

## **Mech Touch 6911**

### Chapter 6911 Light Contamination

Ves and the others still couldn't decide how to use the Radiant particle.

There were too many valid choices, and each of them could have a significant impact on the future of the Larkinsons.

It was even more difficult to decide the use of the Radiant particle than superdimensional matter because the latter was more abundant.

In terms of value and power, superdimensional matter obviously ranked higher.

It was a rare and highly special resource that not only countered the native aliens extremely well, but had never been attainable until recently.

Radiant particles likely existed since the time the Light of Sol first ascended to godhood. He had the power to will them into existence for many years. The fact that they were rare enough that Ves did not even know about them meant that the Terran god pilot likely limited its availability by choice.

There had to be a good reason why the Light of Sol did not spread Radiant particles everywhere.

After all, one of the weaknesses of god pilots was that they were incapable of directly projecting their power across vast distances.

The Light of Sol should be able to partially overcome this limit by distributing his Radiant particles.

To Ves, they were like tiny but concentrated totems that carried a seed of the god pilot's willpower, which was effectively the god pilot himself.

So long as the Radiant particle did not completely run out of energy, the Light of Sol should theoretically be able to descend in it and exercise his power for a brief amount of time.

Of course, the capacity of this single particle was not that big in the first place, so the god pilot might not even have more than a couple of seconds to complete his tasks before he was forced to withdraw.

Perhaps that was why the Light of Sol did not take this means too seriously. The cost-effectiveness was too low. Who knew how much time and energy it took for him to create a Radiant particle and imbue it with a small portion of his willpower.

Ves relaxed after guessing that it was not worthwhile for the god pilot to descend a portion of his consciousness into the Radiant particle.

It would be difficult for the Light of Sol to dial his power to a minimum. It went against their own nature to restrain themselves in order to save energy. They were also not suited to split themselves up and be present in multiple star systems at a time.

Unlike other True Gods, god pilots concentrated all of their power in their own selves. They were incredibly powerful in direct combat, but they were much less suited for other activities.

It would be difficult for the Light of Sol to dial his power to a minimum. It went against their own nature to restrain themselves in order to save energy. They were also not suited to split themselves up and be present in multiple star systems at a time.

The only exception that Ves knew of was the Destroyer of Worlds, and that was only because he had bestowed her with a companion spirit during a Mastery experience.

Even then, Ves was only able to use Emma's spiritual fragment to call down the god pilot's companion spirit and a small measure of Irene's willpower for a brief amount of time. The consumption of energy was too great.

"Everything costs too much."

God pilots normally did not suffer from energy problems because they were easily able to cover their own consumption.

They were simultaneously able to generate a huge amount of energy and expend them through their god mechs.

Yet if they tried to do anything further away, the balance between energy supply and energy consumption broke.

The former sank to the bottom while the latter still remained fairly high despite the god pilot's best efforts.

This should be the root cause why the Light of Sol, the Destroyer of Worlds and other god pilots were not able to mass produce totems, particles, spiritual fragments or other stuff and spread them around so they could descend into many different star systems.

Even if it was possible for them to do so, the effect wouldn't be that good due to energy constraints!

"If your theory is right, then the significance of this willpower-infused particle is clear." Gloriana said. "The Light of Sol did not make it so that he could intervene with our affairs. His willpower is purely present in order to amplify the performance of the Radiant particle."

Ves nodded in agreement. "I think you are right. We can't completely dismiss the possibility that the god pilot will decide to drop by and issue a directive to us, but he will certainly pay way more for it than the Destroyer of Worlds. Emma is able to give her additional flexibility that other god pilots can only envy."

While that came as a reassurance, they soon ascertained a different problem.

"This will-infused Radiant particle is not safe to handle." Alexa Streon said. "It is not as damaging as a Destroyer particle, but it is a strong source of contamination to those whose minds are too weak. When I get close to the particle when we have taken it out of its container, then I have to suppress the urge to hop into a fast-moving vehicle or praise the local star as a ubiquitous source of light. The longer I am exposed to the Radiant particle, the more the Light of Sol's willpower seeps into my own psyche."

She brought up a serious issue. Ves did not experience this contamination himself, but his mental defenses were a lot stronger. It was impossible for him to notice anything concerning while his exposure to the Radiant particle remained relatively brief.

"Is the contamination strong enough to contaminate expert pilots or ace pilots?" Ves seriously asked.

"That is another subject I wanted to address, sir. Technically speaking, most high-ranking mech pilots should not be susceptible to direct contamination. However, I no longer recommend that you think about using it to upgrade a part or weapon of a high-ranking mech. Any device empowered by this Radiant particle can be regarded as an extension of the Light of Sol's might. A Radiant weapon is powerful because the god pilot's willpower is directly distorting its interaction with reality. The effect may be strong, but that is mainly due to an outside source instead of the actual wielder. A champion who wants to become strong by relying on her own merits such as Saint Dise will only get harmed if her First Sword Mark III wields a Radiant sword, do you understand?"

Ves slowly nodded.

Unlike Destroyer particles which possessed unclear relations with the god pilots who spawned them, Radiant particles could not avoid their close association with the Light of Sol as he was their only source.

This made it much harder to decouple the resource from its creator.

The Light of Sol had not made this any easier by imbuing the singular particle with his willpower.

This made it a lot stronger, but also reinforced the truth that it was an extension of himself.

Ves grimaced. "If this is true, then using this Radiant particle to upgrade the performance of an expert mech or ace mech will do more harm than good in most cases. Expert pilots and ace pilots must nurture their confidence and belief in themselves in order to progress. Their resonance strength will cease to grow from the moment they become too dependent on the strength and willpower of a superior pilot."

This was disappointing news. Now that he looked at this situation from another perspective, upgrading the Instrument of Vengeance with the Radiant particle was a terrible decision!

This was because Saint Davia Stark wielded the power of the light attribute in her own unique way.

If Ves suddenly introduced a mech weapon that not only represented another pilot's interpretation of the light element, but also happened to be a lot further in his journey, then Saint Stark might lose faith in her own direction!

Her Saint Kingdom could regress or even collapse if she lost her confidence in herself!

Gloriana voiced her own opinion after taking in this information. "There are only three viable applications that we can choose from. First, we can design a Radiant weapon for a high-ranking mech pilot that is more tolerant towards the idea of borrowing the power of others. The Saint Commander is the only eligible choice."

Her suggestion made sense. Other ace pilots were too obsessed with their own strength. Only Casella Ingvar possessed a weaker ego and was a lot more open to cooperating with others.

Ves rubbed his hairless chin in thought. "This is an interesting idea. We can use the Radiant particle to turn the Irvan luminar crystal rifle into a serious threat. A better idea is to integrate the Radiant particle into the Victrix and see what happens. We may be able to turn the Minerva Mark II's living fey into a light-infused powerhouse."

"The attributes do not match." Gloriana pointed out. "You risk contaminating the Saint Commander, her companion spirit, the Minerva Mark II or her subordinate spirit. This is already a problem if the attributes match, but when they are different, the consequences are much direr for Casella Ingvar."

"Then if we want to be safe, it is best not to arm our ace pilots with any Radiant arms. It is no wonder the Terrans themselves have not made use of this function."

"What are the other two applications?"

"The second application is to integrate it into a warship, preferably a large one that can offer greater room for isolation and protective measures." Gloriana continued. "As long as we can keep the compartment containing the Radiant particle in question off-limits to humans, the risk of contamination should not be too great. Distance combined with isolating materials can make it safe for a warship to open fire with an energy weapon empowered by the particle. The damage output will definitely be a spectacle."

Ves grew a little disappointed at the thought of utilizing a Radiant particle to empower a warship instead of a mech.

As a mech designer, he vastly preferred to work on mechs. It would go against his profession to favor other solutions even if they were objectively better.

"We'll keep this idea in reserve." He decided. "If there are no better options, we can reconsider this proposal."

"The last application I can think of is much more personal to you. This is because you can use it to build you a better weapon."

Ves blinked. "Really? You want me to hog the Radiant particle for myself?"

"Why not? I know you, Ves. I know that you are never able to keep yourself calm and away from the throes of combat. Once your highly-anticipated campaign commences, you will find yourself on the field of battle one way or another. Even if you try your best to avoid it, you cannot help yourself. If this happens, then I want to make sure you deploy into space with a proper set of equipment, and not whatever makeshift gear that you have on hand."

"I am already working on a new raiment and stuff." Ves responded. "It will even be superdimensional."

"That is good to hear, but you can still do better. In my opinion, since you do not have any extraordinary willpower yourself, you will benefit the most from borrowing the willpower of a god pilot. Even if you cannot use it to resonate with your own gear, you can still use its ability to distort reality to raise the power of your weapon. I recommend you use it to design a phase lord-scaled luminar crystal weapon for

yourself. You can use that special flute of yours as a staff, but you do not possess an adequate ranged weapon. Have you already thought about designing a firearm for yourself?"

"Only at our current scale." Ves admitted. "I am working to upgrade the Amarastendira as well, but that is only useful indoors. I have yet to think about developing a luminar crystal weapon that I can use as a phase lord to threaten other powerful opponents. Now that I think about it, I should be remedying this shortcoming right away."

## Chapter 6912 Cannot Stop Moving

Ves felt tempted to use the Radiant particle himself.

It was a selfish idea, and one that went against his principles of a mech designer.

Yet that may be the most proper way to leverage this powerful resource.

If the Light of Sol merely produced the Radiant particle without any further complications, then it would have been fine to use it to upgrade an expert mech or ace mech.

The problem was that the power of a single Radiant particle was miniscule.

Even the weakest Destroyer weapon leveraged the power of lots of Destroyer particles.

What separated the higher tiers from the lower tiers was the concentration of Destroyer particles.

The greater the amount of particles that got stuffed in weapons of the same dimensions, the greater their destructive activity.

Ves did not know much about Radiant particles, but given their similarities to Destroyer particles, the same rules should apply to the former as well.

Therefore, a single Radiant particle was pretty much useless for even the weakest expert pilots.

The only way the Radiant particle was able to surpass its own physical limitations was if a god pilot had permanently severed a piece of his willpower and imbued it into the particle of his own making.

From what Ves had learned, this was not an ordinary process. It was much as if Ves cut off a piece of his soul. The Light of Sol permanently weakened himself in order to transform the Radiant particle into a persistent wonder.

This was a gift of great value. The god pilot probably gave it to Ves in order to increase his entanglement with the Terran Alliance.

So long as Ves accepted this generous gift and made use of it, he owed the Terran Alliance a debt of gratitude.

Ves was not the sort of person who reneged on his debts. Anyone who studied history would know how much he honored all of his professional as well as most of his non-professional commitments.

Right now, Ves felt conflicted by what he was supposed to do with the Radiant particle.

In order to verify that its use would be detrimental to most high-ranking mech pilots, Gloriana called over Saint Commander Casella Ingvar and Saint Dise Larkinson to the design lab.

The two ace pilots couldn't help but gaze at the cylindrical container that currently rested inside a protective chamber.

"Why have you called us over, madame?" Saint Dise asked.

"We need to understand your reaction and compatibility with the Radiant particle." The female mech designer replied. "My husband and I have come up with many theories and deductions. We are reasonably confident of our guesses, but it is better to back it up with empirical data. In a minute, Ves will issue the command that will



release the Radiant particle from its container. All of us must enter the chamber and expose ourselves to the will that is attached to it and try to test your compatibility with it. You do not have to stay if it makes you feel uncomfortable in any way."

