's military power was weak and pathetic, but it had a long way to go before it could catch up to the RA and the RF.

As Ves and many other people continued to think about the implications of the parade, an entirely new presence had arrived.

Everyone held their breaths for a moment as an incredibly powerful and oppressive presence had descended onto everyone!

The entire Shrine of Light and the Astral Octagon all seemed to have left the current universe and entered into an alternate domain where a different set of rules took precedence!

Fortunately, the shift was very light, so much so that the alternate rules had little chance of taking effect.

Ves was familiar with this sensation. He had already experienced it in the past.

The Evolution Witch had arrived.

What people were being subjected to was just a very light application of her God Kingdom.

Even so, she already made Ves feel as if he held no secrets!

In particular, he felt that the Evolution Witch paid quite close attention to the progression of his True Body, the development of his design philosophy and the growth of Blinky!

After a dozen seconds of exposure to her God Kingdom, the Evolution Witch finally dialed her presence down where it became easier to ignore.

A large shape approached the entrance.

Many people grew a lot more excited as they anticipated the entry of one of the most powerful humans in the Red Ocean!

These people were not disappointed when a god mech finally graced the Shrine of Light!

It was as if the Geneforger distorted the natural pathways of light and forced them all to shine on its organic surface.

The sight of raw, uncovered flesh evoked both disgust and power among the viewers.

They knew that the Geneforger was the most powerful biomech in the Red Ocean. Its form was endlessly mutable, so its base appearance was just a cosmetic choice.

The god mech floated forward without generating any sound, heat or other disturbance.

Mechs at this level no longer required the use of flight systems to get around. They could rely purely on distorting the fabric of reality to displace their physical forms!

Ves had always considered mechs to be the ultimate fusion between technology and extraordinary power, and the sight of the Geneforger only reinforced this notion.

He could tell that the Evolution Witch had grown stronger and more mysterious.

As one of the few people privileged to meet and interact with the Evolution Witch in the past, it was easy enough for him to recall how her God Kingdom felt like. This made it clear that her overpowering aura had changed in a direction that felt a little unsettling.

Her God Kingdom had grown stronger and more domineering due to all of the native aliens forces that she managed to destroy or hijack.

Her ultra-powerful domain field had also grown more mysterious because she had clearly been plotting behind people's backs!

Many people claimed that high-ranking mech pilots were the worst possible spies. Not only did they have a compulsion against lying and failing to meet their promises, they also wore their emotions and convictions on their sleeves!

God pilots could never hide their true feelings and intentions. They had to rely on clever words and misdirection in order to retain a sense of privacy.

Right now, Ves could feel that the Evolution Witch felt pleased at all of the progress that the Red Collective had made in the past year.

Ves could not tell whether she was glad that he had performed well in particular.

That was rather frustrating.

In any case, the Geneforger floated forward at a steady pace. It was only when the legendary machine reached the very center of the Shrine of Light that it ceased to move any further.

The light shining from above still distorted their directions, causing them to curve onto the god mech!

This caused the light levels in the rest of the crystalline chamber to dim, while also bathing the Geneforger in divine light!

The god mech literally looked as if it had descended from heaven at the moment!

The more weak-willed guests who became exposed to active God Kingdom even felt the urge to prostrate and worship the Evolution Witch as a literal deity!

After floating around for a few more seconds, the Geneforger finally faded away, revealing a much smaller form.

The Evolution Witch had decided to unveil her human form.

Every guest reacted at this time. They all rose from their seats, only to lower themselves to their knees.

"HAIL TO THE EVOLUTION WITCH!"

Next, the cultivators standing on the crystal floor did likewise!

Whether they were Ur-Titans, Apocalypse Wardens or civilian cultivators, they all lowered to a single knee and greeted the latest arrival!

"HAIL TO THE EVOLUTION WITCH!"

The most powerful human individual in the Astral Octagon peered at all of the people who felt incredibly honored to be in her presence.

The woman in purple robes gently raised her hand.

"Rise."

The god pilot only just spoke those words, and already people found themselves on both of their feet!

It was as if her will alone had already caused people to stand without consciously performing this action!

How frightening!

"Sit."

The Evolution Witch flexed her power over everyone once again by repeating this feat.

The cultivators on foot all remained standing, but those who had been designated seats had already lowered themselves to their original seating postures.

Most of the attendees expressed both awe and fear towards the god pilot. They were completely at her mercy. She could make them do almost anything, and there was nothing they could do to resist!

Most people felt relieved that she was on red humanity's side. The thought of becoming her enemy was terrifying!

After the Evolution Witch gave everyone enough time to regain their equilibrium, she finally started her address.

"The Age of Dawn has arrived. Since the start of this new epoch, human evolution has become unlocked. Everyone has gained the power to adapt, evolve and overcome their prior limitations. No barrier can halt our changes anymore. With the power of E energy, our entire race shall transform in directions unknown to all. Progress will always be made. Those who seek to stand in its way will be crushed by those that embrace its inevitability. Make no mistake. Evolution has its dangers, and to let it run free is to invite disaster. The only viable means to survive in this new and dangerous age is to seize our destiny! Take control over your own evolution and steer it to your desired ambition! This is what it means to cultivate!"

Her provocative words made an enormous impression upon red humanity!

Pretty much everyone was listening to her right now. No matter what people thought about the Red Collective, right now they uniformly concluded that it was a necessary institution!

Without the guiding hand of the Red Collective, human evolution would almost certainly go astray!

Chapter 6436 The Evolution Witch's Revival

The Shrine of Light fell completely silent.

Aside from the Evolution Witch's divine speech, no other sound was allowed to interrupt her historic address.

From the moment she began to express her views, it already became clear how she viewed the Red Ocean and humanity's place in this dwarf galaxy.

According to the god pilot, the Age of Dawn had the potential to become a golden age for red humanity.

The Red Ocean may lack the size and strong imprint of human civilization, but it may serve as the starting point for humankind's collective evolution!

The Evolution Witch clearly saw exposure to exotic radiation from Messier 87 as a blessing rather than a curse!

Even though the Great Severing had already put red humanity in the crosshairs of the overpowering aliens from that dreadful supermassive galaxy, the Evolution Witch possessed far too much courage and ambition to bow down to this threat.

Instead, she used the impending threat of the Subjugation King to fuel her urgency and push herself to improve past her limits.

She was no stranger to this desperation strategy!

After all, back when she was still a mortal, she constantly fought to outpace her own congenital defects. She trained and fought harder than her peers because she had no room for complacency. Her life was literally on the line, and only by evolving fast enough was she able to postpone the deadline of her passing time and time again!

