

Mech Touch 6451

Chapter 6451 Cat's Paws

Secret Keeper Closier-17 continued to maintain a neutral expression. Together with his completely gray and almost featureless uniform, the man exhibited no tells that could allow Ves to gain a grasp of the other person's thoughts and feelings.

That threw Ves off quite a bit. He did not realize it until recently, but he had become too dependent on using his extraordinarily sharp spiritual perception to cast a glimpse into people's true hearts.

This gave him a decisive advantage in many social occasions. It also improved his speech making capabilities as he was able to track the mood of his audience to a precise degree, allowing him to time his revelations to elicit the strongest emotional responses.

Getting confronted by the Secret Keeper uncomfortably reminded Ves that he should not only stop relying on this admittedly useful crutch, but also be on guard in case he met cultivators that could fake their emotional fluctuations and spiritual expressions. The spy in front of him was able to perfectly mask his spirituality to Ves, which meant that the modern cultivation methods practiced by the Red Collective had already reached this level.

That was the strength of qi cultivation methods. Their pure combat power was not as good as mech pilot cultivation, but their versatility and fine control over E energy was unparalleled.

The right approach and training could allow a cultivator to induce an unlimited amount of transformations.

Qi cultivators that specialized in these arts were masters at deception.

In fact, companion spirits like Blinky could potentially develop similar capabilities.

It was a pity that Ves chose to have his Star Cat cultivate a method that mainly increased his energy reserves to a ridiculous degree.

While Blinky still possessed satisfactory control over E energy due to the nature of his existence, the feline companion spirit lacked practice in such fine operations.

Ves did not t this too much. Blinky mainly existed to help him design and fabricate his mech designs. He did not have a strong demand for other functions. That was what other people were for. If he needed a spy, it was better to hire a professional than to do everything himself.

"I do not know how to feel right now." Ves said now that he had a bit of time to process his emotions and understand the gravity of the situation. "I suppose that you know this much about me, I may have exhibited problematic behavior in the past. I would just like to add that I mostly do so because my enemies have driven me into a corner. You can't blame me for overreacting when people are trying to kill or ruin me. Most people who end up in similar situations just end up losing or dying. I have continuously been able to turn the tables against my opponents by employing extreme and unexpected gambits. While I am glad to have done so, my life would be much easier if people could refrain from poking me in the first place. I just want to be left alone and design my mechs in peace."

The member of the Secret Department patiently listened to Ves as he complained about the unfairness of his life.

"We do not necessarily cast blame on you, Chief Councilor Larkinson. What we are concerned about is the damage you can do to our people and society. As simple as your wish may be, it is impossible for you to realize it. Now that you have become the most promising Senior Mech Designer of the Red Ocean and a top-level legislative leader of the Red Collective, you have the attention of the people. This is the life of a leading public official. All of the privileges that you have gained also come with heavy responsibilities. If you wish to take advantage of perks such as claiming a Mentalist Crystal for yourself, then you must restrain your behavior and let go of your more deplorable impulses."

The man sent a very clear message to Ves.

"I get it." Ves grumbled. "I am no longer representing myself and my clan anymore. In the past, even if I played fast and loose with the rules, I could always get away with it because I don't really answer to others anymore. Now that I have accepted a higher office, my deeds will also reflect on the Red Collective. I can do a lot of damage to its reputation and approval rating if I commit a major violation."

The spy nodded. "That is correct. We all stand to gain or lose from your actions, even if you did not mean to do so. You cannot imagine how many observers and intelligence agencies are paying attention to you nowadays. Any behavior that can put you in liability is much more likely to be exposed at this time. Even your past actions are being scrutinized with costly and metaphysical

methods that can extract more information out of the tiniest clues. This is why you must converge your ugliest side and make sure to maintain exemplary behavior in the public."

This was not an unreasonable demand. It was fair for the Red Collective to ask him to

behave like a proper public official.

Ves just wasn't sure whether he could hold himself in. He was realistic enough to know that if he was driven to a corner in the future, he would rather fight back than roll over!

"What if... I have no choice?"

"Then let others take the blame." The Secret Keeper plainly said. "The most ideal solution is to put yourself in a position where you are not compelled to break the rules. However, if you truly cannot help yourself, then do a proper job and delegate the less savory assignments to your allies or subordinates. There are leaders that choose to raise seemingly unrelated organizations that serve as their cat's paws. As long as you have hid your tracks well enough, no one can link the unpleasant deeds of your cat's paws to yourself. This is how the true masters operate. If they have to take action directly and in a manner that causes them to assume culpability, then they have already failed."

All of this made a lot of sense. Ves was thinking too small. He was not accustomed to all of the tricks and best practices that people at such a high office relied upon to achieve

their objectives.

Cat's paws. What a strange term. Ves had no idea where it originated and how any of this had to do with cats, but he developed an immediate liking for this phrase.

Ves was no stranger to raising new organizations, but when he thought about which ones could serve as his cat's paws, none of his existing ones appeared suitable for this

job.

There was an undeniable relationship between himself and other organizations like the Open Consortium and the Creation Association.

Even the Black Cats clearly served as the intelligence arm of the Larkinson Clan! "Thank you for advising me. Ves sincerely said to the Secret Keeper. "I understand how to do better. You have enlightened me that I no longer have to do everything by myself

anymore."

His past methods were too crude and simple compared to the more sophisticated means of the upper echelon of human civilization.

For example, the Secret Department clearly suspected the Xenotechnician of colluding with the treacherous cosmopolitans, yet never considered the idea of taking action because they could not prove a solid link between the two parties.

While there were undoubtedly other reasons that kept the Xenotechnician alive and blameless, the fact that he operated smooth enough to avoid any dirt was a crucial accomplishment!

Ves needed to learn from the likes of the Xenotechnician, He had to get better at disguising his true motives and raise disposable minions that he could use up and discard without bearing any guilt or feeling any notable loss.

He could not raise such organizations in the short term. took a lot of effort and preparation to establish them. The challenge of finding trustworthy people who were willing to do his dirty business was also considerably high. The wrong choice could easily cause him to expose his dirty laundry!

Perhaps this was why so many major players colluded with the Cosmopolitan Movement.

Compared to the effort and risk involved with setting up their own cat's paws, it was much easier to make use of existing cosmopolitan cells!

Of course, dealing with the cosmopolitans came with a heavy price. Not only did they risk bearing the stigma of cosmopolitanism, but the vile human traitors they cooperated with may even resort to blackmail to force less desirable forms of cooperation!

Ves still hadn't forgotten about the fact that Lady Romanda Devos was a member of the Horizon Cell of the Cosmopolitan Movement.

He had been postponing his decision on what to do with Romanda and her cell. While he was tempted to distance himself from them entirely, he did not want to keep the cosmopolitans entirely out of his sight.

Perhaps was better to maintain shallow relations just so that the Horizon Cell could keep him informed about what their more radical colleagues were up to. Ves just needed to be careful not to engage too deeply with the Horizon Cell.

In fact, it was best if he did not interact with Lady Romanda and her cosmopolitan buddies in person anymore.

He needed to resort to his old tricks and craft a false identity for himself to further

reduce the probability that he could get caught.

He thought about the lesser Collie organ that he had just attained. While its name sounded awfully suspicious, its purported function could play an extremely useful role in

these sorts of situations.

However, the organ was only half-complete, which meant that it would take a long time for the Larkinson Biotech Institute to develop anything useful out of this phasewater

organ.

Ves could resort to lesser but still adequate measures to disguise himself. If he had managed to break through to the rank of Master, he was pretty sure his Spirituality would grow strong and robust enough to get away with creating another external

incarnation.

Incarnations were too useful for him. It was extremely regrettable that the incarnation that he originally devoted for this purpose was stuck in the wrong galaxy.

If the urgency was great enough, Ves believed he could still create another external incarnation, but he instinctively felt that he would inflict permanent damage to his Spirituality if he tried to be too greedy.

Seeing that Ves had been properly enlightened, the Secret Keeper resumed his briefing.

"We are on a schedule, so let me inform you about other secrets before my time with you has come to an end. There are many more secrets that the chief councilor of the Upper Council needs to be aware of in order to make informed decisions."

Closier-17 did what he said and continued to speak for two more hours. The main office continued to remain under heavy jamming as Ves absorbed a lot of confidential information.

They ranged from the existence of grand works that possessed shocking capabilities to deductions of the plots and schemes of different groups and factions.

Ves also learned a bit more on where the Red Collective managed to source so much

legacy cultivation scriptures.

When the Five Scrolls Compact had been toppled from power due to the rebellion of the

Big Two, not every group of cultists or daughter organization tried to defend the status

quo.

They recognized where the wind was blowing and decided to follow the trend instead of trying to resist the inevitable!

While these betrayals came with heavy consequences, the old families and organizations that previously tried to curry favor with the Five Scrolls Compact had successfully cut off their poisonous connections and turned over a new leaf.

The Big Two did not work too hard to persecute all of the Compact deserters because

there were just too many of them. Human civilization had also reached its most vulnerable state after the end of the Age of Conquest. Their fragile and half-broken society could not endure any further mass conflicts.

Continuing to pursue old grudges would just weaken humanity to the point the alien

empires in the other half of the Milky Way saw their chance and endeavor to regain control of their stolen territories!

The ultimate conclusion that Ves drew from this was that the Five Scrolls Compact cast a much deeper shadow onto modern human society than he expected. Even if many old families had placed their surviving cultivation scriptures in a library and never did anything serious with them anymore, the tainted knowledge was never truly lost. All of this now came handy now that exotic radiation and the rise of the Red Collective had brought systematic cultivation back into the mainstream.

"Doesn't this mean that the old families with long legacies enjoy a far greater advantage in this aspect than others?" Ves inquired.

"You are correct. This is why the Red Collective must exist. It is also why the Red Association and the Red Fleet ultimately agreed to its founding," Closier-17 told him. "The RC's mandate makes it legal to intervene in the practice of any cultivation method. The old families will be forced to create their own sects and submit their cultivation methods to our Cultivation Department for certification. This will not only restrain the greedy from practicing illegal demonic cultivation methods, but also reduce the gap between descendants that have access to superior heritages and commoners that lack such

foundations."

"I see"

Chapter 6452 Incentive to Lose

Ves continued to receive briefings on all manner of confidential information in the next two days.

The fog that long obscured the true foundation of red humanity slowly peeled away.

Although Ves had no illusion that he was able to learn all of the secrets held by different factions and organizations, just the intel shared by the Secret Department was enough to give him a much better understanding than before!

At the very least, he had a better idea on who he could afford to provoke, who he should not provoke and who he could ally with. He also learned of a few weaker and declining powers that he may be able to annex if the conditions were right.

Ves also gained a much greater insight on the true war situation of red humanity.

The numbers and graphs painted a bleak picture to him. On the whole, the statistics roughly matched his expectations.

The original 5 defensive bands in the border regions had served their purpose and successfully blunted the tip of the Red Tide Offensive for the most part.

The god pilots that continually circulated through many beleaguered star systems had destroyed more enemy warships and other assets than anyone could count.

The salvage gathered from these annihilations played a crucial role in propping up the war economy and helped to mitigate the resource shortages suffered by every industry. However, that did not change the fact that the situation in the rear was not that optimistic.

When humans originally invaded the Red Ocean Dwarf Galaxy, they first appeared in the galactic rim and built Bridgehead One at one of the most remote and obscure star systems.

While this strategic choice meant that humans were able to sneak into the Red Ocean and gradually infiltrate the surrounding territories without prematurely alarming the 13 major alien races, the fact of the matter was that red humanity's current territorial holdings were not that impressive in terms of resource endowments.

The situation in a dwarf galaxy like the Red Ocean was different from a much larger galaxy like the Milky Way, but the general pattern was still the same. All of the more resource-rich star systems were much more prevalent around the galactic core. What this meant was that even the native aliens were losing a huge amount of tons worth of high-grade alloys every day, they still had a lot more to spare!

