

Tech System 321

Chapter 321 Protocol 404

A few minutes before the UN general meeting took place Aron was in one of the rooms of his VR mansion together with Rina. They were waiting for the hearing to begin and would watch it through the Edenian ambassador's glasses. There was no other way to watch it, as the hearing was behind closed doors with no recording equipment allowed.

In fact, Aron and Rina weren't alone; everyone who had sufficient security clearance and was in possession of a pair of Aron's AR glasses was doing the same. John was watching it with the high-level officers of the military, the leader of Nyx was watching it with her subordinates, Sarah with Felix, and the other companies' presidents were watching it together as well. Sarah and Felix hadn't joined Aron and Rina only because they could only handle so much PDA and their limits had been reached far, far earlier.

Alexander and his Esparian counterpart were watching it with their staffs as well, meaning that everyone with the power to do anything significant in Eden and Esparia were waiting for the hearing to begin and leaving the running of their countries and companies to subordinates.

A bucket of popcorn and a large movie theater-style soda appeared in his hands and he offered the popcorn to Rina, who was sitting beside him.

"No thanks, us girls have to watch our figures," she said, giving her boyfriend a girlish, coquettish smile.

"Uhh... your figure is perfect, though. And what is VR for if not to enjoy the things you can't enjoy in reality? Plus, for everything else, there's Biogen." Aron truly enjoyed simple domestic moments like these. They reminded him that he, too, was only human.

"It's starting," Aron said as the American ambassador entered the room and took her seat.

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"Ladies and gentlemen, esteemed ambassadors, we stand charged wi—"

Just as she began her speech and Aron had all of his focus on the hearing, a few of those watching were teleported to a different meeting room. Aron, Rina, John, General Jacob Stiles of the Aeolus Air Force, Director Diana Tregarde of Nyx, and Alexander and his Esparian counterpart, President Jose Inez of Esparia, found themselves in an unfamiliar room together. They hadn't undergone the logoff sequence, so they knew they were still in VR, but that was all.

Something big must have happened.

Moments later, those who were still watching the hearing and had begun panicking as their leaders disappeared all received a brief message from the missing peoples' accounts to continue watching the hearing, and they had simply been summoned for an emergency meeting by Nova. Although the message caused questions to arise, the leaders' subordinates continued watching the UNSC hearing regardless. They knew that if something important had arisen, they would be briefed on what they needed to know when their bosses returned.

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"Are we being attacked?" Aron asked the moment his brain comprehended what had taken place. He knew what protocol called for such a reaction from Nova.

Only Protocol 404 would allow Nova to do things like forcefully logging people into the VR, no matter the situation they were in. If something was happening and their presence was paramount, it was better to reveal the VR capabilities than to hold them secret. But only if seconds mattered or the briefing was of apocalyptic importance. The moment Aron saw the lineup of people in the conference room—which included all of the military AIs and the scientists focused on space research from Lab City—he guessed that the situation was the latter and slightly relaxed.

Out of all the real people in the room, Aron's reaction was the calmest. The rest, having no experience with forced teleportation, were looking slightly pale as their thoughts caught up to the dilated time, but overall, they handled it well. At least those who'd undergone genetic enhancement had, anyway; President Inez was still frozen and had a blank look on his face as he tried to come to terms with the immediate time differential.

[If what's going to be presented to us is true, it might be much worse than that,] Nova said, then gestured for the scientists to begin their briefing.

The simulated version of Stephen Hawking stood and walked to the stage. "Sorry for the urgent call, but we discovered something that we're confident means we've been discovered by an advanced civilization. And from their course, they're on their way to us," he said. The screen behind him was powered on, but currently showed nothing. That would change when he started talking in detail about the topic at hand, though.

His words caused the hearts of all the humans in the room to pound, except for Aron, who released a sigh of relief. As long as it wasn't the outbreak of a nuclear war or something, he would be able to deal with it. He was also feeling a little vindicated in his belief that alien civilizations existed being proven; his evidence up until that moment was only the introduction of technologies in the system including the name of the civilization that discovered them, along with details.

"Within the data our satellite network has been collecting, we discovered an approaching mass of mana headed toward our solar system," Hawking continued. As he spoke, the screen behind him changed from the light blue that meant it wasn't receiving a signal to an image of the starry sky deep in the universe. The view zoomed in until a green object the size of Luna, judging by the measurements next to it on the display, became visible.

"Shit," Aron said. He understood what the object's detection meant, but the other humans in the room seemed to just be impressed by the capability of the satellites. They had no idea what mana was and were only concerned about the huge mass that was on approach to the solar system.

Aron, on the other hand, completely understood what was meant by the discovery and why it had taken so long for them to discover the object. He thought back to the month before, when he had gone on his "impromptu skydiving excursion", as Rina had called it.

Chapter 322 The Brownian Motion of Sentient Life

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A few weeks prior.

As Aron fell from the sky with no parachute, the plane that had dropped him entered a wide holding pattern, as if it was observing his actions.

He continued falling, and despite not having any breathing apparatus to help him breathe in the thin air at 15,000 Meters, he had no trouble breathing. Once he reached 12,000 Meters above the ground, he began casting a floating rune on himself and his falling speed decreased further and further until he came to a full stop at about 10,000 Meters. It was the average altitude at which international commercial airplanes flew, but he wasn't worried about being spotted since the entire airspace was restricted, meaning that any commercial airplane that entered would be shot down.

He then cast a wide shield with a radius of about a kilometer with him at the center, then just waited for a notification.

[The satellites are ready,] Nova announced in his ear. All of the satellites above him, whether they be in geosynchronous orbit, semi-geosynchronous orbit, low earth orbit, or even higher that were in a position that could see him had turned and focused on him. All of their sensors were pointed directly at him, but they saw nothing through the shield despite being plainly visible to Aron himself.

"Begin the calibration," he said and started releasing a huge amount of mana from his body. The mana would normally disperse into the atmosphere, but the shield Aron had cast around himself wouldn't allow it to do so, so it began accumulating as he continued releasing more and more of it. He was pushing as much mana through his body as he could, condensing it around him more and more, to the point that, for those that could see it, it would appear like an almost entirely solid lump of gold.

At the same time, the satellites that were focusing on him began cycling through different universal frequencies, with each satellite assigned a different range of frequencies to explore. The pattern would eventually cover every frequency the researchers in Lab City had discovered to date.