Both ace pilots looked intrigued. They did not fear exposure to the willpower of a god pilot. It would be pathetic if saints were so fragile that their entire cognition collapsed just because they experienced the power of a pilot that happened to make a lot more progress on the same path.

Yet the risks could not be dismissed.

Shallow exposure might not do much, but if the ace pilots got too close or attempted to draw upon the Radiant particle's power, a conflict might occur.

This was why Ves and Gloriana organized a practical test. They could only proceed with their planning if their plans were based on more than empty speculation.

After a short delay, an apparatus slowly opened the cylinder and enabled the Radiant particle to float free.

At the same time, Ves along with the two ace pilots entered the chamber.

The atmosphere was different. The Radiant particle may be small and solitary, but it shoone enough light to make it seem as if the experimental chamber had turned into a heavenly realm!

Ves already started to feel certain urges rising to the top. He experienced the need for speed and the desire to bask in the light of a thousand alien stars.

He also wanted to design the lightest and fastest possible Carmine mech, before forming a Blood Pact with it so that he could try to outspeed light!

Compared to previous instances of exposure, Ves clearly sensed greater interference from the Radiant particle.

It was as if it listened to their concerns and deliberately amped up the effect in order to conduct a better test.

The two ace pilots definitely experienced it as well. Their domain fields, though weak outside of their mechs, grew more agitated as they channeled their willpower in order to retain control over themselves.

Ves meanwhile continued to parse what he sensed from the Radiant particle.

Though it was relatively weak, Ves could feel the Light of Sol's absolute confidence in himself.

As the god pilot who outran the speed of light in realspace, the Terran god pilot's life and cognition was dominated by a sense of eternal restlessness.

Much like actual light, Divine Thibault Clement could no longer remain completely still anymore. His desire to keep moving exceeded all of his other instincts and urges.

Yet because he had taken this obsession to the extreme, the Light of Sol gained the power to break reality just to be able to reach new standards over time!

Ves suddenly felt he gained a sense of the god pilot's true self.

This was a mysterious impression and one that did not require him to study an obscure book.

The Light of Sol constantly needed to surpass his speed record in order to maintain his confidence in his own strength!

He could never stop moving, either in a literal or metaphorical sense. The man broke through and became a god through movement. This had subsequently become a core part of his identity, or rather his divinity.

His God Kingdom reflected his true self, or it may even be the real form of the god pilot in truth.

The Light of Sol and the Radiant may appear to be a human or a mech, but neither forms reflected his authentic self anymore.

According to his own understanding, Ves believed that god pilots had actually transformed into energy-based life forms. If this was true, then it was not wrong to assume that a God Kingdom was the most authentic representation of a god pilot

After all, these extremely large and powerful domain fields were made up of pure energy!

God pilots contrasted sharply with ancient phase whales as the latter almost completely expressed their divinity in their physical bodies.

Ancient phase whales therefore became a lot easier to figure out as their bodies could be dissected and studied.

In contrast, god pilots did not suffer from this weakness. Their physical forms still mattered to a degree, or else there was no point for the Invictus to get upgraded with superdimensional technology.

However, even if an enemy managed to blast apart the god mech, that did not necessarily mean that the new 'deity' would completely die.

So long as their God Kingdoms remained in order, there was still a possibility that the god pilot and god mech could get resurrected!

Ves did not have any proof that this was possible, but now that he came into contact with the willpower of a peculiar god pilot, he developed many new insights that eluded him in the past.

However, there was a limit to how much information he could absorb at a time.

Ves raised his hand and turned it into a fist. "Let us end this here. I do not think we will gain that much further insights with any further prolonged exposure."

Saint Commander Casella slowly opened her eyes. "It is for the best."

"Saint Dise, can you describe your experiences? You came in quite close proximity to the Radiant particle."

The ace pilot crossed her arms. "I did sense the willpower of the Light of Sol. It is... humbling to get into such close contact with the willpower of a god pilot. The gap between us is enormous. I already understood that on an intellectual level, but now that I have been able to taste the real thing, I can see more clearly how much I have to go in order to wield such a weapon with greater responsibility."

"And you don't think you will pass?"

"I know that I will not." Dise replied. "Our personalities are too different from each other. I share little in common with the Light of Sol. I am afraid that I will never be able to surpass him if I fall in love with his powers and design applications. No. In order to cut off any hint of this, it is best if I maintain my distance. The upgrades applied by Ketis are more than enough to satisfy my desire for greater power. I still have a long way to go before I have mastered the power of my superdimensional mech and greatsword. I am also struggling to make my sword formations effective. I have no room left for weapons based on this particle."

That was a definitive and thorough answer. Though not all expert pilots or ace pilots would react this way, Ves believed that they too would have concerns about contamination.

Ves turned to Casella. "What about you? Is it possible for you to tap into its power without losing a part of your identity?"

The Saint Commander furrowed her brows. She did not answer right away, which signified that her answer was not simple.

"Technically speaking, your theory may be correct. If I push myself, I may be able to control any weapon, fey or other device that is based on this Radiant particle. However, I will constantly have to be on guard. If my mental defenses slip, I may end up getting influenced by the Light of Sol without my awareness. It is better for me to err on the side of caution and wait until my resonance strength has grown. The smaller the difference between myself and the god pilot, the lower the risk of contamination."

That sounded plausible. Junior ace pilots still needed to be on guard against the Radiant particle, but senior ace pilots might be able to hold their own in its presence.

None of the Larkinson ace pilots had reached this stage, so the point was moot.

"Thank you for cooperating with our experiment." Ves said at the end. "From your reactions, it is clear that neither of you are willing or able to make use of Radiant weapons or gear without serious concerns. Since this is the case, we will reserve the Radiant particle for a different application."

Both ace pilots accepted this outcome.

"What are your intentions, then?" The Saint Commander pressed.

Ves briefly thought about this decision.

He could either use the Radiant particle to upgrade one of the systems of the Tortuous Scream, or he could use it to upgrade his phase lord gear!

Since Ves struggled to make up his mind, perhaps he should solicit advice from others.

"Your recommendation?"

"Use it for yourself." The Saint Commander responded. "The Tortuous Scream is not that good of a warship considering her alien origin. It is inevitable that we will phase her out. It is better for you to create a powerful weapon for yourself that can grow alongside you and continue to grow stronger. You can also better learn how to wield the power lent to you by the Light of Sol, either through your personal brand of wizardry or by upgrading the design of your weapon. It is also much more manageable for you to construct a personal weapon as opposed to a much larger warship module."

Ves slowly nodded. "You make for a persuasive case. Since there is no one else in our clan that can make better use of this resource, then I will do as you say."

Chapter 6913 Adapted Organs

Though it took a bit of time and procrastination for Ves to reach this point, he could finally work on designing a Radiant weapon for himself without contradicting his own principles.

He still felt a little conflicted. He came to this conclusion a little too easily. It was as if he deliberately conspired to lead the discussion to this outcome.

This should not be the case.

Even if he possessed a certain desire to wield a Radiant weapon, he made sure to follow a fair and reasonable procedure.

In any case, now that he had made his decision, there was not much point in looking back. He should just proceed according to his current plan with peace of mind.

As the Premier Branch waited for the remaining days to pass until their two first-class capital ships arrived in New Constantinople, Ves began to check up on the various projects related to increasing his personal combat capabilities.

He met with Beatrice Hendrix to check up on her progress in developing the Superdimensional Regalia.

"It should not take too long to complete this side project." She said. "The Red Association has made breakthroughs in developing stable superdimensional alloys. The superdimensional qualities may be reduced, but the resulting modular armor plating will not generate spatial fluctuations that are strong enough to destroy the delicate components that are responsible for controlling their movements. The calculations made by the SF-02 has helped enormously."

She projected the design that she had made so far. She not only showed the basic implementation of the Superdimensional Regalia, but also the custom suits of armor for his wife and children.

Ves took a quick look at each of them. Beatrice chose to stick to the basics and did not attempt to innovate too much. She was being quite risk averse to the point of refraining from adding any personal touches to the designs.

This cautious approach would likely result in bland products, but that was not necessarily a bad outcome. Ves did not want to take any risks when it came to developing protective armor for his closest family.

As for the Superdimensional Regalia, Ves could tweak and personalize the design himself without involving anyone else.

Ves nodded in satisfaction. "This side project is on the right track. When do you think you can finish them all? I would rather have them sooner rather than later as we are all moving closer to the frontlines in a matter of weeks. If an accident ever occurs, I at least want my family to enjoy the best possible protection. Even if a starship falls apart around them, their superdimensional armor should still be able to keep them in one piece."

"I can complete the superdimensional suits of armor within a month if expediency is a priority." Beatrice said after a few seconds of thought. "I can promise you that they will be serviceable enough to meet your expectations, but that there are still chances that they may glitch or malfunction. It will take another month of optimization if you want to reduce the probability of accidents."

"Hm, it is difficult for me to decide. As much as I want to have the new gear in a hurry, it may be best for you to take your time to debug the new suits of armor. We still don't know enough about superdimensional matter to know for certain whether it will work as expected in our designs. It is better to be safe than sorry."

The female Journeyman looked relieved. "Understood. I will make excellent use of the additional time to work out all of the kinks."

"Have you started to design my superdimensional raiment as well?"

"I have only completed a number of preliminary steps. I still wish to refine the Superdimensional Regalia as I can directly use it as a reference to design the much larger raiment. That said, the latter will not be a scaled-up version of the Regalia as we will only be able to make use of hull-grade superdimensional alloy for its structure. There are many differences between mid-grade and high-grade superdimensional alloys. The former is considered more stable, so we can increase the thickness of the armor plating to provide you with additional protection."

"I need to maintain enough mobility to evade strong attacks and distance myself from threatening phase leaders." Ves noted. "Make sure to take that into account. You don't have to install too many bells and whistles into the raiment. You can keep the integrated weapon modules to a minimum if you have to. Just make sure that the flight system is fast and powerful enough."

"Understood. Do you have any other requests?"

Ves was just about to turn away before he remembered an important concern.

"Ah, I almost forgot. You've heard about the Radiant particle, right? "

"I have. Are you thinking about..."

"I intend to use it on a phase lord-sized luminar crystal weapon of my own design." Ves explained. "You should design my raiment with ranged combat in mind. I am not well-versed in marksmanship, so I won't use it for sniping, but the raiment can still offer various forms of support. You should at least include an auto aim system."

"I shall take care of it, sir."

They talked a bit more about what Ves expected from the raiment. They could not agree on anything too specific as Ves still needed to figure out what kind of luminar crystal weapon he wanted to wield.

After concluding his meeting with Beatrice Hendrix, he decided to contact the current head of the Larkinson Biotech Institute.

He activated his comm and called one of the contacts in his shortlist.

The physical projection of Vice Director Maria Abselon soon appeared into view.

"Good morning, Professor Larkinson. This is an unexpected call. What do you require?"



"I need you to give me a progress report on the adaptation of phasewater organs for my physique. As you know, the Premier Fleet is about to head to the frontlines. I need to know whether you can implant a number of phasewater organs into my true body before that happens. That will give me time to acclimate to my new spatial abilities and wield greater strength if I am ever forced to take to the field myself."

The former Terran researcher did not look too surprised at that. "Our research teams have tried our best to research the salvaged phasewater organs taken from various different phase leaders. Due to numerous reasons, it is not wise to directly implant these alien organs into your body, so we have spent most of our time growing imitations of the phasewater organs that are much better adapted to your human-like body. However, our progress has been slow due to your insistence on keeping our work as in-house as possible."