The loss of manpower was also fairly minor. While the native aliens were starting to lose an increasing amount of veteran soldiers and powerful phase lords, their population bases in the Red Ocean were so large to begin with that they could easily sustain this consumption for a long time!

"How can the Red Cabal command the native alien races to send out so many of their soldiers to die?" Ves asked with clear confusion on his face. "I mean, if you told human soldiers to suspend their cozy guard assignments and command them to engage in a mission as suicidal as diving head-first into the jaws of a god pilot en masse, they would probably rebel against their superiors. Why are these aliens so willing to accept near-certain death?"

Closier-17 crossed his arms again. "The native aliens are not human. Do not ascribe human emotions and behavior to them. To answer your question, the alien leadership employs many means to motivate their soldiers into the Red War. They rely on religious fervor and fanaticism to motivate the most pious and devoted believers among their population. Many of the aliens who we have been fighting so far are those that answered most eagerly to the divine commands of their supposed gods."

"I see. Poor fools. Their native gods don't care about the lives of their believers all that much. However, I don't think that every alien fleet is staffed by religious nuts. There are a large number of more professional alien forces among them that have overperformed compared to their peers. Then there are the phase lords. They are no idiots who can be persuaded to give up their lives. How are the alien leaders able to motivate them as well?"

"What else? To the elite and professional alien soldiers, the Red Cabal or any sufficiently powerful ruler is promising them a chance to attain godhood. If not for themselves, then their relatives or descendants. Every alien family wishes for one of them to transcend into a god and elevate all of their living relatives in turn. This is the most desirable and often the only viable means for ordinary aliens to ascend to a higher class. Even if the probability to do so is 1 in a million or 1 in a billion, that is still enough to motivate countless aliens to fight for this tiny opportunity."

That sounded rather ridiculous to Ves, but he knew how popular lotteries could be. Not everyone studied math and learned how probabilities worked. Far too many individuals only paid attention to the astronomical jackpot, unaware of how many of them would have to suffer the penalty for losing!

"And the phase lords?"

"Most of them can easily be controlled by the Red Cabal. The phase whales can offer a large variety of incentives to persuade phase lords to take part in the Red War. Lesser phase lords are the easiest to fool as you simply have to offer them a phasewater production system to risk everything in the hopes of advancing further. Greater phase lords are seeking to promote themselves to the same level as ancient phase lords. Their greed and desire to attain the ultimate form of godhood is endless."

"Do ancient phase lords actually exist?" Ves asked. "All red humanity has seen so far are lesser and greater phase lords. Is it possible for the latter to turn into True Gods?" "There should be." The Secret Keeper responded. "We have worked hard to understand the true situation. So far, we have gathered enough intelligence to prove that most alien races have managed to produce a small number of ancient phase lords that still live to this day. Most mortal aliens have long forgotten their existence, as these old and powerful beings have chosen to withdraw from the public eye. These ancient phase lords are the true guardians of the major alien races and serve as one of the strongest guarantees of their continued prosperity. Most of them have chosen to guard their home planets and other highly strategic locations. There are also ancient phase lords that have decided to seclude themselves inside their own pocket spaces and never made an appearance again."

That caused Ves to frown. He knew better than to assume that those hidden ancient phase whales had died from old age. One of the strengths of phase lord cultivation was that it was absurdly effective at extending the lifespans of organisms.

Those ancient phase lords should easily be able to live for millions of years!

"So the native aliens still possess a strong reserve of ancient phase lords?" Ves asked in a depressed tone.

"Yes. They are likely weaker than their ancient phase whale counterparts, but that is no excuse to underestimate them. Their existence and their likely presence at the most important star systems of alien empires makes it extremely risky to launch a direct assault on those locations. Do you understand now, chief councilor? The Red War is a conflict that has already damaged the foundation of our civilization, but the major alien races have only suffered a few cuts and bruises in comparison. Their core foundations remain completely undamaged. In fact, we may even be doing the native aliens a service by killing off so many of their cannon fodder."

"Huh? How does that work?"

"Think about the history of the Red Ocean prior to our arrival. The major alien races generally lived in peace alongside each other. While they are certainly not friendly with each other and avoid mingling with each other whenever possible, they have managed to maintain a stable equilibrium

where wars are unlikely to break out. This has persisted for so many years that complacency has taken root in their societies and spread out their corruptive influence. By the time we appeared and posed a threat to the native alien empires, their many faults led to a cascade of failures, causing them to perform terribly against our conquest fleets."

It did not take much thinking to figure out what the Secret Keeper was getting at. What was the best way to rectify a stagnant and decadent society?

"War." Ves whispered as realization dawned in his expression. "The native aliens... want to clean up the garbage. The more low-value subjects can be cleared out, the more room opens up for more worthy replacements. If any of the conscripts sent to the frontlines manages to persevere and survive the baptism of war, they will become a lot stronger and more useful once they return home. This is an excellent way to revive a society." The old Societal Revival Theory reared its head yet again. Even the native alien leaders had managed to figure out that long-term peace and stability inevitably weakened the

combat readiness of their societies.

The Secret Keeper slowly nodded. "I see you understand. Right now, the native alien leaders have begun to take us more seriously, but they are not in a hurry to go all-out against us. They still maintain many standing forces in the rear that they have yet to mobilize against us. On the one hand, they still do not take us seriously enough yet. On the other hand, they want to avoid losing too much of their armed forces by letting them get slaughtered by god pilots with ease. The alien leaders are still on guard against each other, and do not dare to send too many of their warships to the frontlines at once. This gives us enough breathing space to survive, but it also means we are locked in a battle of attrition where we are at a heavy disadvantage."

"We need to turn this war around in a big way." Ves frowned. "The Deep Strike Plan should have given us hope of completely throwing the native aliens into disarray, but ever since Bridgehead One got isolated, I don't know if we can still go through with our

original plan."

"The Bridgehead One issue is problematic, but there is not yet cause for despair. We have confidence that the greater spacetime bubble will be breached. The isolated star system not only holds the Polymath, the First Flame and the Dominion of Man, but also numerous grand works and entire planets and space stations populated by the most formidable scientists, engineers and other works."

"I know about all of that, but even if they can cobble together a solution, the time differential is too great. Time moves a hundred times slower inside that bubble. I fear that there is not enough time for the people who are trapped to break their cage from

within."

Secret Keeper Closier-17 acknowledged Ves' pessimistic outlook. "Your words may very well be true. There is no denying that the Deep Strike Plan is at risk now that we are cut off from the greater beyonder gate. If too much time has passed without any positive developments, then we must eventually accept that we cannot proceed according to the original master plan. That... may be the moment where the Xenotechnician makes his move. Once he reintroduces his Diplomacy Plan to a red humanity that is much more desperate and running out of options, think about how we will react to his proposal." Ves' expression grew uglier. "If the Xenotechnician really pulls this off at the right timing, then I fear that not as many humans will be eager to cling to their increasingly empty belief of human supremacy. Between honor and survival, almost everyone will pick the latter over the former."

Was this a part of the Xenotechnician's grand scheme?

If this was true, then this painted a frightening picture!

In order for the Star Designer to realize his goals, he gained a strong incentive to make red humanity lose a lot of battles and suffer a huge amount of losses!

Only when red humans got repeatedly brutalized would they be willing to embrace the

notion of allying with friendly alien races!

This incentive to lose was extremely poisonous, because made the Xenotechnician a lot less reliable than before!

Chapter 6453 New Networking Opportunities

Ves began to entertain increasingly more alarming concerns about the Xenotechnician.

He was still willing to believe that the Xenotechnician genuinely wanted to serve red humanity.

Yet there were very different ways to do so. If the Star Designer thought that red humanity was on its way of destroying itself by continuing to cling to the ideals of human supremacy, then he could easily justify the decision to induce painful losses in order to discredit these beliefs!

The Xenotechnician had to be extremely careful about making his moves, but a Star Designer had so many options available that he could probably get away with his deeds! It was difficult for Ves to reconcile his initial impression of the Xenotechnician as an amiable grandfather figure with a ruthless ideologue that had more in common with the Cosmopolitan Movement than the Red Association!

Ves suddenly understood why Closier-17 regarded him with so much suspicion.

Self-appointed saviors had the potential to ruin everything while they attempted to do the opposite.

The Xenotechnician possessed this capacity. The Huntsman possessed this capacity. Even Ves had the ability to tip red humanity into a spiral of defeats.freewebnovel.com

This was why all of the scrutiny had become necessary. Tier 1 galactic citizens received a lot of protection and other privileges not just because they were able to make enormous contributions, but also because everyone needed to know about their enormous capacity to trigger their doom!

The Polymath was just the first of her kind to make an attempt.

That did not mean that the other 13 existing Star Designers in the Red Ocean were any less dangerous!

Ves hated the revelations he received. A part of him still wished he could regain the ignorance of before. The Secret Keeper had fed him so many poisonous secrets that he had become jaded at the great individuals he once looked up to. Their accomplishments were historic to be certain, but whether they remained helpful or a threat to red humanity was in constant doubt!

"Chief Councilor Larkinson." Closier-17 called, causing Ves to emerge from his dark thoughts. "Your fears are understandable, but you do not stand alone. Red humanity still has many defenders. Each of them are flawed, but as long as they agree to work together, a single rogue element will not be able to break the existing order. There are entire organizations devoted to monitoring and predicting the actions of elevated sources of risks such as the Xenotechnician. On top of them, he is also being stared at by his chief rivals."

"Who are his rivals?"

"You should know them already. You already bear their gifts."

Ves blinked. He looked down at the active super-class signal jammer. He also lowered his arms to touch the hidden super-class personal shield generator and super-class

emergency multi-use personal teleporter.

While it shouldn't have taken too much time and effort to fabricate three

masterwork-quality gadgets, the materials used to raise their quality to the highest standard were exceedingly precious!

Only super-class materials such as EE-343F-00334R could be used to make devices that surpassed the already amazing performance of first-class products!

"The Marmedions." Ves gasped.

The Secret Keeper expressionlessly nodded. "Precisely. Charles Marmedion, the Energy Warder, has lived longer than the Xenotechnician. Both of them have lived through the last years of the Age of Conquest, but they have developed in radically different directions. The Energy Warder is one of the most outspoken human supremacists among the Star Designers. It is no coincidence that he has established himself as the leader of the RA Expansionist Faction. Although his goals are much harder to realize after the Great Severing, he still believes that red humanity shall ultimately weather the Red Tide Offensive and launch a sweeping counterattack that will end with the total conquest of this dwarf galaxy."

That... sounded rather optimistic to Ves. Too optimistic.

The Xenotechnician clearly possessed too little confidence in red humanity, but the Energy Warder was guilty of the polar opposite if the Secret Keeper's description was accurate!

Even Ves did not dare to think that red humanity would magically unleash its potential and steamroll all of the native alien forces that stood in their way.

"Is the Energy Warder crazy?"

"Who can say? You must first define the word 'crazy' before we can apply a test to determine whether the Energy Warder deserves this label. This is much harder than you think because 'crazy' is notoriously difficult to define. Where you see ambition, others see madness. Where some people recognize bravery, other people only see idiocy. Whether the Energy Warder is insane or not is irrelevant. What matters is whether he is an asset or a liability to our civilization. Currently, his ideology and actions are much more acceptable to us. Humans should never give up so easily.

That was another clear message to Ves. Was the Evolution Witch encouraging him to develop closer ties with the Energy Warder and the other Marmedions?

The RA Expansionist Faction was practically the strongest power bloc within the Red Association and possibly the rest of red humanity.

Ves saw many advantages in befriending the Marmedions. It was not necessary for him to ally with them. He just needed to be on good terms with the Expansionists. "The Energy Warder is an old Star Designer. What we know, he knows as well. His network and power base is incomparable to that of the Evolution Witch. His Excellency is probably in the possession of far greater intelligence than our Secret Department. He is also an old acquaintance of the Xenotechnician."

