

## Mech Touch 6991

### Chapter 6991: Too Strong

Just as expected, the First Sword Mark III was able to collapse the spatial barrier of a greater phase lord all at once.

This was the phase lord's most formidable and troublesome layer of defense. Its strength was so great that it had stopped many ace mechs from inflicting any serious damage onto their opponents.

It took an unreasonable amount of time and energy to deplete the spatial barrier of most phase lords.

Although red humanity was constantly developing better and better countermeasures, none of these solutions could match the absurd ease in which a weapon-grade superdimensional ace sword was able to pop the Fifth Lord's spatial barrier as if it was a bubble!

Even if the Decapitator enjoyed the amplification from Saint Dise's true resonance, this was just icing on the cake in this specific circumstance.

Many people gained a better appreciation of the offensive potential of weapon-grade superdimensional matter.

They also knew that only high-ranking mech pilots could best realize the potential of this material.

Many observers now looked forward to seeing whether the First Sword Mark III could inflict a major wound onto the greater phase lord.

Yet before the ace mech could plunge her superdimensional Decapitator through the Saint Blocker raiment, the Fifth Lord threatened to kick the machine from below!

Superdimensional mech or not, any machine would get punted away like a ball when struck in such a manner!

The kick came so quickly and suddenly that Saint Dise did not have the time to accumulate her power and execute another extraordinary sword technique.

In addition, the First Sword's Electro-Reactant Flight System had already overloaded a moment before. It was technically infeasible to generate another powerful impulse that could help the ace mech evade the surprise kick.

The First Sword Mark III was completely inferior to the non-superdimensional Dark Zephyr Mark III in this aspect.

After all, the latter was an ace light skirmisher that excelled at speed and evasion.

This left the First Sword Mark III in a vulnerable position!

The phase lord moved so quickly that most people only managed to see a blur.

By the time the Fifth Lord's body stopped its rotation, he had already completed his counterattack!

This time, the observers became shocked for the umpteenth time.

"He missed!"

"No, it is more than that. Look at his foreleg!"

Of his four hooved legs, one of them had turned into a stump!

The limb had practically halved in length!

What was impressive was that the section that got cut clean in half happened to be covered by alien superdimensional alloy.

Even if the coverage of the Saint Blocker raiment was thinner at the limbs, ordinary ace mech weapons shouldn't have been able to pierce through all of this solid matter so easily.

Yet not only had the First Sword Mark III managed to cut through it once, her Decapitator managed to slice the limb off completely, which meant that she had cut the armor on the other side as well!

The aliens reacted with horror at this result. If the superdimensional ace mech was able to chop off an armored limb with so much ease, then the protection offered by the Fifth Lord's Saint Blocker raiment was likely minimal!

The blood that largely consisted of phasewater flowed freely from the disturbingly smooth cut.

It took several long seconds for the phase lord's flesh to close and plug the arteries.

It was as if the Fifth Lord of Bis'get refused to admit that he had been wounded to such a terrible degree after getting struck just once.

Yet as much as he tried to deny this reality, the human false god had proven without a shadow of a doubt that she could not only wound him, but kill him with ease!

The greater phase lord immediately became beset by both fury and panic!

"THIEF! YOU HUMAN PESTS NOT ONLY SEEK TO STEAL OUR STARS, BUT YOU HAVE DESECRATED THE BONES OF THE ELDER GODS! SURRENDER YOUR STOLEN GOODS AT ONCE!"

The ace pilot did not even deign to answer this ridiculous request.

Her confidence in her blade had grown. The superdimensional version of the Decapitator was on a completely different level compared to its previous iteration!

Combined with her willpower and extraordinary sword style, she had become much more certain about achieving her objectives in this battle!

After circling around one last time, Saint Dise had gained the full measure of her current adversary.

She briefly paid attention to the other two greater phase lords.

After witnessing how much the Fifth Lord of Bis'qet had suffered, the Protector of Karnak and the Endless Stomach did not slow down.

They continued to use their best speed to advance forward. It would only take a short amount of time before one of them came close enough to interfere with her fight.

Saint Dise could instinctively feel that she would have a much harder time defeating the other two champions.

One of them possessed superior superdimensional equipment and techniques while the other could withstand bladed weapons a lot better.

She needed to finish off her current foe quickly.

With that in mind, she no longer thought of holding back.

Now that she had a much better read on the performance of her opponent's superdimensional equipment, she was ready to deliver the coup de grace.

Her First Sword Mark III circled around yet again and relied on her Electro-Reactant Wings to propel her forward at full power!

The flight system had played an excellent role so far.

Although it was not enough to make the ace mech as mobile as an ace light skirmisher, it still elevated the mobility of the Mark III far beyond the level of the Mark II!

Right now, Saint Dise relied upon its raw power to quickly build up as much momentum for her ace mech as possible!

The Fifth Lord of Bis'qet fully experienced her naked killing intent.

The ace pilot did not hide her intentions at all. Deception was a weapon for the weak. The strong had no need to resort to such a measure to defeat her opponent.

Perhaps she was underestimating the greater phase lord a bit, but Saint Dise was almost certain that she had exhausted the strongest means of the Fifth Lord.

Against almost any other ace mech, the greater phase lord wouldn't have been reduced to the point where a few exchanges of blows would already leave him in such a pathetic state.

Yet this was precisely what happened.

The unexpected repeated setbacks thoroughly unbalanced him and made it difficult for him to adapt to the current circumstances.

Yet the Fifth Lord ultimately managed to recover his mood in a short amount of time.

He just needed to survive.

As long as he could withstand another attack run, then the other two greater phase lords would finally catch up and put the human false god under much greater pressure.

So long as the three of them combined their forces, it should be impossible for the ace mech made out of high-quality godbone to take away his life!

Although he felt tempted to fully unfold his true body and confront his current foe at his greatest state, the Fifth Lord of Bis'qet resisted this impulse.

Past cases had repeatedly shown that this was a mistake. The nunser phase lord knew he would become so slow that it would be impossible to evade or hit a fast and tiny ace mech.

With the penetration power of her greatsword, she could chop through his enormous body with impunity!

So what if she needed to swing her body a lot more times in order to damage a significant part of his true body?

She only needed to hit a vital organ in order to kill him entirely!

The Fifth Lord therefore had to prevent this at all cost.

He maintained his current size and flipped the orientation of his Saint Piercer arm so that its flat side faced his opponent.

The phase lord made the risky decision to physically push the ace mech with the end of his weapon.

Only by doing so would he be able to push away the threatening machine in spite of getting shortened by a second cut.

Saint Dise easily read her opponent's intentions. She had no intentions of changing her plan or backing away.

As the First Sword Mark III launched her latest and possibly her final attack run against the Fifth Lord of Bis'qet, the ace pilot began to channel one of her oldest but also iconic sword techniques.

Her Saint Kingdom changed until it produced a large silhouette of the founder of the Swordmaidens.

These days, her existence was a legend to the contemporary Swordmaidens, many of which joined the mech legion long after joining the Larkinson Clan.

While Dise had grown far stronger and risen far higher than Commander Lydia could ever dream of, the ace pilot still respected her old leader from the bottom of her heart.

She channeled her love, her heartfelt respect and her regret for the deceased woman's inability to witness the Swordmaidens at their current height into the Decapitator.

At the same time, Dise also sent Respa into her superdimensional greatsword.

The companion spirit not only offered a direct enhancement, but also enabled Dise to resonate with the Decapitator to a significantly greater extent.

Soon enough, the energy manifestation of a larger blade extended from the actual weapon!

As the First Sword Mark III almost reached her target, she did not do anything to avoid a collision with the reversed Saint Piercer this time!

Saint Dise only a loud cry before the tip of her augmented greatsword struck the enemy's superdimensional weapon!

"SWORD OF LYDIA!"

Her words rang throughout the battlefield, surpassing the limitations of distance and vacuum before ringing into everyone's ears.

Their deeper meaning pressed down on any intelligent mind no matter whether they were human or alien!

The power of the Decapitator was unstoppable.

Although the front end of the energy manifestation crumbled fairly quickly, the physical tip of the weapon-grade superdimensional blade pierced through without stopping!

All along the length of the reversed polearm, the straight greatsword continued to cut through the alien superdimensional alloy as if it was trying to split a lengthy sausage in half!

The ace mech continued to push forward with astounding speed. She hardly lost any of her formidable momentum while continuing her cutting efforts.

By the time the Decapitator had cut through a third of the polearm's length, the ace mech finally altered her course and flew upwards!

There was no time or opportunity for the Fifth Lord to lash out with another kick.

The superdimensional ace mech's latest absurd feat had completely broken his cognition.

By the time he mustered the thought of resisting, the First Sword Mark III's glowing blade punched straight through the helmet of his Saint Blocker raiment and predictably offered no meaningful resistance!

The Decapitator ultimately pierced directly into his skull and devastated a large portion of his brain matter.

Almost everyone froze.

Even the reinforcing phase lords stagnated in their attempts to help their fellow native god.

The First Sword Mark III launched a few more attacks against her unresisting foe.

Once she became sure that she completely ruined the greater phase lord's brain, her intuition told her that she had successfully ended the powerful foe's life.

By the time her ace mech pulled out the Decapitator, none of the phasewater-infused blood clung to her blade.

"The Fifth Lord of Bis'get has... perished. Saint Dise and her First Sword have managed to kill him... in just under a minute."

"..."



This was not the first time that a Larkinson ace pilot managed to slay a greater phase lord.

Yet this time was different.

Saint Dise had undoubtedly demonstrated her strength, but that alone shouldn't have been enough to completely abuse a greater phase lord of this caliber to the point of snuffing out his life in such a short amount of time.

Everyone knew without question that the ace pilot owed much of her stellar performance to superdimensional technology!

"T-Too strong!"

Chapter 6992: Stolen Power

"Saint Dise Larkinson claimed her first kill." Ves uttered as he observed the battle in the comfort of his own design lab.

He had declined to observe the battle at the bridge of the Tortuous Scream.

He did not possess a lot of military acumen, and there was little chance he could offer any advice that Casella Ingvar had not already considered herself.

Besides, he felt it would be better if the soldiers of the Premier Fleet got used to being led by the Saint Commander. His presence in the bridge might cause Larkinsons to doubt who they should look to for orders.

"Not exactly, Ves." The physical projection of Ketis muttered. "To most observers, it is the superdimensional ace swordsman mech that claimed her first kill. This is an important distinction."

"You and I both know that Saint Dise's skills bring out the most in her ace mech and her weapons, but I know what you mean. The role played by her weapon-grade superdimensional greatsword is disproportionately decisive in this confrontation. Sure, the Fifth Lord of Bis'qet did not know what to expect, but that final display of hers

was an overwhelming demonstration of the power of high-grade superdimensional matter."

"At least this duel, however brief it may be, will prove that even weaker ace pilots can properly leverage the power of superdimensional matter. I have received more than my fair share of criticism that told me that expending so much weapon and armor-grade superdimensional matter on the machine of a junior ace pilot is wasted."

"Now that Saint Dise has mopped up the greater phase lord that is most susceptible to her blades, she is left with two much more difficult opponents. Are you worried?"

"Not that much." Ketis continued to express her confidence in her work. "No matter what tricks they may pull off, the difference in material quality is not a gap that they can close so easily. I am already happy with the results. It is a bonus if Saint Dise manages to drive away the other two greater phase lords, but strictly speaking, it is already enough if she is able to keep them occupied. It would be especially great if she can hunt down the lesser phase lords while she is at it. The Saint Commander and the rest of her forces are about to enter into engagement range with the remaining alien forces. I am confident that she can crush the spirits of the alien cannon fodder."

Although the alien forces did not show it, they definitely received a heavy blow to their morale!

These days, most aliens accepted the reality that the human 'false gods' possessed the ability to defeat and even kill their own native gods.

The demise of so many lesser phase leaders, greater phase leaders and most egregiously ancient phase whales could not be hidden from the masses.

Perhaps the Red Cabal and other alien groups likened the human high-ranking pilots as devils who had come from another galaxy to corrupt and devour the righteous gods of the Red Ocean.

Whatever the case, both Ves and Ketis had high hopes that the First Sword Mark III would embrace this evil role and continue to add more phase lord kills to her name!

"How is your 'other mission' coming along?" Ketis casually asked.

