

## Tech System 691

### Chapter 691 FAFO 7

The humanoid continued its relentless efforts for over two minutes, pushing against the shield's limits in a desperate bid to exhaust its durability before mana could replenish it.

Eventually, it stopped, sitting down in resignation, mirroring Aron's earlier decision.

Rina, having defeated her opponent in just a minute, felt a mix of pride and caution. She had managed to showcase her prowess, a result of her dedicated focus on mastering magic, something she had selected as her official duty as the emperor's spouse.

"How many minutes have passed since we left the palace?" Rina asked, her gaze fixed on the defeated humanoid.

Despite her apparent victory, Rina remained wary. She knew this was only a fraction of what their enemies might be capable of.

The information from the three tree folks on their side had made her acutely aware of the potential threats, so she stayed on high alert, awaiting confirmation from Aron that the situation was fully under control.

{Nine minutes} Nova responded promptly.

"This should wrap up within twenty minutes before they resort to any desperate measures that might cause lasting damage to the planet and its inhabitants," Rina said, settling back into her waiting stance and bracing for any potential escalations.

Simultaneously, Nova projected the situation on Aron's side. Seeing his current predicament, she appeared neither surprised nor particularly concerned, maintaining her focus on the unfolding events.

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The humanoid on Aron's side, who had been observing Aron's situation with detached interest, decided it was time to act.

"Let's see if you can withstand the same treatment you've given us," the humanoid declared, conjuring a shield that was roughly a meter wider compared to Aron's still-active shield.

With a decisive motion, the humanoid ignited a fire inside the shield. The intent was clear: to continuously inflict damage on Aron's shield, draining the minimal mana he had managed to gather within it.

This would force Aron's shield to deactivate, leaving him vulnerable and unable to resist being taken over.

The fire continued to assault Aron's shield for the next minute, with the intense heat and pressure testing its limits. Despite the relentless onslaught, the shield held firm, causing visible irritation on the humanoid's face.

It was growing increasingly frustrated, as the time for the two tree folks to execute their next plan was rapidly approaching. The delay was unacceptable, and despite deploying their strongest representatives to handle the imperial couple, they had yet to achieve their objective.

“I have access to the entire planet’s mana while you’re limited to just what’s in your shield,” the humanoid said, his voice dripping with disdain. “I can keep this up all day.”

His irritation was evident, however, as he not only wanted but needed to expedite the process and return back to their specific tree folk.

The core root humanoids were crucial for the tree folks' next plan, but the delay caused by dealing with Aron and Rina was becoming a significant issue.

Since only one core root humanoid could be created at a time, they couldn’t afford to go back and create thousands from outer roots; doing so would risk Aron regaining access to the planet’s mana, undermining their efforts. As for the one sent to Rina, he was still stuck in a shield.

The main consciousness could take over the shield rune and continue the assault, but that would divert their focus from the impending plan, which was critical to execute at this very moment.

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“I’m ready. What about you?” Oak inquired, having completed his preparations.

“Just a second, and I’m done,” Mangrove replied, wrapping up his own preparations as he spoke.

Once they confirmed their readiness, they turned their attention to their humanoids. The sight that greeted them was far from satisfactory.

“It just alters a few aspects of the plan, but nothing that will derail it entirely,” Oak said, his frustration evident but under control. He resisted the urge to take drastic action at this moment that could damage the planet and provoke the traitors into action.

“We’ll handle them after the plan is executed,” Mangrove agreed, his tone resolute. “Let’s begin, before anything else interferes.”

With that, they set to work, focusing on their preparations.

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**\*\*Proimaxa B\*\***

From outside the planet, where the exploration fleet’s mothership was currently docked, now manned only by minimal security personnel and a few remaining scientists and researchers. The bulk of the military forces had been deployed to the surface to carry out the emperor’s orders.

The escort fleet ships, tasked with defending the planet’s four cardinal directions against potential external threats, were still en route back to the planet. They had received the emperor’s orders just

ten minutes earlier and would require a few more minutes to return and resume their given imperial orders.

Bianchi, the fleet admiral, was diligently overseeing the fleet's operations, issuing directives and managing updates for various groups.

However, he was momentarily stunned as a colossal magic circle thousands of kilometers in radius materialized above the planet. The magic circle began forming a massive shield making it obvious that it intended to surround the planet, clearly designed to isolate it and prevent any interference from his fleet.

Although magic circles activate almost instantly after creation and mana provision, their completion speed varies based on the scale of their intended effect. In essence, the larger and more complex the magic circle, the longer it takes to finalize the process.