That meant that if the Xenotechnician ever tried anything radical and crossed the line, the Energy Warder would be the first to take action against his fellow Star Designer! The two were political adversaries. There was no way they could reconcile with each other, not when they had grown so old and powerful while drawing strength from their earnest ideals.

Ves never stood a chance if he tried to stop the Xenotechnician from imperiling human civilization, but that was fine.

The Secret Keeper was right that this was not his battle to fight.

The Energy Warder's eyes and ears were probably trying to watch the Xenotechnician's every move.

The formidable amount of people and assets that the Marmedions could muster was far greater than that of the Xenotechnician!

This meant that if the two sides ever entered into an open confrontation against each other, the Xenotechnician would lose miserably!

This realization gave Ves a lot of relief. A huge weight had lifted off his chest. He did not want to end up in a situation similar to the end of the Survivalist conference where he had to play a key role in saving red humanity.

Ves was eager to offload this immense responsibility to the Energy Warder and company and get the hell away before he got caught in the middle.

Even if he was more than willing to root for the Energy Warder's victory, that did not mean that Ves was willing to fight proactively against the Xenotechnician!

Ves thought about his expensive gifts and finally comprehended the meaning of this expensive gesture.

Nothing came for free.

Everything had a price.

Though Ves did not want to get dragged into a fight between Star Designers, the three super-class gifts made it very hard to remain a bystander.

The Expansionists wanted Ves to join their camp.

It was not enough for him to verbally offer his support to the ideals of human supremacy.

It was also not enough to create a helpful spirit that took on the guise of Caramond.

If Ves wanted to acquire the backing and generous support of the Marmedions, then he needed to enter their orbit and establish a more substantial form of cooperation. There were many possible advantages to doing this, but he was very reluctant to get dragged into other people's affairs.

The Marmedions were strong, but that also meant that they threatened the interests of a lot of players. They had their own enemies and difficulties to contend against. The safest play would be to establish a shallow friendship with the Energy Warder and company. There was no urgent need to deepen his relationship with them any further unless they were willing to show him far greater sincerity than a handful of super-class

gadgets.

Ves understood his new positioning quite well. He was a very new player that had been launched to the top of human civilization.

The speed of his ascension and his relative lack of familiarity with most established players turned him into a potential ally that could be won over.

As far as his ideology was concerned, he did not possess any notable beliefs that solidly locked him in anyone's camp.

He agreed with the Evolution Witch's core ideals, but he was not nearly as fanatic about realizing them as the radical god pilot.

He actually thought that the Xenotechnician's Diplomacy Plan had a higher chance of success than the alternatives, but he was not able to overcome the stigma surrounding

alien coexistence.

He supported the Energy Warder's strident adherence to the ideals of human supremacy, but he was not willing to become one of the old Star Designer's footsoldiers.

In short, Ves had not committed himself strongly enough to any camp that he still

retained the ability to choose which one to support!

"Secret Keeper."

"Yes, chief councilor?"

"By telling me all of this, aren't you afraid that I will choose to side with the Marmedions

over the Evolution Witch? What if I decide that I can get a lot more done if I agree to work together with the three Star Designers of the Expansionist Faction?" Closier-17 did not look concerned in the slightest. "The Evolution Witch does not demand your obedience. She is confident that you shall willingly aid her in her attempts to evolve red humanity. If you choose to spur her generosity and choose to offer your services to others, then that is your choice. She will not bear a grudge towards you for turning away from her. Only she is to blame for failing to win you over,"

Ves resisted the urge to roll her eyes. He did not believe that the Evolution Witch was magnanimous enough to tolerate his rejection!

The female god pilot had always acted with little to no restraint. She readily followed

her whims and frequently meddled with his life.

For better or worse, Ves had become too entangled with the Evolution Witch to separate

himself from her. It was better to accept this reality and take advantage of the god pilot's backing.

Besides, the Evolution Witch was not as neglectful towards him as he thought. She may have left him in the dark in the past half year, but he had probably passed her tests.

Secret Keeper Closier-17 wouldn't have been as candid about him about many sensitive secrets if he failed.

Besides, siding with the Evolution Witch did not rule out other friendships and alliances.

Ves was still able to maintain a good relationship with the Destroyer of Worlds as she did not share an adversarial relationship with the Evolution Witch.

If he wanted to diversify his network even further, then befriending the Marmedions was a perfectly valid choice.

"Let's say I want to build closer ties with the Marmedions. How should I go about it?" Ves asked the Secret Keeper.

"It is not appropriate for you to meet with any Star Designer directly. You can propose to work together with the RA Expansionist Faction first, but this will require you to be patient. If you want to earn an audience with one of the Marmedion Star Designers as soon as possible, then you will have to make a grander gesture that can earn you this privilege. Surprise them. Break their expectations. If you can help them achieve their goals considerably easier than before, then you will be able to earn their genuine support."

That was certainly an attractive option. Ves just was not clear yet how he could do what

the Secret Keeper described. It was not as if he could whip up a magical mech design that could make one of the three Marmedion leaders impressed.

They were all Star Designers! They were the top dogs of the mech industry! Even if they lacked Ves' unorthodox capabilities, they were more than capable of designing mechs that performed better in almost every aspect!

Chapter 6454 The Polymath is Right

By the time the Secret Department finally dumped a huge amount of confidential information and speculative guesses into his mind, Ves felt awfully tired.

His body remained in peak condition, but his mental condition had deteriorated quite a lot.

He learned too many secrets, a proportion of which exposed the true side of the people and organizations he thought he understood.

How they presented themselves in public was multiple times cleaner and more upright than how they acted in reality.

It was hard for Ves to come to terms with the reality that the heroes and exemplars he looked up to had their own dark pasts.

Still, he was realistic enough to know that not everyone at this level could keep their hands clean. There was too much competition and not enough resources to go around. This trend only worsened after the start of the Age of Dawn. Getting cut off from the Milky Way Galaxy screwed over a lot of people.

While Ves and his Larkinson Clan had been isolated from the crisis and turmoil that erupted after the greater beyonder gate no longer enabled passage between the galaxies, the circumstances were much worse for parties that depended heavily on funds and assets transferred from humanity's home galaxy!

In order to survive, the groups that fell into crisis resorted to desperate means in order to maintain their dominance. Much of it took place out of sight, and if people noticed that their superiors and owners had changed hands all of a sudden, they had a lot of reasons to keep their mouths shut and their heads down.

Red humanity's order remained precarious several years after the start of the crisis. It all came down to resources, and more pertinently prime living space.

Under the current conditions, the most ideal territory that people wanted to live in was a star system located far away from the frontlines and relatively rich with phasewater and other precious resources.

Such star systems were few and far in between, and had already reached saturation in terms of how many people they could feed and employ.

More construction was ongoing. States hurriedly terraformed lifeless planets into barely livable globes in order to accommodate the enormous influx of refugees and cowards fleeing from the regions most at risk of getting attacked.

The constant upheaval and displacements broke a lot of old organizations and promoted the growth of the ones that occupied superior positions in the new reality.

The wave of consolidations along with the developments at the frontlines produced many losers and precious little winners.

The weak got culled in large numbers. They either lost their livelihoods as they sought to abandon their homes and previously stable jobs. Due to the plunging value of real estate in or close to the border regions, these unwilling migrants lost much of their wealths and became destitute overnight.

Many soldiers fighting in the frontlines engaged in a much more literal struggle for survival. Mech forces fell and right, and despite all of the incentives used by the major players to send soldiers off to war, the manpower pool was getting drained at a prodigious rate.

The last 6 months of intense fighting at the border regions had taken a huge toll on the amount of eligible mech pilots!

The native aliens made no secret of their determination to rely on attrition warfare to exhaust red humanity's capacity to fight.

The enemy's strategy was undeniably costly for both sides, but even the most ignorant individual could figure out that the humans wouldn't be able to keep this up for long!

If Ves had not introduced the Yellow Jacket models, the mech industry would have resorted to extreme measures to raise the amount of eligible mech pilots.

From expanding the production of frontline mechs to send low-aptitude mech pilots into the gauntlet to reducing the mandatory study years of mech academies by half, everything had to be sacrificed in order to put more bodies in the trenches!

The Red Fleet's Starfighter Corps would have overtaken mechs in this situation. Although starfighters were undoubtedly inferior to mechs, their ease of use and lack of dependence on neural interfaces would prove decisive when mech pilots simply ran out after a point.

In fact, the Red Fleet even plotted to marginalize the Red Association entirely by taking over much of the resources and privileges previously enjoyed by mechs!

By gradually replacing the mech industry with the starfighter industry, the fleeters sought to damage the foundation of the mech community and prevent it from ever regaining its preeminent status in society in the future!

Ves found it rather distasteful that the fleeters could not stop themselves from targeting

an important pillar of red humanity during an existential war.

However, this was far from the only case where comrades in arms secretly or not-so-secretly sought to undermine each other.

One of the overall conclusions that Ves made after learning about the true state of human civilization was that the current order might not last anymore.

While the foundation of human civilization in the Red Ocean was still deep enough to prop up its existing rules and institutions for a few more years, there was a limit to how much the current players could expend their reserves.

War coffers were being emptied at a rapid rate. Productivity was dropping. The

economies of many states had plunged into deep recessions. Non-renewable resources were being used up far too quickly.

The social order was also beginning to deteriorate. This was especially the case in the star systems that were at risk as well as the highly congested planets that refugees flocked towards.

Above all, there were still far too many states and governments that refused to tackle the emerging problems with the necessary grit and determination.

Far too many non-essential civilian industries were still operating when the need for war materiel was constantly surging.

The industrial policies of many states had yet to adjust to a state more conducive to total war.

Leaders refused to curtail the production of consumer goods for fear of causing deeper economic disruptions and attracting the fury of their people.

Combined with the rise of an increasing number of political firebrands and agitators, repression was on the rise, causing citizens to become even more miserable.

Ves never imagined that his society's internal stability had plunged so low. The news portals did a good job at trying to maintain the illusion of solidarity, but the reality was that the wellbeing of humans had dropped to lows that had not been seen since the dark days of the Age of Conquest!

When Secret Keeper Rosette-193 briefed him on the dire economy and stability of a lot of human territories, she then proceeded to introduce a tentative solution that certain bigshots had devised.

The woman in a gray uniform passed a secure data pad to Ves that contained a single highly confidential proposal.

"This is... the Dissolution of States Plan?"

"The name should already tell you everything. The soft-spoken Rosette-193 said without emotion. "There are a number of god pilots and Star Designers that believe that the Polymath was ultimately correct on the problems that are impairing our civilization. Many existing states are founded and controlled by pioneers who have taken large risks and agents of powerful groups that are rooted in the Milky Way. More often than not, the controlling authorities are not competent and prepared enough to lead their states in a time of crisis and war. However, they can still rely on inertia and their existing properties to maintain their positions of power. This leads to an undesirable situation where the potential of human states remains untapped. You should know by now that this problem is not being remedied. Instead, the opposite is happening"

Ves widened his eyes, especially when skimmed through the document. "Are you truly serious about breaking apart all of the existing states?!"

"This plan is not set in stone. The Dissolution of States is an adaptation of one of the components of the Deep Strike Plan. We originally planned to introduce a similar if less disruptive plan after the

start of deep strike operations, but the Red Tide Offensive has caused enough accidents and setbacks that more and more leaders are beginning to accept the need to bring this component forward."

"So you think it is a good idea to depose all governments, decentralize their administrations and encourage powerful groups to compete against each other for

control over star systems? The damage produced by these conflicts, whether directly or indirectly, may exceed the losses inflicted by the native aliens!"

Rosette-193 shook her head. "That may not necessarily be the case. All human-to-human conflict will be strictly regulated. Destructive wars will remain prohibited. At most, territorial disputes will be decided by formal matches between two military forces. This is not a new method as the Terrans, Rubarthans and other first-raters have resorted to similar methods in order to prevent escalation. What is important is that the weak and unworthy will no longer be allowed to hold onto territories that are currently being squandered in their hands. The New Elites who have fought and survived in the frontlines understand much better how extensively we must militarize our existing territories. If we must sacrifice our culture, our addiction to consumer goods and our peaceful way of life in order to survive, then we must begin with haste."