"Karnak Base has become much more devastated than I anticipated." Her former mentor replied. "All of the damage and debris is making it easier for Lucky and my avatar to sneak around. The alien guards also have much greater concerns on their minds than a pair of sneaky buggers. The only downside is that navigation has also become a lot more difficult. Entire corridors and rooms have collapsed. We have yet to find the inner sanctum of the resident greater phase lord."

"You were looking for a pool of water, right? Shouldn't that be easy for you to detect?"

"It would if I dare to turn on our active sensor systems. That would immediately give away the presence of infiltrators. I prefer to keep the alien soldiers ignorant and stupid."

While the two mech designers continued to talk, the situation on the battlefield had taken a new turn.

The Protector of Karnak and the Endless Stomach had finally arrived, but not in time to save their fallen comrade.

The two arrivals were not only phase lords in the field. 11 lesser phase lords had deployed near the flagships of their fleets, which matched the gathered intelligence.

A team of 2 greater phase lords backed up by 11 lesser phase lords was a potent killing force in almost any other situation.

No single ace mech could withstand the coordinated pressure of so many phase lords at once!

Yet the superdimensional First Sword Mark III presented such a drastic technological leap from the previous human false gods that none of the alien native gods dared to take this new opponent lightly.

According to the resonance meters that the native aliens had adopted in order to measure the strength of these confounding human false gods, the First Sword Mark III's true resonance only measured a peak of 133 laverses at most.

The higher-ranking aliens knew that these ace mechs posed a real threat against one or two lesser phase lords, but could easily be repelled by a larger band of native gods.

Of course, it took a lot more than that to actually kill these fast and annoying metal flies.

Yet this superdimensional fly already demonstrated a crushing amount of strength at this measly level of resonance strength.

The alien leaders did not know what to do. This was a completely new situation to them. The humans had once again rewritten the rules.

After the phase lords conferred among themselves on a private communication channel, they finally formulated their emergency strategy.

The lesser phase lords wisely stuck close to their fleets and showed no intention of getting close to the First Sword Mark III.

Her mobility combined with her high-grade superdimensional armor system made her impervious against practically anything these weaker phase lords could throw at the ace mech!

In the end, the Protector of Karnak and the Endless Stomach assumed the dangerous but necessary duty of fighting the threatening machine.

Before they made their moves, the jureg greater phase lord decided to address the

"HUMAN FALSE GOD." The jureg greater phase lord addressed the human ace pilot. "THIEF YOU MAY BE, BUT YOU HAVE EARNED OUR ACKNOWLEDGEMENT FOR DEFEATING ONE OF OUR GODS. ANNOUNCE YOUR IDENTITY. WE MUST KNOW WHO HAS COME TO CHALLENGE US WITH A MACHINE BUILT ON THE BONES OF THE ELDER GODS."

Silence ensued as the First Sword Mark III did not appear to be in a hurry to respond.

In fact, Saint Dise recognized the benefit of stalling.

Each passing second brought the forces of the Premier Fleet and the Bluejay Fleet closer to Screed Tanner VI-F.

Stalling also bought her ace mech precious time to run her diagnostic systems and perform a myriad of fine adjustments.

It might not look like it, but the First Sword Mark III overstressed a few of her systems.

As a brand-new ace mech that had yet to test her systems in a battle of this intensity, the First Sword Mark III had already overloaded her Electro-Reactant Flight System several times.

Her arms and shoulders also endured a disproportionately large amount of physical pressure during the moment the ace mech split the Saint Piercer along a third of its length.

While the First Sword Mark III appeared extraordinarily valiant while pulling off these heroic feats, the reality was that Dise had been a bit too eager to push her machine to her limits and perhaps beyond!

While mechs and particularly high-end ones like the Mark III were designed for extreme performance, the problem was that the ace mech was still new and untested.

Even with the willpower baptism of an ace pilot, the latest iteration of the First Sword still presented a lot of unknowns.

Ketis and the mechers were particularly concerned about unexpected side effects of placing advanced technological components in very close proximity to large amounts of high-grade superdimensional matter. It was not impossible for the former to glitch out during a crucial moment.

Fortunately, such a disaster had yet to happen, but it was still risky for Saint Dise to play with fire in her very first engagement with her new machine.

This was why the Larkinsons and mechers were glad that she was not eager to press the attack.

Her highly engineered ace mech needed all of the time she could get to complete her self-diagnostics and detect potential catastrophes in advance and make sure to squash them while they were still in their infancy.

After a lengthy pause, the First Sword finally responded.

The ace mech lifted her Decapitator and held it in front of her with the blade pointed upwards.

Her large and dazzling electric wings unfolded from behind while her sword fey assumed a perfectly symmetrical wedge formation that extended the illusionary wings.

"I AM SAINT DISE LARKINSON, PILOT AND PARTNER OF THE FIRST SWORD MARK III. BOTH OF US HAIL FROM THE LARKINSON CLAN. NOW YOU KNOW WHO HAS TAKEN THE LIFE OF ALIEN COMRADE IN ARMS. BY THE TIME THIS BATTLE COMES TO AN END, HE SHALL NOT BE THE ONLY GREATER PHASE LORD WHO FALLS AT OUR HAND."

Her response sounded simple and went straight to the point. She even made the arrogant declaration that she would take the life of another greater phase lord!

Although this was an incredibly arrogant and foolish claim to make when her resonance strength peaked only at 133 laveres, the Protector of Karnak and the Endless Stomach had no choice but to respect her words!

Perhaps the ace pilot alone did not constitute a serious threat against them, but her ace mech completely changed the game.

The human false gods relied too much on their metal technology to enhance their combat potential.

The alien gods looked down on these weak and puny humans for basing their strength on how well they controlled their fancy equipment as opposed to becoming strong in the most direct possible manner.

Yet the alien phase leaders also hated and feared the humans for being so damn good at becoming one with their combat gear!

Despite the fact that even a normal footsoldier could kill an ace pilot when the latter was outside of a cockpit, as long as the human false god was in place, then he became nearly unkillable.

The humans hated the phase leaders for relying on their incredibly strong spatial barriers to resist so many attacks.

At the same time, the aliens hated human ace mechs for relying on their small size, their good to excellent mobility and their absurd reality-defying Saint Kingdoms for being difficult to kill as well!

Both sides relied on completely different heritages and technological paradigms to gain supremacy on and off the battlefield.

Although they could look down on each other all they wanted, that did not stop them from being effective.

Now, red humanity had taken the lead in this high-level arms race.

If high-grade superdimensional matter became more common, then the alien gods needed to be even more careful on the battlefield!

"YOU HAVE BECOME STRONG, BUT ONLY BY RELYING ON THE BONES OF ANCIENT GODS THAT HAVE LONG DISAPPEARED. BE WARNED, DISE OF THE LARKINSONS, FOR YOUR STRENGTH IS STOLEN FROM US, THE DESCENDANTS OF THE ELDER GODS. WE SHALL ONE DAY TAKE BACK WHAT IS OURS. THE GODBONES THAT YOU RELY SO MUCH UPON SHALL BE STRIPPED AWAY FROM YOUR MACHINE, LEAVING YOU WITH NOTHING BUT A METAL SHELL. OUR WRATH IS ENDLESS, AND YOUR TINY BODY CAN NEVER WITHSTAND OUR RETRIBUTION."

Those words certainly sounded ominous, but phase lords had a tendency to be blowhards.

Saint Dise completely shrugged off the threat and warning and readied herself for the second round of battle.

Her ace mech raised her Decapitator.

"BONES OR NOT, IT DOESN'T MATTER. THE LAW OF THE JUNGLE APPLIES. KILL ME AND TAKE AWAY OUR SUPERDIMENSIONAL MATTER IF YOU OBJECT TO MY BATTLE PARTNER. JUST DO NOT COMPLAIN IF WE DO THE SAME TO YOUR ENORMOUS BODY!"

Chapter 6993: Red Cabal Responses

The battle between the First Sword Mark III and the greater phase lords resumed again!

Saint Dise clearly felt confident enough to confront her enemies despite being surrounded by enemies on all sides.

With her new superdimensional ace mech, she no longer took the threat posed by the phasefighters and warships seriously anymore.

Her sword fey alone could chop them into pieces so long as they got close enough!

After the two sides had completed their little exchange, the Protector of Karnak made the first move.

The Protector of Karnak ultimately made the first move. Without warning, he disappeared from sight!

If not for Saint Dise's sharp intuition, she would have responded too late by the time her ace mech detected a strong presence had appeared just a few hundred meters away!



It turned out that the jureg greater phase lord utilized a phasewater organ that granted him the capacity to perform short-ranged teleportation with no delay.

Although the Protector of Karnak found himself unable to get closer than the edge of the First Sword's Saint Kingdom, this also brought him close enough to unleash his killer move!

Instead of activating another phasewater ability or charging forward so that he could attempt to snap the First Sword Mark III in half with his empowered claw, the Protector of Karnak instead made a surprising move.

Several banks of back-mounted missile launchers began to launch a spread of short-ranged high-yield transphasic missiles straight at the First Sword!

These missiles were not as small and compact as the ones typically launched from mechs.

The Protector of Karnak maintained a size that was several times larger than a typical mech.

This granted him enough of a scale advantage to mount larger weapon systems on his fully-enclosed raiment.

Just like a juggernaut, more or less.

Dise did not know how much phasewater the native aliens had stuffed into the warheads of the incoming missiles, but she instinctively felt that they possessed the power to crack or heavily damage her First Sword Mark III upon direct impact!

Her sharp intuition automatically prompted her to make a move before she consciously thought about her response.

8 of her sword fey already jumped forward and split up in order to intercept all 8 threatening missiles.

Meanwhile, the enemy warheads encountered a strange form of resistance as they plunged deeper into the ace mech's Saint Kingdom.

While Dise's domain field was almost entirely offensive in orientation, it was still able to weaken and slow down the missiles just enough to give the sword fey enough time for interception.

Just as the Saint Kingdom weakened the enemy missiles, they also amplified the sword fey, making them a lot faster and tougher.

Everything happened in an instant.

Unlike lower-end missiles, the premium munitions issued by the Red Cabal did not let themselves get cut into half with a whimper.

Their potent warheads exploded as soon they encountered significant resistance.

Multiple detonations occurred at the same time as soon as the sword fey were about to cut through the missiles!

By the time the interference settled, Saint Dise's eyes widened when she noticed that all of her sword fey suffered heavy damage!

Each of their tips were just gone. The back half of the spurs were still intact, but also showed significant signs of damage.

3 of the crippled sword fey had become entirely unresponsive. The remaining 5 moved so slowly and shakely that there was no point in controlling them anymore.

In just a single exchange, the Protector of Karnak had removed 8 mid-grade superdimensional sword fey off the board!

Although Saint Dise was a little more confident that her ace mech's armor-grade superdimensional alloy plating could resist these missiles, the First Sword would never be able to get away unscathed!

A single high-yield transphasic missile might not be able to punch through all of the armor layers, but what about 8?

What about 16?

What about 32?

There was no way the enemy phase lord's missile launchers could only unleash a single salvo.

Even now, she strongly suspected that the greater phase lord was waiting for his launchers to load another set of transphasic missiles into the tubes.

There was no guarantee that these missiles would possess the same yield as the ones that exploded just before.

What if their yield had doubled or tripled? The First Sword would definitely suffer a more serious blow, up to and including an armor breach!

The Protector of Karnak did not continue to linger beyond her Saint Kingdom.

The greater phase lord demonstrated considerable courage by diving straight inside.

The results of the initial missile salvo encouraged the alien leader.

It had thoroughly broken the myth that a superdimensional ace mech was invincible!

Saint Dise scowled and chose to meet the enemy's challenge.

So long as she was close enough, she believed the Protector of Karnak would not be so quick to launch his destructive missiles for fear of harming himself.

As the First Sword Mark III executed a moderately empowered sword slash at the larger and more formidably armored phase lord, the Protector of Karnak fearlessly extended one of his armored crustacean-like claws.

The blade glowed and glinted with metal energy and true resonance.

The claw glowed with in a mysterious dark blue tint that strongly exuded the power of space.

Two different superdimensional arms clashed against each other.

The moment the two collided against each other, the fabric of space rippled like a stone dropped in a lake!

Both sides bounced backwards as if they had just struck a solid wall.

The results of this exchange became clear.

Saint Dise grew disappointed when she saw that her superdimensional Decapitator failed to slice through the claw as easily as she had chopped off the limb of her previous opponent.