After more than half an hour of the satellites following the quantum server's instructions, the search ended as a frequency had finally been discovered that showed the golden lump where Aron was.

[The calibration was a success, sir,] Nova informed Aron, who had sweat pouring from his forehead. Although he could channel mana through his body in an unlimited amount, his mind hadn't yet reached a level of advancement that would allow him to maintain his maximum flow rate without limit. Currently, an hour was the best he could manage.

He released a sigh of relief as he stopped channeling mana through his body and immediately canceled the shield he had been keeping active in order to trap the mana in a confined space. It swiftly dispersed through the atmosphere, the high concentration having served its purpose of discovering and calibrating the frequency his satellite network could use to detect it.

"Come pick me up," he said in a tired voice. He continued hovering in place, and a moment later, the plane that was in a holding pattern approached him. But as it was on its way to collect him, it was met with a massive turbulence wave that had been caused by the outflow of dispersing mana from around his body.

The turbulence gave the pilot and copilot of the plane quite a shock, and had the plane been made of usual materials, such as aircraft aluminum and other lightweight alloys, it would have broken into pieces and crashed. Thankfully, however, it had been made of tougher stuff and powered its way

through the turbulence to rendezvous with Aron—who had already begun making his way toward the plane—midway.

He reboarded the plane through the open cargo ramp and retook his seat, watching the cargo ramp slowly close and block out the sun that had been hitting his eyes. The room darkened, but was swiftly lit by the strip lighting in the cargo bay.

After finding a frequency at which the satellites could detect mana, Nova and Aron got to work mapping the universe, which had a few differences from the universal simulation. Due to the number of variables in the real universe being a bit higher than in the universal simulation, it couldn't be 100% accurate. After all, life existed and Nova didn't have nearly enough processing power to model the random, almost Brownian motion of sentient life.

It was yet to be discovered if Nova ever would wield the power to simulate everything with 100% accuracy, even though it was theoretically within the realm of possibility; all it would require was sufficient computing resources. Resources that quantum computing was too primitive to be able to gather, at least without replacing the entire planet with one giant ecumenopolis consisting of nothing but clusters of quantum computer servers that stretched out beyond the Karman Line and reached the cold, unfeeling reaches of space.

The discovery of mana's frequency had resulted from the scientists working in Lab City delving deeper into research on Henry's evolved eyes. Their ongoing research had allowed them to discover many things the deeper they went, almost like the young boy's eyes were a treasure that kept on giving.

Now, all the satellites that Aron had launched into space had been updated with a new frequency scanning program that allowed the researchers to see mana in its bare and neutral form. It would take a few more simulations before they could differentiate the energy in its different forms, but a few satellites had already been tasked with mapping earth once again. This time, they would be mapping the planet's mana profile; although it exists everywhere in the universe, the concentration wasn't equally distributed.

The rest of the satellites that were currently mostly idle turned their "eyes" back toward the universe, their new primary task to develop a mana map of the few light years around the solar system that Earth called home.

Chapter 323 I'm Not Saying It's Aliens... But It's Aliens

Back in the present, in a secure meeting room somewhere in the universal simulation, the time-dilated meeting was still ongoing under Protocol 404.

Stephen Hawking continued his presentation, explaining the situation in more detail for the remaining humans who thought the mass was just some novel thing the scientists and researchers in Lab City had discovered. They felt the same as Aron initially had, that as long as it wasn't an immediate nuclear war or something, they would easily be able to handle whatever it was.

They had obviously forgotten that they'd been called to this meeting venue as a result of Protocol 404, so Dr. Hawking had to explain to them the importance of the green object on the screen.

"The object, although very far from us at about seven light years, is heading toward us at a quarter of light speed," he said. The humans in the room finally understand the implication of what was being said. Although they weren't astronauts, nor did they have any deep understanding of the field of space research, they still knew that an object of that size moving toward earth that fast was definitely not a natural occurrence.

"From the way it's moving, it's obvious that we aren't simply in its path. And that isn't all—we're still not sure if .25c is its maximum speed and will need to observe it for a longer period of time to come to a conclusion. But during that time, we need to assume that it's accelerating," he said, then paused to allow the people to digest what he was saying.

"We only managed to discover it with the mana mapping we were doing, meaning the object has yet to reach a point where satellites using conventional imaging can discover it. That also means that it started its journey sometime between one day and six years ago. We can only know for sure once we can detect it with regular imaging. Right now, we've already tasked our radio telescopes with determining its velocity and acceleration, but we're only 60% confident that we'll get any kind of results within the next three years. So the only method we have to track it is on the mana map. That'll give us its rate of acceleration, if any, but it won't give us any detailed information on what it is. For that, we'll need the radio telescopes—and all of them on the planet, at that." He paused once again, this time giving a longer break for the humans to digest the information he had been churning out.

"If we can send a mission to upgrade the Hubble Space Telescope, we can extend our visual observation range and get detailed information on the object," he continued. "It won't be very good, but we can use it to rule things out until we get a bigger, more specialized deep space telescope in position at the L2 Lagrange point."

He hadn't yet mentioned their hypothesis of what the mass might be, or where it had come from. This meeting would obviously last a very long time.

After a minute of silence, he dropped his next bombshell. "Since the object's never been picked up on visual sensors before, it's obvious that it's been created recently. Which means it was either created and launched by intelligent life and is an uncrewed object, or it's a crewed vessel and contains intelligent alien life."

The people in the conference room had just confirmed the existence of intelligent alien life and their reactions were complicated. Their jaws had dropped from a combination of surprise, disbelief, fear, and many more emotions they hadn't even known they could feel at the same time.

"So, to confirm," General Stiles cleared his throat, "alien life exists and this object is definitive proof of that?"

"Yes, and they're coming directly toward us," Dr. Hawking confirmed.

"I'm guessing your next question is how they're only just now discovering us when we've existed for so long?" he continued. It really was the question that was on everyone's mind, and he immediately answered it. "We've got two theories, one more likely than the other." He paused, creating suspense without planning to do so.

"The first hypothesis is that they discovered us long ago and it just took a lot of time to create a vessel capable of reaching us in a reasonable time, which means we're facing a civilization that's either very patient, very curious, very goal focused, or a very long-lived race... or anything, really, that could convince them to spend that much time preparing to come to us. The second hypothesis is that they only recently discovered us due to this," he said, and the screen behind him immediately showed the mana map of the earth.