Her willpower accumulated rapidly during those desperate days. She was not like the other mechers who could afford to take their time and polish their skills over a longer period of time.

The Evolution Witch had entered a race to overcome her own early death from the moment it became clear that her own body was failing her. Instead of letting her diseases and disabilities break her mentality, she persevered and endured all of the pressures of her life until she finally ascended to godhood and completely wiped out the afflictions that haunted her for the entirety of her mortal life!

Though Divine Lucie Miyazaki had distinguished herself as one of the fastest mech pilots to complete her transcendence among the later generations, her breakthrough turned out to be a blessing as well as a curse.

She had lost her great cause. She had lost the motivation that propelled her to success at a pace that could only be matched by a few other god pilots and a total freak like the Chosen Human.

Lucie thought that ascending to godhood would become the start of a wonderful new life as one of the strongest powerhouses of human civilization.

The reality turned out to be less rosy than she imagined.

Sure, she managed to completely liberate herself from her many mortal failings, thereby crossing a chasm that the vast majority of mech pilots could never cross, let alone approach!

Yet from the moment she became a god pilot, she understood that she had ascended from the top of mortal society, only to start off from the bottom of a new society made up of divinities!

The optimistic Evolution Witch quickly got taught a few painful lessons by her senior god pilots.

How could a fresh god pilot possibly stand a chance against those who had decades if not centuries of lead time?

Even though there was no structured way for god pilots to progress any further, the god pilots who had emerged a lot earlier did not sit still.

They collaborated with Star Designers to implement priceless upgrades to their god mechs.

They strengthened their raw willpower through the stupidest methods such as challenging each other.

They expanded their knowledge and experimented with different methods in order to broaden their problem solving capabilities.

No god pilot neglected the development of their own combat power after they ascended to their current rank. The Evolution Witch became awfully discouraged after getting beaten by practically every god pilot she sparred against.

Fortunately, a woman who had crossed the road to no return did not wallow in her depression for too long.

She regained a bit of the motivation she had before!

Although her life was no longer on the line this time, she still managed to gather enough conviction to grow stronger, if only so she could no longer embarrass herself by getting beaten down by the likes of the overwhelming Technomancer or the incredibly silly Triangle Guardian!

Yet this did not prove to be enough to regain her old stride. Nothing posed a threat to her life anymore. Unless she deliberately set out to endanger herself and travel deep into the other half of the Milky Way, there was no way to regain the sense of urgency that enabled her to become a god pilot against all odds.

What was even worse for Lucie was that her glorious ascension did not allow her to exert that much actual power.

Human civilization in the Milky Way had already been carved up by older and more established powers.

The older god pilots who still possessed an attachment to worldly power had already claimed their own territories for themselves.

The MTA Transhumanist Faction had already been claimed by the Chosen Human. Under his cautious leadership, every biotech researcher and scientist working to promote the cause of human evolution endured a lot of hindrances in their work.

The Evolution Witch had no stomach for all of these rules and regulations, but there was no way for her to do anything else.

She could never beat the Chosen Human in a fight!

Not only did Divine Hussain Albedo become a god pilot much earlier than Lucie, but his ridiculously high genetic aptitude made him utterly unique among his kind.

He was able to gather followers much easier. Everyone considered him to be the literal chosen one of the human race, or else he wouldn't have earned his title.

What further cemented his leadership among the Transhumanists was that his ideology perfectly matched the paranoia and caution of all of the old school mechers.

The rebels against the Five Scrolls Compact and the survivors of the dark days of the Age of Conquest always rejected unbridled human augmentations.

With the collusion of these old timers, the Chosen Human's position at the top of the MTA Transhumanist Faction became infallible!

Even if the Evolution Witch worked harder than any other god pilot just to defeat the Chosen Human and take over the MTA Transhumanist Faction, she still had no feasible way to advance the cause of human evolution!

This was because so many other god pilots would exert their own pressure and influence to stall her plans and prevent her from reforming the faction according to her own ideas!

There was no room for her in the Milky Way Galaxy. She gladly left for the Red Ocean at the first possible opportunity!

She decisively left because she wanted to get as far away from the disgusting Chosen Human and his hypocritical ideas about human purity.

The old school leaders were also very glad to see her depart from the old galaxy. That way, she would no longer be around to 'corrupt' people with her heretical ideology.

It was not as if she could affect any real change in the new frontier. Many of the upper and middle-level officials of the Transhumanist Faction that were stationed in the Red Ocean all belonged to the Chosen Human's camp.

Combined with the threat of an unwelcome visit from the Divine Albedo or any of his like-minded god pilots, the Evolution Witch only received a small amount of room to exert her own ideas!

Then the Great Severing took place.

Where many red humans saw this event as a disaster and the start of a life-threatening crisis, the Evolution Witch readily embraced this surprising turn of events as the greatest stroke of fortune in her life!

She took over the branch of the Transhumanist Faction and initiated a purge that decisively dismissed or transferred away all of the Chosen Human's orphaned lackeys.

Though that led to a temporary shortage in high-quality manpower, the attraction of one of the 8 remaining god pilots of red humanity was far too great. It had been easy for her to call up enough capable people to replace the missing personnel. She even managed to expand the ranks of the Transhumanists by several times!

What was even more great for the Evolution Witch was that the Age of Dawn brought everything she needed to thrive.

Exotic radiation forcibly placed red humanity on the path of evolution. No matter whether anyone liked it or not, they would continue to evolve and transform as long as Messier 87 continued to pump out E energy radiation into the galactic neighborhood!

As the 'Goddess of Evolution', helping red humanity grapple with their own evolution and setting them on the right paths directly and indirectly fueled her own cultivation!

This was especially after she exchanged deep insights with the Oblivion Empress!

The confirmation of strong alien beings in Messier 87 and proof that at least one God King was on its way to the Red Ocean perfectly replaced the threat of impending death that once caused the Evolution Witch to advance at a very fast pace.

This familiar engine rejuvenated the Evolution Witch so much that she had accomplished much when she fought in the border regions in the past few months!

The only god pilot that managed to smash more alien assault fleets and claim the lives of more alien phase lords was the Light of Sol.

This was understandable as the Terran god pilot was on his own. His speed also granted him a strong advantage in a war that encompassed many different territories.

Even so, the Evolution Witch managed to generate a lot of disruption by forcibly mutating a lot of alien spacers into her minions. The brainwashed aliens always turned their warships around and returned to alien space in order to wreak havoc among their former comrades.