However, the shield's creation didn't continue peacefully, as it was soon met with resistance. It appeared that someone or a group of individuals had moved to disrupt the process, actively attempting to dismantle the magic cycle before it could be completed. To these individuals, the shield's completion threatened to complicate their given responsibilities significantly.

"As expected, they didn't remain passive and took action," Oak said, a hint of disappointment in his tone. However, the disappointment was short-lived as he continued, "Then don't blame me for what I'm about to do." His voice carried a tone of conviction, indicating that he was fully prepared to proceed with his next steps despite the interference.

## Chapter 692 FAFO 8

This phase of the plan demanded minimal interference at the outset, as any significant disruption could jeopardize their objectives. The uncertainty surrounding how the remaining tree folks might respond to their actions added another layer of complexity. Anticipating potential obstacles, they had already devised strategies to deal with these powerful beings if necessary.

And how do you handle three individuals who, if they interfere, could dismantle your entire plan? You create a dilemma for them, forcing them into a situation where they must choose between confronting you and jeopardizing their own interests or dealing with an immediate threat and allowing your plan to proceed, knowing full well they will pay the price later. It's a classic rock and a hard place scenario.

And they had billions of lives to use as distractions to divert attention from their true intentions.

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{Sir, the giants and dark elves have started attacking everyone else. What are your orders?} Nova reported to Aron, displaying the unfolding situation on the ground and awaiting his instructions.

"What's their take on this?" Aron asked.

{They mentioned that each of them can command the races they created. While issuing orders to a few individuals isn't a problem, doing so on a large scale would take a significant toll on them. They want to know if they should prioritize disrupting the shield's creation or focus on minimizing

damage to their people. If they choose the latter and the shield is completed, they won't be able to destroy or cancel it since it will draw on the planet's mana for fuel,} Nova explained.

"Tell them to prioritize preventing any damage on the ground. The same goes for the military—order them to use stun weapons or inflict non-lethal injuries. I want to avoid casualties," Aron instructed firmly. He was confident he could deal with the shield if necessary, but that would be a last resort if his plan didn't work.

{Understood,} Nova replied, swiftly relaying the orders to the entire fleet and the Proximian forces temporarily under Aron's control, while also informing the tree folk to focus on their people.

"If this drags on much longer, it will be the spark that ignites racial division among them," Aron remarked, his eyes scanning the different video feeds showing the chaos unfolding below. He understood that if the situation wasn't brought under control soon, the seeds of hatred between the races would be sown, and the Proximians would be introduced to racism.

Thankfully, there were no children, as they would have been the ones to suffer the most from this.

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The chaos on the planet was unprecedented, with billions of Proximians caught in the turmoil. One faction aimed to inflict maximum damage, while the other struggled to endure for as long as possible.

As he ducked to avoid a chicken knife hurled by his wife, a dark elf, spat out in frustration, "Fuck your elder!"

Although the situation should have filled him with anger, his expression betrayed a different emotion. When this conflict began, he had been deeply saddened by the thought that his wife might want to kill him.

However, upon learning from his elder that it was her elder who had orchestrated this and that she was not acting of her own volition, he felt a surge of relief. His happiness that his wife had no murderous intent for him far outweighed the anger he should have felt towards the elder who had set this tragic sequence of events into motion.

"But first, let's deal with you," he said, dodging the barrage of flying kitchenware as he moved towards his wife. With a quick activation of his affinity magic, he shocked her into unconsciousness.

"Though I had hoped to use this magic only in more intimate settings, I had no choice," he murmured as he carefully carried her to their bed. Once she was settled, he said, "Elder, I'm done here." As he spoke, his eyes briefly lost focus. He extended his hand, conjuring a shield around her—both a protective barrier and a prison, should she awaken before the elders were dealt with. He then regained control of his body as his elder relinquished it back to him.

“Go help others who are near you,” were the next orders he received from his elder. He immediately left his house and was met with a dwarf desperately trying to escape from a giant.

The size difference between them was immense, and the giant quickly overpowered the dwarf, beginning to strangle her with all its might.

Without hesitation, he sprang into action. With lightning coursing through his body, he moved at lightning speed towards the giant, aiming to shock her into unconsciousness.

“Thank god,” he said, observing the scene. “They seem to have lost some of their intelligence and are now fighting against the elders' orders, making them easier to handle.” He watched as the giant was enclosed in a shield, and he did the same for the dwarf, who was deemed unable to defend herself and would only be a liability rather than a help.