That sounded incredibly serious. Ves anticipated a huge amount of protests and opposition as result of this insane plan,

Yet... he could also see how it could produce the positive effects described by the female.

Secret Keeper.

The infighting was bound to produce a lot of losses, but the gains may be greater once

more deserving leaders took over.

These conquerors had little respect for the existing laws and property rights that

protected the status quo. They could easily smash apart the corruption and the unproductive laws that prevented territories from reaching their greater potential. Ves recognized that the main purpose to enact the Dissolution of States was to completely tear down the highly parasitic rent-seeking powers that only sought to benefit themselves at the expense of the greater society!

This plan had the Polymath all over it. Even if she was unable to contribute directly to the plan due to being trapped in a greater spacetime bubble, it was clear that a growing number of leaders had gained renewed appreciation for her logic and ideals!

In fact, Ves actually liked parts of the Unity Plan as well. The biggest problem he had

with it was that it demanded that the smartest human should be placed on the throne. As long as the current leaders never intended to enact this final controversial step, it

was not that bad to implement the rest of the original Unity Plan.

Ves sighed. "When?"

"Uncertain support for the Dissolution of States Plan has not yet reached a majority. We

expect that it will ultimately be implemented within 6 to 12 months. We cannot afford to

delay too much as our civilization needs to implement harsh but necessary reforms as soon as possible."

"I see. What about... the Terran Alliance and the Rubarthan Pact?" Ves asked. "The people

of those states have a lot of pride in their shared identities. The ancient clans and the Rubarthan principalities will not agree to let themselves be broken down and lose all of the advantages of maintaining strong and permanent alliances with each other." "That is also one of the main sources of opposition to the proposal. We believe that the Terrans and the Rubarthans will ultimately recognize the necessity of this radical plan, but they will continue to cause unnecessary delays. At most, they will be excluded from

the plan in exchange for receiving reduced material support. Over time, we believe that the competitiveness of the Red Ocean Union will surpass the Terran Alliance and the Rubarthan Pact, which will cause the latter two to reconsider the wisdom of their

opposition."

That sounded like a lot of wishful thinking to Ves. It was dangerous to rely so much on assumptions, but the Secret Keeper sounded awfully confident that everyone would eventually fall in line.

Where did Rosette-193 get all of her confidence?

Chapter 6455 We're In Trouble

The Dissolution of States Plan was not a small matter!

It had the potential to completely upend human-occupied space and disrupt everyone's lives!

Although Ves could not figure out why the supporters of this insane plan were confident that it would ultimately revive human society and increase its productive forces, they had a lot of smart people at their disposal, so they probably had a way to prevent everything from spiraling into ruin.

Ves appreciated that he received advance warning of what might be coming. The Dissolution of States Plan was bound to disrupt a lot of existing arrangements made by the Larkinson Clan and his other organizations.

While he was bound by secrecy to not leak out anything about this plan to others, he could still issue vague orders to ensure his power base suffered as little negative consequences as possible.

It helped that the Larkinson Clan held very little territorial holdings so far, so it was not as if Ves had much to lose.

In fact, he could potentially make huge gains by taking over the territories that became ripe for the picking.

Not that he would do such a thing. Competing over territory was a waste of time in his opinion.

The Red War was a much more pressing concern to him. The Red Tide Offensive needed to end first. Once red humanity was able to launch a counteroffensive and conquer a lot more alien territories, then it shouldn't be too difficult to claim the more desirable star systems for himself and his clan.

Although the territories in alien space were much more vulnerable to incursions from their prior owners, the resources available in star systems closer to the galactic core was also higher.

"Maybe it will never come to this." Ves muttered to himself.

If red humanity was unable to bounce back from the Red Tide Offensive, then there was no point in dreaming about building up a territorial domain in former alien space! Ves continued to mull over all of the secrets he learned even after the Secret Department concluded the final briefing.

"We're in deep trouble."

He needed to figure out where the Whale Ark was being built so that he could stay close to the location.

If the native aliens managed to break through the frontlines while human society was in the process of collapsing from within, then there was no way to salvage the situation anymore!

Ves needed to make sure he was close enough to the Whale Ark so that he could quickly evacuate to the only ride that could take him away from this dangerous dwarf galaxy.

The Red Ocean was a dangerous place!

Although his confidence in red humanity's ability to withstand the ongoing crises had dropped, he still preferred it if he did not have to abandon his entire foundation in the new frontier.

Fortunately for him, the confidential briefings made it very clear that the other leaders were not being complacent. They were all working on their own solutions, though the issue was that they were so strong-willed about it that they refused to coordinate their actions.

Everyone had a different vision on how red humanity should be saved!

The Evolution Witch was no exception to this rule!

"Only one more day to go before she makes her big announcement."

Ves built up a lot of anticipation for what she was about to unveil. He already received a hint that he had somehow contributed to whatever she was working on! This meant that he would also become affected by the god pilot's scheme!

The lack of information was killing him, but considering that he only had to wait for one more day, he reluctantly remained patient and hoped that the hours would pass by quickly.

During this time, Ves tried to wrap up his visit to Yernstall. The Sapphire of the Red Ocean was a resplendent location, but he wanted to go back to New Constantinople and resume his old routine.

Ves therefore proceeded to work together with Eliza Mo Ragadan and Gavin Neumann to handle various appointments and conclude various business deals.

Much of the business deals had to do with cooperation regarding the production and sale of Yellow Jackets.

The popularity of the first commercial Carmine mech models had peaked so much that the demand had broken the record!

The secrecy surrounding the Swarm Project had prevented the Living Mech Corporation from establishing a lot of different business deals with third-party manufacturers in advance.

Ves and the LMC could only make up for lost time by quickly signing agreements with

Fortunately, the insane popularity of the Yellow Jackets made it disgustingly easy to find willing partners who were willing to take up the burden of production and distribution at reasonable prices.

One of the biggest points of frustration was the fact that the production of the mysterious Carmine System was effectively controlled by the Red Association.

Only the bioproduction companies under the direct control of the mechers received the right to produce this crucial and revolutionary new control system.

While the mechers had made much better preparations for the mass production of the Carmine Systems, their production capacity was still finite at all 3 tech levels, so there was a hard ceiling on the monthly output of first-class, second-class and third-class Yellow Jackets.

Another point of frustration was the cheap market positioning of the Yellow Jackets. All three versions of the Carmine mech were catered to the lower end of the market, which meant that they did not earn a lot of profit.

For now, that problem was not yet evident as the huge mismatch between supply and demand had caused the actual prices of the Yellow Jackets to be 3 to 5 times higher

than usual.

There was a limit to how extensively people were willing to get ripped off, though. Only the most desperate rich customers who wanted to experience the pleasure of piloting a mech for the first time had paid so much cash.

In fact, a black market had already formed about delivered but still unbonded Yellow Jackets where they were being sold at even more inflated prices!

Ves expected the mech industry and the mech market to eventually normalize and return to saner prices. The Yellow Jackets may possess a revolutionary capability, but their lack of quality materials and advanced technologies limited their impact on the battlefield.

They could only make significant achievements on the battlefield if they deployed in large numbers.

In order to encourage mech forces to field thousands if not tens of thousands of Yellow Jackets at a time, Ves insisted that the sales price should be lowered until it was close to a typical budget mech model with similar performance characteristics! "Dropping the price too soon is not advisable." Gavin frowned as he advised Ves on good business. "Demand will still remain overwhelming for the first 3 months. There are still plenty of well-heeled customers who are willing to spend the amount of money it takes to equip a mech company just to obtain a genuine Yellow Jacket that is fresh from the manufacturing complex. It would be a waste of our earning potential if you prematurely reduce the price to normal budget mech ranges. The excess demand will not go away, and the supply will still not be able to keep up. The second-hand "That is true if normal market forces prevail. Ves acknowledged his assistant's point. "However, the Red Association will not let that happen. I am sure that the problems that you have mentioned will ease up. What we need to do the most is to set expectations and make sure that everyone remembers that the Yellow Jackets are fragile mechs by nature. I do not want customers to spend ten times the amount of money for them and treat them as premium mechs. They are relatively fragile and cannot keep up with the performance of more capable mech models."

This was not about profit anymore. This was about survival. Ves had learned enough secrets in the past two days to know that the Red Association was not above manipulating the market in secret in order to achieve its desired outcomes.

A perfect free market could never exist. The mech market appeared to look quite free

on the surface, but it was constantly being nudged by the mechers in secret in order to maintain stability and prevent undesirable distortions.

In any case, once Ves was done with negotiating deals and adjusting the pricing strategy of the LMC, he proceeded to take care of another noteworthy affair. He visited the shipyard that he had bought during the grand auction. Starfarer Berth was much more beautiful now that he was able to step foot on it in person. Since he already visited the orbital shipyard by remote in the past, Ves did not waste

too much time on tours. He simply completed a quick inspection of the ongoing works and gauged the capabilities of the workers.

"We have managed to hire more qualified personnel as of late" Chief Executive Eric Poderin reported to Ves in person. "Our production speed cannot be raised any further due to the limitations of this relatively small facility. What we can do is increase the speed of switching production to a new design, Upon your instructions, we have also hired numerous naval engineers and xenotechnology experts that are familiar with adapting alien tech onto human products. They have already integrated with my crew and are spending most of their hours at work on studying archetech. The samples and documentation provided by Professor Gloriana Wodin has been helpful, but not too much."

"How so? What is the problem?"

"Our technical personnel are highly qualified, but archetech is so difficult and alien

that it is a struggle to learn. I have lived for over 2 centuries, but I have never felt so pressured since my university days when I tried to study the principles of archetech. It is... not a technology base that is meant to be used by humans."

Ves knew that his wife had done him a favor by trying to give the scientists and engineers employed by Starfarer Berth a crash course in archetech. Since her time was short, she was not able to do more than give all of these

first-raters a lot of homework.

were having difficulties?"

"Our rate of progress is not any worse than others who have attempted to learn archetech." The leader of Starfarer Berth defended himself. "What you perceive as slow is considered relatively normal in our sector. Difficulties are to be expected. I can only promise you that most of us will master the bare minimum necessary to convert a captured archeship into a moderately human-operable starship according to our original schedule."

That would take a year or two, but it couldn't be helped. Archetech was just that difficult to master.

"We can still speed up our study of archetech if you are willing to make a large trade

off, sir" "What tradeoff?"

"If you are willing to suspend the production of first-class combat carriers for our

Premier Branch, most of our personnel can devote all of their work time on studying and maybe even experimenting with archetech. If you are willing to divert the budget used to fund the production of first-class combat carriers on expensive tutors, many samples of archetech and targeted upgrades to our facility, I am confident we can advance the schedule by at least half a year."

That... sounded awfully tempting, but Ves eventually rejected this idea.

"We still need those combat carriers. Each of them can carry 30 first-class multipurpose mechs, and we need as many of them as possible. It is unreasonable to make so many sacrifices just to convert the archeship that we have captured into a

stealth frigate. The alien vessel is good at sneaking around, but she isn't designed to carry any mechs. I think we still need to be able to carry enough hard power to win

our battles in space. Just do your best according to our current plan." "Very well, sir..."

Chapter 6456 Commodore

The day had finally come.

During the founding ceremony of the Red Collective, the Evolution Witch promised to make a big announcement that was sure to shake red humanity.

Everyone took her seriously. God pilots were not known to make bold lies.

Many observers that tried to keep track of the Evolution Witch's movements and actions had also vaguely figured out that she had created an ambitious layout.

She had done a good job at hiding her tracks. No one knew what she was up to. The most the intelligence agencies had gathered was that she had relocated a large amount of Transhumanist scientists and engineers to a secret location.