If not for these disruptions, the native aliens may have gathered enough momentum to topple the 4th defensive band by this time!

At this moment, the Evolution Witch's reputation and prestige had reached a new peak.

Her contributions were many and undeniable, and her strong association with the Red Collective earned her the right to lead this founding ceremony.

Even if she was not able to lead the Red Collective directly due to political reasons, she could still pull many strings in order to steer the new superorganization to ensure it would continue to advance the cause of human evolution!

The only question was whether this was enough. Trying to establish her divine authority over every instance of human cultivation and evolution was extremely bold. It would be difficult for her to lay claim over such an enormous dominion, but the potential rewards were so massive that Lucie did not want to give up this high-risk gambit!

She was aware that a few god pilots knew exactly what she was doing and how she might threaten their own interests.

They might not confront her directly, but they would definitely hinder her and find a way to sabotage her plans.

The frustrating attitude of the Hunting Association was an example of this pushback.

However, the Evolution Witch remained confident she could overcome the opposition from within red humanity.

All she needed to do was wait for 3 more days. Once she was ready to enact her carefully laid plan, everything would change.

Although there was still a chance that not all of the pieces would fall into place, the Evolution Witch invested far too much in her grand scheme to stomach the idea of failing.

Her attention briefly landed on Ves Larkinson.

The naughty brat did not know it, but he had made massive contributions to her ambitions. The Evolution Witch would have never been able to put together her latest plan and gain the confidence to succeed without his indispensable assistance.

Soon enough, everyone would know that Ves Larkinson had contributed to the revival of red humanity.

Chapter 6437 Take Control of Our Evolution

From the moment the Evolution Witch spoke to all humans trapped in the Red Ocean, she uplifted everyone's spirits.

A god pilot was one of the most authoritative leaders that people could encounter.

To witness a live address of an honored god pilot in their lifetimes was one of the greatest honors that most ordinary people could obtain!

No individual dared to express contempt at the Evolution Witch's words.

Even her critics and political opponents had no choice but to set aside their animosity and take her words and vision seriously.

That was because she was essentially correct. Red humanity was evolving, and people needed to take active control over their improvement.

The Red Collective would not have any room to squeeze its way between the Red Association and the Red Fleet if there was no need to worry about this problem.

The resplendent woman had currently taken on her human form. Though she looked a lot smaller than her god mech, nobody could ever mistake her for being a weak and fragile human.

As the center of a God Kingdom, the Evolution Witch's human facade turned into a nexus of transcendent willpower. The fabric of relativity that encompassed the entire Shrine of Light had fallen under her control!

It was trivially easy for her to enhance her presence and make sure that everyone paid serious attention to her words.

Speaking moments like this were rare, so the Evolution Witch made sure she could take as much advantage of this situation as possible!

"We have entered unprecedented times. The Red Ocean has turned from a barren desert into an oasis of life. The very dwarf galaxy is changing before our eyes. With each passing day, more mundane materials are being transformed into hyper materials. The rate of exobeasts are evolving into mutated beasts has increased so much that a dedicated organization is required to contain this threat. Even the native aliens are beginning to explore the limitless potential of exotic radiation."

Her expression darkened a little when she mentioned the alien threat.

She had strong feelings about their current enemies, so everyone around her could clearly perceive her hostility towards the natives of the Red Ocean.

"Do not forget that the native aliens have equal access to the benefits of E energy radiation as us. They have already begun to research and adopt a wide variety of hyper materials, even going as far

as stealing our own applications. The major alien races have also begun to conduct research on how they can absorb E energy radiation to promote their own growth. Their methods are crude and immature, but their willingness to defy

their old traditions in the face of war is commendable. Will you agree to allow the native aliens to overtake us in the field of cultivation?"

Nobody wanted this to happen!

Even the people who felt most reluctant about unleashing cultivation onto human society did not wish for the native aliens to gain a lead in this aspect!

The Evolution Witch smiled as if everything proceeded according to her expectations. "It is for this reason that the Red Collective must exist. We are different from the humans that we have left behind in the Milky Way Galaxy. Our distant brothers and sisters do not share the same pressures as us. Their bodies are not being irradiated by exotic radiation every second of the day. Our struggle to survive is so much greater that we can no longer abide by the old rules that have served humanity well for centuries or millennia. In the survival of the fittest, the species that tend to persist the longest are not necessarily the strongest, but the ones that adapt the best to changing environments. We have now found ourselves in this exact same situation. We adapt, or we go extinct. There is no middle ground."

The god pilot uncomfortably reminded everyone that they could no longer go back to the old status quo. That was the most foolish decision to make of all, because it was no different from burying their heads in the sand. They could not afford to stick to old solutions that no longer worked because their environment had drastically changed for the worse!

Her message was clear. People needed to change. Those who stood in the way of this righteous cause would only be doing their enemies a favor!

"The Red Collective is an organization that can only exist in an upright manner in the Red Ocean." The Evolution Witch continued to espouse her propaganda. "We are far superior to the humans who have the misfortune of remaining behind in the Milky Way. Not only do we have access to an endless source of energy to stimulate our evolution, we also have the foresight and courage to let go of the old and embrace the new. Each of us have begun a journey that will lead us to unknown destinations. None of us can predict whether your path leads to greatness or doom, but moving forward is always better than remaining stagnant. Be proud of that, fellow red humans. By possessing the courage to take control of your evolution, you have already exceeded the qualities of

the stagnant humans that are still wallowing in their complacency in the old galaxy." Many people including Ves knew exactly what the Evolution Witch was doing.

She was strengthening the collective identity of red humanity by denigrating original humanity.

It was one of the oldest tricks in the book, but it was incredibly common and effective for many reasons.

People always liked to lord over others. Society was never fair, and people always wanted to be at the top rather than the bottom.

By using original humanity as her scapegoats, the Evolution Witch could beat this

subject up as many times as she wanted in order to strengthen red humanity's sense of superiority!

It was not as if all of the folk back in the Milky Way could do anything to retaliate and stop the Evolution Witch from insulting their honor.

If they possessed a means to cross 50 million light-years in an instant, then the humans of the Milky Way would have found a way to cross this immense distance already! The only point Ves was uncertain about was why the Evolution Witch found the need to employ such a low-level method to rouse red humanity's sense of pride.

There were much more elegant and uplifting ways to achieve similar results. Ves did not see much point in bringing up original humans as they have become completely irrelevant in the new frontier.