"TCH. JUST AS I THOUGHT."

The Decapitator managed to stay completely undamaged, but the masterwork greatsword failed to leave behind more than a shallow groove onto the armored claw.

Although this had hardly been the First Sword's strongest attack, the Protector of Karnak's ability to block a high-grade superdimensional blade was far better than that of the Fifth Lord of Bis'qet!

"DO NOT MISTAKE ME FOR THAT NUNSER FAILURE OF A GOD. I HAVE LEARNED THE GREATER MYSTERIES OF SPACE BY THE TRUE GODS OF THIS GALAXY. MY BODY CARRIES THE ORGANS HANDCRAFTED BY THOSE VERY SAME GODS! I SHALL BORROW THE POWER OF THE TRUE GODS TO THOROUGHLY EXPOSE YOUR FALSE CLAIM TO DIVINITY!"

Well, all of that self-righteous boasting was useful for more than making phase lords drunk on their own ego. They inadvertently revealed valuable intelligence and confirmed many theories.

Of course, that was assuming that they spoke the truth.

Given the Protector of Karnak's position within the Red Cabal's hierarchy, it did not seem likely that he was speaking in error.

This confirmed that the Red Cabal had responded incredibly quickly to the rise of superdimensional mechs.

The native aliens recognized the threat of humans harnessing the power of superdimensional matter and came up with a quick but effective countermeasure.

Dise believed that the Protector of Karnak may have been part of the first batch of phase lords that was assigned to test whether his new toys could withstand the power of human superdimensional weapons.

The current result should definitely please the Red Cabal!

No longer would phase lords and phase whales foolishly expose their enormous true bodies, trusting that their enormous transphasic flesh alone would be able to resist anything the human false gods could throw in their direction.

Before the First Sword Mark III could close in for another attack, the Protector of Karnak rushed forward first!

Dise's Saint Kingdom immediately tried to press onto the formidable true body of the jureg phase lord, but its sheer mass along with disturbingly effective protection offered by his alien superdimensional armor made it difficult to produce any significant results!

The Protector of Karnak lashed out with two glowing claws that threatened to snap or at least cut into the waist of the First Sword Mark III!

The ace mech's electric wings swung and enabled her to dodge to the side. At the same time, the First Sword struck with the Decapitator, seeking to block the closest claw.

Another eruption of spatial ripples spread from the point of the contact!

The superdimensional armor that covered up the claw received another small cut mark, but this one was shallower than the one before.

The First Sword needed to put more momentum and energy behind her sword attacks, but it was hard for her to disengage when the Protector of Karnak continued to dog her heels!

Dise soon found out that her ace mech was actually faster and much more responsive than her opponent.

Yet whenever her ace mech successfully created a bit of distance, the Protector of Karnak activated the phasewater organ that enabled him to blink through space!

There was no warning. There was no obvious energy buildup. Dise could only rely on her intuition to quickly orient her defenses in the direction the greater phase lord appeared.

What made her life even more difficult was in some instances, the Protector of Karnak launched a salvo of high-yield transphasic missiles immediately after completing his instant displacement!

Dise had to rely purely on her intuition and her read on her opponent to predict this threatening move in advance.

She had learned her lesson this time. Dise no longer sent out her sword fey to intercept the missiles.

Her ace mech instead accumulated a bit of sword energy in advance and hastily swung the Decapitator in a fast sweep, sending out multiple rays of sword energy that accurately intercepted the missiles and forced them to explode in advance!

Since her sword energy attacks remained in her Saint Kingdom, they fully benefited from her willpower. There was no instance where her response failed to stop the warheads.

As the First Sword Mark III continued to collide her Decapitator against the empowered claws of the Protector of Karnak, Saint Dise began to smirk.

"TO BE ABLE TO TELEPORT SO CLOSE TO MY BATTLE PARTNER WHILE HER HIGH-END SPACE SUPPRESSOR IS ACTIVE MUST BE EXHAUSTING TO YOU. TELL ME, HOW MANY MORE TIMES CAN YOU REPEAT THAT BLINK ATTACK? ALSO, HOW MANY MORE TRANSPHASIC MISSILES DO YOU CARRY?"

The jureg greater phase lord did not lose his rhythm even as the remaining 25 sword fey harassed him from the rear and sides.

The sword fey formed simple formations that grouped 3 of them together before striking the Protector of Karnak's superdimensional armor from different angles.

Most of the strikes managed to penetrate a single layer at a time, but there were occasions where they failed to leave a mark.

This happened whenever the Protector of Karnak activated a phasewater organ that empowered that particular armor section. The blue glow significantly strengthened the spatial attributes of the superdimensional material, enabling it to resist attacks from other superdimensional weapons a lot better!

All of this delayed the time the First Sword would be able to breach the greater phase lord's armor.

As long as the ace mech was able to create one big gap, Dise was confident she could finish off her opponent!

Yet just before she was about to lock her greatsword against those armored claws, Dise suddenly pulled her ace mech away!

The electric wings propelled the First Sword to the side and rear just in time to evade the giant pillar that plunged into her Saint Kingdom and almost threatened to collide against the machine!

The Endless Stomach had made his move!

The greater phase lord had attempted to play subtle and lingered in the distance.

Though he had waited long enough for Dise to become a little too fixated on the Protector of Karnak, she was not stupid enough to ignore this massive threat entirely.

Her companion spirit had been keeping a constant eye on the Endless Stomach. The moment he did anything notable, Respa had already warned Dise in advance!

Chapter 6994: The Endless Stomach

When the Endless Stomach struck, Saint Dise was already poised to react.

She successfully evaded the zzamayel greater phase lord's initial strike, but this was just the beginning.

The phase whales may regard themselves as high and mighty gods, but they were also shameless enough to gang up on a single opponent!

The two had already determined their cooperative strategy.

The Protector of Karnak became even more dogged in his pursuit of the superdimensional ace mech.

Each time the First Sword Mark III attempted to back away, the greater phase lord came right behind.

Even if the ace mech channeled additional energy into her Electro-Reactant Flight System to speed up her flight, the Protector of Karnak would just blink over, thereby negating the effort.



What was really annoying was that the greater phase lord kept Dise guessing when he would launch his next salvo of transphasic missiles.

Although the Protector of Karnak clearly tried to ration them, his reserves of potent missiles was greater than Dise initially expected.

Her expression sank when she guessed that the Protector of Karnak had many different ways of storing a large amount of goods in his own true body.

If he wanted to retrieve another set of missiles, he just had to dig them out of his partially unfolded body somehow.

Dise had no idea how multi-dimensional physics worked, so she could not explain how it was possible for the jureg greater phase lord to pull stuff out of his own true body.

Yet the reality of the situation meant that the ace pilot had to remain on high alert and never let go of her vigilance.

As long as her focus slacked off at the wrong time, she would definitely pay for her mistake!

Still, as difficult as it may be to put more distance between herself and the Protector of Karnak, she considered him to be a lesser threat compared to the latest greater phase lord to join the fray!

From the way the Protector of Karnak maneuvered, he clearly wanted to drive the First Sword Mark III closer to the Endless Stomach.

Dise had a pretty good idea why. She had never fought against a zzamayel greater phase lord, but she roughly understood what they were generally capable of. She knew that she needed to employ an entirely different approach to deal with these slime-like monstrosities.

When the Endless Stomach maneuvered his way so that he was able to sandwich the First Sword Mark III with the help of the Protector of Karnak, the former made another attempt to pounce on his opponent!

The First Sword immediately turned around and struck at the other greater phase lord, only to see the resonance-empowered blade passing straight through the slimy, amorphous body like it was cutting through jelly!

Saint Dise scowled, but she had already expected this result.

Even as the Endless Stomach opened up a large maw that was ringed with specially made superdimensional teeth, the First Sword Mark III's electric wings boosted her away in time, thereby preventing her from getting engulfed.

"YOU SHALL NOT DEVOUR ME, YOU FILTHY MONSTER."

Of all of the phase lords that ace pilots and particularly those that specialized in melee combat had fought against, the zzamayel variation was among the worst.

The zzamayels were disgusting slime-like creatures that possessed no solid body mass aside from a core.

Nobody had any idea how such a race could evolve to grow sentient and intelligent enough to become good at biotechnology and become one of the major races of the Red Ocean.

What was even more outrageous was that the zzamayels also possessed the capability to become phase lords despite their strange physiology.

Yet it was also due to their amorphous true bodies that their phase lords tended to be weirder than most.

The most obvious one was that most melee and particularly cutting attacks were pretty much useless!

Even as the First Sword Mark III continued to dance between the two greater phase lords and retaliate whenever possible, her superdimensional Decapitator passed through the Endless Stomach's unarmored form without inflicting any noticeable damage!

The ace pilot felt as if her battle partner was just cutting through water!

Seeing that the superdimensional properties of her powerful sword turned out to be completely ineffective in this situation, Saint Dise narrowed her eyes and began to execute a different and more powerful sword technique.

"BLADESTORM."

As the ace mech swung her glowing Decapitator, the greatsword unleashed an expanding storm that consisted of thousands of small sword energy attacks!

The storm struck the Endless Stomach and began to cut through many portions of his body.

However, the small and weak sword energy blades lacked power and dissipated fairly quickly.

While the Endless Stomach suffered damage across his entire side, his slimy body simply closed the gaps and returned to his peak condition!

Saint Dise knew that she had no chance of defeating and killing this greater phase lord by herself today.

The best way to kill him was to destroy his core.

Yet to reach it, her First Sword Mark III would have to wade through all of his slimy body.

This was clearly not feasible, so she could only reduce his slime body first.

There were many ways to accomplish this. Explosive weapons and energy weapons worked best at blasting away or vaporizing a lot of slime matter.

Melee weapons on the other hand fared less well unless they possessed energy weapon properties as well.

This was not the case for the Decapitator or the surviving sword fey. All of them were solid superdimensional blades that happened to encounter one of the few situations where their special properties turned out to be ineffective!

In the end, Saint Dise found that she was slightly able to inflict more losses onto the Endless Stomach by using the flat side of her ace mech's mace to literally scoop away chunks of transphasic slime!

Even then, the efficiency of this attack was so low that the First Sword would have to scoop all of this slimy matter for several hours in order to exhaust the Endless Stomach!

When the Endless Stomach next attempted to swallow the First Sword, the ace mech was just in the process of repelling the Protector of Karnak's latest strike.

This was bad!

The zzamayel phase lord had picked a good time to strike. Not only was the First Sword not able to turn around and respond immediately, but the slimy monstrosity also contorted its body so that it was able to launch an extremity forward with much greater speed than expected!

Saint Dise reacted in a split second. Her ace mech overloaded the safeties of the Electro-Reactant Flight System and forced it to give her a powerful boost, even if it came at the cost of strong wear-and-tear!

While certain parts of the abused flight system were already starting to drop into yellow condition, the ace pilot already sent out her nearest sword fey in an attempt to intercept the transphasic slime arm.

Fortunately, the ace pilot had kept them close to her machine in order to respond to emergencies like these.

The sword fey plunged tip-first into the slimy arm.

While they only parted through the transphasic matter without inflicting any permanent damage, they still managed to play a useful role!

The slimy tendril lost cohesion, especially since it was relatively thin due to being extended from the main body.

Although the limb already showed signs of recovery, it took time for it to regain cohesion. The successive sword fey strikes further weakened the limb and ultimately caused it to slow down just enough for the First Sword Mark III to slip away from its reach.

Yet when Saint Dise attempted to recall her weapons, she found to her dismay that the sword fey couldn't escape their prison once they had entered its viscous embrace!

Like glue, the Endless Stomach's transphasic flesh instantly transported the captured blades to the center of his body.

There, the superdimensional teeth immediately began to grind on the sword fey, attempting to break them down until Dise lost all control over her weapons.

The female ace pilot gritted her teeth. Through her true resonance empowerment, she could feel how the blades already started to succumb from the repeated grinding and biting attacks.

If the Endless Stomach did not recently acquire his superdimensional teeth, then it would have taken much longer for him to damage the sword fey.

However, now that he had received this massive upgrade, it only took a few bites for the sword fey to crack, deform and malfunction!

Dise regrettably gave up on the weapons. She did not even think of going back to retrieve the sword fey.

The mid-grade superdimensional alloy used to make them was fairly precious, but the Larkinson Clan had plenty more of it. There was no need to treat them as carefully as her Decapitator as they had already been designed with sacrifice in mind.