Ves grimly nodded. "It is a bad idea to give third parties the secrets to my own secrets. Not only will they know my strengths and weaknesses, they can also program as many backdoors as they can get away with. I cannot afford to assume that they will remain honest."

The vice director looked uncomfortable. "Be that as it may, our institute does not have the talent and expertise to independently complete all of the research and development. These phasewater organs are completely alien and possess strange properties that are deeply related to the mystery behind phase lords. We have therefore taken to exchanging knowledge with the Phase Lord Department of the Red Collective and numerous research institutions of the Terran Alliance. Rest assured that we have never given them any compromising information. We merely needed to borrow their theories and data sets to develop our own solutions."

That sounded typical. Ves did not have a problem with this as he and his wife also made use of this method. This especially became more relevant due to the need to learn how to process and make effective use of superdimensional matter.

"That is okay. I trust your judgment on this matter. I am only interested in the results at the moment. Are there any phasewater organs that are ready for implantation in the coming weeks?"

The older woman nodded. "There are, but the quantity is not too great. Let me disclose to you from the start that we have yet to make any significant progress in deciphering and adapting the most important Phasewater Production System that originated from the Arena Lord of Ya'gwasa. The complexity and interactions of the PPS are greater

than any of the other phasewater organs. Not even the Red Collective has managed to adapt their own captured PPS as far as we are aware of. Do not expect us to make any progress in the short term."

That did not disappoint Ves too much as he did not have any great expectations for this in the first place.

"That's okay."

"Let me move on to the good news, sir. We have completed our studies on the augmented lesser Kelsis organ and synthesized a human version that should offer high stability. We are most confident in the quality of this organ as it is one of the 3 basic phasewater organs that are studied the most. It will enable you to generate stronger spatial barriers that are especially attuned to resist physical damage."

Ves did not look too impressed. "It's a decent defensive buffer, but a superdimensional raiment will probably offer much greater protection. I suppose this upgraded Kelsis organ is better than nothing."

"We have also completed our studies and adaptation of the lesser Dofner and lesser Pelmir organs." Vice Director Maria Abselon continued. "The Dofner organ grants basic warp travel capabilities. The Pelmir organ behaves as a reactionless drive. Both should significantly enhance your mobility without relying on any technological equipment. Do note that the performance of the adapted organs are downgraded from their originals. We are unable to match the quality of the originals. Do not expect to be able to travel interstellar distances quickly. Alien warp travel is too slow."

Ves smiled. "This is great news. Mobility is important, so I really can't do without those two adapted phasewater organs. It doesn't matter if their performance is a little lackluster. I can compensate with the flight system of my upcoming raiment. The combination between the two should produce a powerful result."

"Next is the lesser Arcis organ. This has been our next focus as it is less complex in operation than the other phasewater organs. This will enable you to convert spatial power into electric currents. However, the power output is directly determined by your phasewater concentration. If it is still fairly low, then the Arcis organ will not be able to perform as well as a first-class power reactor for a mech. The situation is much more optimistic as the phasewater concentration rises."

That was not only because the phase lord was able to channel a lot more spatial power than before, but also because the size of the Arcis organ grew exponentially bigger with the growth of the true body.

A power generator that could support an entire starship was far more powerful than a compact power reactor that could only fit into a mech!

"This will be useful in the future, but not in the short term." Ves frowned. "I won't say no to an implantation, though. Any other organs ready?"

The vice director shook her head. "That is all for now, sir. We have yet to complete our studies on the greater Norigo organ, the greater Marigal organ, the lesser Sympatico organ and the severely incomplete lesser Collie organ. It will take at least several years to complete our studies in the remaining phasewater organs. Their functions are not entirely clear to us. The greater organs are also larger and of significantly greater complexity. Do not expect us to deliver our results quickly."

"What you have done so far is already enough. I am quite pleased that the Larkinson Biotech Institute has produced usable resorts in a relatively tight timeframe. How soon can you send the organs and doctors responsible for the surgeries?"

Chapter 6914 Experiments of the Elder Gods

Ves did not care too much about his phase lord cultivation, but that did not mean he neglected it entirely.

As the Red War continued to press red humanity back, it became increasingly more important to grasp as much power as possible.

As a mech designer, Ves ordinarily shouldn't be so obsessed over strengthening his personal combat capabilities.

Yet he knew from previous experiences that he could not always get what he wanted. His habit of making risky decisions did not help matters either.

For example, he should have made preparations to withdraw the rear of human-occupied space like many others. That would have enabled him to minimize contact with dangerous enemies and reduce the need for strong personal protection.

Yet instead of making this common sense decision, Ves willfully did the opposite!

He, a mech designer of great renown and success, instead chose to accompany the Premier Fleet closer to the frontlines where dangerous aliens sowed death and destruction on a genocidal scale.

Ves could not even properly articulate all of the reasons why he wanted to accompany the troops to the forefront of the ongoing Red Tide Offensive.

He was lucky that his leadership of the Larkinson Clan was so strong that no one actually bothered to question his dubious decision.

His subordinates all assumed that it was part of his secret master plan or that everything would magically work out in the end.

Aside from his wife, the Larkinsons could not conceive of the possibility that Ves was so broken that he had become a slave to his own impulses.

A strong part of himself sought excitement rather than tranquility.

The mere thought of behaving like other sensible mech designers was anathema to his psyche.

He vehemently rejected the thought of resembling those old geezers who lived such boring lives that their inspiration had evaporated a long time ago. Their thinking had become so fossilized that it was impossible for them to come up with groundbreaking innovations that put the mech industry ahead of the rest.

In any case, Ves had always gained lots of inspiration on the battlefield. Many of his celebrated works could be traced back to insights derived in the middle of an ongoing engagement.

He had always been a person who thrived under pressure. Perhaps subjecting himself to the dangers of battle was a way for him to stimulate his imagination and trigger his own inspiration.

In any case, since the mechers and the fleeters were too preoccupied to prohibit him from going through with his risky decision, Ves needed to make sure he was prepared to defend himself if the enemy somehow managed to force him into fighting.

"How soon will you be able to arrive and implant the prepared phasewater organs in my body?" Ves asked the vice director of the Larkinson Biotech Institute.

"We can arrive in 2 weeks at the earliest." The physical projection of Maria Abselon replied. "We have been preparing for this operation for months. If you give us more time, we can continue to monitor the health and the expected performance of the synthesized phasewater organs. Due to various reasons, they are not grown from scratch, but converted from the remains of the salvaged alien phasewater organs. This was the best way for us to maintain the metaphysical qualities that are nearly impossible for us to replicate in lab conditions."

Ves already knew that the process of creating the new human-compatible phasewater organs entailed the act of cannibalizing the original alien phasewater organs. This was an irreversible destructive act that was impossible to recover from if they made any mistakes.

Perhaps the Phase Lord Department of the Red Collective had become good enough to grow new phasewater organs from scratch, but the Larkinson Biotech Institute was nowhere near that level.

The Larkinson biotech researchers could only use the existing alien phasewater organs as the frameworks of new organs that were especially designed to minimize compatibility issues with Ves' physique.

The new organs weren't even all that suitable for other phase lords. Even if their enhanced bodies allowed them to avoid a lot of compatibility issues, it was still not wise to rely on organs that were designed to work best with others.

Although the research teams of the LBI barely knew what they were doing when conducting research on phasewater organs, Ves was willing to put his trust in his experts.

"Under normal circumstances, I would agree with you that we need to be cautious about stuff like this. We are working with completely new stuff that has a direct influence on my health and future." He said. "However, we can't afford too many

delays during this day and age. I would rather complete this round of upgrades sooner rather than later. Is it better to implant all of the new organs in my body at the same time, or is it more advisable to do it sequentially?"

The latter is the safest option by far." Maria said. "However, our research into phase lords tells us that the former is also viable. As long as your true body is strong and healthy enough to withstand the successive pressure of hosting new phaseater organs, the complications are relatively mild. The fact that the new phasewater organs are based on your own DNA provides us with additional guarantees."

"Then let us try to get everything done within a single operation if possible. I believe in my own physique, and if anything goes wrong, I am sure that you and other doctors will step in if complications arise."

Adapting to 4 new phasewater organs sounded like a serious burden, but he believed he should be able to persevere.

At worst, he could always instruct the doctors to take the phasewater organs out again.

"There is one other issue, sir."

"What is it, Maria?"

"The implantation of the phasewater organs cannot be held in a regular operating theater. We will need to cut into your body first. Your actual one. You will need to prepare a suitable chamber and acquire the necessary instruments, some of which may end up becoming as large as your previous cabin."

"Does the operation need to be held in a specialized room?"

"Yes."

"Can you do it aboard the Tortuous Scream?"

"We advise against that." The woman shook her head. "Your true body is fairly large. There are too few compartments on the warship that can accommodate you. Another

issue is that we do not know what will happen if you react in a more violent fashion. If you completely lose control, you can tear up the ship from the inside. It is better to hold the operation on a planet and in an isolated location."

"Hm, you have made your point. Your concerns sound valid enough, and it is indeed better to prepare for accidents. You can contact my assistant to make the arrangements."

After getting that out of the way, Ves and Maria Abselon spoke a little more about the research relating to phase lords.

"We are beginning to develop our own understanding of what phase lords are and how important it is to develop stronger phasewater organs. Have you ever asked yourself why the personal evolution process of the phase whale race can also be practiced by other organic races? From the perspective of exobiologists, this sounds as strange as humans being able to eat all of the foods that are normally ingested by phase whales."

Ves blinked. He never really thought about this issue. Now that she had brought this matter to his attention, he had to agree that this situation sounded a little suspicious.

"What are your ideas, then?"

"We can only conclude that the phase whale race and their physical cultivation method are both artificial. They did not emerge through natural evolution. Too many variables preclude this possibility. The phase whales call themselves the descendants of the 'Elder Gods'. We surmise that the latter are their literal creators. They may have disappeared, but their experiments have lived on. Perhaps the aliens have preserved records that can prove this theory."

Her idea did not sound far-fetched to Ves. He recalled during the early days of exploring the Red Ocean that he and his clan stumbled upon a phase whale enclave that turned out to be an abandoned experimental site.

The fish-whale race that a phase whale originally developed in order to tackle low reproduction rates had taken a life of their own in the small and resource-poor interior.

Numerous fish-whale kings had claimed their own territories and maintained conflict with each other that lasted for a million years and maybe more!

The entire place came across as unhinged and deranged to Ves. It was already a minor miracle that the fish-whale race partially transcended from their roots as experimental subjects and created a semblance of civilization in an isolated pocket space.

Ves eventually managed to loot a lot of phasewater as well as convert the Phase King into a design spirit.

He also came away with the knowledge that the creator of the pocket space attempted to do to the fish-whale race what the 'Elder Gods' had done to the phase whale race.

"What do you think the 'Elder Gods' had in mind when they created the phase whale race?" Ves asked.

"We do not know. It depends on who they are and what they are missing. We can only loosely speculate that the Elder Gods have developed an interest in phasewater. Perhaps they saw enough promise in them that they sought to create a new race that can inherently absorb phasewater and gradually transform into a superdimensional being. We believe they may have completed their objectives and left the Red Ocean for unknown reasons."

Ves picked up an important clue from those words.

"Do you think that phasewater became available first and phase whales only emerged later, or do you think it is the other way around? According to the native aliens, phasewater is godblood."