The Transhumanist Faction also began to put more effort into obtaining rare and expensive materials.

All of this indicated that the god pilot's plan was likely based on advanced technology! Nobody possessed any further clues than that. The location where the

Transhumanists were preparing their solution for the Evolution Witch remained unknown, and nobody managed to obtain any information on what was taking place inside.

Every worker was carefully vetted by the Evolution Witch, and none of them had any chance of leaving their secret hideout ahead of time.

It was only until recently that observers managed to detect the arrival of an RA battlecarrier that had evidently been tasked with transporting goods on behalf of the god pilot.

Many people hoped that the Evolution Witch hadn't brought back a biodisaster or whatever.

Speculation ran rife by the time Ves woke up and readied himself for the day.

His schedule had cleared up for the most part as he had managed to fulfill many of the goals he had set for this business trip.

If the Evolution Witch's mysterious surprise did not demand that he stay behind in this central star node, then he intended to leave tomorrow and leave the hustle and bustle of Yernstall behind.

As Ves perused the news publications for any clues on what the Evolution Witch was about to announce, Lucky yawned as he finished his bowl of high-grade exotics and hypers.

The archemetal cat had grown tired of Yernstall as well. La Reine and other highly developed planets were filled with high technology and extremely valuable alloys, but

The mechers and the fleters monitored everything. They were so good at tracking everything that they somehow managed to track Lucky when he was phasing through solid matter!

Seeing that Lucky could not get away with snacking on a mech or a metal wall without getting caught and bringing trouble to himself, the gem cat glumly awaited the day he returned to New Constantinople.

Diandi Base was small, but at least the personnel over there did not mind if Lucky enjoyed a bite out of stuff every now and then, especially if he left behind a mark. "Meow... meow..."

"I know, Lucky. It won't take much longer, hopefully. I am more than eager to get back to my wife and children. It is frustrating to communicate with them by remote."

As Ves waved his hand and shut down all of the news publications that had done nothing but engage in baseless speculation, he turned to his personal assistant. "Have we received an invitation to attend the Evolution Witch's public announcement?"

"We have not." Gavin responded. "No one has received an announcement. We just received confirmation from the Transhumanists that the Evolution Witch is not going to hold a speech in a stadium or other public venue. She intends to appear in space to address every red human during a live broadcast. We can all watch the show right here on the Tarrasque."

"I see. That is convenient. If anything goes wrong, we should be far away enough to remain unaffected. It's a pity that we won't get to enjoy the show up close, but I value my safety more."

"By the way, Ves, your friend from the Red Fleet has also returned. The Babylon Excavator has returned with minor technological upgrades. She also brought along two destroyers, the Geirne Fis and the Mennis Rebode."

Ves knew what that meant. Sigrund had returned. Not only that., Admiral Mieli had come through and helped to facilitate his promotion!

He decided to call the fleeter right away.

A dozen seconds passed until the physical projection of Zonrad Reze appeared in the dining compartment.

Compared to the last time Ves saw the disguised AI, Sigrund's human guise wore a slightly more elaborate uniform.

The additional golden stripes and symbols made it clear that he had ascended beyond commanding a single warship.

From the moment he got promoted, he finally received the privilege of commanding

"Congratulations."

"Thank you, professor, or should I say chief councilor."

Ves casually waved his hands. "It doesn't matter. It is not as if my office at the Upper Council is my primary consideration. So what have you become, and what is with the additional ships?"

"I have been promoted to a commodore. The complete administrative procedures are still taking place, but Admiral Chelsea Mieli has been generous enough to assign the two destroyers under my command in advance."

The new commodore activated two projections that depicted the two relatively small warships.

"Destroyers, huh?" Ves spoke. "I can tell that they are designed to fulfill two different and highly specialized roles. That is nice and all, but couldn't the RF have been less stingy and assign a few cruisers to you instead?"

"The Red Fleet cannot spare such hardware, professor. Every warship counts. Light cruisers and heavy cruisers are still sub-capital ships, but they are large enough that they can undertake many responsibilities that smaller escort vessels cannot do. Destroyers may be small, but they can punch above their weight so long as they are fighting under favorable circumstances."

Commodore Reze gestured towards the destroyer that was covered with small turrets. "The Geirne Fis is a destroyer of the Storm Shredder class. She is largely covered with secondary and tertiary cannon batteries that excel at point defense and taking down enemy small craft. There is not much else that is noteworthy about her design. Her weapons are much less effective against warships and other large opponents, and should never have to face them upfront as far as I am concerned."

"I agree."

The commodore gestured to the projection of the other destroyer.

"If you want to employ a siege weapon against a particularly large and relatively immobile target, then the Mennis Rebode can help you. She bears a large transphasic hyper laser cannon as a spinal-mounted weapon. The single-shot firepower of this spinal cannon exceeds the firepower of a single primary cannon mounted on the Babylon Excavator in certain cases."

"That... sounds quite impressive. What else does this interesting ship have in store?"

Ves loved the design and philosophy behind this exaggerated destroyer. The integration of a sizable spinal cannon on a ship class with little internal space to begin with was a dedication towards extreme specialization!

The entire vessel strained so much to support this comparatively gigantic weapon that the ship sacrificed everything else in order to sustain the consumption of such a

powerful armament!

"Nothing else. The Mennis Rebode does not carry any other weapons aside from a modest complement of transphasic missiles and a small amount of point defenses. She is not designed to

operate by herself. It is best to treat her like a siege machine and protect her well until it is necessary to borrow her power."

"That sounds decent. The quality of the spacers among the fleeters have always been high, so I am expecting good performance from your unit going forward." Ves said. Sigrund made a seemingly sincere bow. "The Babylon Squadron shall not fail you, professor! In time, my unit may receive reinforcements from the RF over time. Do not reject them. Show them through your actions that you possess profound knowledge. We will continue to remain attached to the Bluejay Fleet, though we are not merging ourselves into the RF's chain of command."

"That is good enough. I am happy to receive all of this help."

The mechers and the fleeters did not always see eye-to-eye with each other.

It was awkward for them to escort the same mech designer and bump into each other

every day.

Ves had no interest in meddling with their old rivalry. The lack of coordination and other measures made it harder to coordinate between the two groups.

This might cause trouble in the future.

Ves and Sigrund chatted a bit more about the latter's promotion. It had been difficult

for Zonrad Reze to account for himself. His past performance was not too good, and he had broken multiple rules when he authorized the unlocking and deployment of

several superweapons.

However, the naval board that decided over Zonrad Reze's case had ultimately decided in favor of promoting him and preparing him for more important duties in the future.

"Has your heavy cruiser replenished her stock of weapons of mass destruction as

well?" Sigrund coughed. "It is not appropriate to discuss such topics in our current setting. I will inform you later in person to better secure our communications." "That is acceptable. There is no hurry on this matter since we are present in one of the most secure star systems within human-occupied space. By the way, I have an

unrelated question."

"Please ask."

"Does the RF and your fleeter buddies know anything about what the Evolution Witch

is about to announce?"

"No." Commodore Reze shook his head. "We have far too little verified proof. My new

promotion may have enabled me to command multiple ships, but I am not yet an admiral. I do not have the clearance to access the information the Fifth or Seventh Fleet might have."

"It is nice if we obtain useful information, but it is not the end of the galaxy if I am just

as ignorant as everyone else. I just find it challenging to wait for the Evolution Witch to start her show."

This caused the fleeter officer to grow suspicious. "Her decision to maintain so much

secrecy does not bode well for us. If she feels the need to hide her work until she is ready to present it, then her work is probably mired in controversy!"

"I am not too worried about that. She must have everything under control, and if she

has managed to gain the cooperation of at least one Star Designer, then the likelihood of accidents should be a lot less than before.

There was nothing particularly noteworthy to talk about with Sigrund aside from his promotion, so the two quickly ended their short call.

Sigrund was moving up. He had come one step closer to becoming an admiral and gaining enough power to take control over his own destiny.

Many people around Ves had grown by leaps and bounds. Though he still missed a lot

of familiar people who were still undergoing EdNet training at this time, they had already crossed the halfway point.

Ves eagerly looked forward to welcoming the return to all of the heavily augmented

and much more knowledgeable Larkinsons back to the clan. That should be the time where he could truly unleash the Larkinson Clan.

As Ves continued to devise plans for the future, he eventually received a short notification.

He headed up to a lounge where everyone he knew in person had gathered.

Jovy Armalon, Vector Loban, Lady Romanda Devos and so on had gathered in order to watch the live broadcast together.

Ves was also accompanied by his 12 Apocalypse Warden guards. Their armor and presence made it impossible to ignore them, but they had done a good job acting in an

unobtrusive manner, though only as far as their gear allowed.

"Meow."

Lucky came as well and automatically sought out Jovy's lap.

The Survivalist smiled and stroked the gem cat's back.

"You have grown even stronger since the last time I touched you. This archemetal

alloy feels amazing"

"Meow."

"It's starting"

Chapter 6457 The Evolution Witch's Announcement

This was an important day. Red humanity would remember this date, just as they remembered the date when Ves Larkinson introduced his

now-historic Yellow Jacket models.

Though Ves was not able to understand the magnitude of the Evolution Witch's ambitious scheme, he already received various clues that indicate that her plan had the potential to rock red humanity.

Others with excellent connections and high positions obtained similar clues. They cleared out their schedules and chose to pay full attention to the Transhumanist leader's announcement.

The fact that she was a god pilot was already enough to give her due attention, but the scant hints she had dropped so far compelled other tier 1 galactic citizens to orient themselves around her mysterious plan.

The Evolution Witch knew better than to fool her peers and other powerful dignitaries with empty bluster.

Everyone tuned into the broadcast. Many more adventurous individuals even hopped onto their starships and attempted to fly closer to the site where the Evolution Witch intended to hold her announcement.

It was useless.

Traffic control in Yernstall was extremely strict. The security forces did not dare to take any risks and preemptively locked down all traffic. Even ships that were located on the edge of the outer system had to temporarily shut down their engines and coast along in ballistic trajectories unless they were on a collision course!

More and more people anticipated a big show. Now that Ves had been reduced to one of many spectators, he could vaguely sense the immense anticipation building up from every hopeful human in the Red Ocean.

"Vector." He spoke up as he idly scratched Lucky's chin. "Have you received any further information from your superiors? Now that the Evolution Witch is about to start her speech, surely you must have more information." The biomech designer who sat on another couch shook his head. "I am

afraid to disappoint you, but I have not received any new missives. My friends and acquaintances in the Transhumanist Faction have not been able to share much information either. I am in the same position as you and everyone else."

They soon fell silent when the Evolution Witch appeared in the broadcast.

Her entrance was not particularly grand this time. The Geneforger suddenly appeared in an empty location of space that was located in the junction between the inner and outer system of Yernstall.

The entire region of space had clearly been emptied in advance. Nearby traffic had already been diverted more than a day ago, so there weren't any errant cargo haulers or other vessels in the neighborhood.

Just for good measure, the Geneforger fully unfolded its God Kingdom, thereby gaining extensive control over its surroundings!

The sheer reality-defying power of the Evolution Witch's transcendent willpower was so great that it could pressure every viewer who was watching the live broadcast!

A momentary air of oppressive excitement weighed down on everyone's spirits before it withdrew.

The god mech still radiated a strong and vigilant God Kingdom, but it was not directed towards anyone specific.

The Evolution Witch was merely being careful. This showed that what she was about to announce may be a lot more vulnerable than her god mech.

Interesting.

After making an appearance and providing undeniable proof that she was the real deal, the Geneforger disappeared.

In its place was the god pilot in her human guise. Divine Lucie Miyazaki floated in space in complete defiance to the rules that governed what should happen if a human entered into space without any visible protection

against the merciless vacuum environment.

To a baseline human, appeared in space like the Evolution Witch was

nothing less than a death sentence!

To a god pilot, floating around in space in this form was no different from

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taking a walk on an ordinary habitable planet.