In any case, the subordinate spirits returned smoothly to the First Sword Mark III. So long as they remained alive, the replacement sword fey would quickly regain the same life and personality.

At this time, the battle between the First Sword Mark III and the two greater phase lords had entered into a stalemate.

Both sides had figured out most of the core capabilities of their adversaries.

Saint Dise no longer fought as aggressively as before. Since her ace mech was constantly outnumbered, she had little choice but to err on the side of caution.

The Protector of Karnak and the Endless Stomach both cooperated smoothly with each other.

They understood each other's strengths and possessed enough age and experience to understand how to best leverage their advantages.

Even if Saint Dise was also able to respond better due to her growing familiarity with her opponents, their teamwork continued to improve, thereby making it difficult for either side to gain the upper hand.

Another factor that played in the back of their minds was their consumption.

Each of them expended large amounts of energy, willpower, phasewater and other resources.

They also wore out their weapons, armor and other tech when applicable.

The First Sword Mark III had not been fighting for too long, but Saint Dise knew that she was pushing her ace mech too hard in order to compensate for her own shortcomings.

The reliability and health of the Electro-Reactant Flight System had dropped considerably.

Dise did not dare to make too many high-risk maneuvers for fear of causing it to reach its breaking point too soon.

The energy reserves of her ace mech was also draining at a rapid rate.

In addition, her ace mech was only down to 19 sword fey, and she expected to lose more of them if she continued to fight against these two powerful opponents.

The only consolation was that her opponents were also bleeding from this engagement.

The Protector of Karnak had repeatedly used his blink phasewater organ in short intervals of time. That sort of abuse should definitely take a toll on the greater phase lord. He was also expending a lot of concentration and possibly phasewater to amplify the spatial properties of his superdimensional claws and armor.

While the effects were undeniably strong, Saint Dise possessed enough common sense to understand that this had to cost a lot to sustain!

While phase lords tended to show greater advantages in terms of endurance due to their massive physical forms, Dise refused to believe that the Protector of Karnak could teleport under adverse conditions so often.

She was waiting for the moment the greater phase lord had completely lost his interception ability.

Already the jureg phase lord had been waiting longer and longer before he caught up through teleportation.

Understanding his limit was of paramount importance!

As for the Endless Stomach, the zzamayel phase lord did more than trying to devour the First Sword Mark III.

The Endless Stomach released a cloud of transphasic toxins!

The terrible monster attempted to weaken the First Sword Mark III by engulfing the entire machine in his own phasewater-infused poison!

Chapter 6995: Ultimate Deterrence

The First Sword Mark III struggled against the two greater phase lords.

The Fifth Lord of Bis'qet had no idea who he had been messing with and suffered for his habit of looking down on the human false gods.

While his loss represented a heavy blow to the nunsers in the star system, there were many other alien species that still possessed the determination to resist the evil human devil that had slain one of their deities.

To them, this battle was no different from a struggle between good and evil. Only by uniting their strength and listening to the guidance of their surviving gods would they be able to vanquish the fearsome extragalactic invaders!

Not that it mattered to Saint Dise.

Despite fighting well within range of countless enemy guns, her ace mech continued to fly and parade in front of the native aliens with impunity.

So long as her Saint Kingdom and her armor-grade superdimensional armor system remained fully functional and intact, she had little fear that the overwhelming amount of enemy guns could pose a realistic threat against her battle partner.

For one, any warship that dared to open fire against the First Sword Mark III was liable to hit one of the nearby greater phase lords as well.

There was no way that the rank-and-file aliens possessed the guts to harm their native gods, even if they only did so on an accidental basis.



Much of their firepower would probably go to waste as well. The First Sword Mark III constantly remained on the move.

Although she was pushing her Electro-Reactant Flight System way past her tolerances, Dise still remained confident that it would keep her machine moving for the time being.

With the help of her intuition, she had already managed to evade most of the massed attack salvos from the nearest enemy warships and orbital defense platforms.

As a melee mech specialist who had spent many years piloting a mech that was many times more fragile, Saint Dise had honed her intuition to detect any imminent attacks.

Even if she was not as good as Saint Tusa in this aspect, Dise prided herself on being the second-best in terms of evasion.

She seriously doubted whether the other ace pilots of the Larkinson Clan could get close to matching the pair.

Saint Davia Stark, Saint Isobel Kotin and Saint Commander Casella Ingvar usually fought outside of harm's way most of the time.

Saint General Ark Larkinson may be proficient in melee combat, but he either went on an all-out offensive or bided his time.

If he ever chose to challenge formidable opponents, he preferred to enter into quick and brutal brawls where he was more than willing to let his Lionheart take beatings if that helped to eliminate his foes as quickly as possible.

Naturally, that sort of fighting style was not too conducive to training and honing his evasion skills.

The First Sword Mark III currently proved that she was able to dance and glide across the battlefield without relying on overloading her flight system all of the time.

Saint Dise constantly improved and optimized her handling of her ace mech. The pressure of the battlefield served as an excellent engine to squeeze out more performance from her machine.

Even as she continued to fend off the Protector of Karnak and the Endless Stomach, it became clear to her that she could not gain an advantage over her opponents.

If she was facing just one of them at a time, then she was confident that she could outplay her opponent somehow.

Yet because the two had teamed up against her, she had no opportunity to launch a serious counterattack!

The two greater phase lords knew what they were doing. They not only sought to constrain her movement, but also positioned themselves so that they could punish her any time she chose to commit an attack.

It did not help that Saint Dise clearly preferred to go on the offensive against the Protector of Karnak. The jureg phase lord was just a lot easier to deal with as his body and superdimensional armor at least presented her with a solid target.

The same could not be said for the Endless Stomach, whose giant slime-like body was not only difficult to damage with a blade, but also started to engage in disgusting means of attack.

Not only had he begun to launch slime balls that threatened to stick to the First Sword Mark III and gum up her joints, he also began to spread a toxic cloud of gas around his body.

Although the Saint Kingdom was able to repel and weaken the effect of this toxic cloud, she could still feel it trying to corrode the exterior of her mech.

Her superdimensional armor was able to resist it with ease, but not every surface component was made of solid metal!

The more delicate and exposed parts of her sensor systems and more importantly her flight system began to suffer more serious damage after prolonged exposure.

Dise had become especially sensitive towards the latter as she could not afford to let the Electro-Reactant Flight System incur further abuse!

As her First Sword Mark III whipped out a quick spray of sword energy attacks in order to intercept the latest salvo of transphasic missiles, Dise quickly checked the state of the battlefield.

The forces of the Premier Fleet and the Bluejay Fleet had just begun to open fire at the enemy.

While their initial attacks did not inflict much damage due to hitting fully powered azure energy shields, Dise knew that this was just the beginning.

Once the mechs came close enough, the Saint Commander would fully make use of her Command Field to empower the attacks of all of the mechs under her sway with a touch of true resonance.

The attacks of all of those first-class multipurpose mechs would definitely inflict much greater damage at that point!

During the strategy sessions, Dise already knew that the Saint Commander grew concerned whether this highly effective display of firepower would incur the wrath of multiple lesser phase lords and maybe even greater phase lords.

Dise could already see the lesser phase lords poised to launch an offensive against the two human fleets.

After all, they were too weak and vulnerable to assist the greater phase lords in suppressing the First Sword Mark III. It made much more sense for them to leverage their superior strength against the mortal humans.

This was especially the case when the two fleets was only protected by a single ace pilot at most, and she happened to be an ace commander who lacked the characteristic Saint Kingdom!

"NOT ON MY WATCH."

After clashing against the Protector of Karnak for the umpteenth time, Saint Dise no longer tried to go for the big prize anymore.

Her ace mech abruptly turned around and flew straight towards the nearest raiding fleet!

Although the two greater phase lords reacted with surprise at this abrupt switch in strategy, they quickly pursued their adversary.

It did not take much thinking to figure out her intentions.

"COWARD! YOUR OPPONENTS ARE US! YOU SHALL EARN OUR ETERNAL RETRIBUTION IF YOU SEEK TO SLAUGHTER OUR YOUNGER GODS! YOUR HONOR IS WORTH NOTHING IF YOU ATTACK THE WEAK."

Saint Dise sneered when she interpreted the angry alien phase lord's speech.

"DO NOT LECTURE ME ON HONOR. THIS IS WAR, NOT A DUEL. BESIDES, I DO NOT SEE YOU AND YOUR ZZAMAYEL BUDDY HAVE BEEN GANGING UP AGAINST ME. FORGIVE ME FOR NOT ENTERTAINING THE TWO YOU AT ONCE."

The Endless Stomach was not fast enough to keep up with the First Sword Mark III.

The same applied to the Protector of Karnak, but he repeatedly blinked forward in space, enabling him to catch up to the superdimensional ace mech while also launching a surprise attack at the same time.

Saint Dise and her battle partner still could not measure any emissions that could tell them when the jureg phase lord was about to perform his blink ability.

Yet that did not stop the ace pilot from anticipating this move in advance.

In fact, witnessing the Protector of Karnak pull off the same old technique on a repeated basis had improved the ace pilot's ability to predict this very move!

She could not entirely explain it other than the fact that she had grown more familiar with the Protector of Karnak's attitude, ideas and methods.

In the next few blink interception attempts, the greater phase lord found himself too far away from her target to launch an attack with his armored claws.

This was because the First Sword Mark III had already begun to evade to the side before the sudden teleportation event happened.

The jureg greater phase lord felt chilled when he realized how much easier his opponent had read his move and intentions.

These repeated failures eventually prevented the Protector of Karnak from fulfilling his most immediate priority, which was to shield the lesser phase lord from the lethality of a superdimensional ace mech!

The lesser phase lords had clearly gotten the message and had already begun to split up and distance themselves from their previous positions.

Still, as fast as they managed to flee, their warp travel capabilities were considerably weaker due to their lower phasewater concentration.

The First Sword Mark III easily caught up with the first fleeing phase lord, who also happened to hail from the nunser race, and sent out her sword fey first.

Only 15 sword fey remained intact and fully functional at this time, but this was enough. The resonance-empowered superdimensional blades pierced through the lesser phase lord's spatial barrier with much greater ease and plunged straight through his raiment and into his flesh!

Lesser phase lords did not possess the power and influence to obtain proper superdimensional armor.

Their raiments — if they even had any — were merely made out of a combination of transphasic materials and hyper materials. It was clear that they were stuck with more affordable tech and materials that would have been perfectly fine in an earlier time.

However, this was a time where superdimensional technology was on the ascendancy. Against a weaker opponent that only enjoyed the protection of 'lastgen' equipment, the mid-grade superdimensional sword fey easily cut through the armor, flesh and bones like tofu.

By the time the First Sword Mark III approached the neck of the pained and crippled phase lord, her glowing Decapitator severed the large head from the rest of the quadruped body without encountering any significant resistance!

A lesser phase lord died by Dise's hand.

For a moment, she felt rather befuddled by how easy it was. She would have struggled a lot more not too long ago.

Her recent fighting against the two hardy greater phase lords had put her expectations out of whack and caused her to forget how much of a game changer her ace mech had become.

A sense of greed and desire overtook her mind. A grin appeared on her face.

Since it was that easy to eliminate lesser phase lords, then she became determined to mop the rest of them up! The greater phase lords could wait until later!

The First Sword Mark III collected her sword fey and changed course in order to pursue another fleeing target.

Even though the ace mech had yet to claim her second lesser phase lord head, her deterrance alone had been enough to break the spirits of most of the enemy champions!

No matter how much the two greater phase lords cajoled and admonished their lesser brethren, the lesser phase lords simply refused to stay too close to the demon of an ace mech.

If one of their own could be felled with so much ease, then they could potentially become vulnerable as well!

The lesser phase lords would rather abandon their fleets and let this battle end in a devastating loss than risk their own lives!

In any case, their lifespans had expanded so much that they had so many more experiences on his agenda.

They did not want to cut their lives short before they could properly enjoy centuries if not millennia of being treated and worshiped like gods!

Chapter 6996: Casella Takes Charge

The lesser phase lords failed to heed the call of the Protector of Karnak.

Not only did they refuse to stand their ground and form a united front against the superdimensional ace mech, they all but abandoned their fleets and fled in different directions!

This was an incredibly clear display of cowardice and miscoordination that disappointed a lot of their mortal soldiers!

Their morale plunged and their faith in their accompanying gods deteriorated at a rapid speed.