Maria Abselon pressed her lips in thought. "This is a chicken and egg problem as far as we are concerned. On the one hand, phasewater can be produced through alternative means to relying on the PPS of a greater phase leader. Phasewater is so strongly tied to the phase whale race that it is impossible to treat them in isolation. As far as we are aware, no other galaxy contains phasewater in significant quantities, which makes it more difficult for us to conduct comparisons and draw conclusions."

Was the presence of phasewater completely dependent on the phase whale race?



Ves personally did not think this was the case, but he was not too sure about this conclusion.

"What does that mean for humans who attempt to embark on the same method of body cultivation?" He asked.

"It is strange, but interesting. Since other alien races can cultivate their own phase lords, humans should be able to do so as well. Your transformation along with the rise of the Ur-Titans and Flesh Choppers unquestionably proves that phase lord cultivation is universal. This should be impossible if it is a product of natural evolution. Our conclusion is that the Elder Gods are composed of alien researchers of great intellect and advancements. I would certainly not wish to make contact with them. They can easily crush our civilization if they have not regressed."

Who were the Elder Gods? Why did they abandon a dwarf galaxy that was filled with strategically valuable phasewater? Had they truly abandoned the Red Ocean and their experimental subjects, or would they return one day to see how their creations had fared?

There was too little reliable information about the Elder Gods in the libraries. Ves saw little point in wondering about them when he had more pressing enemies to be concerned about.

"Since phase lord cultivation is so universal, do you think that it is good for humans to practice it? Or do you think we are making a mistake by adopting the methods of a strange group of aliens?"

"Biotechnology is all about adapting the unique or powerful processes of other races for our use." Maria Abselon replied. "We believe in the righteousness to study the unique strengths of the native aliens and develop methods to harness this power. As long as there are no obvious safety concerns, we are curious to see how far you can go with this. You have the potential to develop the body of a physical superbeing. When your true body expand to the size of a planet... will you still be able to retain your human identity and cognition?"

"Good question."

Chapter 6915 Intellectual Phase Lords

Who were the 'Elder Gods'?

For what reason did they create the phase whale race?

Why could other races embark on the same self-evolution path as the phase whales?

Many aliens including the phase whales themselves sought answers to these questions.

So far, it did not appear that anyone had the answers to all of these questions.

Perhaps only the highest leaders of the Red Cabal might know a few secrets, but it was doubtful that they could solve the mystery of phasewater and the existence of their own race.

All of this uncertainty presented unknown risks and dangers to any human that sought to follow the footsteps of these aliens.

Phase lords were undeniably powerful, but humans understood far too little about how they worked.

That presented plenty of hidden dangers that could put human phase lords such as Ves at risk in the future.

Despite these considerations, Ves did not think of ignoring this aspect of himself. The more threatened he felt, the more he wanted to stack up on his protection.

Implanting phasewater organs into his body was an important step to the growth of any phase lord.

"I have been wondering about a circumstance that I find strange." He brought up another topic. "Why do phase whales have to develop their own phasewater organs? Why don't they spawn them automatically at birth or when they progress their body cultivation?"

Vice Director Maria Abselon smiled. "The scientific community has pondered over this question. It is not that great of a mystery. For the phase whale race, it is an attempt

to preserve its reproduction rate. The more homogenous they are, the easier it is for them to reproduce. Those that have made little progress may be weak, but they can still play a role by creating the next generation of phase whales."

"Can't they make their own designer babies and such?"

"Any race that has 'evolved' past the point of eliminating their natural reproduction capabilities has eventually gone extinct." She told Ves. "The Elder Gods clearly understand this rule, so they made sure that their initial organic forms still retain the ability to reproduce. It is only when they raise their phasewater concentration and implant increasingly more unfathomable phasewater organs that they become unique and indescribable existences. Strictly speaking, greater phase whales have already diverged so much from each other that they constitute different races that are reproductively isolated from each other. Sounds familiar?"

Ves nodded. A similar dynamic applied to humans. Even Ves and Gloriana had to resort to using the services of biotechs in order to 'create' their children.

"Why do phase whales all insist on developing their own phasewater organs when they can just pool their efforts and rely on industrialization to meet their needs?" He asked next.

"Phase whales do not think as humans or any other sentient race in the Red Ocean for that matter. Compared to humans and orvens, the phase whales possess completely different thinking patterns. Their bodies are much bigger. Their race is aquatic in nature. They grow up inside gas giants. Their population is much lower. All of these factors cause them to be more individualistic. Aside from the Red Cabal, the phase whales have not made any concerted attempts at creating their own civilization. Without civilization, they must do everything themselves, and this includes the development and creation of their own phasewater organs."

That made sense.

"I take it that there are other reasons why these phase whales develop their own organs."

"Correct. The phase whales highly prize mastery over their own bodies. They have the intelligence and the lifespan to study many biosciences. They also understand the dangers of relying on third parties to upgrade their bodies. As individualists, they are

not above exploiting the vulnerabilities of their fellow phase whales. Only by doing all of the research and development by themselves will they gain the greatest mastery over their own physiques. They also believe that extensive understanding is necessary to progress in the later stages. A strong body is not enough to ascend to godhood. The phase whales believe, correctly in his case, that their mental development must keep up to an extent in order to control their increasingly larger and more massive true bodies."

Ves could easily believe this. The true bodies of ancient phase whales were as large as the moons of many planets. Their mass was so high that they could already form their own gravity wells. A mortal mind and spirit could never maintain effective control over so many biological processes!

Developing a stronger mind and spirit was much more important for other cultivation paths. This was an essential demand for anyone who wanted to ascend to an energy-based life form.

"Phase lords don't tend to progress the same way," Ves noted. "They almost never become biotech scientists and they always rely on their organizations and civilizations to develop the phasewater organs reserves for their use. Now that I think about it, we are no different in this regard."

Maria nodded. "That is because our lifespans are much shorter. We are too impatient to dedicate hundreds if not thousands of years on mastering biotechnology to the point where we can independently develop our own phasewater organs. We also put greater trust in our own organizations and institutions. There is no need for us to follow the habits of the phase whales. However, alien phase lords are substantially less effective at progressing their own body cultivation."

"I thought that was due to the restrictions on the availability of Phasewater Production Systems."

The vice director smirked. "Exactly. It is exactly because the other alien races have yet to understand and reproduce the PPS that they are falling behind in this area. Our studies of the PPS harvested from the Arena Lord of Ya'gwasa have presented us with many confounding observations. This is simply not an organ that we can casually grow in a lab. This is also why you cannot expect us to convert it for your use in the short term. Several exobiologists have developed a theory that only phase lords can develop the spatial cognition and abilities needed to develop this advanced phasewater

organ and produce it through their own means. 'Mortal' scientists such as us may lack the qualifications to progress in this area."

That caused Ves to frown. "If this theory is correct, then the Larkinson Biotech Institute needs to employ an actual phase lord in order to convert the PPS into a useful organ. That is... not realistic."

Ves could probably do it, but that would come at the cost of losing focus of his own profession as a mech designer.

He would never make such a stupid move. There were more ways for him to increase his chances of survival than implanting an adapted PPS and other advanced phasewater organs into his body.

So what if the LBI's research on phasewater organs stalled?

It was not the end for Ves. He could focus his time and energy on designing stronger mechs that could eliminate his enemies on his behalf. This was the right way for mech designers to protect themselves. Becoming a stronger phase lord was just a backup plan in his opinion.

"We believe that the Phase Lord Department of the Red Collective has secretly begun to develop in this direction." Maria Abselon shared. "At the very least, the larger brain mass will enable the researcher phase lord to surpass their original cognitive limitations. If they engage in qi cultivation that focuses on developing their analytical, memory and processing capabilities, their thinking may be able to outperform RF supercomputers. Combined with a companion spirit that can develop a complementary specialization, these phase lords have the potential to become heavyweights in the scientific community. This may be one of the reasons why the Phase Lord Department has made more achievements and become increasingly more prominent within the Collective."

This was the first time that Ves heard about this! Even if it was just a rumor, he already believed it because he knew it was right. Even if a lot of brain matter was occupied with managing all of the extra mass and organs, there was still enough brain matter left over for other purposes!

No phase lord was truly stupid. Even if they were focused on martial pursuits, they were able to fight better than mortals! It was one of the reasons why they could still compete against ace pilots.

Ves felt the need to return to the Astral Octagon and check up on the true situation of the RC.

There was only so much he could learn from receiving remote reports from his chief of staff. He had failed to establish relationships with the other leaders of the RC and therefore found himself out of the loop of many internal developments.

He knew that Eliza Mo Ragadan was doing the best to represent his office, but she lacked his reputation and prestige.

The Collies also knew that Ves was not that fully committed to their superorganization. They honored him as the founder, but they probably thought that his high position mostly served a ceremonial function.

After all, it was the Lower Council that actually drafted, debated upon and passed the bills.

The Upper Council only served to represent the interests of the major and the minor powers of human civilization in the Red Ocean.

Ves did not have much influence on their voting patterns. If the Terran Alliance thought that a bill was detrimental to its interests, it would vote no regardless of what he thought.

"Since the Phase Lord Department is doing so well, do you think that its researchers will be able to develop new and original phasewater organs that are highly suited to humans from the start?"

"We already have that capacity ourselves." The vice director responded. "We have already advanced our understanding of phase lords to the point where we have learned the basic framework of phasewater organs. If ordered, we can begin the development of a new phasewater organ that is completely adapted for your physique. We can even combine it with hyper technology to produce outcomes that are unlike anything the native aliens have developed in the past."

"What is stopping you from doing this, then?"

"Two reasons, sir. First, it is prohibitively expensive. We not only require access to much greater processing power, it also takes a large amount of phasewater and other precious materials to grow the mech-sized organs. Second, why reinvent the wheel when we can steal them from the aliens instead? They have invested thousands, tens of thousands if not hundreds of thousands of years into iterating many types of phasewater organs. Their degree of optimization, sophistication and peak performance has reached an extremely high level."

"Yet those are old and outdated products now that we have entered the Age of Dawn." Ves pointed out. "Not only have we gained access to hyper technology, but now there is also superdimensional technology. We can't wait for alien researchers to develop new solutions that make use of hyper materials and superdimensional materials. That is way too slow and turns your scientists into lazy bums. We need to invest in this capacity and develop a degree of self-sufficiency. If you are so worried about funding, then just focus on a single specialization. Our clan excels at hyper technology and E-technology, so we should develop new phasewater organs that are closely related to those fields."

Ves and Vice Director Abselon spent the rest of the call discussing the details of this expansion.

This would have been easier a year ago, but now that the Red War was weakening the foundation of human civilization, it was a lot harder to get stuff done.

If red humanity continued to suffer loss after loss, then the LBI would no longer be able to obtain the resources and third-party support that were necessary to complete many of its research projects!

Therefore, both of them hoped that red humanity would persevere. There was no need to think about expanding the research activities of the LBI if red humanity had collapsed!

Chapter 6916 Unholy Energy Weapon Concept

After arranging the upcoming implantation of phasewater organs, Ves ended the call in satisfaction.

When he checked the schedule, he noted that a lot of good stuff will happen at once in the next two weeks.

The Tortuous Scream was about to arrive in the next few days. The first-class fleet carrier built by the Eternal Vulcan Empire was due to arrive a bit later.

The cultivator contingent dispatched by the Red Collective should be on the way as well. Ves looked forward to exploring their broad and unusual abilities and figuring out ways to make them useful to the Larkinson Clan.