On the map were areas of varying mana density, but there was only one part of the map that showed a blinding light; and behold—it was right on top of Eden.

"We think it might be the result of this concentration of mana right here." As he said that, the map displayed the blinding light covering Eden, then zoomed in until it was focused on Avalon Island, which was the center of the area of blinding light.

"Fuck," Aron said in a low voice. No one but Nova, who was omnipresent in the room, heard it, but the reaction told her that he had already discovered the source of the mana concentration on Avalon Island.

"The fusion reactor," he continued. "Wait, no.... It's the mana produced by the reactor's energy to mana converter."

About half of the electricity generated by the fusion reactor beneath the Cube was excess, so rather than store it, Aron had made the decision to use it for industrial purposes, like manufacturing the hybrid mana batteries for the Zeus One and Olympus electronics, along with some other various processes and applications.

Apparently, that decision had been a fuckup on a truly colossal, or rather cosmic scale.

Chapter 324 A Monkey With A Laser Gun

"Something on the island is causing the production of mana in such a high quantity that the equipment capable of seeing it shows us as a pulsar star due to the planet's rotation. That means we're constantly sending a beacon telling anyone else that's capable of detecting it that 'WE ARE HERE'. The only question that remains, now, is how fast is the beacon traveling through the cosmos?" As Dr. Hawking said that, the screen behind him zoomed out until the entire planet was visible, then zoomed out again until it was the size of a marble. The still image on the screen began to move, the flashing light of mana flickering on and off like someone who knows nothing about Morse code playing with a light switch. From the side, it almost appeared that Earth was a dying pulsar star, ejecting the last of its mass before it goes supercritical and explodes in a last, desperate act of wholesale self-

Aron watched with a look of fear on his face as he came to the realization that they had been sending this signal for more than two years, ever since he'd built the transformer-equipped fusion reactor. The horrifying news meant that whoever, or whatever, had sent the moon-sized object or vessel to them must have known about Earth for at least two years.

The most devastating part of the news is that he still had no idea how long it had taken the creators of the object to discover the signal he'd been sending. It had to be within two years, but did that mean the incoming object had been in the neighborhood? If not, had it been launched yesterday? A year ago? Two years ago? The uncertainty terrified him.

Dr. Hawking, knowing nothing of the panic attack Aron was having, continued, "Together with all of that, we have to realize how new we are and how young our discovery of mana actually is. We're still amateurs, so mistakes like this are only to be expected. If the, what we're currently calling 'Builders' are familiar enough to recognize this signal beacon for what it is, we must be a very tempting target to them. Imagine what you would do to a monkey that's in possession of a laser weapon—the best we can hope for is that they take it from us in a benevolent manner.

"But if the 'dark forest hypothesis' is true, well...." Here, he paused again as information on the dark forest alien contact hypothesis was uploaded to the minds of the human attendees. "If it's true, then we need to prepare for the worst."

"We must be prepared to face an enemy that is absolutely 'other' to us. One that we cannot anticipate, we cannot understand, and we cannot even begin to fathom in any way, shape, or form. We absolutely must NOT use ourselves as a reference, as that may cost us dearly in the long term.

"Although this is the first object we've discovered that's headed toward us, we still suspect that there might be more. But since the satellites that discovered this one weren't really optimized for the task, we can't see much farther out than ten or so light years. So what we need to do now is make plans on how to move forward from here," he finished, then returned to his seat.

There was a long, drawn-out silence in the room that was practically palpable for a solid ten minutes as everyone digested the information they'd had dumped on them over the past hour or so. Each person had their own thoughts as they digested the information the best they could with their genetically enhanced brains, which were the only thing that had allowed them to at least keep calm throughout this particular meeting.

It wasn't every day that they were informed of a potential Extinction-Level Event (ELE), after all.

"I assume that, together with this announcement, you already have a course of action in mind, right?" Alexander was the first to speak, as always. He had grown accustomed to Aron immediately handing him an intricately detailed course of action whenever the two men met, so in his heart, he was hoping that today's revelation would be the same.

[Unfortunately, he's hearing this for the first time, just like you. And as you've already noticed, we were called to this meeting using Protocol 404, which means this discovery is completely 'fresh,'] Nova said with a frown. [Protocol 404 is an emergency protocol that was triggered when it became apparent that all of your inputs were necessary to create a reaction plan for this discovery.]

"We'll start by shutting down the thing sending the signal before anything else," Aron said. It would hurt, since he would be temporarily losing the AIs' main quantum server as it was entirely mana-powered. Still, it would only mean a temporary increase in load for the rest of the server superclusters that Nova had been building, and the drop in actual performance wouldn't be completely devastating. But what would really hurt was that his main atomic printer would also be shut down while it was being converted from mana to electricity as a power source.

"With that out of the way, we still have a bit of time to think and come up with an action plan. For right now, let's take a break to gather our thoughts and adjust to the new discovery," he finished.

Everyone agreed, since they definitely required the break. Besides, time spent digesting now would lead to increased productivity later, so the meeting split into small groups or pairs that were

accustomed to working together in order to lay the initial groundwork for their planned suggestions during the brainstorming session that was yet to come.

After all, "more haste, less speed" was a saying for a reason.

Chapter 325 Human Nature

"So we have anywhere between ten and twenty-eight years before they arrive. We can prepare for the encounter slowly at the start, but we have to deal with everything holding us back on Earth and speed things up once we have a united front," Aron said when the break was over.

"Before we can begin full preparations, we need to be a united entity. So, since that isn't likely to happen on its own, we'll move to the second option, where I take over and unite the world under a single government, with myself as the sole ruler and ARES as the only military force."

The others in the room paled; they knew that although their chances against the coming moon—if it escalated to war upon contact—would be higher if they fought as a united force, but the UN would never have that ability. No government would ever give up their power and authority, partly due to greed and partly because of the joys of power and authority. So if someone had to unite the world, it might as well be the people in this meeting room. They were the only ones with the power to do so, so whether others willingly agreed or not, the unification would progress nevertheless.

Unfortunately, human nature being what it was, a peaceful unification was nothing more than a pipe dream.

"Over the next three years, we'll focus on tying up loose ends and finishing the unification. While we do that, we'll launch purpose-built early detection and tracking satellites to the L2, L3, L4, and L5 Lagrange points. That'll give us a higher-resolution map of the area within ten light years of us, so we'll know exactly what we're dealing with and when it'll arrive.