The Evolution Witch deliberately swept her gaze towards the rows and rows of cultivators raised by the precursor of the Red Collective.

From the mighty Ur-Titans to the humblest civilian cultivators, each of them maintained extremely respectful and humble stances in front of the female god pilot.

The supremely powerful woman smiled more affectionately at these model cultivators.

"An entire standard year has passed since a great young man has proposed the formation of a new organization. Its mandate is multifold. It must first promote the cause of cultivation within our civilization. It is tasked with managing the practitioners of cultivation and ensuring they remain productive members of our society. It is also responsible for enforcing the laws governing cultivation and meting out punishment against rulebreakers that can form a serious threat against their fellow humans. Lastly, it must discharge its responsibilities within a legal framework that makes it accountable to the population at large."

This was pretty much the core mission statement of the Red Collective. Even though everyone important enough already knew about it, it was still important for the Evolution Witch to mention this during the ongoing founding ceremony.

No one weaker than a god pilot dared to defy her commands. Anyone who tried to work against the mission statement of the Red Collective implicitly defied the will of the

Evolution Witch!

Anyone who did so without the backing of another god pilot opened themselves up to retribution from the Human Biodisaster herself!

Although it would be extremely uncouth and counterproductive for the Evolution Witch to take action in person to squash a human power because of political disagreements, the mere threat that this might happen should keep many naysayers honest!

In fact, the Evolution Witch did not even have to take action in person. There should be many sycophants and political opportunists who would be glad to clean up her weaker opponents on her behalf!

Seeing that the right people had received her implicit warning, the Evolution Witch

continued with her speech.

"The Red Collective may be small and lacking in many facilities after only a single year of preparation, but its foundation is strong and its future is unlimited. As long as it develops along a healthy trajectory, I have no doubt that it will stand equal to the Red Association and the Red Fleet one day. We must all remain patient and avoid demanding overly hasty results. Much of the property and personnel of the current Collective are loaned or donated from other sources, but this is not a detriment, as everyone agrees that we must take control over our own evolution. No matter

whether you are a mecher, a fleeter or a citizen of a state, you are all red humans, and you are all mutating under the distant light and radiation of Messier 87. The Red Collective will always have a mandate as long as that remains constant."

This time, she demanded patience from those that expected the Red Collective to solve all of their problems. Not even a god pilot could make that happen. "Now that you understand why we need the Red Collective, I shall explain its governance, which is different from what you are accustomed to seeing from the Red

Two."

The Evolution Witch succinctly explained the power structure of the Red Collective.

She briefly mentioned the establishment of the legislative branches in the form of an Upper Council and a Lower Council.

She pointed out that the Office of Executors fulfilled the function of an executive branch.

She also mentioned the various departments.

The Enforcement Department happened to hold most of the judicial power at the moment.

Everyone was somewhat satisfied.

The big players remained confident they could prevent the Red Collective from damaging their core interests by possessing seats in the Upper Council.

The ordinary citizens at the bottom finally felt they gained a voice through the Lower Council.

Ambitious carcerists were eying the many open positions within the departments that urgently needed to be filled!

The founding of the Red Collective ruined a lot of plans, but opened many future possibilities to a lot of individuals who previously remained stuck in their current

circumstances.

Through the Evolution Witch's deliberate words, the Red Collective was bound to become synonymous with progress!

The Evolution Witch sure knew how to conduct good PR, but only if she cared about

other people's opinions.

"The Red Collective is new and still in flux. Its rules and its governance may undergo significant changes as it continues to perfect and improve its operations. From today onwards, every council, every office and every department must begin their work with the common cause of human evolution in their minds. Each of us are the first to embark on this societal experiment. We must perform at our best in order to set good examples

to the generations to come. All of us must work together to fulfill the mandate set by the

people."

This was easier said than done. Much of the RC was bound to be divided by different parties. The Office of Executors would probably have their hands full trying to stop or limit all of the political maneuvers that were taking place.

So long as humans remained selfish, no one could ever solve this problem! "Every labor should yield a reward. None of the members who are ready to dedicate their

lives to the Red Collective will remain impoverished. It is too premature to introduce a new currency, but every worker and contributor to human cultivation will have the opportunity to earn RC merits, which can be redeemed for a large variety of rewards."

RC merits!

Sure enough!

Red humanity had gained one more way to rise above their stations and earn their way

to prosperity!

Chapter 6438 Cultivation Methods Available to the Public

The creation of RC merits was a significant step.

It was one way in which the Red Collective intended to close the gap with the Red Two.

A lot of planning went into the creation of RC merits, and more importantly, the exchange where it could be redeemed for all kinds of rewards.

There was an important reason why the Evolution Witch mentioned RC merits in her speech.

"Every red human will have an opportunity to earn RC merits by contributing to the Red Collective. Both civilians and soldiers can earn a varying amount of RC merits by fulfilling material orders, offering territories and facilities to the local branches of the Red Collective, exposing any crimes or abuses perpetrated by cultivators, teaching a curated cultivation methods to a classroom, volunteering to fight on the frontlines as cultivators and more. Even the poorest third-raters can still earn respectable amounts of RC merits as long as they are willing to go above and beyond to promote their own evolution." The RC's Merit Exchange was similar to the ones maintained by the RA and the RF. There were still differences. The RC oriented itself a lot better towards the bottom segments of human civilization. It should be a little easier for third-raters and second-raters to earn meager amounts of RC merits without bankrupting themselves. The reason for that soon became known as the Evolution Witch continued her explanation.

A projection appeared over her head.

It depicted a large floating space station that possessed a peculiar appearance. Its exterior consisted of aquamarine-covered plating and its overall shape looked like a tapered pentagonal rod.

A less charitable way to describe the space station was that it looked like a giant mace that a phase lord could use to smack his enemies around!

Even so, this was no weapon. The appearance of the space station possessed special and mysterious qualities that Ves could not define. There was something fishy about this structure!

"This is the Repository. It is the prototypical library that shall hold all of the cultivation methods of red humanity. Its archives will not only store the texts and scriptures that can teach red humans how to evolve to greater versions of themselves, but it will also accommodate researchers who are tasked with decrypting the mysteries of legacy cultivation methods. To most of you, the Repository is the destination where you will go in order to exchange for a cultivation method outside of a sect."

Most people were not familiar with the concept and meaning of a sect, but the

Evolution Witch clearly intended to address this subject later.