The implantation surgery should therefore be the last event that held him back from leaving New Constantinople VIII.

The good news was that phase lords generally tended to recover very quickly from these processes as long as everything went right. If the phasewater organs worked correctly and if the surgeons knew what they were doing, then Ves should be up and running in a matter of days.

That would be the time the Premier Fleet formally set off towards the nearest war theater.

It was not bad to wait for a bit before setting off. A lot of new spacers had just boarded the incoming starships or would be doing so upon arriving in New Constantinople VIII. They all needed to familiarize themselves with the ship and their assigned stations. A few days of acclimatization and familiarization could make a considerable difference.

In the meantime, Ves went back to designing a personal weapon for himself.

He needed both a melee weapon and a ranged weapon in order to fight competently as a phase lord.

Since he was not that much of a fighter to begin with, the only way he could pose a threat to his enemies was to overcompensate by relying on superior equipment.



That was an area he excelled at. He possessed the expertise and materials to come up with a set of good weapons.

He already intended to develop a superdimensional polearm as his melee weapon. A simple spear with a long shaft should be easy for him to use. He just needed to drive the sharp tip at the enemy.

A spear was also the most economical form of superdimensional weapon. There were good reasons why most Saint Piercer arms used by the aliens happened to come in the form of lances.

Ves intended to make the shaft out of more abundant hull-grade superdimensional alloy. While it was not the best possible material to use when fighting against enemies armed with their own superdimensional arms, it was better than nothing.

The more important spear tip should ideally be made out of weapon-grade superdimensional alloy. This should make it really easy to inflict damage to tough enemies, though it was doubtful that he could inflict fatal damage unless he struck a critical organ.

A much better fighter should be able to produce miracles with such a good superdimensional weapon, but in the hands of a non-combatant like Ves, he would probably end up wasting its potential.

"Wait. That is not quite true. There are several ways to remedy this problem."

Ves grinned as he quickly noted down a couple of ideas that he intended to follow up on later.

He soon turned his attention to his ranged weapon option.

This was arguably more important because it was the best way for him to use the Radiant particle that he received from the Devos Ancient Clan as a gift.

When Ves thought about the phasewater organs that he was about to receive, he knew that he would soon receive a considerable boost to his defenses and mobility.

Of course, no phase lord was able to make optimal use of any newly implanted phasewater organs. It took a lot of time and practice for him to make the most out of his new capabilities.

It didn't matter too much to Ves. Even if his performance fell behind, he could just rely on his raiment to compensate for his lack of combat skill and acumen.

The lesser Arcis organ therefore came in handy as it enabled him to channel additional energy to any of his technological gear.

Ves could choose to channel much of that extra power to the azure shield generator in order to strengthen his defenses.

He could also copy the solutions applied to the Amaranto Mark III and channel all of that spare power to his energy weapon instead!

Ves activated a design suite and began to sketch out the ideas that came to his mind.

Compared to Saint Tusa, Ves lacked the courage to dance on a knife's edge and fearlessly circle around enemies that could blast him apart if he got hit a couple of times.

There was no need for Ves to force himself to imitate the Dark Zephyr Mark III.

"If I have to choose a model to take inspiration from, then I would rather take inspiration from the Phobos and the Lionheart."

The best way for Ves to avoid getting hit was to make the enemy unaware that he was present in the first place!

He kind of liked the Phobos for being able to enter into stealth and take his enemies by surprise.

The expert stealth mech was also able to deploy disposable fiends that could terrorize enemies and commit acts of sabotage without getting exposed right away.

However, it was too difficult for Ves to make this all possible. In order to become a sneak attacker, he needed to turn his raiment into a highly effective stealth suit.

That took way too much time and effort to design.

He also did not have the confidence to keep his presence hidden from alien phase lords who relied on their Locos organs to detect enemies with their spatial senses.

The Lionheart was the opposite to the Phobos in many regards. It was a very bright and shining mech that exuded leadership and superiority. It was capable of absorbing the faith and belief of many people and using all of that excess energy to forcibly elevate its performance past its normal peak.

From what Ves knew about his uncle, General Ark Larkinson often preferred to launch devastating charge attacks with the help of all of his boosts!

Although Ark was also good at sustained combat, Ves took a lot of inspiration from his tactic of quickly beheading an important alien champion or asset in the beginning.

"While it would be nice to imitate the Phobos or the Lionheart, I am ultimately far too different from them. Perhaps the mech that resembles me the most is the Valkyrie Redeemer."

The Valkyrie Redeemer was armed with a short luminar crystal weapon and a spear. It was capable of launching charge attacks, but it was also able to inflict harassing attacks at a distance.

The mech model was classified as a marauder mech, which meant that it was armed with weapons that enabled it to fight up close or from afar, but usually only one at a time.

"I can't fight like a marauder mech, but I can use it as a good starting point."

One of the issues he had with its fighting approach was that when they utilized their ranged weapons, they tended to imitate harasser mechs like the Stingripper and annoy their enemies while constantly dancing around their enemies.

Ves did not think he could fight this way as it was hard to aim a firearm while moving around so much.

Mech pilots had at least ten years of professional training and more years of practice and actual combat experience to rely upon.

He could only rely on shallow training and auto aim assistance from his raiment.

Neither of these solutions ranked high in terms of reliability.

Try as he might, Ves could not imagine that he would do well as a marksman mech or a harasser mech.

Yet he still wanted to borrow the strength of both archetypes.

He wanted to gain access to the power of the single-shot of a good marksman mech.

He also wanted to retain the mobility and superior positioning capabilities of a good harasser mech.

What if he combined the two together?

As Ves continued to sketch the luminar crystal weapon that fit him best, he eventually came up with a fairly short but stocky cannon.

If it was a kinetic weapon, then he would have called it a shotgun, but there was no straight equivalent for directed energy weapons.

The weapon should not have a noticeable spread at short range. This was an undesirable trait for energy weapons as it drastically weakened the penetration power and effective damage inflicted onto enemy targets.

Nonetheless, this was not a weapon optimized for long-ranged combat. Ves wanted to focus on power as opposed to precision. This was also why he wanted to make the weapon accumulate as much energy as possible.

"It's kind of like the smaller and short-range version of the Instrument of Vengeance."

While the luminar crystal blaster lacked the long-ranged precision of that iconic weapon, Ves intended for the former to retain the ability to accumulate as much energy as possible before discharging it all in one massively powerful energy beam!

While Ves did not think he could turn himself invisible, he could rely on allies to attract attention and allow him to get close enough.

His general game plan was to bide time while letting his luminar crystal blaster accumulate as much energy as possible.

Once he spotted a good opening, he would dash forward and get as close to his target as possible before pulling the trigger!

The luminar crystal weapon would subsequently proceed to unleash a massively powerful energy beam that should be able to overwhelm many enemies due to the amplification from the Radiant particle!

Once he fired his weapon, Ves might choose to finish the job by switching to his superdimensional spear before charging forward.

If not, he could instantly back off and put as much distance between himself and the enraged enemy as possible!

"The luminar crystal blaster needs to be as strong as possible if I want this to work."

Ves slowly began to grin as he came up with an interesting possibility.

What if he attempted to Demoncast this Radiant luminar crystal weapon?

There was a chance that it might not work.

Stuffing a demon inside a weapon that was blessed by the willpower of a god pilot could result in a conflict where the weaker party perished.

That was not the outcome he desired.

What he wanted to do instead was find a way to merge their strengths together!

What would happen if darkness successfully corrupted the Radiant particle?

Ves hoped that he would end up producing an unholy energy weapon!

"I will call this the Defiled Light Project!"

Chapter 6917 The Essence of Duty

Ves became incredibly motivated to work on the Defiled Light Project!

He loved the concept of a weapon that was uniquely suited for his use. The D-arm combined a number of strengths that could empower the energy gun with multiple sources of power, similar to the Instrument of Vengeance.

While Ves was not able to rely on the power of key resonating materials and such, he could still apply other design applications to maximize the damage output of a single shot.

After coming up with this experimental weapon, his combat system became increasingly more clear.

If Ves was forced to enter the battlefield as a phase lord, then the Premier Fleet was probably in big trouble.

If the combination of a handful of warships, 1000 first-class multipurpose mechs, the Superdimensional First Sword Mark III, the Minerva Mark II and support from multiple teams of qi cultivators was not enough, then Ves would most definitely be outmatched one way or another.

He needed to avoid direct combat as much as possible. He already knew from past incidents that his combat skills and fighting consciousness were way below the standard of an average third-class mech pilot.

There was no way he could hold his own against enemies who may have honed their combat skills and instincts for centuries if not millenia.

Ves needed to be smart about this and avoid the enemy's strengths as much as possible. The best way to do that was by adopting a hit-and-run approach.

He constantly reminded himself that he was a mech designer. He was not a mech pilot. He felt no obligation to abide by the rules of honor like most soldiers. If a non-combatant such as himself was forced to take to the field, then he was not going to pretend that he possessed a warrior's heart!

Larkinson or not, Ves intended to fight his battles according to his own ideas.

If that meant skulking about on the battlefield while using his subordinates as cannon fodder, then that was fine as far as he was concerned.

His troops were supposed to be his protectors, not the other way around!

Ves fully intended to act like a scumbag and make it as inconvenient for the enemy to target him as possible. His mobility should be superior enough to make it difficult for enemies to land a strike on his person.

His azure energy shield, his spatial barrier and his superdimensional raiment should make it abundantly clear that a few occasional lucky hits did nothing but waste the enemy's firepower.

He intended to fight like an opportunist. He would avoid contact when there was no advantage to be gained, but ruthlessly rush forward and hit an opponent that had been pushed on the backfoot.

Cooperation with allies was essential. Ves disdained the identity of a duelist. That was a privilege for the strong and the honorable. Since Ves lacked these martial qualities, there was no need for him to artificially constrain his behavior with rules.

Ves was a contrarian at heart. He never blindly followed other people's rules.

He followed his own code.

If the two happened to conflict with each other, then he would try to follow his own rules if he thought he could get away with it. This was what he relied upon to survive and thrive in an increasingly more dangerous cosmos.

Ves purposefully extended this attitude to the development of his gear. No matter whether it was the Superdimensional Regalia, his temporary raiment and the Defiled Light Project, he all designed them with survival in mind.

As a mech designer, this was a relatively novel experience. He was used to being a service provider to mech pilots. He understood how they thought and how they engaged in combat. His previous Mastery experiences directly exposed him to the courage and honor that these noble soldiers valiantly displayed on and off the battlefield.

Perhaps a part of Ves felt unworthy to be counted among their ranks. This was why he deliberately set out to differentiate himself and his combat gear. He did not want anyone to form any misunderstandings about his positioning.

Honor and chivalry should be reserved for noble idiots like Saint Jannzi and Saint Dise.

A survivor and an opportunist like Ves had his own way of solving problems.

Of course, Ves was well aware that he was not trying to become a complete coward.



He would never bother with developing weapons for himself if that was the case. The determination to arm himself with a luminar crystal blaster and a superdimensional spear meant that he still had a desire to be proactive and actively engage his enemies.

This was because Ves recognized that if he wanted to get a job done, he may not have any other choice but to do it in person.

Not everything had to be categorized in absolutes. Even a non-combatant like Ves could become a valiant warrior in the right situations. There were also times where mech pilots lost their courage and degenerated into cowards.

There was nothing special about that. They were just being human.

Only high-ranking mech pilots held themselves to a higher standard.