"Citizens of red humanity." The Evolution Witch spoke with the same empowered human voice she used during the founding ceremony. It was both authoritative and gentle. "Three days ago, I told you that I am about to make an important announcement. That time has come. Before I unveil the grand project that my collaborators and I have been working on, let us take stock of our current position in the Red Ocean."

The Evolution Witch used her own willpower to project a large and vivid map of the dwarf galaxy they currently resided.

She had thoughtfully color-coded all of the territories belonging to the humans and the aliens.

The sheer difference in size was glaring to everyone. Those with greater understanding of stellar geography knew that the actual situation was worse than it appeared.

The distribution of resources was highly uneven, and it was clear that human-occupied space only covered a backwater of the Red Ocean!

Ves thought about all of the secret briefings he received from the Secret Department. The information he gained during those tedious sessions allowed him to read these maps and other related information a lot better than before.

"Simply put, red humanity is outnumbered and outgunned. We still have a chance to win by relying on our sparse advantages. Our forces are technologically more advanced and our soldiers are qualitatively stronger. Our battle tactics are more mature and our supply lines are short. We enjoy all of the advantages of staying on the defensive. Yet even when my fellow god pilots and I have been rending apart assault fleet after assault fleet, the influx of native aliens is endless. The disproportionately high loss rate have not deterred our enemies from sending in more cannon fodder. All the while, our fortified border systems are slowly reaching the limits of how much fighting they can withstand."

Many people reacted with shock and dismay!

The pessimistic outlook shared by the Evolution Witch countered much of

the propaganda meant to prop up morale and encourage people to fight!

dire state of red humanity, it was taboo to speak about it so blatantly and in

the open.

The god pilot didn't care.

Other speakers who tried to give red humanity a harsh dose of reality might be met with immediate pushback from the established powers, but the Evolution Witch was too great to be handled in this fashion.

If not for her absolute strength and her genuine loyalty to red humanity, the other tier 1 citizens would have tried to shut down the broadcast by

force at this time!

However, everyone remained patient, not because the Evolution Witch was too powerful to be subdued in a short amount of time, but also because she clearly had a greater purpose in mind.

"Hope is not lost, my fellow red humans. We are humans, but we can be so much more. The founding of the Red Collective is one of the most significant steps we have made to reverse the ongoing war by out-evolving our adversaries. In time, the mass practice of systematic cultivation methods will make each of us much more individually stronger and more productive than before. Our fighters will be able to defeat more opponents and our workers will be able to multiply our industries. Yet will our enemies give our cultivators the time to unlock their potential, explore how they can best wield their new-found abilities and truly come into

power?"

Hell no!

Even the most dimwitted human knew the answer!

In a sense, the Red Tide Offensive already served as the response of the Red

Cabal and the most powerful alien empires.

The supreme alien leaders felt so threatened by red humanity that they did not hesitate to drive trillions of alien soldiers and even phase lords to their

deaths! Even if most of them suffered miserable deaths, they still made a contribution by choking the red humans with the sheer magnitude of alien corpses and warship debris stuffed down their throats!

The map of the Red Ocean made it all too clear that two defensive bands,

of which one of them was already starting to fray.

"We need resources." The Evolution Witch flatly said. "The Red Ocean exposed by the light of Messier 87 has become increasingly more rich and diverse with new and interesting materials, but it has not done enough to mitigate our shortfall in materials. Salvaging the wrecks of alien warships allows us to harvest large amounts of low to middle-grade alloys, but we are short of higher grade materials that are vital to the development and upgrades of senior ace mechs and god mechs. Our best mech pilots are more than capable of surmounting the challenges posed by the native aliens, but without enough high-quality material supply, their machines may not necessarily keep up with their ambitions."

That caused a lot of people but particularly mech designers to grow

concerned.

The Evolution Witch pointed to a very big problem. Mechs at this level could no longer be built by relying on high-grade materials alone! Only the rarest and most expensive super-class materials could bear the awesome power of those mighty pilots.

The power of a god was not so easy to bear!

While it was technically possible for peak ace pilots and god pilots to make do with machines built with inferior materials, the problem was that they could only channel true resonance up to a limit.

The more inferior the materials, the lower the ceiling.

This would inevitably make the powerful pilots uncomfortable and restrained. The feeling of being unable to unleash their full power for fear of breaking apart their own machines was one of the most frustrating conditions to fight under!

"We have not yet exhausted our stockpiles of critical super-class materials

that are relevant to the production of the most powerful mechs as well as warships." The Evolution Witch informed to the relief of many people. "Yet we must not wait until they run out before we act. In order to obtain sufficient quantities of super-class materials and other essential goods that are vital to our civilization, I have secretly worked with a number of powerful collaborators. Today, I

am ready to unveil the results of our work and commence the very first test that will determine our future as a neonle

and a civilization that is locked inside a hostile galaxy." Her God Kingdom vibrated. A large patch of space in front of Divine Lucie Miyazaki began to deform until it finally unveiled a large and familiar-looking construct! "Is that... a gate?!"

The black gate that appeared in the live broadcast looked both familiar and

different to everyone. It vaguely resembled a smaller version of a beyonder gate, but it possessed clear additions and design modifications that looked as if it had been corrupted by mystical elements.

Runes and other mystical elements were embedded into the hyper material components of the gate. Their presence was completely incongruent with the obviously technological aspects of the construct.

A number of quick-witted people had pieces together enough clues to

realize what the black gate signified.

Ves was not one of them. Even though there were elements of the gate that looked disturbingly familiar to him, he failed to make the crucial connection before the god pilot formally introduced the object to red

humanity!

"This

is the Oblivion Gate. It is a technological nightmare that clumsily fuses phasewater technology, hyper technology, E-technology, FTL technology and most notably highly experimental advances in the field of

gravitic wormhole technology. Its sole purpose is to generate a momentary wormhole that can reach out to another wormhole that is generated more than 50 million light-years away by a similar but not completely identical Oblivion Gate built in the Milky Way Galaxy in secrecy."

"WHAT?!"

Ves was hardly the only one who reacted with shock! The amount of people who could remain calm and composed were far

outnumbered by the red humans who became completely gobsmacked by this shocking revelation!

The Evolution Witch merely smirked as she continued to blow up the

expectations of her audience. "The Oblivion Gates are the products of a secret collaboration that spans two different galaxies. Here in the Red Ocean, I have chosen to enlist the aid of the Dimensional Architect of the Expansionist Faction of the Red Association, who contributed to the research and construction of this Oblivion Gate."

His Excellency Chester Marmedion, son of the even more legendary Charles Marmedion, appeared in the live broadcast in an instant. The Star Designer hovered beside the Oblivion Gate like an overseer,

making it clear that he was probably responsible for operating the exceedingly complex construct!

"Over in the Milky Way Galaxy, I have made contact and secured the vital cooperation of three key individuals. They are Master Moira Willix of the MTA Survivalist Faction, the Beast of Fear who leads the MTA Unbound Humanity Faction, and lastly the Oblivion Empress of the Nyxian Gap. The latter may be better known to you all as the mother of Professor Ves

Larkinson."

Everyone inside the lounge compartment turned their heads and stared straight at Ves.

Even Lucky was no exception!

"Meow?!"

"Did you know about this Ves?!"

Ves wanted to burst into tears. He had no clue that the Evolution Witch and

his mother had been working on such an explosive project! The two women had completely left him in the dark!

Chapter 6458 The Craven Red Humans

"Oblivion Gate?! And there are two of them? This... this changes everything!"

"Have we finally managed to open up a portal back to the Milky Way?!"

"This is too good to be true! It is impossible for a pair of portals that are only a fraction of the size of the greater beyonder gates to be able to bridge 50 million light-years. Technology is amazing, but this goes too far!"

"This is no mere product of technology. Do you see all of those mysterious runes? Do you see how much hyper materials have been used to construct this gate? The god pilot herself revealed that this is a work of both modern technology and ancient mysticism! 'E-technology' is just a euphemism for cultivation sorcery!"

"I WANT TO GO HOME! I WANT TO GO HOME! I DON'T WANT TO STAY IN THIS DEATH GALAXY ANYMORE! PLEASE HELP ME BUY A TICKET! I WILL SELL EVERYTHING JUST TO BE ABLE TO GET BACK HOME!"

"Is the Evolution Witch mad?! We have done so much to break away from original humanity and its many institutions. All of that will be undone if the god pilots of the Milky Way are able to pass through these Oblivion Gates and enter the Red Ocean in large numbers. Sure, they may be able to save us from extinction, but they will not be satisfied with letting us retain our power and independence. I fear that the greedy humans from our former galaxy may become even worse enemies than the native aliens!"

A huge amount of people, both ignorant and wise, immediately drew a lot of conclusions based on the shocking unveiling of the Oblivion Gates.

Whether they were right or wrong remained in question, but everyone already developed a lot of ideas about the Oblivion Gates.

Immediately, the public had split into at least two camps.

One group wanted to leave everything behind and pass through the Oblivion Gate as quickly as possible so that they could return to the protective umbrella of original humanity.

Unlike the poor and miserable red humans that were struggling to prove their right to survive in the new frontier, the numerous and powerful original humans in the old galaxy did not fear anyone except themselves! This craven behavior completely pissed off the more patriotic and committed red humans who had completely bought into the idea of building a new future in the Red Ocean.

Even though the survival conditions of red humanity were much harsher, the pressure exerted by total war had also caused them to grow by leaps and bounds!

Explosive advances in phasewater technology, hyper technology,

E-technology and cultivation science had already caused red humans to enjoy dozens of amazing new benefits!

The Red Ocean was a nightmare for the weak, but a paradise for the strong! The New Elites Program and the Red Collective granted ordinary people who failed to stand out in the Milky Way completely new options to stand out and excel.

As the public began to get more and more divided over the existence and the implications of the Oblivion Gates, a certain Larkinson remained completely stunned by what he learned.

The unveiling of the Oblivion Gates completely shocked Ves!

He knew nothing about their existence!

He had no clue that the Evolution Witch and his mother plotted such an ambitious scheme!

It was understandable that Ves remained in the dark when he resided in the Red Ocean.

He never approached the Evolution Witch or gained access to whatever secret research base she established in order to develop the Oblivion Gate in cooperation with the Dimensional Architect.

In the past half year, Ves had been too preoccupied with completing the Swarm Project and setting up the Red Collective.

Had the Evolution Witch done this on purpose to keep him busy and out of the way long enough to prevent him from causing any unforeseen

accidents?

That may very well be true!

While Ves accepted that the Evolution Witch had successfully prevented him from stirring up any trouble that could risk the Oblivion Gate Project, he could not accept that his own mother had kept such a massive secret from him for long!

Back in the Milky Way, a certain silvery cyborg cat yowled and jumped away from the design terminal.

"MOTHER!!!!!!!!!!"

The cat flew out of the design lab and quickly navigated the passageways of the Throne of Light, the heavy cruiser that served as the flagship of his

mother's fleet.

Along the way, she transmitted a message to meet with her mother in person. It took a minute for her to receive a response, which prompted Veronica to change her course.

She could usually find her mother at her private temple and meditation room, but this time she had appeared out into open space!

Fortunately, the living divine artifact's flight speed was not slow, and the Throne of Light was not as massive and time-consuming to navigate as actual battleships.

Veronica plunged towards the nearest exit that led into open space.

As soon as she dove out of the hangar bay to the bewilderment of the soldiers serving on the heavy cruiser, the cyborg cat magically amplified in size and began to exert her Maracos organ to speed up her passage

through space.

As a mystical mirror creation of Ves that he had bastardized from a strange orvan ritual, Veronica was actually one of the main reasons why Ves became eligible to become a phase lord!

Due to the fact that Veronica was not a static altar but actually a living cat with biomechanical implants, the Cyborg Cat was also a phase lord! Navigating through space with her own phase whale organs was a piece of

cake.

Veronica therefore sped up her pace, but still had to traverse a lot of distance before she was able to reach the coordinates of the Oblivion Gate.