"At the same time, we need a ruling structure for the united planetary government and to focus on military technologies and training, including a space military to complement our ground, sea, and air forces." Although Aron hadn't come up with a detailed plan over the short break earlier, he'd at least had enough time to come up with a broad strokes outline so people could sort themselves into smaller task-focused groups in their areas of specialty.

"Let's reconvene a week from now, after we've had enough time to come up with more detailed plans."

After the meeting adjourned, the AIs disappeared in a flash, save for Nova, leaving only Aron, Felix, Sarah, Alexander, Diana, and Jose in the room with her.

Aron turned to Nova and asked, "What resolution did the UNSC come up with?"

Instead of answering in words, Nova gestured and the screen in the meeting room divided in half. On the left half was the tally of the votes and on the right was the recording of the voting process and announcement.

As they watched the decision being announced, Aron sighed, "They really are testing our patience, aren't they?" He didn't know whether to be disappointed with human nature or furious with the process.

"Are we going to allow them to do their investigation? From the looks of things, they're planning on using the opportunity and the threat of economic sanctions to steal our military tech," Alexander said, trying to gauge Aron's thoughts on how to act on the decision.

"No, we're not going to allow them to come in the first place," Aron said. It was a mildly out-of-character decision for him, who usually tried to remain behind the scenes and go with the flow.

"You'll have to make an announcement to display our stance and resolve to not be exploited just because we're still classified as a developing nation," Aron said to Alexander, then turned to Jose and continued, "Once Alexander makes his announcement, you should make one showing support as well."

Alexander and Jose both nodded and gave affirmative grunts.

"On your side, you should prepare to kick things up into high gear. We need more chaos if we're going to unite the planet—the more chaos there is, the faster the unification will happen and the less we'll have to bleed for it. Manpower is another resource, so it's up to you to ensure we lose as little of it as possible," Aron said to Diana Tregarde, the head of Nyx.

The discovery of an alien force headed his way marked a huge shift in Aron's approach to things. From the moment he had gained the system and become rich, the comfort that came along with the lifestyle change had caused him to constantly place himself in a passive position. He had either gone with the flow and not fought for things, or made overly complex, Machiavellian plots to avoid acting himself. It was rare that he made moves himself, or even used his overt forces at all, but that would all come to an end today. The emergence of an alien threat was exactly the kind of kick in the ass that he needed to finally step out of the shadows.

Although an outside observer might consider his reaction an overreaction simply because he had discovered what might be aliens, who may or may not be hostile, that really didn't matter. Whether or not this batch of aliens was hostile or friendly made no difference; where there was one, there would be more. And eventually, one of the civilizations that came in contact with Earth WOULD be hostile. It wasn't a chance, it wasn't a probability... it was an absolute guarantee that, eventually, there would be war with an alien force.

For Earth to stand a chance, it absolutely must be united.

Another reason the planet had to be united was that any self-defense force absolutely could not function under a divided leadership. That was another thing that made organizations like NATO and the UN toothless: a lack of unity and cohesiveness. A collective might sound like a good idea on paper, but human nature being what it was, it would always fail in practice. Socialism, Communism, Democracy, Republics... there was no perfect system of government once the pretty words on paper were put into practice by imperfect humans.

The best the average citizen could ever hope for is that the people who governed them were at least benevolent.

"Are we going to inform the world about the discovery?" Alexander asked.

"Yes, or at least the leadership of the nations. But before we do, we need to have a contingency plan in place. The announcement will be the last thing we do before we begin the final phase of the unification so we still have things to prepare before then. Though I hate to say it, I expect fierce

resistance without a show of force beforehand... so we will prepare that show of force in secret and bring it out when necessary.

"But first, we have to launch the observation network. Everything hinges on the data we collect on the incoming object, and the more evidence we have, the more leaders we can convince to unify without a fight," Aron said.

After a few more questions and answers, everyone logged off to rest as they were exhausted by the long meeting, together with the emotional ups and downs from the discovery itself.

"Looks like accumulating SP was a good idea after all," Aron said as he opened the system shop to look for things he might need for the upcoming difficulties.

Chapter 326 Blatant Robbery

UN headquarters, New York.

The days following the UNSC resolution regarding the dispute between Indonesia and Eden were filled with more meetings, both open and behind closed doors. The UN bylaws required them to announce any voting results and disclose their resolutions on their website within a certain amount of time, so everyone was busily arguing over how to divide the benefits from the Edenians. After all, in the eyes of the Big Five, Eden didn't deserve to have anything, especially considering its "poor and impoverished" status. And today was the day that the president of the UN Security Council, Ambassador Jennifer Walker of the United States, would send out a press release to the world and hold a press conference announcing the UN's decision.

She was quite pleased with herself, having won quite a few benefits for her country. Primarily, America would be taking over the oil extraction and the battery technology from the Edenian Navy, Russia would be taking Biogen and the asthma cure, the UK would take the shipbuilding technologies, France would receive the weapons technology, and China would be given the cellphone and laptop tech, including the manufacturing of their chips. Although all of the technologies would be shared by the five of them, each ambassador had agreed behind closed doors to collude and they would all be responsible for manufacturing the items and trading them between each member nation. Of course, that all hinged on the inspectors being able to pick a fault with Eden that would allow the UNSC to impose sanctions on them. But that wasn't a really hard task to accomplish; after all, finding fault with things, whether deserved or not, was incredibly easy if one were so inclined.

The reason that Ambassador Walker was pleased was because in addition to the technology acquisition, the US would be receiving all of the oil from Eden on their own.

She had done her duty and released the press release and the website was already displaying United Nations Security Council Resolution 2344, 'Concerning the Ongoing Dispute Between Indonesia and the Republic of Eden', so all that remained was the press conference where she would announce the resolution to the world. It was quite a feather in her cap and her staff had worked tirelessly to ensure that only "friendly" reporters would be in the audience and she knew all the questions that would be asked in advance.

The press conference went as planned. The reporters were friendly and only asked questions that Ambassador Walker had meticulously prepared to answer beforehand. The reporters had also gone into the conference with a general idea of what would be announced, as they'd already read the

resolution on the UNSC's website, so the only thing that surprised them was Walker's announcement about the hindrance of the inspection team being cause for the imposition of sanctions on the fledgling country. Even the friendliest reporter was a little uncomfortable at that, because it was a blatant abuse of process to railroad a country that any reasonable person would have agreed was in the right.