When it came down to it, the basis of their willpower cultivation centered around believing that they were capable of performing superhuman feats by themselves.

As long as they believed in this fantasy hard enough, falsehood would eventually transform into reality.

The very human sentiments of doubt and hesitation only hindered them from believing in themselves.

Expert pilots and ace pilots therefore had to undergo a long journey of struggle to defy their mortal shortcomings and steadily evolve into a more flawless and invincible ideal.

Ves recognized that he was completely unsuitable for this path because he could never brainwash himself with such obvious lies and falsehoods.

He found it rather ironic that if mech pilots wanted to traverse the path of godhood, they needed to rely on the power of their own lie to cross the extraordinary threshold.

Yet mech pilots simultaneously had to abide by the impossible standard of being truthful from their perspective!

There was an inherent contradiction in their progression.

On the one hand, a high-ranking mech pilot that easily believed in his own delusions tended to grow their resonance strength faster.

On the other hand, the more lies and falsehoods a high-ranking mech pilot became entangled with, the harder it became for them to overcome their bottlenecks!

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Trying to reconcile the two was nearly impossible.

It likely explained why so few expert pilots could complete transition into ace pilots, and why so few peak ace pilots survived the road to no return.

Truth and lies.

Reality and fantasy.

Courage and doubt.

Self-sufficiency and reliance on mech designers.

Willpower was rightfully regarded as one of the most difficult but rewarding forms of cultivation.

Anyone who was exceptional enough to reconcile these contradictions and come up with acceptable solutions for all of them deserved to become the strongest True Gods at their levels!

A god pilot relied predominantly on the power of one's own mind and will to produce an outcome that surpassed anything comparable!

Now that Ves was preparing himself for the possibility of entering the battlefield himself, he gained more insights on the difficulties that true soldiers had to endure.

He did not envy them at all for being forced to handle all of this pressure on a frequent basis.

He respected them more for it. Even if these soldiers did not always believe that they were strong enough to complete their missions, they still stepped up and prepared themselves to fight against some of the most powerful alien opponents of the Red Ocean.

This was the essence of duty.

Ves respected them all the more for it. Even though none of the side projects had any direct relations to any of his mech designs, the act of putting himself in the shoes of his customers, if only briefly, significantly improved his understanding of their plight and struggles.

He knew he would be able to design slightly better mechs for them going forward.

This was because he was one of the few mech designers that possessed enough bravery — or foolishness — to join them on the battlefield!

Mech designers who never thought about doing this in the first place simply wouldn't be able to gain these insights.

He pitied people like Gloriana who still maintained a high degree of separation towards the mech pilots she served.

As much as she liked to think of herself as a service provider who understood the needs of her individual clients the most, she was only able to understand the rigors of combat in abstraction.

She had never fought in the trenches or proactively risked her life for a cause that was greater than herself.

"That's fine."

Not every mech designer had to be the same. Gloriana established her own unique advantages that had little to do with Ves.

Their long-term collaboration remained stable because they each took advantage of each other's strengths while covering for each other's weaknesses.

One of the reasons why he willingly prepared for the possibility of entering the battlefield himself was to protect his wife and children from danger.

It would be counter-productive to encourage Gloriana to form a Blood Pact with a Carmine mech and enter the battlefield in person!

If even she had to fight the enemy, then that would constitute a complete failure!

Ves was determined to prevent this scenario from unfolding!

He would just have to do his best to develop the strongest gear for himself and complete his own initial combat system.

In order to make sure that his luminar crystal weapon became as strong as possible, he worked extensively with Harry Kaikkonon to push the Defiled Light Project to a greater height.

"To be honest, I would have preferred to start this project a few years later." The Journeyman Mech Designer said. "I have been preoccupied with trying to figure out how to make luminar crystals out of superdimensional matter. While they share a few traits in common with transphasic materials, there are so many differences that my

research has hardly made any progress. I can already tell that this will be a long and difficult research project."

The development of superdimensional luminar crystals was a high priority for the Larkinson Clan.

Many of its ranged mechs relied heavily on luminar crystal weapons for attacks, so any breakthroughs in this field would comprehensively strengthen all of their firepower!

"I understand." Ves said. "We can't afford to wait that long. Just consider the Defiled Light Project to be a precursor of a stopgap solution. Once we have successfully mastered the method to produce superdimensional luminar crystals, we can update all of our fourth and earlier generation luminar crystal weapons to the fifth generation. For now, we stick with what works, which is fourth gen."

Harry tensely nodded. He was not pleased with this decision, but there was nothing he could do about it. Superdimensional luminar crystals could not be invented in a matter of days or weeks.

When Ves explained his concept and initial design choices for the Defiled Light Project, the other mech designer furrowed his brows.

He did not entirely understand the significance of turning the luminar crystal blaster into a D-arm, but he was able to understand the rest of the description well enough.

"You are aiming to make a weapon with very narrow applications." He said. "Your goal is to design a short-ranged version of the Instrument of Vengeance that can be wielded by a phase lord such as yourself. I can understand the choice you make because you do not possess the marksmanship or resonance strength of Saint Davia Stark. However, your insistence on being able to release the most powerful discharge of energy as possible will entail many sacrifices."

"Such as...?"

"You will not be able to make good use of the weapon outside of its optimal use pattern of a giant-killing ambush weapon. You will not be able to use it to take down enemies from afar or eliminate large swarms of weaker opponents."

Ves grimly nodded. "That is fine. Enemies that are further away do not pose much of a threat to me. I don't need to take action in person to deal with swarms of weaker enemy units. The only enemies that I am forced to take seriously are phase leaders. This is why I insist on this giant-killing configuration. It needs to be so good at fulfilling its primary objective that I am willing to forgo other goals."

"I see. This is your prerogative. I just hope that you will not get caught flat-footed if you are confronting your most ideal enemies, sir."

"Let me worry about that problem."

Chapter 6918 X-ERC Luminar Crystals

The Defiled Light Project was ambitious, but it did not require a lot of work in order to complete.

This was because Ves and Harry Kaikkonen borrowed a large amount of design solutions from past projects.

It was not entirely inaccurate to characterize the luminar crystal blaster as a short-ranged version of the Instrument of Vengeance.

However, it was a mistake to assume that it behaved exactly like the legendary luminar crystal rifle with a shortened stock and much shorter barrel.

Aside from the predictable absence of resonating materials and components designed to enhance the long-ranged precision of the energy weapon, the scale of the overall weapon was much greater.

Ves' current phasewater cultivation allowed him to become three times taller than a typical mech.

That did not necessarily mean he could easily wield weapons that were three times larger and more massive, but he was able to conduct personal experiments on himself in order to determine the optimal weight and dimensions of his luminar crystal blaster.

He just ordered the delivery of a large amount of rectangular metal bars with handles and carried them with one arm or two arms.

This was enough to quickly determine the target size and dimensions of the luminar crystal weapon.

"At your scale, this weapon tends to be on the smaller side." Harry Kaikkonen said. "The barrel is shorter than preferred and the stock also does not offer too much room for components. The Good news is that the scale of the entire weapon is large enough that we can still install plenty of functional components to maintain an acceptable degree of power and stability. Compared to the Instrument of Vengeance, it can still output a considerable amount of burst damage. If you are willing to increase the size of the weapon by 20 percent, then I can significantly increase the firing rate while still maintaining stability."

"That will not be necessary, Harry." Ves shook his head. "As I said before, I want this weapon to be suitable for hit-and-run attacks. It needs to charge up and unleash a devastating shot at the right time. It doesn't matter if it takes a lot longer to charge back up to full power because I will be making sure to stay out of harm's way as best as possible. You know as well as I do that high burst damage is preferable to sustained light attacks when it comes to penetrating the defenses of the native aliens. I don't mind if I have to wait longer to get ready to launch another attack. In fact, a weapon that fires more frequently may even be a trap that can give me the delusion that I can dogfight my enemies."

Harry slowly nodded. He understood what his superior was implying.

If Ves was armed with a weapon that could fire frequently, then he would feel tempted to stay in engagement range and constantly focus on attacking. As a mech designer, it was difficult for him to stop pulling the trigger because he was trained to consider that to be a lost opportunity.

Mech designers often tried to increase the efficiency of their work by any means possible!

This was not always the right solution when it came to actual combat. There were many different variables at play. Sometimes, the right solution was to withhold action and wait for better opportunities.

Since Ves was not a trained soldier who became proficient in spotting those opportunities, he decided to artificially limit the offensive capabilities of his firearm so that it left him no choice but to fight as he originally intended!

A mech armed with a marksman rifle would always try to snipe enemies at a longer distance. It would never be stupid enough to get close and enter into a dogfight against an enemy unit.

Likewise, a mech armed with a submachine gun should not maintain its distance from the enemy for the duration of the entire battle. Once it was time for such a machine to confront the enemy, it would seek to get closer in order to compensate for its lack of accuracy.

Ves deliberately avoided the decision to turn his weapon into a versatile firearm like the Irvan wielded by the Minerva.

Saint Commander Casella Ingvar was proficient in marksmanship, and needed the ability to launch direct attacks at multiple distances.

This was why Ves granted her Minerva a transformable firearm.

The Irvan performed like a marksman rifle for long-ranged striking capabilities, but could also be turned into submachine gun for self-defense at closer distances.

If Ves wanted to, he could apply a similar template to his Defiled Light Project, but he refused to make the weapon versatile.

By specializing the weapon for a single purpose, he not only constrained himself from doing anything stupid, but also became assured that it would do its sole job extremely well.

"I would like to share two proposals with you, sir." The Larkinson Clan's recently designated luminar crystal weapon specialist said. "We are years away from developing superdimensional luminar crystals, but that does not make superdimensional matter useless. We can still use it to reinforce its internal structure and plate the exterior for additional protection. It would be good if we have hull-grade superdimensional matter to spare. We can even add a superdimensional bayonet if you need to attack your enemies but do not have the time to switch to another weapon."



Ves thought for a moment. This was a good way to increase the toughness and reliability of the weapon. He would not have to be afraid of rough handling.

The downside was that reinforcing the luminar crystal blaster would either increase its size and mass, or require a reduction in the size of functional components.

Still, he did not want to wield a weak firearm that would break if it got struck by a Saint Piercer arm or other penetrating attack.

"Your first proposal is acceptable. Let's adjust the draft design so we have a better idea of what we are working towards. Don't worry about material usage. Our use of armor-grade and weapon-grade superdimensional matter is restricted, but we still have a good reserve of hull-grade superdimensional matter. What else?"

"Well, as a phase lord, it is expected that you will continue to grow in size in the future." Harry Kaikkonen said next. "I am not sure when or by how much you will grow, but it is best to assume it will happen sooner or later. Since this is the case, the weapon should be designed with variable scale in mind from the beginning. The luminar crystal blaster must be designed in a way that retains its relevance and usefulness even if you have grown several times larger."

Ves frowned. "That is difficult to ensure unless we resort to smart metal. I already intend to do that for my own Carmine 'mech', but it is impossible to apply the same treatment to luminar crystal weapons. This tech is based on solid and immutable crystals. Nanomachines simply cannot replicate them. We can only switch to less powerful energy weapons that can be reproduced with smart metal if we want to develop a weapon with a variable scale."

Harry shook his head. "It is not necessary for us to immediately resort to smart metal, sir. We can instead rely on a semi-modular luminar crystal weapon that is designed from the grown up to shift in size and replace smaller crystals with larger and more powerful substitutes. Let me show you what I have in mind."