"Cultivation methods are more than instruction manuals that describe multi-step plans to improve yourself. They contain profound and life-changing secrets that can unlock the hidden potential of human qualities. Since cultivation can be dangerous when you attempt to manipulate forces that you cannot understand or harness, the Red Collective imposes many restrictions to every method. The Repository currently recognizes four different categories of cultivation methods."

A different projection appeared over her head. They displayed fairly simple and basic examples of people benefiting from their cultivation practice.

There were humans who grew stronger and could lift four times the weight of objects than before.

There were humans who aced their university exams where they previously struggled to earn passing grades.

There were also humans who piloted their mechs much more effectively than before because their accuracy, reaction speeds and other relevant parameters had improved!

That last part interested a lot of mech pilots as well as norms with dreams of controlling their own Carmine mechs!

It showed that even mech pilots could still benefit from cultivation, though to what extent, few could tell.

"The most accessible cultivation methods that the Red Collective shall make available to the public starting from today are free curated cultivation methods. These are fully modern cultivation methods of low complexity that any human can easily get started with, including children from the age of 12. Every free method is curated by our best cultivation scientists in order to guarantee their safety and reliability. They are the best methods to become accustomed to cultivation practice as mistakes will never lead to severe consequences. Their ceilings are low, but they can be used to build good foundations. Once you transition to more advanced cultivation methods, you should be able to transform your existing foundation and avoid losing your progress."

With the existing heritage and scientific capabilities of red humanity, it was not difficult to derive these free cultivation methods.

Ves had actually provided his input on a few of them, but the cultivation scientists hailing from the major powers did not really need the help.

He was far from the only person who was proficient with the science of cultivation.

The projection above the Evolution Witch's head changed to demonstrate more powerful and dramatic displays of cultivation.

They showed the Ur-Titans injecting phasewater into their veins before painfully trying to grow the sizes of their true bodies.

They also showed the Apocalypse Wardens trying to cultivate the furnaces in their

bodies by cultivating next to roaring flames!

They also showed other familiar sights such as singers eliminating the resistance of thousands of captive orvan prisoners of war and planters accelerating the growth and maturation of special herbs.

These were powers and abilities that could never be attained by practicing low-level cultivation methods!

"Once a practitioner has built a solid foundation and is ready to embark on true cultivation, he or she may choose to practice premium curated cultivation methods. These are more advanced scriptures that are carefully drafted and curated to produce strong results over time. Their ceilings are much higher, but the dangers are also greater. In order to reduce the occurrence of cultivation deviations, the Repository or designated agents offers lessons in order to understand and properly practice these methods. More complicated methods cannot be learned through studying the texts alone. Do note that the more powerful premium curated cultivation methods also require the use of cultivation resources in order to get started or accelerate your progress. This usually consists of elixirs synthesized from special reagents. Talent and other uncontrollable factors can also determine your compatibility with specific cultivation methods."

The greater the power, the greater the requirements. This remained an unbroken rule.

People needed to decide for themselves whether they were able to meet the requirements to practice a premium cultivation method that imposed heavy demands on comprehension, talent, finances and access to high-level resources.

None of this was fair, but society was unfair to begin with. So long as people had a chance to practice the most powerful premium cultivation methods one way or another, they should not have too many complaints.

"Access to premium curated cultivation methods is not free." The Evolution Witch emphasized. "They are the products of multiple hard-working experts. They also promise greater power, so we do not permit any human to practice them freely. Each premium curated cultivation method can only be accessed by exchanging the required sum of RC merits and passing a background check. In order to prevent unauthorized distribution of these premium methods, each of them are composed so that human individuals can only get started on them if they begin their first practice with the help of visualization artifacts that are exclusively displayed inside the secure chambers of the

branches of the Red Collective."

The projection above her head changed to display a small collection of these so-called visualizations.

They ranged from mythical dragons to unusually looking robots.

Each visualization image depicted far more than a piece of artwork. Their creators instilled great meanings into them, causing them to turn into artifacts that could impart very special feelings and emotions into their viewers!

"These visualization artifacts are the key that allow a practitioner to unlock a premium cultivation method. Without a key, a copy of the texts alone cannot allow a human to get started. If the Red Collective has discovered that a human has been able to bypass this security measure and succeeded in practicing a premium cultivation method without exchanging it from the Repository, then the Enforcement Department will take steps to remedy the situation."

That spooked a lot of people, especially those that sought to take advantage of the

apparent loopholes.

While Ves did not think it was impossible for him to circumvent the need for visualization artifacts in order to practice a premium cultivation method obtained through irregular means, there was no reason for him to risk any penalties when it should be easy for him to earn a lot of RC merits.

The Evolution Witch's expression turned a little less pleasant.

"Both free and premium cultivation methods are fully curated. The same cannot be said for uncurated cultivation methods. These are either legacy cultivation methods that are recovered from old or ancient sources. They may also encompass modern cultivation methods created by individuals who have not submitted them for certification to the Red Collective. They may promise great power, but their safety can never be guaranteed. The Red Collective heavily discourages and prohibits the practice of uncurated cultivation methods. Only by submitting them for certification can they be practiced, but only with the guidance and assistance from the Repository or a sanctioned sect. Independent practice of advanced cultivation methods is not allowed."

These were heavy restrictions!

The Red Collective clearly did not want lone individuals to play around with dangerous forces without any supervision. There were too many ways that could go wrong if people were left to their own devices!

The RC clearly wanted to turn cultivation into a group activity. By forcing people to practice their methods in groups or classrooms, they could all keep tabs on each other, thereby making it easier to spot cultivators who threatened to go astray. The group environment should also foster greater cooperation. Study groups could emerge where people exchanged their best practices and helped each other understand

the more complicated scriptures.

"Finally, sect certified cultivation methods are advanced scriptures that are permitted to be practiced by members of sanctioned sects. It is not necessary to exchange RC merits for them, as sects will impose their own requirements to practice them. The Red Collective permits the establishment or registration of organizations that are able to provide structured teaching and supervision of cultivation of sect-exclusive methods. There are advantages and disadvantages to practicing sect certified cultivation methods as opposed to premium curated cultivation methods. Do note that every sect certified cultivation method must be paired with visualization artifacts in order control their

spread. Know that the Red Collective does not directly control these sects. It only supervises them. Their rules and cultures may be drastically different depending on their origins and purpose."

This was not enough information to give people a comprehensive understanding of

sects, but it was better to explore this subject later.

All in all, many listeners had become fascinated by all of the possible ways they could get

started with cultivation.