The Indonesian ambassador had immediately followed with her own press conference, where he announced that Indonesia welcomed the UN inspectors with open arms, and even offered to help with the investigation.

The only country that had remained silent to that point was Eden, though Panoptes was already busy drumming up support for Eden through Pangea. Still, no one knew exactly what Eden's response would be, though the Edenian citizens had naturally chosen their side already. They argued that the industrialized nations, led by the five permanent members of the UN Security Council, were trying to strong-arm them with false narratives because of the recent discovery of vast reserves of natural resources. Since Eden had continuously maintained that they were performing counterpiracy operations in Indonesian waters—including publicly releasing the satellite footage of the "innocent fishermen" they were accused of sinking—their accusations were quickly swaying the public to their side.

In response, the Big Five had found "experts" talking about how the video footage was doctored, and even complimented Eden on their expertise in filming movies. A certain Hollywood director even took to Pangea and joked about hiring them to work as editors on his next major blockbuster film.

The war of words on the internet continued off and on for hours until it settled down and everyone agreed that all Eden had to do to prove their innocence was let the inspectors in; after all, the UN was a respectable organization dedicated to maintaining world peace, so what was the big deal? Let them see what they wanted to see and they would clear Eden of any wrongdoing and life would go on.

Alexander's press secretary scheduled a press conference for the next day to announce the official Edenian response to the UN resolution. It would be broadcast on all channels in the country and streamed live through Eden's official Pangea account.

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The next day, the press conference took place as scheduled, and Alexander had no issues firing many shots across the UN's bow.

"If the allegations made any sense, we would naturally welcome the UN inspectors. But what we don't understand is why they want to investigate us and our weapons when the dispute is over whether or not our action of breaching Indonesia's territorial waters was valid under international maritime law as an act of counterpiracy. Indonesia is well known for having pirate-infested waters surrounding it, so why are we being singled out? And what does it have to do with our vessels?" he argued.

"We believe that the permanent members of the UN Security Council—China, Russia, France, the United Kingdom, and the United States of America—simply want to steal our weapons technology under the guise of 'inspecting' it. They have already sent over a list of demands that includes providing them with a copy of the schematics for our weapons and the blueprints for our ships,

making it blatantly obvious that they want to take our technology. Technology which, I remind everyone watching, is responsible for our nation's self defense and is classified as such.

"Therefore, we hereby formally deny their request and issue our strongest protest against their blatant rigging of the sacred act of voting. The UN doesn't want to send inspectors, they want to rob us. They want to rob us of our safety, they want to rob us of our security, and they want to rob us of our technological advances simply because they cannot tolerate a small nation like ourselves having something that they themselves do not. Thank you for your time, and may god bless Eden. I will be taking no questions at this time."

Following Alexander's press conference, Ambassador Foster, the Edenian representative to the UN, sent an official letter denying access to the investigation team so long as they required access to sensitive military technology as part of their inspection process.

The response from the UN came at practically light speed, compared to the normal ponderous actions that required meeting after meeting before finally being implemented. It was only a week later that they announced the sanctions they would impose on Eden unless their inspectors had free and unfettered access to the ships in question. Together with the sanctions, the UNSC also imposed fines of 15 million USD per day until the UN inspection team was granted the access they required.

Chapter 327 Resolve

"Arms embargo, import and export sanctions, travel bans, natural resource sanctions, financial sanctions, and even freezing the assets of citizens that are held in banks outside our country, including our own foreign currency reserve that's currently held in trust with the US Federal Reserve. Man they're desperate to get their hands on our tech," Aron said as he read the nearly endless list of sanctions.

The list had details of what exactly in those specified categories were being banned. For the financial sanctions it included freezing of the assets of every high-ranking member of the government, including John and the other generals of ARES, together with Alexander and his cabinet members. Aron was only saved from it since he had nothing connecting him to the government that would warrant his inclusion in the sanctions, at least not publicly.

Together with their assets being frozen, money that was owed to Eden from other countries that hadn't paid them yet was also frozen. That included the 65 billion that China was supposed to pay for the oil delivery that had started the whole mess. It was very obvious that the Chinese had added that clause to avoid, or at least delay the payment as long as possible; they would benefit either way.

The same people were also included in the travel ban, meaning that Alexander had very few countries he could visit at the moment without breaking any of the sanctions.

"They really banned us from buying weapons," Aron chuckled when he read the details about the arms embargo. They were banned from buying weapons from any member of the UN, but oddly enough, they weren't banned from selling them.

"So they banned the sale of all natural resources coming from our country. Except oil, that is, but we can't even sell that since our buyers can't pay us without violating the sanctions. Do they really take us for morons?" Aron muttered as he read the natural resources sanctions.

"But the biggest hit will be the import and export sanctions. That can at least harm the economy a bit, but our companies are explicitly listed as exceptions. I guess it's because we have things that

they can't replicate yet," Aron said when he realized that they were going to be choked in the import department. It might not harm his companies, since they were self-sufficient, but the rest of the country would be heavily affected by the import sanctions.

"How long until Alexander's address?" Aron asked.

[Seventeen minutes, sir,] Nova responded, materializing a countdown timer.

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"We've already read and understand the unfair sanctions being imposed on us by the UN in order to harm both our short- and long-term development plans," Alexander said after greeting the Edenians watching his address.

He had decided to do the announcement personally, not through his spokesperson, as he wanted to avoid a rebellion, no matter how unlikely one was. The citizens knew that they already had things much better under him than any of the other politicians in the country, much less the dictators who came before him.

"And in order to alleviate the chokehold they're trying to afflict on us, I called an emergency parliament session last night. In that session, we drafted and I signed a bill to reduce the harm of the import and export sanctions. That bill gives Hephaestus Industries and Manufacturing permission to produce all of the sanctioned products without having to license the relevant technology from its creators. If they're so determined to do us financial harm, then I am more than willing to return that harm directly to them," he said, causing the room full of reporters to have a mild brain malfunction. They hadn't expected that he would have such a drastic reaction to the sanctions, but with such an explosive beginning to his presidential address, they prepared themselves for what would follow as best as they could.

"As for the financial sanctions, there's nothing we can do to mitigate the harm they've already inflicted upon our great nation. Many of our country's overseas assets have been frozen, and the payments foreign companies and governments owe us are going unpaid. But that doesn't mean we have to dwell on it, as merely dwelling on a problem does nothing to resolve it. Thus, we further resolved to implement a solution to prevent further financial attacks on us.