He began to sketch out a very basic draft design of a weapon that fit his description.

Ves soon became more enthusiastic as he understood what Harry had in mind.

"This is actually a much more practical idea than I initially thought! While the mechanical structure adds a lot of complexity and vulnerability to the weapon frame, the ability to quickly change its dimensions and swap out parts makes up for it. While it is bound to become a rather maintenance-heavy device, that is no problem for a mech designer like myself."

Harry's proposal was to design a weapon that was defined by a mechanical structure that naturally accommodated change and growth on the onset.

It reminded Ves a lot of the Chiron and War Squire lines of training mechs.

They were designed to mimic the growing physiques of many possible teenagers.

The length of their limbs and other parts could dynamically be adjusted as the mech cadets became affected by growth spurts and grew increasingly taller.

Harry simply applied a similar approach to the luminar crystal weapon, making it so that Ves or anyone else could easily increase the scale of the weapon through combining a shifting weapon frame and swappable semi-modular components.

It was like designing a weapon that was inherently meant to be redesigned and rebuilt again and again.

To be honest, it was not completely necessary for Ves to go through all of this trouble. As a mech designer who upgraded many existing mechs, he was proficient in reinventing and reimagining his products.

However, it would take a lot of time and effort for him to manually redesign larger versions of his luminar crystal weapon.

He could save himself a lot of redundant work by taking this demand into account at the beginning of the weapon project.

The downside was that it not only increased the complexity of the design, but also introduced a lot of mechanical vulnerabilities.

However, this was why choosing to use superdimensional alloy as reinforcing material was such a good idea. Its toughness and resistance towards adverse effects effectively mitigated this downside!

"Great!" Ves grinned and lightly clapped Harry's back. "This is an excellent combination of ideas. Let's go through with it. I don't mind if it will take a little longer to complete the project. It is worth it if I can continue to make use of it after I have grown in size after a fast and convenient rework. It will also make it easier for us to convert the old crystals with cutting-edge superdimensional crystals a few years later. By the way, you don't need to add a bayonet to the design."

"Are you sure, sir?"

Ves grinned. "If my suspicions are correct, transforming the luminar crystal weapon into a D-arm will automatically solve this problem, hehe."

The pair continued to flesh out the design and configuration of their ambitious project. It took a lot of extra work to include the latest design specifications, but it was more than worth it for both mech designers.

Harry soon presented Ves with another question.

"Do you remember my specialization, sir? Well, I have managed to develop new advancements in my ERC luminar crystal weapon technology. It is only a minor technological breakthrough, but I am able to present you with two different design choices."

"Oh? What have you come up with, this time?"

The energy weapon specialist activated a new projection that showed off two different ERC luminar crystals.

He gestured towards one of them. "This is the product that you are familiar with. It is the type of crystal that I have incorporated in the Instrument of Vengeance. It can convert any strong emotion into different effects, ranging from a straightforward increase in firepower to negating E energy effects. While this has significantly improved the power and versatility of my luminar crystal weapons, it has also made it much more difficult for mech pilots to control their damage output, as they actively

need to manage their emotions during eventful engagements. For example, if mech pilots feel sad about the loss of their comrades, their damage output may decrease by as much as 50 percent."

"That sounds... really bad."

"The problem is not insurmountable for trained and disciplined mech pilots." Harry said. "However, the complaints that I have gathered from the users of the recently released Bright Warrior Mark IV and Valkyrie Redeemer Mark IV has opened my eyes to how much of a burden it is to force mech pilots to regulate their emotions during highly charged moments on the battlefield. This is why I have recently developed a variation of ERC luminar crystal weapons that are only attuned to a single specific emotion."

He gestured to the second projected crystal.

"In order to distinguish them from each other, my original products have been relabeled as U-ERC for short, while my new products will be called X-ERC for emotionally reactive charged luminar crystals that are attuned to an indeterminate emotion. An ERC luminar crystal that is attuned to anger should be referred to as an A-ERC luminar crystal for example."

"I see. You should give me a list of all of the X-ERC luminar crystal variations. I need to understand all of the options."

"Here you go, sir."

Chapter 6919 Happy Gun

When Ves entered the firing range used for testing experimental weapons, his attention immediately drew towards a series of energy pistols.

Each of them had been made with basic luminar crystals. The craftsmanship left much to be desired, but there was no need to care too much since they were only prototypes.

"So these are your new X-ERC luminar crystal weapons, right?"

"All of them are indeed my latest works." Harry Kaikkonen proudly said. "The theory behind them is not particularly complicated, but it has taken a large amount of trial and error to make them practical and remove most of the glitches."

The X-ERC luminar crystal pistols gave off different vibes to an individual as sensitive as Ves.

The types of hyper materials used to make the individual guns obviously aligned to very specific emotions. This caused the weapons to attract E energy of different emotions, which could infect people who came close enough.

The effect grew more confusing when Ves stepped close enough to become affected by the 'auras' of multiple pistols at once.

He simultaneously felt the inclination to feel angry, embarrassed, sad and disgusted at the same time!

Of course, Ves easily managed to maintain his composure.

Harry did not make use of high-quality hyper materials, and the weapons were far too small to attract enough E energy to produce a particularly strong effect.

"Interesting."

"That is one of the problems with bringing multiple X-ERC luminar crystal weapons together." Their maker said. "I have yet to devise an effective solution to negate this problem. Unless you are piloting a mech with Lufa as the design spirit, it is detrimental to carry armaments that respond to different emotions at once. I can only dim the effects of the hyper materials, but I cannot disable them entirely, so it is highly advisable not to mix them together."

Ves nodded in understanding. "That makes sense. I can understand the rationale of trying to cover for multiple different scenarios, but if the result is that you get bombarded by multiple different emotional inducements at once, then I do not think anyone would be crazy enough to do this. I hope you will be able to solve this problem."

"That depends on advancements in hyper technology. The only effective solution to isolating the effects of hyper materials is to move them out of the area or put them into a container made with materials that inhibit the passage E energy. Neither of them are practical."

Ves believed that if a mech pilot truly wanted to carry multiple different X-ERC luminar crystal armaments, he could pilot a mech that was equipped with multiple weapon containers.

If he wanted to channel the power of anger, he could retrieve an A-ERC gun from a box and make use of its superior firepower.

If he wanted to utilize a more penetrating weapon, he could put the A-ERC weapon back into its box and pull out a G-ERC pistol instead.

However, Ves did not evaluate this idea highly. All of this switching around was not only a hassle that was prone to sabotage and interference, it also took up way too much capacity for way too little firepower and utility.

Harry did not approach the table that held all of the experimental armaments, but instead moved to a lane that was further away before pulling out his personal sidearm.

Naturally, Harry had made a luminar crystal weapon for himself. He put much more craftsmanship and thought into his personal gun.

Although it had not reached masterwork quality, Ves could pick up the love and attention that Harry had put into its creation.

"This is an older U-ERC luminar crystal pistol that I have yet to update." The Journeyman explained to Ves. "This means that it can respond to any emotion. I have already lowered its setting so that its basic energy output matches that of the prototype weapons. Now, I will proceed to channel numerous different emotions before firing a shot for each of them. You should pay close attention to the firepower and other effects induced by my tech."

Ves took this seriously enough to call up an interface that connected him to the extensive sensor suite of the firing range. This would allow him to observe all of the objective data.

Of course, the sensor systems were not yet able to measure everything related to E energy. Ves could only rely on Blinky's sharp senses to serve as an acceptable substitute.

"Please proceed, Harry."

I will proceed to fire a baseline shot while keeping my mood as neutral as possible. I will then proceed to fire shots while feeling angry, sad and so on. I will try to cycle through every emotion that corresponds to the X-ERC luminar crystal weapons that I have made."

Harry did as he said. As a mech designer, he was not really capable of evoking strong emotions on demand.

He particularly struggled with evoking strong feelings of sadness, love, altruism and anger.

The man did slightly better when evoking feelings of shame and pride. He probably thought about the worst and best moments of his relatively short mech designer career.

Ves did not judge Harry on his relatively lackluster performance. He already figured out that this test was about relative values as opposed to absolute values.

In other words, it was much more important to make comparisons rather than trying to reach high scores.

"Now that you have measured the baseline data, I will proceed to release a test shot with each of my new X-ERC luminar crystal prototypes."

Harry first activated the safety and put away his U-ERC sidearm. He then moved to the table, picked up the nearest X-ERC gun, and moved back to the lane.

Ves could already tell the weapon corresponded to excitement, joy, happiness and exuberance.

Harry already began to smile as he not only allowed the 'happy gun' to affect his mood, but also actively fed and reinforced it as much as possible!

"Hehehe... hahaha..."

Despite feeling happy to the point where he was about to laugh like he was attending a cabaret show, Harry still managed to exercise enough discipline and control to raise his rifle, aim at the target in front of him, and pull the trigger.

The new E-ERC gun corresponding to Excitement launched a golden beam that was distinctly brighter and more colorful than the ones that came before.

However, Harry's joyful mood clearly affected his aim, causing the energy beam to drift too much to the right.

"Impressive." Ves said as he studied the data on the two times where Harry evoked the power of happiness to enhance his energy attacks. "There is a 30 percent difference in firepower."

"Thank you, sir. This is because wielding an E-ERC weapon already primes me towards feeling excited. I only need to feed it in order to make it stronger. The E-ERC luminar crystals used to make this weapon are also specialized to convert this specific emotion into higher output. The downside is that trying to evoke other emotions will invalidate the performance increase. Firing this weapon will be no different from firing a non-ERC energy weapon."

Harry demonstrated this by deliberately trying to feel as depressed as possible before launching a shot.

The energy beam was no longer as powerful or remarkable as before. It was just a plain red beam that struck with ordinary power.

"Is there any negative scaling?" Ves asked. "If you feel the opposite emotions, will the firepower of the X-ERC guns actually decrease?"

"Thankfully no. You can't sabotage yourself to that extent. From what I have been able to test, both the positive and negative effects of using ERC luminar crystal weapons



disappear when you are evoking no emotions, weak emotions, non-relevant emotions or opposite emotions. When I hold this particular gun, the only emotion that can alter the damage output is joy."

That was good news. Harry's new X-ERC weapons would have been a lot more dangerous and troublesome to wield if it was sensitive to all of those additional factors.

"Let us measure the performance of the remaining X-ERC guns when they are in your hands."

They completed the second round of tests. Harry picked up and put down each and every prototype weapon one by one, often requiring time to acclimate himself to a new emotion.

In each and every case, the effects applied to the energy beams fired by the X-ERC guns were superior.

While that meant a major decrease in firepower when wielding the G-ERC pistol, this was an intended outcome as Harry already ascertained that feeling sad and gloomy produced that particular effect.

The good news was that the penetration power of this weakened energy beam had drastically improved. It had burned much deeper into the target than normal, which was particularly useful for damaging sensitive and vulnerable internal components.

Of course, most other emotions produced a more general increase in damage output. Harry's inclination as a person still remained relevant, but each different X-ERC gun made it a lot easier for him to strengthen the right emotions.

Once the test session came to an end, Harry put down his last gun and moved towards Ves.

Both of them studied the collected data. Just as expected, the numbers for the second round were all higher than the numbers of the first round.

"I would say your new development is great progress." Ves commented. "Wielders of your X-ERC firearms can not only exert better control over the damage output, but also produce stronger effects. The downside is that they will lose the versatility offered by your original U-ERC armaments, but that is not a big deal for most people."