It was clear that most ordinary civilians would settle with free curated cultivation

methods. Perhaps they might work hard to earn RC merits to gain access to premium curated cultivation methods, but it would probably be difficult to get the good stuff. People hailing from the major players should all prefer to practice sect certified cultivation methods. They did not have to deal directly with the Red Collective, and they may be able to gain easier access to strong cultivation methods without paying a huge

price.

As for uncurated cultivation methods... they would always tempt people into practicing them. The Red Collective would always seek to crack them down, but it was impossible to get rid of this phenomenon entirely.

The only hope was to make free and premium curated cultivation methods accessible

enough to reduce the temptation of dubious and unreliable alternatives. That was the most correct way to address this problem.

Even so, there would always be people who were skeptical about the RC and sought to 'break the system'.

Chapter 6439 False Hope

In just a single announcement, the Evolution Witch or rather the Red Collective defined the term 'cultivation method' and split it up into four different categories.

The nature and selection of the categories betrayed the Red Collective's ambition to take control over the practice of systematic cultivation.

The collies could not control all forms of cultivation among red humanity. It was impossible to stop humans from absorbing E energy radiation in a passive manner. Anyone who thought about it were fools without doubt.

However, it should still be possible for the RC to impose its authority over systematic cultivation.

By taking control over the drafting, testing, certification, proliferation of cultivation methods, the collies hoped to establish strong dominion over a brand-new means of pursuing power.

The stakes were high. Practicing the wrong cultivation methods, or practicing the right ones incorrectly, could lead to severe danger up to and including death to a lot of people.

It was one thing if the cultivators merely risked their own lives. It was another thing if they practiced a demonic cultivation method and started to absorb the life force of their friends and family!

The Guardians of Order and all other humans who possessed a justifiable amount of paranoia towards the reckless and selfish practices of the Five Scrolls Compact played a useful role for once.

The faction possessed a much stronger interest in letting the RC claim as much control over how humans interacted with systematic cultivation.

Even the proponents of cultivation such as Ves and the Evolution Witch did not deny the need to establish proper supervision and enforcement within this new and promising domain.

The only groups that opposed the considerable expansion of the RC's authority over systematic cultivation was the Red Association and the Red Fleet.

The mechers and the fleeters acknowledged the need for the RC to impose order in the cultivation community, but the old hegemony did not want the collies to interfere with their own business!

Ves had been involved in the tense and acrimonious negotiations to resolve this contradiction.

The Interim Leadership Council turned into a shouting match as the councilors from the RA and the RF refused to play along unless they received special treatment!

Although it galled the ardent supporters of the RC quite a lot, there was no way to

proceed without the cooperation of the Red Two.

The RC had no choice but to capitulate on this matter. The RA and the RF received their much-desired exemptions.

The complete secret agreement was extremely complex and multi-faceted. It basically came down to the recognition that the mechers and the fleeters gained the right to play around with systematic cultivation without the collies butting into their business.

Technically speaking, the RA and the RF essentially secured the right to create and manage their own uncensored cultivation methods. They took over all of the responsibilities normally undertaken by the RC.

That meant that the mechers and the fleeters became responsible for anything that went wrong. If one of their cultivation methods went awry or ended up killing a lot of people, they would bear all of the blame.

Another important point in the secret agreement was that if the RA or the RF ever allowed one of their exclusive cultivation methods to leak and spread uncontrollably among the public, the RC had a right and obligation to intervene to stop this travesty from doing any further damage.

In short, the Red Collective was able to spread its authority across all of human society with the very glaring exceptions of the Red Association and the Red Fleet.

This would probably turn into a persistent source of frustration among the collies. Perhaps the only consolation was that the RA and the RF granted the RC expanded rights and permissions.

The RA permitted the RC to conduct research into mechs, including restricted fields such as neural interface technology, so long as the projects were related to cultivation science.

The RF granted the RC the right to freely produce and field warships up to a certain threshold. There was no need to collect RF Warship Tokens first.

The exchange of benefits was enough to placate the factions with a vested interest in the Red Collective.

Nobody was completely satisfied, but everyone could at least live with the compromise.

There was no need to mention this deal to the public, though. The Evolution Witch completely skipped any mention of the compromise and continued her effort to establish the authority of the Red Collective.

"Make no mistake. Power must be earned. The most powerful forms of structured cultivation can transform baseline humans into transcendent beings that can wipe out the population of an entire planet, all without relying on mechs or other forms of technology. Such power cannot be attained at will. They can also extend your natural lifespans by thousands if not tens of thousands of years. Only a working combination of talent, hard work, discipline, patience and a willingness to work for a large amount of RC merits will allow you to ascend beyond the limitations of your human frailties." Not everyone had a strong yearning for power. These people were realistic enough to understand that they were not chosen ones who were destined to attain greatness. Yet nobody could resist the allure of extending their lifespans. Life-prolonging treatments were hard to come by.

Even the wealthier and more powerful individuals faced increasingly more obstacles in their attempts to obtain the high-grade life-prolonging treatment serums necessary to live beyond 3 or 4 centuries.

If engaging in systematic cultivation allowed them to expand their lifespan by several times at a fraction of the cost, then it had suddenly become a lot more attractive to all of the middle-aged and elderly citizens of red humanity!

The ultimate pursuits of cultivation were power and eternity.

Almost everyone wanted to live forever. If systematic cultivation could enable people to live much longer than their human limitations, then they were bound to embrace it a lot more enthusiastically than before!

The popularity of the RC rose even further after more and more listeners made this realization!

Third-raters and second-raters were especially ecstatic about it as they lacked almost complete access to life-prolonging treatments.

Ves recalled the insane adventure he went through just to recover a vial of high-grade life-prolonging treatment serum from the Starlight Megalodon.

This was how desperate the space peasants could be in their quest to expand their

longevity!

While the Evolution Witch effortlessly managed to stoke people's expectations towards cultivation, Ves inwardly shook his head.

He knew that there was little point in pursuing longevity alone. Red humanity was in a dire state at the moment, and the Red Tide Offensive had already toppled 3 out of 5

defensive bands.

It was ridiculous to drool over expanding your lifespan by thousands of years when red humanity was slowly losing the Red War!

Without power to defend their own presence in the new frontier, humans were bound to get wiped out regardless of whether they evolved to the point where they could live for

millions of years!

The kind of immortality attained through cultivation did not make people invincible and impervious to getting killed.

Such a mythical state could only be attained when a cultivator had far surpassed the limitations of a mighty God King!

The more clever and insightful leaders already figured out this caveat, but it was not a big deal to let the ignorant dream about living forever. Impossible ambitions had always driven humans to unleash their potential and produce amazing results.