While most of the alien soldiers proved themselves to be professional enough to perform their duties despite this setback, they had become significantly less enthusiastic and coordinated than before. The alien spacers and officers had definitely become a lot more distracted than before.

Saint Dise fulfilled one of her objectives.

She grinned wider even as the annoying lesser phase lords continued to split further apart from each other!

Regardless of whether she could only claim the heads of two or three lesser phase lords at the end, the fact that she was able to kill any of these younger native gods in an instant turned her battle partner into an ace mech that had to be avoided at all cost!

With so many lesser phase lords cutting and running, the two approaching human fleets recognized their opportunity to make a mark and accelerated forward at an even faster pace than before!

Given how much weaker the remaining organized alien forces had become, the Saint Commander decided to take advantage of the current situation.

Instead of staying in the bridge of the Tortuous Scream, the ace command mech made her way out and quickly launched into space!

This exposed the Minerva Mark II to the enemy forces, but the Saint Commander considered this to be inconsequential.

The appearance of the ace command mech above the flagship of the Premier Fleet immediately boosted every friendly human's morale!

Unlike the phase lords of the enemy, their own champions had demonstrated bravery!

Saint Dise continued her fight while being outnumbered on all sides.

The Minerva Mark II on the other hand became a symbol of the indomitable spirit of the Larkinson Clan.

She also painted a giant target on her front!

Ace command mechs always remained high-priority targets on the battlefield, yet the Saint Commander believed she needed to set an example for both the humans and the aliens.

It worked. The disparity between morale on both sides widened even further.



The human soldiers received overwhelming proof that their champions were much braver and more fearless.

On the other hand, the native alien soldiers felt even more demoralized due to the contrast between their champions and that of the enemy.

Even though they belonged to very different species, many native alien races developed similar ideas and perspectives on bravery and honor.

Right now, their own gods demonstrated behavior that would have gotten mortals executed if they tried to flee without authorization on the battlefield.

Meanwhile, the human forces had brought just two of their 'false gods', but already set positive examples that transcended borders and race.

The consequences were subtle, but not negligible.

What was important was that there were many different consequences. Enemy soldiers reacted slower. Their leaders became less inspired. They all began to make more mistakes.

All of these problems might not sound too serious, but when they began to add up, their efficiency and combat readiness had dropped by a significant margin!

As for the Larkinsons and their allies, they performed better than usual. Not only were they overflowing with confidence, they were also eager to capitalize on the openings created by Saint Dise.

As the fleet slowly entered into more proper engagement range, the Saint Commander finally decided to properly deploy her Command Field.

Everything changed as far as the human soldiers were concerned.

Each of them felt the presence of Casella as if she was whispering in their ears, but deeper.

Her presence was not overpowering or overbearing.

Instead, she occupied an empty slot in the awareness of those she could reach with her Command Field.

She had made sure to keep her Command Field gentle. If there were mech pilots and other soldiers who felt uncomfortable with another person watching over their shoulders all of the time, then they could easily opt to reject her domain field.

Very few did so. Only civilians and the people who felt the need to hide the truth so badly ultimately chose to have nothing to do with Casella.

Very few Larkinsons of the Premier Fleet made this choice. There were not too many civilians among them, and their trust in their own ace commander was nearly absolute.

The people serving in the Bluejay Fleet were very different. It was natural for high-ranked officers such as Rear Admiral Gori Tensen or civilian mech designers like Jovy Armalon to politely decline to invite Casella into their heads.

However, the Saint Commander's reputation was so high among the mechers, fleeters and collies that plenty of them opened themselves up to her, though not without holding many parts about themselves back.

Casella did not attempt to pry. These people placed their trust in her, expecting her to utilize their strength without violating any of their strict rules.

In fact, each of the Red Three probably had a rule that should have prevented themselves from opening themselves up to an ace commander that did not belong on their side, but nobody had any desire to enforce this regulation.

As Casella's Command Field began to elevate the strength of every machine but particularly the mechs, many of the soldiers of the Bluejay Fleet got reminded why they chose to participate in this offensive operation against the native aliens.

They were doing what was necessary. This was more than a mission to them. It was a calling.

Defending red humanity against the alien menace was one of the noblest actions they could take.

As the Saint Commander's presence grew more intimate, many of these soldiers suddenly learned that Casella Ingvar shared the same ideal.

"Larkinsons or otherwise, it matters not. Today, we are red humans and comrades in arms. We fight for many different purposes, but one stands above all, and that is to fight for the continuation of our civilization in this dwarf galaxy. We fight so that our children and grandchildren will still have a friendly human territory to go home to and feel at peace. This is a future that each of you wish to come into fruition, so take heart and pay no attention to our differences. So long as you fall under my command, I promise that I shall leverage your strength to the best of my ability."

While the ace commander did not add much substance to her words, she was able to convey her sincerity and belief in their common cause to everyone.

The Larkinsons but especially the soldiers of the Red Three loved her even more for it. No matter how wary they may feel about opening themselves up to her Command Field, much of their hesitation melted away as they truly felt that they should not nitpick over their many differences.

"Arise, my Knights, and take up my banner. Your faith in me shall be rewarded. I freely grant my strength to you. Use it to exact devastation on our foes."

The mechs of the Bluejay Fleet opened fire first. Their resonance-empowered energy weapons packed a punch and many of them were also unerringly accurate at longer ranges.

The long-ranged energy beams did not rake across the orbital space station or the distant enemy battleships.

Their firepower at this range was not good enough to seriously deplete any of the energy shields.

No. Saint Commander Casella Larkinson instead imbued her Knights with more than a fraction of her true resonance.

She pushed on their mech pilots to accept her skill and judgment, but the combination between the two enabled the mechs armed with long-ranged armaments to accurately strike and take down enemy phasefighters!

"So many."

Phasefighters had become a lot more ubiquitous compared to the previous ages. The gathered intelligence estimated that there were at least 13,000 of them in the star system.

The estimates turned out to be accurate.

So many phasefighters had begun to advance. Their alien pilots were not content with waiting until the human mechs got closer.

The alien pilots did not expect their advance to go unanswered. The humans often tried to whittle down their numbers, but there was only so much their weapons could do from a distance.

Normally, energy beams had a hard time trying to hit any of the strike craft, particularly when they adopted loose formations and allowed the pilot to fly forward in an unpredictable manner.

Yet this time, the Commandeered mechs struck with the power of quasi-expert mechs and the accuracy of an actual expert mech!

This potent combination resulted in a hit rate of over 30 percent, which was quite respectable under the circumstances!

Phasefighter after phasefighter collapsed after getting struck several times in a row by unerringly accurate energy beams.

This shouldn't be happening either!

Each of the craft had been designed to fight against first-class humans, so their designs reflected this ambition. The azure energy shields that these modern phasefighters relied upon were tuned to withstand dozens if not over a hundred attacks launched by first-class multipurpose mechs!

Yet what actually happened was the long-ranged attacks launched by a couple of hundred mechs only needed to land three to six hits to strip the energy shields from the phasefighters.

As soon as they lost their protection, it only took a single accurate strike to cripple or destroy them outright!

The native aliens, already unbalanced by the cowardice demonstrated by their native gods, scrambled to adapt.

They put more effort into performing individual evasive maneuvers.

While this caused the alien pilots who were bad at it to become particularly attractive firepower magnets, it at least enabled the more skilled phasefighter pilots to survive longer.

Yet when the distance between the two sides started to close, the phasefighters became even more miserable.

The Commandeered mechs began to unleash even more weapons in their direction.

On the side of the Premier Fleet, the Dracoloids and the Omega Threshers began to showcase their strength in different ways.

The Dracoloids advanced forward with open aggression. The Commandeered dragon mechs might excel in short-ranged combat, but they were far from helpless while they were still attempting to close the distance to their enemies.

As soon as the leading elements of the enemy phasefighters entered into medium range, the Dracoloids struck with a modest ranged weapon complement of 4 integrated gauss cannons and 2 integrated plasma guns.

Although the Dracoloid did not have that many weapon systems, each one definitely inflicted serious damage upon impact.

Of course, since they all fired slower-than-light projectiles, their accuracy was normally difficult to maintain even at medium ranges.

Yet when Casella put her superhuman marksmanship skills at the disposal of the Dracoloids and their Larkinson mech pilots, the dragon mechs found ways to raise their hit rates.

The resonance-empowered gauss rounds and plasma bolts took an even greater toll on the energy shields than the native aliens calculated.

Then there were the Omega Threshers.

The other combat-oriented first-class multipurpose mech chosen by the Larkinson Clan was this model.

It had many different ranged weapon systems. The Omega Thresher boasted 6 integrated Omega Laser Cannons, and Casella instructed the machines to make sole use of this weapon system.

The performance of the Omega Threshers at long range was already impressive due to their potent combination of signature weapon systems.

The Omega Lasers hit harder than conventional laser weapon systems. They also expended energy like nothing else, which meant that the Omega Thresher often found itself forced to leave its other weapon systems dormant just so the pilot could focus fully on hitting the formidable aliens with his most accurate weapon systems.

Under the control of the Saint Commander, the Omega Threshers easily managed to down one phasefighter after another after landing only 4 attacks from the Omega Laser Cannons!

The phasefighters continued to lose numbers like crazy. Only a short time had passed, and already they had lost over a thousand strike craft.

#### Chapter 6997: Opening the Pressure Relief Valve

During the initial confrontation between mechs and phasefighters, the former definitely held an advantage.

The Commandeered mechs vastly overperformed compared to ordinary first-class multipurpose mechs.

The true resonance amplification gave them enough reality-distorting power to remove the hardy and troublesome azure energy barriers with disturbing ease.

The skills and guidance provided by the multitasking ace commander massively increased the hit rates of all of the ranged armaments.

The affected mech pilots could choose to accept or reject these offers, but the vast majority chose to bond themselves to the Saint Commander. They trusted in her.

Again and again, the Omega Threshers continued to demonstrate their prowess in mid-range combat.

The Omega Laser Cannons did the most work, but the Omega Thresher model also featured other ranged armaments.

As the distances continued to grow smaller between the two sides, the Omega Threshers also opened fire with their Phase Disintegrator Guns.

Unusual energy projectiles struck one phasefighter after another.

While the energy bolts did little else but disturb the performance of any phasefighter that received a direct hit, the damage was considerably greater when hitting a transphasic energy shield!

The Phase Disintegrator Guns had been designed specifically to wear out enemy energy shields faster than usual.

The new and exotic weapon system definitely fulfilled this goal. In fact, they proved even more effective when the Omega Threshers got Commandeered by the Saint Commander.

When empowered by resonance, the performance of the Phase Disintegrator Guns was absurdly high.

If not for the fact that their muzzle velocities were a bit on the low side, they should have been more common.

Even so, the Saint Commander was more than skilled enough to work around this limitation.

"The native aliens have lost over 2000 phasefighters at this time! Their leaders are changing courses and strategies, but none of these measures are preventing our Commandeered mechs from continuing to bombard them with accurate attacks."

"The enemy vanguard elements are deploying smoke screens in an attempt to deny us from targeting their strike craft. Their attempts are largely ineffective as the Saint Commander is able to find enough targets for her Commandeered mechs to lay waste. Besides, the Dracoloids and other melee mechs have already begun to get close enough to engage the enemy strike craft in close range."

"The enemy warships are beginning to open fire on our warships! They are also launching missiles!"

"Intercept the guided munitions!"

The warships on both sides had begun to bombard each other with long-ranged gun battery fire.

The Premier Fleet and the Bluejay Fleet immediately fell at a disadvantage in this regard.



The native aliens had over 130 warships at their disposal, of which 16 consisted of capital ships.

In the meantime, the only true battleship that the attackers could rely upon was the Tortuous Scream!

The disparity in quantity and caliber of firepower immediately became apparent.

The human warships performed better under the guidance of the Saint Commander, but she was no starship operator. It was also a lot more difficult for her to significantly transform the combat power of an entire vessel, so her positive influence on the Tortuous Scream and the warships of the Bluejay Fleet remained limited.

However, if there was one area in which the human vessels excelled at, it was tech and defense.

The alien warships were all fairly modern, but also came from mixed sources. The vessels built by the major alien races were lopsided in their improvements and technological advancements.

The warships of the Red Cabal were not only made out of better materials, but they were also equipped with more advanced high technologies.

Their biggest advantage was that they all benefited from shield link technology!