"With that goal in mind, I had an emergency meeting with President Inez of Esparia and signed an agreement forming a central currency between our nations. The agreement will strengthen our economy and spending power, while also making it difficult to sanction us. Over the next month we will discuss the agreement in detail—what the currency will be, what powers the central bank will have, and how its rollout will take place with the minimum amount of fuss and hassle for the citizens of both of our countries.

"Together with the formation of a central bank, we're going to officially enter the financial marketplace. I met with the CEO of Connect, and he agreed to launch a subsidiary company that will be responsible for buying, selling, and trading shares in public companies by the time the new currency begins being rolled out. We will also implement policies that will make it profitable for companies to do business and have their shares traded in Eden, similar to the way Hong Kong and China handle their separate markets." Alexander was killing two birds with one stone and creating a virtuous cycle. First, the market trading would strengthen the new currency, and second, the new currency would make it more attractive to do business in Eden, thus increasing the volume of the share trades on the nascent market.

The saying "tough times make tougher people" was just as true on a national scale as it was on an individual scale.

"For the arms embargo, it's laughable. They're imposing these sanctions specifically because they want the weapons and equipment that we have, and the fact that we're prohibited from buying weapons we don't need while being explicitly allowed to sell our weapons to people who are outclassed by our military only serves to highlight the hypocrisy and greed of the people that decided to implement these ridiculous sanctions. I tell you this," he looked directly into the camera, "what we have is ours, and you will NEVER be able to take it from us!

"As for the natural resource export ban, although it'll harm us in the short term, it'll also allow us to focus on building up our domestic industries, as well as force us to innovate in those fields just as much as we did in the defense industry. Our nation has always been perceived as poor and impoverished by outsiders, and it's about time we change that.

"The people whose corruption and greed made them think they could prevent us from developing, prevent us from industrializing, prevent us from buying and selling, and prevent us from traveling haven't realized the strength of our spirit that we honed through generations of revolution against evil men like them. We have suffered, and through suffering, grown stronger. We persevere, through famine and flood, through fires and storms. We have the heart, the courage, and the determination to suffer adversity, and through suffering, we thrive. We are tougher than them, we are more just than them, we are more determined than them, and we are more resolved than them.

"We are a country that, instead of silently and meekly suffering the injustices done to us, choose to fight. And though this may not be a fight that's won with guns, we will learn to fight on this new political battlefield and we, will, win!" Alexander hammered his clenched fist against the podium with each of the last three words for emphasis.

"Dear citizens," he continued after a pause to recollect himself and change mental gears.

"Although it might seem like we're nearing hard times again, and no matter how true that might be, we have to remember that what we're facing now is something we were bound to face one day or another, as we grow stronger and begin threatening others' interests. I know that many of you may think that we could've just accepted their demands and our lives would continue as they are now, but you'd be mistaken. The people behind these sanctions are bullies, and like bullies, they're only empowered by surrender. Giving in will only hand them more power over us, and the moment we give in on one thing, we'll be forced to give in on another. And another. And another. We'll be forced to give so much that there will be no difference between what we are today as a nation and what we were in the past when we suffered under the yoke of dictator after dictator. We will be bled by them until we have no more blood to give, then they will devour our flesh and build cudgels from our bones that they'll use to beat others into the same position as we were in just a few short years ago.

"Are we that naive? Are we that gullible? That shortsighted?

"To that, I say: no! We are NOT naive! We are NOT gullible! We are NOT shortsighted! We are more than capable of standing on our own and making minor sacrifices now for great gains later.

"I stand here today, the president of this great nation, and I issue you this promise: we will be self-sustaining within a year, or I will resign as president of this great nation and surrender myself to you, the citizens of Eden, to be judged."

His address finished, Alexander introduced his press secretary, who would answer a few questions from the press. Later, the press department would send out releases with more details on the plan that had been drafted to deal with the issues at hand.

Chapter 328 Schemes and Gratitude

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"Yes, Mr. Ambassador, we would like to buy all the grains that China isn't taking," the Edenian ambassador to Ukraine repeated his request to his Ukrainian counterpart. Ukraine was suffering China's retaliation for voting against their decision in the UNSC meeting.

"Are you trying to help us because we voted in your favor, or is it preparation for when the sanctions are implemented on Eden?" he asked to sate his curiosity, as he had no plans to deny their offer at all.

"It's a bit of both, as we need to have enough of a food surplus that when the import ban is implemented next week we'll have enough to allow us to hold out for a year. Plus, although your vote did nothing to change the outcome, it still made it difficult for the bastards to pass the sanctions." The Edenian ambassador wouldn't bother hiding anything, since everyone knew the ins and outs of what had recently taken place behind closed doors.

"But you've been quite helpful to us in countering the pro-Russian faction in Crimea, so there's no need for you to be grateful for what was basically nothing but pointless support," the Ukrainian said. He was hinting at the intelligence operations that were being conducted by Nyx agents on the ground, helping Ukraine have a semblance of counterintelligence against the Russian invaders. They were trying to infiltrate Ukraine in order to make their upcoming invasion as easy as possible, to the point that they might not even need to fire a single shot at all. And the Nyx agents had been helping them prevent that from happening.

"I'm just doing what my bosses require of me," the Edenian ambassador replied, feeling quite good for his country's action. Even he knew that they were being very friendly with Ukraine, more so than they normally should be for other countries.

Meanwhile, Nyx herself, who was monitoring this phone call, couldn't help but shake her head as she knew Eden was only repaying their support in the UNSC by buying the grains. They had never considered the intelligence help they provided Ukraine to be a favor, since it was a scheme within a scheme, meant to aid Vladimir in rising up the chain of command inside the Kremlin. The plan had been working very well for him, as he was in consideration to be promoted to one of the higher positions in the organization, one where he could move a large portion of the intelligence department without even having to report to the Kremlin. That said, even if he got promoted, he would still have eyes on him paying attention to how he uses them.

"Then I'll inform our higher-ups and get back to you as soon as possible to make sure the deal is sealed before the import sanctions go into effect," the Ukrainian ambassador said. After bidding his farewells, he ended the call and immediately reported the situation to the government officials who could facilitate such a huge order for Eden.

After three back and forth negotiation sessions, the deal was approved and signed. But due to the massive amounts of wheat requiring shipping, as the order was enough to sustain the country's need for grain imports for more than two years, Rachael had immediately put the atomic printers into

higher gear, printing massive ships that could retrieve their grain before the sanction went into effect.