The Evolution Witch smiled wider as she could feel red humanity's rapidly growing

fervor towards self-evolution.

The more people embraced her ideology, the greater her hold on their lives!

"The Red Collective permits every human to cultivate with moderation. In order to raise individuals who can fully practice the more productive and complex cultivation methods, the Red Collective is in the process of founding, sponsoring or supervising cultivation academies. These brand-new institutions provide full-time education programs that are most suitable for transforming teenagers and adolescents into professional cultivators. Each of them provide discounted access to premium curated cultivated methods to pupils who demonstrate sufficiently high talent and other qualifications. Cultivation academies must also provide individual courses and training programs that teach people of all ages how to practice a specific free or premium curated cultivation method. More and more cultivation academies will arise on every

settled planet over time."

This was a big deal. The RC clearly copied the model of mech academies from the RA. This helped to make it easy for red humanity to understand how cultivation academies

were supposed to work.

While it was a big commitment to let children enroll into cultivation academies instead of more conventional schools, this may be the only chance for space peasants to gain access to the more promising premium curated cultivation methods!

It was clear to Ves that the Red Collective wanted to train and indoctrinate entire armies of powerful and obedient cultivators.

By getting to them when they were still at young and impressionable ages, these future cultivators should be much more easier to control and put into action than others! The biggest issue with cultivation academies was that they directly competed against.

sects.

The organizations that possessed the means and ambitions to engage in their own forms of cultivation were quite upset that they had to compete with cultivation academies for highly talented recruits.

In fact, not every collie felt enthused about educating so many people. This was a responsibility that could easily be shifted to third parties.

The Evolution Witch spread her arms. "Change is coming. The measures that I have announced will change our society forever. It will not take long before our entire order has transformed. Many of you will not be able to fully adapt to the rapid pace of change, but I must ask you to be strong and tolerant towards the new phenomena that will invade your daily lives. So long as the Red War looms over our civilization, we must soldier on and push our evolution until we become strong enough to repel the native aliens."

For all of the wonders she introduced, the god pilot still had to remind everyone what

was at stake.

"Progress is life. Resistance is death. If you wish to doom yourself, then that is your personal choice, but do not drag down other red humans. If you still harbor objections towards cultivation, then I must ask you to remove yourself and allow the rest of us to save our lives as well as our civilization. As long as the Red Collective represents our collective will to evolve and grow stronger, it will enforce its mandate on you and everyone else. We can debate on alternative approaches after we have solved our existential crisis."

Perhaps people developed the impression that the Red Collective was 'soft' compared to the more domineering Red Association and the Red Fleet.

The Evolution Witch did not want that impression to stick, so she made sure to give

people a little warning. Her God Kingdom even started to grow sharper in order to emphasize her ominous words!

"Now that you have learned multiple different means on how you can engage in systematic cultivation, let us meet your new leaders. Some of red humanity's best and brightest have volunteered to undertake the critical responsibility of shaping and growing the Red Collective until it is able to cement its place in our civilization. No

leader is infallible, but as there are multiple of them, they should be able to keep each other in check, thereby preventing the RC from straying from its fundamental mandate. No appointment is permanent and guaranteed for life."

Ves did not mind if he could not keep his position in the Upper Council on a permanent

basis.

The first generation of leaders had an opportunity to set the customs and traditions of the Red Collective.

Getting in first meant that he could still steer the Red Collective in a direction that

would continue to favor himself and the Larkinson Clan long after he left the Upper

Council!

Chapter 6440 The Investiture of the Upper and Lower Councils

Now that the Evolution Witch formally introduced the Red Collective and introduced a new era of cultivation to the masses, the god pilot finally chose to withdraw.

Her exit was much less flamboyant than her entry. Her human body simply faded away until none of it was visible anymore. Even the awesome presence of her God Kingdom had faded from everyone's awareness.

That did not necessarily mean that she had left. The god pilot was most certainly watching over the entire Astral Octagon and its surroundings for any threats. She merely relinquished her right to address red humanity any further.

After all, there was no need for an individual of her stature to announce political appointments.

That job was reserved for mortals.

A familiar figure began to descend from her elevated position and land at the very center of the Shrine of Hall.

It made sense for a fletcher to speak up next. Ves just did not like her very much.

Fleet Admiral Amelie Jameson occupied the exact same position as the Evolution Witch, but possessed none of the latter's divine grace.

The contrast was considerable, but most people did not necessarily think that Amelie was inferior.

No matter what, she was still a fleet admiral, one of the few top-ranking members of the Red Fleet who ended up stuck in the Red Ocean. To be able to climb from the officer ranks and make it all the way to the top of the Admiralty proved that she possessed excellent capabilities.

It was actually even more impressive that she managed to become a tier 1 galactic citizen while remaining mortal.

Sure, she benefited from having access to the best implants and human genetic optimization treatments, but they could never make her as outrageously powerful or intelligent as a god pilot or a Star Designer.

However, the Evolution Witch was proven correct that red humanity most definitely needed to rely on systematic evolution in order to survive the Red War.

Ves sat close enough to the center of the grand chamber to notice that Fleet Admiral Jameson had already begun to cultivate!

He could vaguely sense that she was practicing a fairly safe and clean qi cultivation method that mostly strengthened her charisma and her intellectual capabilities. There may be more aspects that Ves had yet to discern, but it was clear that the fleet admiral maintained her caution and vigilance towards this new phenomenon.

He wondered how long that would last. Making it easier for her to command her subordinates and solve complex command problems was only a fraction of the benefits that systematic cultivation could produce.

With her power, wealth and connections, she should readily be able to transform herself into a phase lord or other powerhouse.

While she did not necessarily have to turn herself into a gigantic humanoid monstrosity and risk alienating herself from the rest of the Red Fleet, there was an endless variety of qi cultivation methods that could allow her to become as powerful as Cynthia Larkinson while still retaining most of her humanity, which the fleeters cared about a lot.

Whatever the case, the cultivation of Fleet Admiral Jameson was not Ves' problem. The fleeters had fought hard to earn an exemption from the Red Collective's mandate, so they should be able to work out a plan by themselves.

"Red humans." The matronly woman said in a stern and authoritative voice. "The selection of the members of the Lower Council has already taken place beforehand. Each of you have been given the opportunity to cast your vote to select who you wish to represent your state or organization in the Lower Council. Today, we shall commence the investiture of the winning candidates and bestow them with the power to appoint individuals to the Office of Executors to serve as the heads of every department."