Her mother and her collaborators had placed the experimental construct far away from any starships for fear that the proximity could produce unexpected variables.

While Veronica urgently sought to reach her mother and demand an explanation, the Evolution Witch finally began to speak again after the masses received enough time to process the initial revelations.

"In the interest of avoiding any misunderstandings, I shall announce the presumed limitations of the Oblivion Gates first." The god pilot spoke in a serious tone as if she had not just unveiled a powerful solution to one of red humanity's greatest shortcomings! "First, the Oblivion Gates are experimental and untested. There is no guarantee that they will work. The Dimensional Architect has made invaluable contributions, but the Oblivion Gate does not incorporate technologies based on his strengths alone. The forced merger of several radically different fields of technology has resulted in not one, but two asymmetrical gate constructs that work slightly differently. Either one, both or none of them will work as intended."

It was clear that it was extremely difficult to figure out how to develop two different Oblivion Gates that had to be adapted to local circumstances. The Red Ocean had a good supply of phasewater, hyper materials and other unique local materials.

The Milky Way was largely barren of both phasewater and hyper materials. These constraints meant that the R&D team over in the old galaxy had to figure out different ways to produce similar results, and that made this

project much harder to succeed.

"The Oblivion Gate is much more expensive to operate. It is not necessarily

costlier than the greater beyonder gates, but the amount of volume they can displace across vast distances is much smaller. Due to the need to connect wormholes divided across millions of light-years, every activation consumed an extreme amount of phasewater and other unspecified resources. The other side lacks the support of large quantities of phasewater, so it is much more difficult to establish a connection. This also means the wormholes cannot remain active for long. It may take a second or less to complete an exchange of high-value trade goods. We cannot afford to exchange trivial low-cost materials between the galaxies." That also made a lot of sense. Ves refused to believe that these strange Oblivion Gates could solve a problem that the greater beyonder gates failed to accomplish.

The fact that the Oblivion Gates worked more like teleporters than more traditional beyonder gates was a huge limitation. The longer the gates maintained their connections, the more stuff that humans could transport

to different locations.

Ves still remembered all of the fleets and starships that passed through the

lesser and greater beyonder gates at a high frequency during the Phasewater Generation.

Human civilization had drastically changed once the distances that separated humans across the Milky Way had shrunk. A journey that used to

take decades could not be completed in a matter of weeks due to the network of lesser beyonder gates!

It was not reasonable to expect the Oblivion Gates to perform as well as the beyonder gates.

The Evolution Witch paused before she disclosed a disappointing piece of information. "More importantly, if you have any thoughts about returning to the Milky Way Galaxy, then do not hold any expectations. Nothing alive can travel through the current iterations of the Oblivion Gates. We are most certain that any human or other organism will not be able to survive the intergalactic passage. It is possible that this may be remedied in the future, but this is not our priority. I am not interested in opening an escape

route, and the humans of the Milky Way may not necessarily welcome us back."

That certainly sounded ominous. There was a lot more meaning behind these words that Ves could not figure out at the moment.

Just as expected, a lot of red humans grew disappointed at the revelation that they could not pass through the Oblivion Gate and return to the old galaxy alive.

There was no reason to believe that the god pilot lied in front of their faces. If she said that they would not survive, then it must be true.

Perhaps the Oblivion Gates were just prototypes that were not refined enough to enable humans to pass through

There was still a lot of room for technological improvement! Previously, only a small group of researchers were able to work on the

Oblivion Gates in secret.

Now that the Evolution Witch removed the veil of secrecy on them, it was a

lot more acceptable to involve other Star Designers and other clever minds in the subsequent development process!

Many red humans still clung to the hope that the Oblivion Gates would reestablish passage to the Milky Way. They were willing to die if there was no escape route, but now that one had appeared, their resolve to fight to

the bitter end in the Red Ocean had diminished! While the Evolution Witch was definitely aware that this undesirable reaction might occur, she did not comment on it at this time. "There are only two Oblivion Gates. Their successful construction demanded the use of high-grade exotics and super-class materials that are impossible to source in the Red Ocean. We have exhausted a considerable proportion of our local stockpiles. If our Oblivion Gate is destroyed... we may not be able to construct a replacement."

As she spoke, a large sphere-shaped black container appeared into view. It was meticulously designed to fit the aperture of the inner ring structure.

This shape offered the most volume for gate transfers according to the

calculations.

A similar sphere had appeared in front of the Oblivion Gate in the Milky Way as well!

Both sides had to activate their Oblivion Gates simultaneously and perfectly coordinate with each other to form a continuous and stable wormhole, if only for a second!

"Once I have concluded my speech, I intend to conduct the first test shortly afterward. I will not hide the results of this attempt. You shall all be able to see for yourself whether we can open up a small, high-end trade route with the Milky Way."

Many people wanted the god pilot to hurry up and commence the

experiment as quickly as possible.

Others wanted her to share as many details as possible so that they could

figure out the working principles of the Oblivion Gates!

Chapter 6459 The Beast of Fear

Red humanity was still in shock after learning about the existence of the Oblivion Gates.

Even if the Evolution Witch immediately deflated their wild hopes and expectations after she listed out the huge number of limitations, their enthusiasm did not disappear entirely.

This was because the Oblivion Gates was just the first iteration of this experimental tech!

Humans were quite familiar with the progression of every new technological invention.

The prototypes basically served as proof of concepts that were made in order to test if a new application was viable enough to work.

As long as the first activations were successful, then there should always be room to improve the performance of the Oblivion Gates over time.

They could become larger so that more goods could be swapped across the galaxies at a time.

They could increase their efficiency so that they cost less phasewater and resources to activate.

They may also be improved to the point where they could finally allow living beings to transfer from one galactic neighborhood to another!

In short, as long as people kept working on the Oblivion Gates, they would always grow better over time, just like how the same mech lines got better with each passing generation.

Meanwhile, the Evolution Witch continued her speech. She began to talk more about the tech behind the Oblivion Gates and who was responsible for developing these bizarre constructs.

"The Oblivion Gates are the brainchild of myself and the Oblivion Empress. The reason why the two of us have managed to achieve cooperation across intergalactic distances is because the Superior Mother, her qi incarnation, is active in the Red Ocean." The Evolution Witch casually revealed a bombshell as if she cared nothing about secrecy.

A new presence appeared. The Superior Mother showed up in her guise as a stern but matronly woman.

Even though her presence was almost completely overshadowed by the Evolution Witch's God Kingdom, her mystique marked her as an

extraordinary existence.

Suffice to say, a lot of Hexers in the Hex Federation instantly grew ecstatic at the appearance of their Supreme!

"Women shall reign over red humanity!"

"Hexism shall span the galaxies!"

"We are saved by the Superior Mother!"

The Evolution Witch and the Superior Mother exchanged familiar glances, showing that they had developed a strong friend and mutual

understanding!

"It is no secret anymore that the Oblivion Empress possesses a checkered past, but as far as red humanity is concerned, she is one of the two main contributors to the development of the Oblivion Gates. Much of the hyper technology and E-technology applied to the constructs are adapted from deep and extensive insights into systematic E energy manipulation. The runes applied on the gates and the rituals used to create or process the specialized materials are all due to her credit. It is no wonder her son is so outstanding. If the Father of Carmine Mechs is so brilliant and innovative, then imagine what her mother is capable of. Systematic cultivation can be used to create many miracles when employed for a good cause."

That was a pretty strong endorsement of systematic cultivation. Knowing that such a powerful qi cultivator had played a pivotal role in the development of the Oblivion Gates cast a positive halo over the Red Collective.

"Now, you may assume that the Dimensional Architect is the other main contributor to the Oblivion Gates. As a Star Designer, his knowledge and affinity with technology is almost unmatched. However, every Star Designer has their specializations, and none that we know of are capable of developing the key technological principles to connect two wormholes together across vast distances."

familiar-looking but very unassuming Master Mech Designer!

"This is Master Moira Willix of the Survivalist Faction of the Mech Trade Association. She is known for tutoring Ves Larkinson in the past, so do not underestimate her capabilities. She has secluded herself close to where the Oblivion Empress reigns in order to study the anomalous conditions of the Nyxian Gap and further her own research. After meeting with the Oblivion Empress and accepting an offer to lead the Oblivion Gate Project, she has invested decades worth of accumulated research. She has managed to do this by pioneering the field of wormhole gravitic technology. She does this in the hopes of paving her way to advance to the rank of Star Designer. If this attempt succeeds, she will almost be assured of her ascension as long as she is able to complete the development of a stable and mature pair of Oblivion Gates."

Many people fell silent after hearing this. Ves and the Senior Mech Designers around him were especially affected by this revelation.

Star Designer. That was the end point of many mech designers who aspired for greatness. Even though many of them eventually got beaten down by reality and failed to make any further progress, there were still a lot of hopefuls who dreamt of making it to the end!

However, the immense mech industry of the old galaxy had only produced around a hundred of them over a span of 4 centuries.

The new frontier had yet to spawn any new Star Designers!

This showed how difficult it was for Master Mech Designers to cross the

vast distance that separated them from attaining their own form of

godhood!

To be able to witness the birth of a potential new Star Designer was an incredible honor as well as a good opportunity.

Who knew whether mech designers could gain inspiration from Master

Willix's example and stimulate their own breakthroughs?

Such lucky occurrences had definitely taken place in the past!

At this time, almost every mech designer in the Red Ocean sincerely wished that Master Willix would succeed.

It did not matter whether red humanity was separated from original

humanity.

They were all mech designers. They identified by their professions first,

and any other labels next.

Of course, it also helped that the success of the Oblivion Gate Project would materially improve the conditions of red humanity during these

difficult times!

Master Willix's promotion may literally save their own lives!

The Evolution Witch proceeded to introduce another collaborator. Her willpower produced a different projection that displayed a fearsome biomech that possessed a completely different style than her Geneforger! The god mech was a familiar sight to those who knew their god pilots and corresponding god mechs.

There was no mistaking the giant and oversized mutated wolf-like shape. The creature may vaguely be based on a canine template, but the addition of hundreds of tentacles, multiple rows of teeth, sickly green poison veins and more cast a frightening sight!

The Beast of Fear was too lazy to accept a different title. When he ascended to godhood, he completely abandoned his mortal name and fully embraced the name of his god biomech!

This choice had ominous implications. Most god pilots tended to use a title that was separate from their god biomechs in order to maintain artificial separation between their human and machine sides.

The Beast of Fear declined to do so, meaning that he saw no distinction between himself and his god biomech.

When people had to speak to him for whatever reason, they could never tell for sure whether they were speaking to a human or a genuine beast!

The man had completely become a beast at the True God level!

This was a controversial decision that caused him to be feared and ostracized by other human leaders. It was no wonder that he was only able to find shelter in a fairly controversial group like the MTA Unbound

Humanity Faction.

Generally speaking, many people preferred to avoid the Beast of Fear. He

ranked very low on the popularity list.

Why did the Evolution Witch decide to collaborate with such a fearsome

and questionable god pilot?

Did she not have more reliable friends among the god pilots left behind in

the Milky Way?

"The construction of the Oblivion Gates requires the intervention of god pilots in order to produce the unique materials that cannot be made through other processes. Our strength is also needed to assemble parts together in a manner impossible to create by resorting industrial means." The Evolution Witch explained. "They may not appear this way on the surface, but the gates are actually biomechanical in nature. Only god pilots that are deeply familiar with biotechnology can facilitate this project." That was one reason why she sought out the cooperation of this controversial god pilot.

"I am familiar with the Beast of Fear. We share much in common, and I am

confident that he will cooperate with us rather than expose this project to the Galactic Mech Council. Do not forget that red humanity and original humanity have broken off relations. We are no longer one race, and we have not established any formal alliances. This intergalactic project is not legal from the perspective of the Mech Trade Association and other authorities. Original humanity fears that we may lead hostile aliens to their precious galaxy, but the Beast of Fear does not. He is fear incarnate, so he will grow by spreading it. The MTA Unbound Humanity Faction which he is a part of is also in favor of defying the status quo."