...

Aron was standing in front of the building that had the fusion reactor under it, ready to take it offline for a few hours. Once the reactor was SCRAMmed, the smaller, more mobile atomic printers would begin modifying the transformer so it would deliver only electricity, but not transform it to mana.

"Let's begin," he said once he was sure that the building and a ten-kilometer radius around it was empty, with him as the sole human inside the circle.

As if waiting for his order, the printers began their work by digging in order to arrive at the underground where the transformer was. And while they were on their way, the last bit of mana was sent to the main quantum server to allow it to operate without a constant supply of energy for about three days. After that supply was exhausted, the server would go offline together with the fusion reactor. But the dip in power wasn't noticed by anyone on the island, much less those in the country, as the other fusion reactors had picked up the slack and were smoothly providing electricity to every one of Helios' customers.

When the atomic printers arrived at the location of the underground transformer, they immediately started disintegrating it to pieces while at the same time printing a new transformer in its place, one that had just finished its testing in Lab City and had been deemed operational.

Together with that, one atomic printer entered the pipeline in which mana was being transported to the quantum server, where it began its journey. It would print room-temperature superconducting cables stretching from the new transformer to the server room, which was currently undergoing modifications as well. If all went according to plan, the server room's modifications would be completed after the power cable was finished being laid.

It didn't take long before the new transformer was completed and the superconducting high-voltage cable had arrived at the server room. The modification of the server room would be quite a bit more complex; the entire floor was being replaced by that same superconducting material so electricity could travel through the legs of each server rack to power the servers within. But the modifications didn't end there—the rune that currently provided cooling was to be replaced as well. That replacement would render the server room completely inhospitable to human life, as Nova had chosen the most brute-force method of cooling in order to save time on the modifications. The entire server room would simply be flooded with constantly circulating liquid helium through a system that an atomic printer was currently busily printing.

But that was the only thing that would take a bit longer, as with the transformer completed, the changes in the atomic printers would need to be taken care of, so it too will be taken offline for a short time to be modified as well.

"With that out of the way, let's go look for a solution," Aron said as he boarded a vehicle that would take him back to the Cube. He was planning on logging into the universal simulation to continue brainstorming on how to deal with the mess they had unknowingly caused, as well as how to use mana but stop it from looking like a pulsar star going supernova in mana sight.

Chapter 329 Shopping List

"Mr. President, why do you think Eden overreacted so much to the idea of UN inspection teams?"

President Trump was currently holding a press briefing. When he saw the reporter that had asked the question, he recognized them from Fox News and smiled as he answered, "Although every country has some reason or other behind their actions, based on Eden's overreaction, they're really taking the most difficult path. Sanctions are gonna be imposed. So many sanctions. It's really gonna hurt them where it hurts. So for them to risk so much just to stop inspectors from getting in, that means they must have something really big to hide." Trump stopped there to allow the reporter to ask a follow up question.

The reporter didn't disappoint and immediately asked, "And what might they have to hide?"

"If it was me, and it wasn't, because I'm too smart to hurt this beautiful country with so many sanctions, but if it was me, then the only thing I can see myself hiding like that would be weapons of mass destruction. Of course, we already know what happens to countries that hide weapons of mass destruction," he said, sternly gazing directly into the camera. He wanted to plant a seed of doubt in Eden's credibility, and WMDs were the easiest accusation he could make.

Though it caused a commotion in the room, he didn't answer any more questions on the topic, having already said enough to cause the idea to take root in people's minds. He would leave the rest to his supporters and detractors to talk about, either defending his claim or refuting it. It didn't matter, the more they talked about it, the more his words would spread to the rest of the world.

He knew it was the start of their plan to crank up the pressure on Eden. They were planning on giving Eden and Alexander the Saddam treatment, and at the moment, the CIA was working overtime in coming up with, interpreting, or outright making up false intel in a way that would make their suspicion be seen as the truth by people suspecting them of having WMDs and interpreting everything they do as evidence in support of that conclusion. It was the same phenomenon seen in couples, where one half would suspect the other of being unfaithful and view them through the lens of that assumption being true.

...

"If I had enough SP to buy this, it would solve all the problems we have," Aron said as he read the description of a knowledge he couldn't afford at the moment.

[FTL (Faster Than Light) travel—Alcubierre Warp Drive

A means of exceeding the universal speeding limit. This is one of the technologies that has been discovered by multiple civilizations in different times and is considered the minimum qualification to be considered a seedling of an advanced civilization.

The Alcubierre Warp Drive was theorized on Earth by theoretical physicist Miguel Alcubierre, based on Einstein's field equation. It is widely considered to be an entry-level FTL method and operates by generating....

Price: 100,000,000,000sp]

"Damn... if you need to have FTL to even be considered a proto-advanced civilization, what does that make us?" Aron muttered as he continued reading. The description of FTL travel as a category was rather lengthy, considering all the various means and methods involved in breaking the speed

limit imposed by the laws of physics, so he had chosen the cheapest one to read about in further detail.

[You can just release product after product for the next two years to collect enough SP to buy it. As they say, it's better to be exceptionally good at one thing than moderately good at many,] Nova said, appearing behind Aron and reading the system screen over his shoulder. He had given her permission in the system long ago, so she could see its prompts just as easily as he could; but she preferred reading over his shoulder to reading it on her own lest she read too much faster than him and cause confusion in the resulting discussion.

"That would've been a good idea... if we were facing an enemy we know something about. Since we don't, we need to have a broad knowledge base so that no matter what they bring to the table, we have a better chance of countering it with something we already have in our arsenal. Plus, FTL would just get us there and we'd still likely be unable to do anything once we're right in front of them," Aron countered. He had the habit of saying things that he was sure Nova already knew. It was a good habit to have, as in the midst of saying his thoughts aloud, he may discover something important in them that would reveal a solution he had yet to consider. And Nova was aware of that tendency of his, so she was more than willing to play along. After all, as an artificial intelligence, no matter how sentient she was, she would forever be incapable of the fuzzy thinking and true randomness that humans used in their day-to-day thought process.

"Let's look at other things." Aron moved on to other things from the system.

[Robotics, tier 1

A technologically advanced solution to aid or replace manual labor in menial and dangerous tasks....