With the help of their shield link transceivers, they could shuffle shield energy directly between each other.

The human mechs also happened to possess their own shield link transceivers.

This helped to reassure the mech pilots and warship crews as they confronted a vastly numerically superior foe.

Despite being outnumbered several times to one, the mechs and warships continued to rely on the power of their ace commander and the protection of shield link technology to remain strong!

"We have yet to suffer significant casualties, but the native aliens are continuing to lose phasefighters at a prodigious rate. It will not take long for the Dracoloids to get close enough. The only downside is that there are too many alien phasefighters on guard to intercept any melee mechs that seek to get close to the most dangerous planets."

While the situation of the attacking forces remained optimistic for the time being, the native aliens could still regain the advantage as long as they persisted in the battle.

The native aliens were not unfamiliar with the strengths and weaknesses of shield link technology. The forces of the Red Association and the Red Fleet utilized support link technology often enough for the aliens to devise their own countermeasures.

The answer was quite simple. So long as they inflicted enough damage, they could drain the entire pool of energy used to sustain all of the energy shields at once!

Once the protected mechs and warships received this treatment, every connected asset lost their energy shield protection at the same time!

The native aliens cleverly targeted the largest, slowest and most vulnerable human targets.

That just so happened to be the Tortuous Scream, the Vulcan's Glory and other large starships in the two fleets.

Each of them received a torrent of abuse from the large number of enemy assets in the field.

Even without the protection of their phase lords, the alien fleets still possessed the ability to overwhelm many human foes, particularly when they were on the defensive this time!

The other advantage the native aliens possessed was their much greater willingness to resort to transphasic missiles.

Since the native aliens had access to far greater reserves of phasewater, it was not difficult for them to set a bit of it aside to create highly potent explosive warheads.

Now, the enemy warships held nothing back as they launched their precious transphasic missiles and torpedoes at the human vessels.

If they struck the Tortuous Scream all at once, the converted alien battleship's energy shields would probably receive so much pressure that they would collapse before the shield link transceiver could obtain additional support!

"We cannot let more than 70 percent of those missiles strike our ships. If they do, then the total energy shield pool might get drained ahead of time, causing us all to become exposed. We cannot let that happen!"

The Saint Commander found herself forced to divert precious firepower to shoot down the missiles in advance.

Omega Lasers at lower power settings fired at a higher pace than before. Each time, the resonance-empowered laser beams struck the warheads with just enough power to successfully neutralize a missile.

Hundreds of these energy beams struck the fast and maneuverable missiles. Their hit rates reached a respectable level of 60 percent. The main reason why it did not get any higher was because Casella had to provide guidance to hundreds if not thousands of mechs at a time!

It should normally be impossible for any single individual to micromanage so many Commandeered mechs at once, but Casella was able to do it in defiance of reality!

This was what she was good at. Casella did not intend to waste any of the mechs under her command.

The first salvo of missiles detonated long before they reached close enough to threaten the hulls of the Premier Fleet and Bluejay Fleet.

However, that did not mean the native aliens gave up. They continued to fire repeated salvos of missiles.

The enemy understood clearly that interpreting all of these warheads took a toll on the human forces.

Enemy phasefighters began to gain more breathing room due to the decrease in enemy firepower.

Yet that changed as soon as the Dracoloids finally managed to close the distance!

The Larkinson mech pilots assigned to these aggressive machines had been biding their time.

Now that they had come close enough, the Dracoloids immediately began to rely on their superior mobility to intercept the enemy phasefighters and savage them up close!

Their space suppressors became fully active while their shield link arrays kept their azure energy shields active even when they came under heavy fire.

The well-trained alien phasefighter pilots relied on various different means to avoid getting caught by the human melee mechs. Their plan was not that complicated. They attempted to rely on their superior numbers to isolate and defeat the Dracoloid mechs in detail.

Yet the Saint Commander was able to read their intentions and devised countermeasures.

Her strategic acumen led her to employing the right solutions at the right times.

Even as the enemy phasefighters attempted to scatter and move further apart from each other, the Dracoloids simply ignored the faster and more maneuverable enemy craft and moved straight to the enemy warships!

These hulls were larger and far less maneuverable than alien phasefighters. There was no way they could outrun the Dracoloids!

The enemy phasefighter pilots realized their mistakes and tried to regroup before trying to intercept the Larkinson melee mech units.

Yet their pursuit made them easier and more predictable targets to the humans. The Dracoloids had the ability to flip around and fire a rapid salvo of plasma guns and gauss cannons. Each of these weapons were powerful and happened to be easier to hit their targets at lower distances.

Right now, these Dracoloids were shredding through many unprepared phasefighters!

It was only after this stage that the Dracoloids could finally unleash their full power. They closed the distance and breathed fire into the azure energy shield that protected the alien enemy from the ultimate freeze.

The enemy's energy shields never lasted long!

Not only had the space suppressors of the Dracoloid turned their effective strength into a fraction of their former glory, but the flamethrowers built into their dragon's mouth proved absurdly effective at overloading azure energy shields as well!

Phasefighter after phasefighter collapsed and burned before other enemy units decided to butt in and interrupt a solid occasion.

"The native aliens have lost over 3500 phasefighters and counting! The surviving phasefighter pilots have become even more discouraged.

They had yet to down a large number of mechs at this point!

Even if the battle had taken a large toll on many of them, they could still fight and persist.

"This is so much fun!"

The glowing Dracoloids were able to fully unleash their true nature. The Larkinson mech pilots felt as if they had opened up a pressure relief valve. The steam had been building up inside their bodies ever since the first piloted the dragon mechs. It was only now that they spread glory with the help of dragon wings that they finally became in tune with their power and other aspects.

Dragon mech after dragon mech continued to intercept phasefighters before breathing fire into their shielded and well-protected forms.

While the Omega Threshers were able to play it safe by fighting at mid to longer ranges, the Dracoloids fully satisfied those who liked to get up close and personal!

Usually speaking, the Dracoloids tended to run out of fuel rather quickly if they kept launching their fire breath attacks.

However, the resonance amplification loaned by Saint Casella gave the destructive flames an added kick, enabling the Dracoloids to crack open the defenses of their targets with brief sprays of fire.

As the enemy phasefighter units continued to get disrupted by the invading humans, the battle between the warships was not so hopeless to the alien defenders.

The human warships fought aggressively, but Commandeering did not have much of an effect on them, so they were unable to withstand the superior numbers of the enemy warships.

It was only because of the lack of trust and coordination between the alien fleets that they had not been able to make better use of their numbers advantage.

Even so, if this continued, the human warships might be forced to retreat, which would put their mechs in a dangerous position!

Chapter 6998: The Day of Insurrection

On the day the Battle of Screed Tanner VI-F commenced, the Red Ocean continued to remain a hive of activity.

Many other battles raged in and around the frequently changing frontlines of the Red War.

Nobody kept track of the sheer amount of battles that the humans had fought against the native alien species.

Most red humans made the assumption that the Red War had erupted on the day the Great Severing occurred.

As for the fighting that occurred before this period?

The humans at the time did not really consider their steady advance into alien-occupied territory to be a proper war.

How could they? The humans were part of the most powerful civilization of the much greater Milky Way.

If humankind truly wanted to, they could have dispatched thousands of first-class mech corps, dozens of god pilots and tens of thousands of CFA battleships to sweep across the 'tiny' dwarf galaxy within a decade!

The fact that humans did not overwhelm the Red Ocean with overwhelming force was not a sign of weakness, but strength.

Humans had the luxury of wiping out the native aliens at any time, but they considered this option to be too costly and wasteful.

Rather than engage in a loss-making business, the Big Two chose to let the space peasants do their work on their behalf. They may be weaker and much more constrained by the rules, but plenty of them would be happy to invest their wealth and lives to become pioneers.

If everything went according to plan, the pioneers should have swallowed up the territories of the Red Ocean within 5 decades or less.

Unfortunately, nothing went according to plan. The Great Severing had split the most dominant civilizations in two galaxies.

Original humanity retained their dominance in the Milky Way Galaxy, though it was currently undergoing massive internal upheaval.

Red humanity had become the orphaned sons of their original race and civilization. It had lost the protection of overwhelming military force, just as the Red Cabal intended when they transported their dwarf galaxy to a distant cosmic location.

The fighting between the two sides was no longer as one-sided as before. The pioneers of red humanity only managed to make consistent gains due to receiving a constant influx of reinforcements through the greater beyonder gates.

Now that this flow had become completely cut off, red humanity not only lacked the reinforcements to sustain its offensive push, but even started to lose manpower and combat assets at a prodigious rate!

To many people, this had become the real Red War. It was a conflict where red humanity had been put on the defensive from day 1 and never had a chance to go on the offensive.

For many days, red humans fought and died in droves as they found themselves the weaker side of a war this time.

It was a situation that many human supremacists never thought they would encounter in their lifetimes.

Many of them indeed failed to adapt to the new reality. They either became ruined or lost their lives in the fighting.

Not a day went by without the galactic net broadcasting news about star systems succumbing to the advancing aliens.

The Red Tide Offensive unleashed by the Red Cabal was highly successful.



Ever since the red humans had lost their precious defensive bands, their territories no longer enjoyed uniform protection.

The inherent division between red humans caused many problems. The major powers tried their best to address this issue by investing more authority into Human High Command, but this was a flawed solution.

HHC could never address all of the grievances and disagreements of every human group.

The existence of a central authority that tried to tell different forces where they should fight did not sit well with many people.

Combined with many people's resentment towards the Red Association and the Red Fleet, people's regard for their hegemons had dropped below a dangerous point.

The popularity of the mechers and the fleeters was dropping. Not only were they failing to win or at the very least limit the losses of the Red War, they continued to lord over everyone else as if they were still unquestionably in charge of all humans.

This grated on many people, but particularly the Terrans and the Rubarthans.

From their perspective, HHC was not so much a platform to coordinate their defenses, but a tool used to control the space peasants and exploit them in order to make the RA and RF richer to the detriment of the masses!

More and more people became convinced that the old rules no longer worked anymore.

The start of the Age of Dawn changed everything.

Now that many people increasingly smelled weakness from the mechers and the fleeters, the space peasants gradually realized that their overlords were growing weaker!

This caused the downtrodden and the suppressed to have ideas.

After many months and years of secretive preparations, the conspirators finally received a signal.

The time had finally come!

While no forces began to mobilize on a wider scale, several major human powers abruptly initiated official live broadcasts at the same time!

Each of them directly addressed their own populations, but also intended to pass on their message to others, most notably the mechers and the fleeters!

On the side of the Terran Alliance, an honored Star Designer appeared in view.

The Armsforger himself had chosen to address the Terrans and other humans.

As a Star Designer that was famous for combining both high technology with traditional smithing techniques, the Armsforger had long been known for crafting the most exquisite melee weapons.

Many god mechs, particularly those that excelled in melee combat, benefited from his unbreakable Armsforger Weapons.

Now, this muscular and fit Star Designer had chosen to disclose a daring and risky plan that directly affected the lives of every Terran in the Red Ocean!

During this historic broadcast, the Armsforger chose to wear a multi-layered green garment that blended formality, refinement and transcendence in a single elegant presentation.

[My fellow Terrans and red humans, today I have an announcement to make. The leaders of the Terran Alliance along with other like-minded partners have been preparing to save our people by any means necessary. We have determined that the best way to do so is to expose the falsehood of unity, and recognize it for the tyranny that has always constrained our potential.]

[Yes, I dare to state the truth. Since the start of the Age of Mechs, our Terran people have been stripped of our rights and suffered one humiliation after another. In their greed to conquer our civilization, the Big Two has stolen our warships and prohibited us from fielding them ever again. They have also imposed a set of rules and instituted a technological blockade. Under the reign of the mechers and the fleeters, we can never be allowed to field weapons that can ever threaten their rule.]

[Do you recognize how absurd it is for us to behave as a subjugated group in a time where the native aliens are the greater threat to our common civilization? Many of us have filed constant petitions and requests to repeal the rules that tie our hands behind our backs. Yet the Red Association and the Red Fleet refuse to take them seriously despite the fact that we are losing more men and mechs than the mechers and the fleeters.]

Many viewers grew angry and upset at the mechers and the fleeters. It was pretty easy to turn the Terrans against their current overlords.