Harry nodded in agreement. "My X-ERC armaments have a much lower skill threshold. It barely takes any training for any soldier or mech pilot to exert a reasonable amount of control over the energy weapons. I do not think that their invention has phased out my U-ERC weapons. I believe that highly trained and superhuman mech pilots such as Saint Davia Stark can make the most out of the versatility of U-ERC luminar crystal weapons."

"I agree. Another issue of concern is that wielding an X-ERC weapon will constantly alter your mood. It is difficult for a mech pilot to muster up much enthusiasm for a fight when he feels sad. It is also difficult for him to exercise restraint when he is wielding an energy weapon that is constantly encouraging him to feel happy or angry. The stronger the X-ERC weapon, the more difficult it is for the wielder to remain sober. There are legitimate concerns about whether such a weapon can impair the judgment of the wielder."

This meant that mech pilots needed to be careful about their choice of weapons. X-ERC weapons were simpler and could easily produce better results, but they could alter the behavior of their users when it was not desirable.

U-ERC weapons were a lot more difficult to utilize. It was also harder to use them at their full potential. However, their lack of mental influence meant that the wielder was always the one that shaped his emotions, and not his weapons.

"Now that you have been introduced to my latest invention, which type of luminar crystal weapon do you prefer to wield in person?"

Ves already smiled. "I need power rather than versatility. The Defiled Light Project should center around an X-ERC luminar crystal blaster."

"Since that is the case, which particular emotion do you want to associate with your weapon? It is best to pick one that is easy for you to evoke and strengthen on the battlefield. I do not recommend you select an emotion that you are uncomfortable with and cannot easily draw upon in difficult situations. I suggest that you select the

emotion that you experience the most when you are in a stressful and dangerous situation."

Ves already knew what to pick when Harry gave out his advice.

His hand reached out and picked up the prototype E-ERC weapon.

He grinned as he appreciated its promising effects. "This one fits me the best. Whenever I am under pressure, I always feel excitement as long as I am working towards a solution. It is really easy for me to feel joy whenever I am making substantial progress. This happy gun will represent my future!"

Ves could not wait to wield a gun that literally became stronger when he felt amused!

He fully became invested with a project that could essentially weaponize his own joy!

"Hahahaha! This will be great! Killing enemies will make me happy, which will subsequently help me kill even more enemies, which will fuel my joy even further! This is the best possible positive feedback loop for myself! It's perfect, hahahaha!"

Chapter 6920 The Power of Joy

Ves grew satisfied with Harry's progress.

His innovation was not that big, but it not only increased the practicality of his tech, but also opened up a lot of new possibilities.

The possibility of making his own 'happy gun' that became more powerful when he grew more joyful had a lot of potential in his eyes.

As Ves continued to grin while he was anticipating all of the fun he could create with such a weapon, the other mech designer did not entirely look convinced.

"Sir..."

"What is it, Harry?"

"Are you certain you wish to base the Defiled Light Project on my E-ERC luminar crystals? There are other X-ERC that correspond to emotions that have proven to produce stronger effects. You should at least try out each of the prototype weapons for yourself in order to make a proper and informed choice."

In order to make sure he did his due diligence, he projected a list of X-ERC crystals and added a summary of their known strengths, weaknesses and other properties.

[X-ERC luminar crystal types

E-ERC: Excitement / Joy / Happiness - Moderate increase in firepower, low morale inspiration effect.

G-ERC: Gloom / Sadness / Depression - High increase in firepower, high increase in penetration.

C-ERC: Contempt / Disgust / Disdain - High decrease in firepower, mental damage effect, moderate morale undermining effect.

D-ERC: Disgrace / Shame / Embarrassment - Moderate decrease in firepower, moderate physical repulsion effect.

L-ERC: Love / Affection / Devotion - Moderate increase in firepower, strong morale inspiration effect.

S-ERC: Sacrifice / Selflessness / Altruism - Low increase in firepower, moderate E energy negation effect, high rate of self-exhaustion.

P-ERC: Pride / Arrogance / Vanity - Low increase in firepower, moderate persistence effect.

A-ERC: Anger / Fury / Rage - High increase in firepower, low annihilation effect.]

As Ves calmed down a bit, he briefly took the time to study the projected information, but his heart was not in it anymore.

He had already locked in his choice as far as he was concerned. Harry did not really understand him, so it was natural for the Journeyman to question the fast decision-making process.

"Harry." Ves said as he placed down the E-ERC prototype gun and started to pick up the other prototype weapons in sequence. "Every person is different. From my personal experience, many people tend to express one emotion more often than others during combat. Their training, life experiences and relationships all determine which emotion they associate the most with fighting. Saint Davia Stark is driven by her fury. Patriarch Reginald Cross and Saint General Ark Larkinson are poster boys for pride. Saint Dise Larkinson is more difficult to pin down, but I would argue that she channels a combination of contempt and devotion."

"And you claim that yours is excitement?"

"I just know it." Ves grinned wider as he dismissed the other weapons. "Humans such as you and I are always capable of channeling every emotion, but never equally. When you present me with this list of proven effects, you are assuming that soldiers can pick and choose the emotions they want to channel on the battlefield without any major issue. That is a dangerous assumption to make."

"I merely wish to prevent you from making a decision that you will regret."

"That is on me, then. People are not blank dummies who have an actual reaction to every emotion. Their unique lives cause them to associate different emotions to different associations. Forcing them to make use of a specific X-ERC gun because it offers the greater value on theory is presumptive on your part. It is not the role of a mech designer to dictate what arms they should use. We should only offer advice at most. The mech pilot or his superior will be the ones to make the decision."

Ves gestured his arm towards all of the crude X-ERC weapons.

"These guns of yours all tap into the power of emotions. Do you know what that means? Your X-ERC weapons have crossed the barrier of objective reality and have ventured into the territory of subjective imagination. I don't know what you have

learned about E energy, but to me it is the fuel that can turn our fantasies to life. It works on fuzzy data and idealism."

He picked up the 'happy gun' again and waved it back and forth.

"According to your data, E-ERC luminar crystals deliver relatively mediocre performance because it only makes energy attacks moderately stronger while also producing a small morale boosting effect. Yet how many people have test-fired your E-ERC prototype arms?"

"Two." Harry admitted. "Just you and me, and I am the only individual that has systematically fired all of the new X-ERC guns in exhaustive detail for data-gathering purposes. This is still an ongoing development. I have yet to test the performance of the prototypes in the hands of other volunteers."

Ves did not look surprised. "While I have no proof of this, I can already guess that certain people will be able to produce much stronger or weaker effects compared to when you wielded the same prototype guns. The difficulty is that how well the wielders channel their emotions also affects the data. You need to find a way to control for this variable and isolate its influence on the collected data."

"That is... a difficult problem to solve, sir. How can you objectively measure a person's anger, happiness, sadness and other emotions on an objective and scientifically verified scale?"

"I am sure you will be able to figure it out somehow. If not you, then another scientist. The more people realize that their emotions has an influence on the outcome of E energy manipulation, the more they have a need for a tool that can measure this kind of stuff. For now, just take my word for it. I am confident that even if my level of joy is exactly the same as yours, I will still be able to get more out of the E-ERC gun than you. This is how E-technology works. Let me demonstrate."

He picked up the happy gun and brought it back to the firing lane.

Ves did not open fire right away. Instead, he first sent Blinky into the hyper weapon in order to establish a much closer connection to the experimental firearm.

He then took the time to gather his thoughts and emotions.

He thought back on his moments of triumph. He had many sources to draw upon. He thought about the birth of his masterwork mechs, his dramatic high-stakes political reversals, the triumphant product reveals and the acknowledgement he received from the masses.

He also thought about the heartfelt joy he experienced whenever he noted that his clan was doing better than ever. He had taken considerable risks in splitting off from the Larkinson Family and starting up his own organization. The safer bet would have been to join another state or organization, yet he staunchly refused every offer and got rewarded for his daring.

Ves also thought about his family. Although Gloriana was a frequent source of strife and disagreement, she was also one of the few women who trusted him on an unconditional basis.

He also thought about his critical battlefield victories. There were so many close battles that ultimately ended up in his favor, either because his soldiers came through or because he managed to reverse the situation by relying on a brilliant — or desperate — gambit.

Above all else, Ves thought back on the moments he gained critical inspiration. There were times where he tied multiple different clues together or gained a critical new insight that enabled him to develop wondrous new inventions!

From the creation of companion spirits to the development of his epoch-changing Carmine mechs, Ves became invigorated by the many sources of joys derived from completing massive contributions to society.

As a mech designer, Ves had many more reasons to feel happy and satisfied than most of his colleagues.

As he thought about all of this and more, he felt a lot more attuned to the E-ERC prototype weapon than before, and that was not only because his companion spirit was doing a good job.

He no longer felt as if he was holding a luminar crystal weapon in his hand anymore.

Instead, he had the illusion that he had squeezed out all of his happiest memories from his mind and stuffed them into his happy gun.

Though Ves may have inadvertently stuffed other emotions such as pride, love, devotion into the weapon, the happy gun disregarded all of that and only responded to the most relevant emotion at hand.

This granted Ves a sense of ownership and kinship with the weapon. It felt as if his happiness had momentarily turned this luminar crystal gun into a living monument of his joy!

Harry could clearly feel this remarkable transformation. His eyes widened as he could feel the power of Ves' happiness even when he was observing from a respectable distance!

Moreover, the E-ERC gun exuded a much stronger golden glow than normal!

Harry Kaikkonen knew for certain that he had never been able to evoke such a strong reaction from the happy gun or any of the other prototype energy guns for that matter!

"Remarkable." He whispered even as he made sure the sensors recorded all of the data.

The lightshow had reached a new peak, and that was with Ves still holding back!

Ves only wanted to empower the E-ERC gun with his emotions alone. He wanted to prove to Harry and to himself the validity of his theory about how the power of emotions could accomplish the impossible.

"WITNESS THE POWER OF JOY!"

Just speaking those words caused his excitement to reach a higher peak!

Ves pulled the trigger right away!



A much brighter and more blinding golden light beam surged from the muzzle of the glowing luminar crystal pistol and struck the target with significantly greater power than any of the previous test shots!

"Amazing!" Harry gasped! "Although the data does not entirely make this clear, you have convinced me that one man's excitement may be qualitatively different from another man's excitement. You are correct that emotions are not one-dimensional phenomena that can be quantified with simple numbers. From what I am able to subjectively perceive from your demonstration, your happiness is much richer, deeper and multi-faceted than mine. You hardly even need the support of hyper materials in order to maximize your expression of this side of yours. It may even be the case that my prototype weapon has absorbed those additional qualities before translating them into additional effects!"

Ves smiled and returned to the table in order to put the happy gun back in its place.

"Your ERC luminar crystal weapons don't create power and special effects out of thin air. The law of conservation of energy still applies in hyper technology and E-technology. I think your new weapon tech does not necessarily unlock a brand-new capability. Instead, you have merely drawn out a handful of the hidden features of luminar crystal technology. This may be another set of proof that the luminar race based their tech on extremely refined applications of hyper technology. The extinct luminars were small in stature, but possessed big hearts and minds. They took advantage of the latter in order to overcome their scale disadvantage and punch above their weight."

Harry clearly agreed with this theory as well. "It may be our destiny that we are using this old alien tech for the same purpose. My U-ERC and X-ERC luminar crystal weapons will enable each of us to use smaller weapons to inflict greater damage onto warships and phase leaders!"