Price: 1,000,000,000sp]

[Yep, we need this,] Nova interjected. [Although the robotics research in Lab City has advanced enough to start rolling them, they aren't advanced enough to be able to participate in a war theater,] she continued, sounding so excited that Aron did a doubletake as he realized the reasoning behind her excitement—she badly desired a physical body so she could interact with the world on her own, instead of simply viewing it through cameras and other digital sources.

[Terraforming, tier 1

A method of converting a hostile environment to a beneficial one. It is the gateway to colonizing other planets and reaching beyond the cradle of your civilization. It has been independently discovered by many civilizations, but the first was....

Price: 2,000,000,000sp]

He then moved to another technology after bookmarking the previous technologies for later purchases.

[Artificial Environmental Shielding, tier 1]

[Galactical Navigation System, tier 1]

[Intermediate Runic Knowledge, tier 1]

[Tractor and Repulsor Beams, tier 1]

[Energy Weapons, tier 1]

[Psionic Shielding, tier 1]

[Spatial lock, tier 1]

...

He continued searching for things that he had thought about during his recent rest, and when he was done, Nova materialized a holographic screen summarizing the list so the two of them could jointly see the prices and discuss solutions. After going through it, they organized it by priority, from most-to least-necessary technologies, then grouped them further into absolute requirements and things that would be nice to have. The ones that would only be nice to have could be bought piecemeal and researched on their own in Lab City, but the priority required tech would be purchased whole and immediately implemented.

Chapter 330 A Po' Boy Once Mo'

"We have to buy the psionic shielding, since we don't know if they can communicate using their minds. If they can, and our minds aren't shielded, they'll probably be able to read ours. Or even control them! That would be devastating," Aron said. He definitely couldn't afford to give up the upper hand by allowing the aliens to invade the thoughts of humans.

"Plus, with the mind control defense knowledge, we might even be able to extrapolate how to control the minds of other intelligent beings."

[When it comes to kinetic weapons, we don't need to buy those. We're already far ahead in that category and we'll only continue advancing,] Nova said, resulting in Aron striking the kinetic weapons knowledge off the list.

"Plus, we can use the disintegration function of the atomic printers as a weapon, as long as we can figure out how to increase its range." Aron received a look of approval from Nova. She wasn't capable of creative leaps of logic like that, so it was something she truly appreciated about him.

[Not only that, but it can also be used in many different ways. It can be used to board enemy ships, as a stealth infiltrator by breaching and dropping surveillance devices, or even as a bioweapon. We just need to strengthen it so it can handle the stress of being fired from a coilgun.]

"By the way, how are the golden research labs doing? We've only used a tiny bit of their results," Aron asked. There was much to implement from the golden labs in Lab City and he had only tapped into a small bit of their potential.

[They're about in the same place as their conventional counterparts. The difficulty is that you're the only person who can inscribe and charge runes,] Nova answered as she showed him some parts of the tech completed by the golden labs.

"Let's see if there's any tech we can use to help us solve that problem," Aron said and went on a window shopping spree again.

"Now that's way too expensive even though I'm flush with SP right now," he said when he found what he was looking for.

[Runic Imprinting, tier 1]

They say laziness is the father of all discoveries, and this technology follows that rule. It was discovered by a runic imprinting worker from a magitech civilization who hated spending his time and energy imprinting runes. The hard work drained his mental energy and stamina, leading to a rocky marriage, and due to wanting to remain with his wife, he had an epiphany and built a device that could do the work for him. As a result, he ended up the richest, most powerful man of that civilization.

Price: 15,000,000,000sp]

Despite his complaining, Aron still added it to his list to buy later. "Although we can earn more SP the more tech we release to humanity, it would be counterproductive right now. But once Earth is united, there'll be no need to hold back anymore and we can start a cycle of massive SP farming.

...

"Now I'm poor again," Aron sighed as he looked at the pitiful 100 SP remaining on his system screen.

"When the system is finished assimilating the new knowledge, you can start integrating it into Lab City and test simulation 01," he said. The researchers in Lab City had given him pleasant surprises before, so he hoped they would do the same with the recent purchases, whether they were whole or in part. It would be difficult to produce further research results on technologies he had wholly purchased, but his partial purchases had branched out into multiple directions and his whole technologies had been used in some very creative ways. In fact, if Earth wasn't currently pressed for time, he would have preferred to only buy technologies piecemeal, as it was cost-effective to give the creative minds in Lab City a starting point and let them have their head determining where to go from there.

All the technologies that were being sent were things that Nova hadn't found inside the universal simulation. She'd spent the last week checking and compiling a list of their current tech, which had delayed Aron's shopping spree by a week. It had been a worthwhile tradeoff, though, as he now had a better idea of what they needed after discovering everything they already knew.

The new tech also included the knowledge of nanotechnology and megastructures, as there were two civilizations that had developed enough to ascend to an entirely new reality, and each of them were fanatic about one of those fields.

The civilization that had fanatically researched, invented, built, and improved megastructures had begun doing so when they discovered that their planet would face a devastating supernova shockwave from a relatively close solar system. They began by building a massive shield around their planet, then eventually emigrated from the surface of their world to a Dyson sphere around their star. From there, they learned how to harness black holes, and eventually discovered a way to use them to travel to different dimensions and left the material world behind entirely.

The one that focused on nanotechnology, on the other hand, had been forced to do so when faced with a civilization of marauders that used nanobots as weapons. The marauders would launch a "gray goo" style apocalypse on planets, or other celestial objects, then harvest them for technology and resources. The civilization that was under attack was already a galactic-scale empire, with multiple planets terraformed and colonized, so they began their evolution with the idea of defending themselves from the terrible planetkiller weapons, only to eventually ended up miniaturizing their entire civilization and moving to the quantum world.

Obviously, Aron couldn't immediately skip to the end and lead humanity's emigration to a higher, or at least new, plane of existence, but he still found it ironic that the planetbound civilization had focused on building megastructures, while the galaxy-spanning empire focused on shrinking everything down, yet each had reached similar destinations in the end. Still, the system's description of the knowledges had given him a general idea of a successful research path for future development.

'To each their own,' he thought, 'but at least I'm the beneficiary of their advancements.'

The system didn't waste any time in integrating the knowledge into Aron one after another after he confirmed his purchases, but this time—thanks to his latest evolution—he didn't even feel dazed, let alone the freeze he used to feel when he was receiving knowledge assimilation. Plus, the speed at which the knowledge was assimilated into him had greatly increased; it only took thirty minutes for the system to impart all of the knowledge he had just bought from its shop.