[The prohibition on the use of shield link technology is the most egregious restriction that they have imposed on us. While their own mechs and warships are able to collectivize their azure energy shields, thereby enabling all of their units to last far longer in battle, we are still not permitted to use the same technology.]

The Armsforger assumed a more grave demeanor.

[What does this tell you? To us, it signifies the fact that the Red Association and the Red Fleet values their own greed and lust for power over the defense of our united civilization. They have helped to establish Human High Command, only to deny its suggestions to liberate us from their confining and outdated restrictions. They still guard against a return to the Age of Conquest, thereby completely forgetting how much we thrived during this golden age of humanity.]

The Armsforger actually looked angry this time.

[Their continued refusal to return our right to field our own warships and use every advanced tech that is already known to our civilization does not benefit our race. It merely benefits the tyrants that fear losing power over the supposed 'space peasants'. My fellow Terrans, do not mistake this fact. We all enjoy the status as galactic citizens, but as far as the mechers and fleeters, we are still the same barbaric primitives that they imagined us to be since the start of the Age of Mechs.]

[We are not children that need coddling. Neither do we accept the argument that it is better to keep dangerous tech and weapons out of our hands for fear of harming ourselves. Continuing to maintain this stance serves no other benefit than to maintain the same excuse that has led us to accept the false authority of the mechers and fleeters for several centuries. No more. We can no longer tolerate the lies of the RA and the RF, especially when doing so will continue to deprive us from the powerful tech that we need to protect our borders and keep our fellow Terrans safe.]

A symbol began to appear on the Armsforger's back.

It was a flag that depicted a globe that displayed the continents of Old Earth!

[Due to these reasons and more, every Terran leader have agreed that we must make a bold statement. It is my pleasure to announce that from this day onwards, the Terran Alliance will unilaterally secede from the tyrannical hegemony that is led by the Red Association and the Red Fleet. We are not requesting them to hand over the rights and sovereignty that rightfully belongs to the Terran people. We will take it back ourselves.]

The background changed.

It depicted projections of brand-new warships flying under the Terran flag.

Such a sight would have attracted the heaviest degree of punishment from the Red Two in the past!

It also showed mechs that managed to withstand concentrated firepower due to carrying a working shield link transceiver.

This was a naked breach of the Red Two's duopoly on shield link technology. The Armsforger was very much correct that the only reason this restriction existed was to ensure the mechers and the fleeters maintained technological superiority over the 'space peasants'!

Soon enough, a map of human-occupied space appeared.

[By taking back our sovereignty, many contracts, treaties and laws are no longer appropriate anymore. The territories of the Terran Alliance will no longer answer to any laws imposed by the Red Two that we have not explicitly chosen to retain by our own free will. Our legal departments have already revised many of them to fit the new era where the Terrans are able to stand proud for regaining our freedom. Let there be no confusion over our stance. We do not look kindly to the RA and the RF for subjugating us for so many years, but this is not the time to settle our grudges. For as long as the native aliens remain strong, we shall work and fight together as red humans.]

[However, if we must fight and cooperate with the Red Three, we will do so as their equals, not their vassals. Under no circumstance shall we obey their orders, or supply them with our goods and materials without engaging in honest trade. If the mechers and fleeters truly prioritize the continued survival of red humanity, then they should make the sensible decision and allow us to retain our sovereignty. If they are not willing to do so, then they must know that we do not stand alone. The Rubarthan Pact and numerous other first-rate states are following suit.]

The map changed to reflect a greater split unfolding. Not only had the Terran Alliance and the Rubarthan Pact become sovereign star empires again, there were even a handful of first-rate states in the Red Ocean Union that followed suit!

The Armsforger formed a vicious grin.

[In the eventuality that the mechers and the fleeters refuse to accept the inevitable, we are not above turning our arms against our fellow red humans. We shall never be slaves again. No matter what sort of advanced tech the mechers and the fleeters intend to use, we have more powerful tech at our disposal. With the assistance of hidden but also rising human power, we shall persuade the RA and the RF to accept our turns, not by force, but by giving them a farewell present. Otherwise, they shall not have any opportunity to receive the technological secrets they desire the most.]

That was a bold statement to make. It sounded rather implausible for the Terrans and other conspirators to buy the Red Two off with technology transfers, not when they had already accumulated so much cutting-edge tech!

Chapter 6999: The Day of Return

"Have the Terrans and the Rubarthans gone mad!? Their insurrection threatens to break apart our unified human civilization! How will we be able to maintain a united front against the native aliens! Their stupid desire to regain their sovereignty will divide us during a time where we can least afford division!"

"Damn, those first-raters are engaging in stupidity again. Instead of fighting the aliens who are trying to kill all of us without causing any drama, the Terrans and the Rubarthans have decided to pick a fight with the RA and the RF at the worst possible moment! Our third-rate state will get overrun by the native aliens by the time these selfish and entitled people have finally finished their big spat. Why can't they resolve their grudges after they have taken care of our alien enemies?"

"My business is ruined! The Red War has been bad for my company in general, but I was still relying on trade between the colonial alliances to maintain a barely positive balance sheet. If commerce between the different human states is disrupted by the introduction of trade barriers, this will make everything more expensive!"

The news spread across human space within minutes. Many people celebrated the secession of the Terran Alliance, the Rubarthan Pact, the Eternal Vulcan Empire as well as a handful of other ambitious first-rate states.

People were already calling it the Red Split.

Nobody knew what was in store in the future. What exactly did the Terrans and the Rubarthans mean by 'regaining their sovereignty'? Did this mean that they were thinking about engaging in diplomacy with the aliens?

Which contracts and agreements would remain valid and which ones got dissolved due to the occurrence of an unforeseen event?

Everyone became confused!

It would take many days in order for the people across human-occupied space to adapt to the new changes.

The Red Split generated a lot of uncertainty in a time where red humanity was under heavy assault.

Many people had already begun to castigate the Terrans and the Rubarthans for putting their selfish desires for independence over the more fundamental need to save their race!

However, out of all of the groups of people who felt most uncertain about the attempted secessions, the mechers and the fleeters were greatly appalled by what had happened!

They had long feared that the Terrans and the Rubarthans would attempt to take advantage of the current crisis and slip out of their grasp.

The fact that they managed to prepare such a grand conspiracy and not leave behind any solid enough clues in advance was a massive intelligence failure on the part of the RA and the RF!

At this point, the Red Association and the Red Fleet had yet to make their stance clear. So did the Red Collective for this matter.

The mechers and the fleeters had genuinely been caught flat-footed. Most of their attention had been squarely focused on the native aliens, which could explain why they had failed to sniff out this plot in advance.

"It is impossible for us to bring the insurrectionists into compliance through the application of violence." Commodore Cory McArmin of the 124th Monitoring Squadron spoke in a measured and composed voice. "The first-rate colonial superstates are correct in their claims. Attempting to divert our fleets from the frontlines in order to wage war against the insurrectionist states will lead to unacceptable losses. The Terrans and the Rubarthans are too proud to surrender without resisting. Their foolish pride and nationalism will see them fight to the death for every star system we take."

When humans started to fight against each other, the native aliens benefited immensely.

It would not be a surprise if the native aliens bided their time and continued to build up their invasion forces while different human factions squabbled against each other!

Not only would attacking fellow humans during this critical time cause the morale of the mechers and the fleeters to plunge, but it would also tank their legitimacy across human-occupied space.

The Big Two had always been keen on maintaining a strong amount of legitimacy over the centuries.

It was the single most important quality that cemented their right to rule over every human.

For a long time, the masses genuinely believed that it was best for the mechers and fleeters to remain in charge of everyone. This belief had become so strongly rooted in the Milky Way that there had never been any real chance to question its validity.

Until now.

For the Terran Alliance and the Rubarthan Pact to repudiate the Red Two and their hegemony so vehemently indicated that there was a larger plot afoot!

When the projected RF officer issued a counterargument, Commodore McArmin grimaced.

"I refuse to believe we are out of options. We can still rely on our soft power and other gentle means of bringing the insurrectionists into compliance. We can impose trade embargoes. There are many goods that they rely upon to keep their planets and settlements prosperous and functional. By interrupting this form of commerce, we can make Terran and Rubarthan citizens dissatisfied without generating too much hostility."

"..."

"If economic pressure is not enough, then we can apply military pressure as well. Both colonial alliances rely extensively on our military support. Compared to the Rubarthan Pact, the Terran Alliance is especially vulnerable due to being protected by only a single god pilot. Let us see how long the Terrans will maintain their stubborn stance when they are truly left to fend for themselves."

The good commodore was not the only person to make this proposal. Many mechers and fleeters elsewhere thought about relying on pressure tactics to make the insurrectionists reconsider.



However, there was little chance that this would happen.

The Terrans would most definitely pay for their stubbornness, but so would everyone else!

If the Terran Alliance ever collapsed, the rest of red humanity would probably follow suit. The Red Ocean Union was not large enough to maintain enough population and industrial capacity to maintain the war effort.

In short, the mechers and the fleeters could not afford to endure the consequences of seeing the insurrectionists fall!

Since this was the case, the Red Two had to be extremely careful about which tactics they chose in order to encourage the insurrectionists to reverse their foolish decisions.

Perhaps it was no longer possible to demand a complete return to the old status quo, but they may be able to negotiate a more acceptable alternative in this day and age.

While the Terrans and the Rubarthans were willing to fight hard to regain their sovereignty, they probably made a miscalculation.

The Red Association would never give up its jurisdiction on mechs!

The same went for the Red Fleet in relation to warships!

There were many mechers and fleeters willing to resort to the worst options and go to war in order to preserve their dominion over these aspects.

Perhaps the threat of that may be enough to get the Terrans and the Rubarthans to agree to reason.

Whatever the case, Commodore Cory McArmin doubted that his voice would make a difference in this great debate.

He was just a relatively unimportant RF squadron commander.

Instead of being stationed on a fleet that was directly involved in the Red War, he had the unenviable privilege of being stationed as far from the frontlines as possible.

The Second Sphinx, the light cruiser that he was stationed on, and a handful of other warships and science vessels had been assigned to reside close to the location of Bridgehead One.

To be more precise, they continued to linger at the edge of the greater spacetime bubble that enveloped the central star node for a long period of time.

The good news was that if the data was accurate, Commodore McArmin might not need to stay much longer.

"Is the greater spacetime bubble ending today?"

"The speed in which it is unraveling has fluctuated multiple times." A senior CFA astrophysicist responded to the commodore. "We are 85 percent confident that this is not a natural unwinding process. The humans inside the bubble have been actively manipulating their own spacetime cage, though we do not have enough indications to learn what they have done or whether they are successful."

Commodore McArmin looked wary. "What is your personal opinion?"

The scientist paused for a few seconds. "I fear that the humans that are about to be reunited to the rest of the cosmos may not be the ones you expect to welcome back."

Those words stuck to the commodore's mind when the greater spacetime bubble finally collapsed.

As soon as the photons that had previously been trapped in the spatial anomaly finally receive a chance to escape into the rest of the Red Ocean, the sensor systems of the Second Sphinx and other starships immediately became overwhelmed by foreign sights!

"Did we park next to the right star system?! This is not Bridgehead One! There is much more orbital infrastructure present around the planets! The surfaces of those globes have also become much different!"

"How many warships and carriers are there in this star system?! There are tens of thousands more hulls than we expected to see! Wait, these ship classes are completely unfamiliar. They possess recognizable human design styles, but their tech and materials are completely new and unfamiliar!"

"The Dyson spheres surrounding the 12 stars of Bridgehead One have become much more developed. We have detected the presence of mass siphoning devices that extract particles from the stars and convert them into solid matter."

"Those planets! Of the over 100 planets that originally orbited this mega star system, over half of them have transformed into war fortresses that are armed to the teeth. Wait, why are they embedded with gigantic thrusters? Can they move under their own power?"

The sensor officers and analysts practically went crazy as they witnessed the arrival of a completely different version of Bridgehead One than they expected!

Shouldn't the greater spacetime bubble cause the passage of time inside of it to slow down by a factor of 100?!

Even as the bewildered mechers, fleeters and collies tried to make sense of what they observed, a familiar yet unfamiliar warship instantly seemed to teleport a few dozen kilometers away from the 124th Monitoring Squadron.

Alarms rang throughout the Second Sphinx as the ships all detected that they were at the mercy of the dreadnought that had appeared into the naval equivalent of knife fighting range!

"Is that... the Dominion of Man?"

"Yes, but... she has received enormous upgrades from top to bottom."