Now that sounded convenient! The Beast of Fear was an excellent choice

because his interests were completely separate from the other human

leaders!

He would love nothing more than to open up trade with the Red Ocean and induce fear among original humanity at the same time!

It was quite fortunate that the Evolution Witch not only knew such a good collaboration partner, but that he agreed to participate in this grand research project.

The fact that the Oblivion Empire managed to create an Oblivion Gate of its

own was the best form of proof!

The Evolution Witch crossed her arms. "Let me be clear about who is and is

not responsible for these modern wonders. They are both developed and built by the Oblivion Gate Consortium, which I have founded together with the Oblivion Empress. I am in charge of managing and protecting the Red Oblivion Gate. The Oblivion Empress is responsible for managing and protecting the Black Oblivion Gate. They are designed from the ground up so that only one of us can operate and activate our respective gates. We

will not extend this power to any other individuals, no matter whether they are god pilots or Star Designers."

That... was a domineering declaration. Ves did not doubt the Evolution Witch's ability to defend her monopoly on the Red Oblivion Gate, but he grew a lot more concerned about his mother's hold over the so-called Black Oblivion Gate!

Cynthia Larkinson was just a qi cultivator True God!

She was incredibly versatile, especially due to her extensive knowledge, but she was not able to match a god pilot in direct combat!

Even with the advantage of the special terrain of the Nyxian Gap, Ves had

no illusions about her ability to cope with a hostile god pilot. Who knew how the more protective and paranoid god pilots of the old

galaxy would react to this dangerous attempt to bridge the gap between

the galaxies!

However... as long as the Oblivion Empress managed to obtain the protection of the Beast of Fear and other powerful players, she may be able to maintain her monopoly on the Black Oblivion Gate!

The question was how. Ves did not think that the two devious women came

up with such an enormous scheme without accounting for these variables. The Evolution Witch began to address this very issue.

"The greatest threat to the Oblivion Gate Consortium does not lie in the Red Ocean, but in the distant Milky Way where original humanity is still stuck in the Age of Mechs. The citizens and leaders in the old galaxy have

become fearful of what has befallen us. They will not take kindly to allowing a secret group of conspirators to defy their taboo on blocking interactions between our two galaxies. This is why we must make them an offer that

they cannot nagsiklu refuse. I at me start with our first 'wift' to

original humanity: Carmine mechs."

...

The mention of Carmine mechs caused Ves to freeze. His mind worked

quickly. He soon managed to piece together enough clues to figure out the

truth.

The Evolution Witch intended to trade the secret of Carmine mechs to the

humans of the Milky Way from the start!

Ever since she and Cynthia Larkinson conceived of the Oblivion Gate Project, they already planned to use the irresistible Carmine mechs as a bargaining chip to preserve the Black Oblivion Gate!

"I've been used!" Ves gasped in realization!

Chapter 6460 The Inferior Humans

Carmine mechs!

How could the Oblivion Gates have anything to do with Carmine mechs?!

Many listeners initially grew confused, but then they realized why Carmine mechs presented the perfect bargaining tool for the highly ambitious Oblivion Gate Consortium.

Red humanity already gained access to the brand new mechs equipped with the amazing Carmine System, so most people's awe towards its capabilities had already dropped to a more reasonable level.

Less than a week had passed since the historic product reveal, and red humans already started to treat Carmine mechs as a permanent addition to the landscape.

Original humanity lacked this benefit.

When red humans thought about all of the 'original' humans that failed to enter the Red Ocean, the former began to take pity on the latter.

Sure, the Red Ocean had become a much more dangerous environment to humans than before, but it also granted them so many advantages that were previously unthinkable!

The powerful combination of systematic cultivation and Carmine mechs alone presented a huge amount of people at the bottom with amazing possibilities to strengthen themselves and rise to greatness at a much more affordable price!

Original humans who occupied the lower and middle positions of the Milky Way virtually had no chance to change their fate. They were destined to live and die as space peasants without leaving any significant mark of their existence on their society.

The stagnant society and the unshakeable dominance of oligarchical groups left far too little room for talented and opportunistic upstarts to rise to power!

The Red Ocean was different because the ongoing war created a lot of fault lines, enabling ambitious and capable individuals to squeeze between the cracks. The famous Ves Larkinson served as the best example!

Although only 3 days had passed since the Red Collective had been founded, a large proportion of brave, desperate and eager red humans had already gotten their first taste of systematic cultivation.

Too little time had passed for most people to make any noticeable gains when practicing the free curated cultivation methods that were suitable for beginners, but there were always exceptions.

Every population had a small proportion of talented individuals. They were born with much greater spirituality than usual, and absorbed ambient E energy radiation with a higher degree of efficiency than before.

When these 'talented' people practiced a suitable and compatible qi cultivation method for the first few times, their latent accumulation quickly transformed into a readily usable foundation that brought them immediate strength and gains!

The result of all of this was that in every large settlement, dozens of people suddenly emerged that were able to cast magical spells such as fireballs, or jump over two stories in an instant!

While the sudden acquisition of combat power caused the rapidly strengthened cultivators to become unstable to the point of endangering the people around them, the Red Collective had already made preparations in advance.

Not only did the collies deploy a large amount of enforcers to as many settlements as possible, they also warned the local authorities to monitor and intervene anyone that began to act weird all of a sudden.

The Pacifier mech turned out to be an excellent way to suppress out-of-control cultivators!

Most qi cultivators were still weak enough that Lufa's glow was completely able to suppress their spiritualities and prevent them from leveraging the power of heaven for their own use!

There was no chance for them to wreak havoc when the living peacekeeping mechs arrived!

Of course, even with these amazingly effective machines, ordinary mechs

were also capable of defeating regular cultivators.

A single fireball or rock shard could never breach the defenses of a mech!

In any case, these quick responses successfully reduced the negative impact of introducing systematic cultivation to the masses.

Many news pub

geniuses had gained.

ons highlighted all of the benefits that the more stable

All of this propaganda caused more and more people to appreciate the advantages of systematic cultivation.

There was no way that red humanity wanted to let go of it anymore!

Now that they gained access to a completely new means of empowerment, everyone already regarded it as their collective treasure. Their support for the Red Collective reached a new peak.

All of this increased the sense of pride and superiority of red humanity. They had diverged so much from original humanity in just the span of a few years that their sense of belonging towards the Milky Way had already plunged below a critical level!

Of course, this was only a generalization. There were still plenty of red humans that still identified themselves as citizens of the Milky Way. This was especially the case for people who left behind close family and loved ones in the other galaxy.

However, the traumas and crises that most people suffered since the Great Severing had firmly caused these sentiments to fade.

People cared a lot more about their own lives than the friends and family that were safely residing in the Milky Way!

Since red humanity had already begun to psychologically diverge from original humanity, the former actually felt they possessed the right to decide whether the latter was able to make use of Carmine mechs!

Unfortunately for these people, the Evolution Witch already formed a plan of her own. At this moment, no one objected to her decision to offer the gift of Carmine mechs to original humanity, especially after she elaborated

on her decision.

"The Great Severing has caused our branch of humanity to diverge from the people of the Milky Way. The latter could have chosen to aid us in our

prevent our enemies from turning on them next. We have gone our separate ways since then. So long as the distance between our galaxies remains too great, there is no good means to heal the divide, nor is it desirable to do so. For all intents and purposes, we have become two different civilizations. Over time, our universal evolution will cause our race to grow and diverge from original humanity as well, so we will have even less in common than in the past. As the inferior and unevolved branch of humankind, do you think the people over there will be willing to engage

in the trade of goods?"

The answer was likely no! Now that the two groups no longer considered themselves as one, they had begun to take on a competitive relationship!

It was not necessarily a good development for original humans to allow their distant cousins to grow too powerful!

More cynical individuals even entertained the controversial idea that the leaders in the old galaxy might actually desire the downfall of red

humanity!

All of these ideas were based on cold hard interests. The leaders of original humanity had to make decisions what was best for their own constitutions. If red humanity was taken out of consideration, then their attitude towards a lost branch of humanity could never remain warm!

More and more red humans began to frown as they gradually figured this out. So long as they posed a realistic threat to original humans, the leaders of the Milky Way would never tolerate trade!

"This is why we must offer a bargaining chip that original humanity cannot

refuse. They are still stuck in the Age of Mechs, and there are many more individuals in the Milky Way who have always dreamt of piloting a mech. If we expose the existence of Carmine mechs and offer them a realistic chance of piloting one in exchange for trading goods, public support will overwhelmingly take our side. Not even the Big Two can suppress this pent-up demand once the news has spread. My collaborators in the Milky Way have already made preparations to spread this news across the entire galaxy at any time. It is impossible for the mechers and the fleeters to suppress this news, nor deny that Carmine mechs cannot exist. The psionic pylon that carries the imprint of Ves Larkinson shall ensure that original humans will not only learn about the existence of Carmine mechs,

but also gain an opportunity to form their own Blood Pacts." What a masterful scheme. Ves fully acknowledged the depth and thoughtfulness of her grand design.

Ves had pretty much forgotten about the psionic pylon that was supposed

to extend his design philosophy across parts of the old galaxy that he was not able to cover once he moved to the Red Ocean. However, once he became a pioneer, he completely lost interest in the LMC's business activities in the old galaxy.

He no longer possessed any attachment to the Yeina Star Cluster and

couldn't care less of whether his customers were stuck with piloting mechs that became increasingly more outdated over time.

It might not be fair to all of the old living mechs that still possessed a lot of

potential, but could only rely on flawed and imperfect upgrades devised by mech designers who did not really understand his design philosophy.

Yet Ves simply did not have the time and interest to spare on serving his oldest customers in the Komodo Star Sectors and beyond. This was why the P.P. no longer crossed his mind anymore. Ves never

expected that it would suddenly become incredibly relevant again.

The mysticism used to create the P.P. did not care for distance, just like how quantum entanglement nodes could theoretically maintain their connections across intergalactic distances as long as the pairing did not get interrupted.

The effective range of the P.P. that was still supposed to be stored in the

center of the Yeina Star Cluster had even increased by a huge extent ever since Ves advanced to the rank of Senior Mech Designer!

Once he realized his design philosophy, the P.P. that was still connected to him in a mysterious way would also undergo a similar transformation. Due to its existence, Ves actually maintained a connection to the original

Kingdom of Mechs.

This meant that if he ever broke through to Master Mech Designer, he had the option to contribute his design philosophy to both the Kingdom of Mechs and the Red Kingdom at the same time!

Ves was not the only mech designer who retained this crazy possibility.

Every mech designer who left behind a P.P. was able to do the same!

The only issue was that there was only one copy of this object in the Milky

Way. Anyone opposed to the existence of Carmine mechs or opening up trade with the humans of the Red Ocean could make an attempt to ruin everything by destroying the P.P.!

Normally, that should spell the end of the plan to spread Carmine mechs

among the population, but it was not that simple.

Ves knew that the Evolution Witch's master plan was actually a bit more perfect than described.

This was because Veronica was still present in the Milky Way. He created his living divine artifact from a bastardized alien ritual that somehow caused it to become a mystical reflection of his core essence. From a metaphysical standpoint, Veronica was a living derivation of Ves' Divine Core. The Cyborg Cat may have been chipped away from Ves, but they were still the same in many aspects.

Not all of his incarnations possessed this unique property, but Veronica was the clear exception!

In practice, this meant that much of the direct cultivation gains made by Ves directly affected Veronica as well!

Her phase lord cultivation had actually reached a more advanced stage than Ves himself. She not only possessed her own phasewater organs, but also carried a smaller copy of his design flame!

This meant that Veronica could effectively act as his surrogate in terms of a mech designer. Even without the existence of the P.P., it was quite possible for Ves to work as a mech designer in two different galaxies at once!

However, there was one big problem with this plan. It painted a huge target on Veronica's back!