The Lower Council represented the interests of the people, so its councilors could make a lot of changes so long as they reached a majority.

It was only natural to give the Lower Council the power to choose the people to staff the executive branches of the Red Collective.

One notable exception to this rule was the Enforcement Department. The LC's ability to interfere in this department was limited in order to maintain a proper separation of powers. This scheme was anything but perfect, but it was the most convenient solution on hand.

Shortly after the fleet admiral finished her words, a projection appeared above that listed out all of the names of the Lower Councilors that had won their respective elections.

The distribution of seats was a complicated affair. The Interim Leadership Council had to balance the interests between large but poor powers and rich but smaller powers.

In the end, population size remained important, but what also determined the allocation of seats in the Lower Council was the so-called 'contribution factor'.

A complex formula with many different variables could be used to calculate the contribution factor of a group. As long as the final sum exceeded a threshold, that group earned a spot in the Lower Council.

Certain states and organizations received the right to occupy more than 1 seat in the Lower Council if they encompassed more people or contributed a lot more to the advancement of human civilization.

For example, the Colonial Federation of Davute was fairly sizable in the Krakatoa Middle Zone, and also made a lot of civil as well as military contributions to the war effort. It had received the right to send two representatives to the Lower Council.

The Hex Federation had a lower population than Davute, but was a lot more active on the military front. Its soldiers were more fanatic and its armed forces were more experienced and cohesive. Combined with the enthusiastic use of living mechs, it also earned the right to send two representatives to the Lower Council.

Ves did not know the lower councilors of Davute in person.

He merely noted that both of them came from the original founders and dominant ruling powers of the second-rate colonial state.

One of them was a part of the Clive Consortium and the other hailed from the Dogon Collective.

The Hex Federation dispatched respected female leaders from two of its more diplomatic-friendly matriarchal dynasties.

One matriarch was a member of the Vraken Matriarchal Dynasty, which was known for its emphasis on rationality and scheming ability.

Another matriarch was a member of the Soma Matriarchal Dynasty. The Somas tended to prize culture and tended to be gentle in their daily interactions.

Those were very interesting choices. They lacked the aggression of the members of the Victrix or Amorte Matriarchal Dynasties, which were famous for harboring hatred towards men and possessing an endless lust for conquest and warfare respectively.

Ves stared at the Vraken and the Soma representatives and briefly met their eyes. Both lower councilors nodded their heads in silent respect.

It was good to know that he could count on their support if he wanted to get stuff done in the Lower Council, though he personally did not expect to interact with them often.

He could easily shift this responsibility to Chief of Staff Eliza Mo Ragadan and other lackeys.

Raymond was a trueblood Larkinson who had been with the clan from the start.

In any case, Ves noted to his satisfaction that the Larkinson Clan also managed to occupy a seat in the Lower Council.

The Larkinson Clan was too small to meet the population requirement, but its contributions to the war effort was disproportionately high, particularly due to Ves' efforts. It was only right to bestow the clan with a seat.

The Larkinsons had already voted Raymond Billingsley-Larkinson to occupy this seat, managing to beat Chief Minister Novilon Purnesse by a wide margin.

Raymond was a trueblood Larkinson who had been with the clan from the start.

He occupied a good mix of leadership positions in the past, from leading the LMC to serving among the 1st generation of chief ministers of the Larkinson Clan.

His last position was the branch director of the Davute Branch.

Even after General Ark Larkinson transferred to this branch and established a large presence over there, Raymond made sure the largest side branch continued to stay true to the ideals of the Larkinson Clan.

To be honest, Raymond was nowhere near as smart, cunning or charismatic enough to claim a seat in one of the highest legislative chambers of human civilization.

Even though he was only over a single century 'young', he was an old man in body and soul. His cultivation was meager and he possessed little passion for politicking.

Novilon Purnesse vastly beat Raymond in terms of qualifications alone.

It was a pity that the clansmen did not really appreciate superior performance alone.

Raymond had two advantages that the better qualified candidates lacked.

First, he possessed the heart of a true Larkinson. People might doubt his ability to keep up with others in a first-class society, but they never doubted his love and dedication to his Larkinson heritage!

Second, he was the grandfather of Saint Tusa Billingsley-Larkinson. Even though Raymond had very little to do with the success of the first and most powerful ace pilot of the Larkinson Clan, the grandson's brilliant aura still managed to spill over the old man!

Ves personally believed the Larkinson Clan would probably be able to accomplish more if a consummate politician like Novilon Purnesse entered the Lower Council. He would be a natural in this political arena.

He did not mind that Raymond managed to win the election, though. Ves trusted the old but dependable man to represent the interests of the Larkinson Clan without any selfish motivations.

After the fleet admiral completed her introduction of the lower councilors, she began to highlight the other legislative chamber of the Red Collective.

"The Upper Council serves as an additional check on the Lower Council. Appointed by the most powerful states and organizations that have made enormous contributions to the continued survival and development of our civilization, the upper councilors represent the interests of the most effective guardians of our race."

A new projection appeared above her head that listed out all of the members of the upper council.

It took too much time to introduce all 150 of them on an individual basis, so the fleet admiral only mentioned the most important ones.

The final name was the most important one.

"...And lastly, the office of chief councilor that presides over the Upper Council is granted to Professor Ves Larkinson, who you may recently know as the Father of Carmine Mechs."

Ves rose from his seat in a dignified manner. Many guests began to clap to show their sincere respect and appreciation for the inventor of Carmine mechs.

Of course, none of them did anything as crass as yell or shout uncouth words. This event was far too formal to permit such behavior.

Though Ves already knew for certain that he would receive this appointment when he got assigned to the most decorated seat on the floater platform, he still felt incredibly relieved now that the fleet admiral confirmed it with her own words.

It was official now. Ves gained a top leadership position, one that granted him access to many of the exclusive resources and secrets of the Red Collective without needing to do a lot of work in return!

Ves had truly managed to break into the second-highest level of galactic-level human politics at this time.

Unfortunately, his status, power and influence could not compare to the likes of Fleet Admiral Jameson.

The Red Collective distributed its power a lot more extensively among different people. The 5 Executors appointed by the two Councils had much more direct authority at their disposal.

Ves figured that his actual political power was more comparable to that of Admiral Chelsea Mieli.

He had definitely turned into one of the top dogs of the Red Collective, but he was not the first person that came to mind when people thought about who was in charge.

"Before we proceed with the next phase of the founding ceremony, I would like to invite Chief Councilor Ves Larkinson to briefly address the public with his words."