"Commodore! We are receiving a direct hail from the capital ship that claims to be the Dominion of Man."

Commodore Cory McArmin had a strong suspicion that this upcoming conversation would no doubt become part of a historic record.

"Accept the hail. Let us talk with whoever has chosen to greet us. Be mindful to stay on your best behavior. We cannot afford to make decisions based on false assumptions. Remain on your best behavior."

When he finally accepted the hail, a projected screen depicted what appeared to be a metallic throne room.

The entire chamber was empty save for a massive throne and reliefs that told a grand story in the form of carved images.

When the view zoomed in, a certain woman sat on the throne.

Clair Hamza, otherwise known as the Polymath, sat on the throne like a sovereign overlooking her domain.

She had once again dressed herself in regal and opulent garments. She had completely eschewed the plainer and more minimalistic lab coat and suit that she typically wore in her guise as a Star Designer.

"Commodore Cory McArmin." The Star Designer spoke. "I am pleased to observe that my star system has merged back into the Red Ocean not too late. We have remained physically disconnected for too long."

The RF commodore was not surprised that she knew his name. Bridgehead One stored extensive records on everything.

His suspicion on what may have happened grew stronger. He was certain that he was addressing the mastermind behind all of the unexpected changes!

"Your Excellency, if I may ask, how long... has Bridgehead One remained in isolation... from the perspective of the humans inside the former greater spacetime bubble?"

The Polymath formed a very deliberate smirk. "Through my successful experimentation and manipulation of what you call the 'greater spacetime bubble', my subjects and I have experienced a total of 53 years. As your sensors can no doubt observe, we have experienced many changes during this lengthy period."

"If I may ask, Your Excellency..."

"Your Imperial Majesty." She pointedly corrected him. "This is how you should address me. During the Time of Isolation, I have gained supreme power over Bridgehead One. It is now the heart and body of the Cybernetic Empire. I have crowned myself as its empress, and I expect the Red Three to recognize my claim."

"..."

Commodore McArmin became speechless, and so did the other members of the Red Three.

What the Star Designer said was so outrageous that he did not dare to offer a concrete response!

This was way out of his pay grade!

The Polymath knew that she shouldn't expect any real answer to come out of the squadron commander.

"Please convey my words to your superiors. They should be in contact with us soon. Do remind them not to keep up waiting for long. Tell them that my Cybernetic Empire is already recognized by the Terran Alliance and the Rubarthan Pact and vice versa. Just because my star system has remained physically isolated does not mean it is impossible for us to communicate across barriers."

This was a critical piece of information! Somehow, the Cybernetic Empire had already contacted the Terrans and the Rubarthans before the greater spacetime bubble had completely unraveled!

This is likely explained by the Terran Alliance and the Rubarthan Pact chose to declare their secession from united human civilization on this particular day!

#### Chapter 7000: The Day of Pestilence

If the secession of multiple first-rate colonial states and superstates had already caused a lot of controversy, the return of a very different version of Bridgehead One generated even more shock!

No one expected for the Polymath to exploit the properties of the greater spacetime bubble and turn it into a massive advantage for herself and the red humans trapped inside!

For a little over 53 subjective years, the Bridgehead One residents experienced two generations of peace, stability, growth and development.

They all gained one of the most valuable resources that the rest of red humanity lacked, and that was time!

The Red Three engaged in intensive forms of data analysis in order to verify whether the claims made by the Polymath — or the 'Cybernetic Empress' — were accurate.

The Polymath never spoke any falsehoods.

It was impossible for so much buildup and changes to take place in a matter of days, months or a handful of years.

It would have been helpful to regain contact with the people who were originally stuck in Bridgehead One from the very beginning, but the Cybernetic Empire maintained a travel blockade as well as a communications blockade.

In fact, many analysts doubted whether the galactic net still existed in Bridgehead One. The communications infrastructure would have been completely redundant during the 5-decade period of isolation.

Perhaps the sight of a much more developed version of Bridgehead One may have been a very elaborate illusion.

It was well within the power of the Polymath to weave a star system-wide deception.

However, there were too many indications that the sight was completely accurate.

After the Polymath had made her initial greeting, the mechers and the fleeters scrambled to form a unified response.

Bridgehead One was the original beachhead established by the Mech Trade Association and the Common Fleet Alliance.

The two superorganizations had invested enormous amounts of resources into turning it into an enormous stronghold.

They even went as far as using some of their most powerful means to transport additional stars and planets in an ever-expanding star system!

This not only opened up a lot more room for laboratories, factories and assembly facilities, but also attracted an enormous amount of highly skilled and knowledgeable scientists and engineers.

The Yernstall Central Star Node was much less impressive in comparison. It was like comparing a tiger to a house cat. The Sapphire of the Red Ocean most definitely happened to be the smaller cat!

In order to verify whether the residents of Bridgehead One had truly experienced so many years in total isolation from the rest of red humanity, the Red Three ultimately insisted on contacting their old officers and acquaintances directly.

Short of crossing into Bridgehead One and observe all of the changes up close, this was the next best solution to quickly verify the Polymath's shocking claims.

Many relatives, colleagues and business partners thus received permission to communicate with people that had all grown a half century older.

To many of these people, the differences had become incredibly stark.

"My son... you have grown older than me now. I never expected to see you again in this state."

"You know all of the secrets that I have shared with my best friend. You are either him, or a highly accurate clone or bot that has stolen his guise and memories."

"Lieutenant Stanton, I would like to remind you that you have not only made an oath to serve the Red Fleet. We have yet to discharge you from our service, nor given you permission to resign. We seriously urge you to reconsider your status and citizenship."

People also began to ask the Cybers about how Bridgehead One managed to become so densely populated.

"How come Bridgehead One has grown so large? How many children did you Cybers produce? Did the Polymath force every family to raise a dozen children per generation?"

"Ah, most of us are not natural born humans. They are actually batch humans. The Polymath has worked on the tech and has set up factories that are able to output a large amount of batch humans every quarter. We could have hosted more of them, but we do not have enough farms and other facilities to enable them to live with dignity. Now that we have finally reconnected to the main universe, we can finally rely on trade to expand our population!"

Through contacting the people that had completely forgotten their original allegiances and integrated into the Cybernetic Empire, the rest of red humanity learned that all of the claims turned out to be true.

The Polymath, who previously had been exiled to Bridgehead One due to the transgressions she had made during the First Conference of the Survivalist Faction, ultimately managed to secure a throne for herself.



Nobody could have taken over Bridgehead One and ruled the expanded star system with so little dissent.

The original loyalties of the stranded red humans did not matter. The Polymath had taken the soft approach, as she knew that people's resistance would definitely fade after a generation of continued isolation.

By that time, even the most stubborn of people ran out of patience!

No matter whether they were originally mechers, fleeters, Terrans, Rubarthans or citizens of other colonial states, they all became subjects of the Cybernetic Empire in the end.

The 'Cybers' as they had taken to calling themselves all showed the reason where their empire derived its name.

"Those cybernetic implants..."

"It is challenging to succeed in the Cybernetic Empire." A former mecher now turned Cyber told his friend in the Red Association. "Our entire population has embraced cybernetics as a valid means to improve our work performance. Many of the current lines were originally designed by the Polymath. They have undergone many iterations of improvements since then that have strengthened their ability to dispatch one type of foe much more effectively than the others."

"Why...?"

"We do not have access to the benefits of systematic cultivation." The Cyber shrugged his shoulders. "You see, when Bridgehead One entered the Time of Isolation, the barrier that kept us trapped and enabled us to gain additional years could not alter the amount of exotic radiation that passed through our star system."

"I think I understand. Time may have sped up inside the spacetime bubble, but the amount of E energy radiation passing through your star system remains constant. What actually happens is that your local exposure to exotic radiation has shrunk until it is barely noticeable. The only way you Cybers could keep up is by resorting to implants."

This had a very large impact on the development of Bridgehead One!

It explained why a lot of long-ranged sensor readings detected buildup of advanced but recognizable human tech!

Much of it carried the style and personal touches of the Polymath. If she did not include any significant amounts of hyper technology to their designs, then that was because she was not effectively able to make it useful, and not because she did not like its working principles!

The rest of red humanity quickly figured out why the Polymath had been unable to invent revolutionary applications of hyper materials.

They lost almost all of their E energy needs while residing in Bridgehead One!

How effective was all of this new and advanced tech?

Nobody could say for certain. They could perform a lot of analyses from afar, but without seeing the new high-tech mechs and starships in action, everything remained theoretical.

At least the Cybers missed remained deficient in terms of hyper technology, E-technology and most importantly superdimensional technology.

The interviews also revealed that the Cybers did not produce any new high-ranking mech pilots.

During the entire Time of Isolation, not a single Cyber mech pilot had advanced to the rank of expert pilot, ace pilot or god pilot!

This gave the Red Association and the Red Fleet just enough assurances in their ability to defend against any megalomaniacal takeover attempts by the so-called Cybernetic Empire.

However, it was clear that the Cybernetic Empress did not intend to surrender Bridgehead One to its rightful owners, nor remain neutral in the disputes between different human powers.

The Polymath and her incredibly militarized one system empire had become incredibly powerful wild cards!

The Red Association and the Survivalist Faction urgently sought to bring the rogue Star Designer back into the fold, but none of their communication requests got through.

By remaining silent and unresponsive, the Cybernetic Empress sent a very clear message.

Everyone understood that the Polymath sought to establish herself as an independent power.

With a massive army, the Dominion of Man and possibly a god pilot at her disposal, she definitely possessed the strength to defend her small but incredibly developed domain!

In fact, the Polymath could even take advantage of everyone else's preoccupation with the Red War to annex the neighboring territories!

Not that many ordinary people cared about the threat posed by the returnees.

No matter how much the Polymath and the tens of billions of Cybers under her command tried to establish their independence, they still clung to their human identities.

So long as that was the case, they could never be at peace with the native aliens!

People began to look at the bright side of this development.

Would the Cybernetic Empress dispatch millions of mechs and thousands of warships to the faltering frontlines?

Would she send one of her impressive 'war planets' that evidently possessed the ability to engage in interstellar travel with the help of enormous warp drives?

Or would she be willing to share a modest but incredibly valuable knowledge repository that contained 53 years worth of constant technological progress and evolution?

Any of these actions could not only introduce a lot of hope to red humanity, but also earn the Star Designer-turned-empress a lot of goodwill among the common folk!

The fact that the Polymath already recognized the sovereignty of the Terran Alliance and the Rubarthan Pact served as a telling portend of what was to come.

Just as red humanity continued to become more and more engrossed by the secession and the appearance of the Cybernetic Empire, a third explosive piece of news spread across the galactic net on the very same day!

Unlike the previous two occurrences, this one was unambiguously negative!

"A total of 14 star systems located in the territories of the Rubarthan Pact have fallen in record time! 21 more star systems have detected the arrival of enormous swarms of hostile organic life forms, each of which are hostile towards the local red humans! The alien pests are not so much attacking our worlds as they are devouring it like interstellar locusts!"

"Are those... voribugs?! There... there are so many of them! Their variations have also grown more numerous. There are far more than the basic three forms of juvenile, adult and elder voribugs visible in the footage. There is a high likelihood that the voribug race has become subjected to external stimulation that has caused these previously wild and feral aliens to undergo rapid development!"

"Our intelligence gathering operations in alien space indicate that we are far from the only victims of the voribugs. These aliens are hardly paying any attention to us. They have commenced an assault on over a thousand star systems occupied by the native aliens! Each of them are woefully unprepared to repel a surprise attack of this scale and intensity. Without the protection of enough phasefighters and warships, the

evolved voribugs are expected to conquer entire alien territories and provinces by the end of this week!"

"This... this is a disaster!"

"No! This is an opportunity! Even if these voribugs are not intelligent enough to understand the concept of diplomacy, the enemy of my enemy is my friend. We must do everything in our power to direct the attention of these insects away from human-occupied space. The more we are able to divert them to alien space, the more the Red Cabal is forced to pull back fleets from the Red War and dispatch them to the frontlines of the new war against the voribugs!"

"Everything... is about to change! I cannot keep track of the variables anymore! Too many events are happening on the same day. This is driving me crazy!"

In the end, with the confluence of three massive events, the 102th day of the 4th year of the Age of Mechs came to be known by three different names.

The Day of Insurrection.

The Day of Return.

The Day of Pestilence.