Similar scenes were unfolding across the planet. The tree folks were concentrating their efforts on aiding those who couldn't fend for themselves, as well as reaching out to isolated locations where individuals might be at risk of death. They also responded urgently to distress calls from their children in perilous situations, striving to rescue them.

This immense pressure tested their concentration like never before, as they had to manage and respond to an unprecedented number of emergencies simultaneously.

Meanwhile, Nova was working tirelessly to coordinate the military forces. She also directed the virtual intelligence to disrupt the giants and dark elves within the military ranks who were armed and posing a threat. The virtual intelligence deactivated their weapons or even turned them against their wielders.

For some, tractor beams were employed to capture them. They were then placed in pods where stasis was activated, effectively putting them out of commission.

While everyone was focused on their tasks, the shield continued to materialize. Within just five minutes, it was fully formed, enveloping the planet entirely and effectively isolating it from both the fleets on the outside and the emperor within, cutting off all external and internal connections.

## Chapter 693 FAFO 9

As soon as the shield was completed, the two tree folks began absorbing mana from both the ocean and the atmosphere now that they didn't have to worry about interference from anyone.

Initially, the process was subtle, but it was quickly detected by those with advanced mana sensitivity, and they immediately came up with a hypothesis behind this action.

“Looks like your magic system is designed for efficiency,” the humanoid remarked, still engaged in burning through Aron's shield. Despite their efforts, which had been ongoing for over seven minutes—a duration long enough to deplete the approximated amount of mana in the shields—Aron's shield remained intact. The humanoid could only conclude that the system's efficiency was the reason for this anomaly.

They hadn't considered that Aron might have a mana tank within him, enabling him to use magic even in areas devoid of ambient mana. This was thanks to his previous encounters and rapid attacks that had only utilized the surrounding mana, making them not even consider the other option.

'How many more minutes before you're done?' Aron asked mentally.

'An hour at the earliest, if I'm to do it without being discovered,' came the response.

'Is there any way to accelerate it?' Aron inquired. He understood that although he could continue feigning confinement, it would give the other side time to implement their plans. Additionally, it meant that the Proximians would have to endure dealing with their out-of-control compatriots for that duration.

'There is a way, but it requires a significant distraction to divert their attention so I can avoid detection,' was the reply.

'I'll provide you with one. Finish it in five minutes,' Aron declared, finally moving from his sitting position for the first time since being locked in the shield. He planned to bring this situation to a close as quickly as possible now that he had the response he needed.

'If it's a large enough distraction, I can manage it within that timeframe. I'll be waiting for it,' the response came before the communication went silent.

"Let me ask you something," Aron said, addressing the tree folk, or at least in the direction of where it was, as a dome of intense fire still separated them. "Have you ever considered that you might lose?"

"Not even once," the humanoid replied, his tone laced with arrogance.

"Okay," Aron responded. He moved closer until he could touch a part of his shield with his hand. Without further comment, he abruptly expanded his shield to match the size of the one containing the fire. This expansion compressed the fire within, increasing its intensity to the point where it exceeded the capacity of the outer shield and before the humanoid could react to his action, the outer shield shattered under the immense pressure.

"Quite a foolish move on your part," the humanoid said with a sinister smile, observing how the situation was shifting in his favor. "What are you going to do now that you've expended the little mana you had left?"

Aron didn't bother to respond. Instead, he expanded his shield once again, catching the other humanoid off-guard. The sudden expansion pushed the humanoid outward until the shield almost matched the size of the massive shield that had previously imprisoned him, with the humanoid being within the one meter separation between the two shields.

Before the humanoid could react, a rune materialized on Aron's hand. Aron immediately infused it with a massive amount of mana, a quantity far exceeding what should have been possible within the shield, given that the humanoid had absorbed nearly all the available mana. Without delay, Aron directed the rune toward the shield, causing it to become passive temporarily before returning to active.

The rune then immediately detonated, obliterating the massive shield and killing the humanoid almost instantly.

Aron quickly created another cylinder shield and extended it until it reached the ocean floor. He then expanded it to a radius of about fifteen kilometers, displacing a significant amount of water. Despite the scale of the displacement, it was a mere drop in the ocean compared to the size of the planet.

This time, however, he wasn't using the cylinder to descend to the ocean's depths out of fear of being struck by the roots. Instead, he had a different purpose in mind for this action.

Another fire rune materialized on Aron's hand. This time, he didn't immediately deploy it but spent over thirty seconds fueling it with mana. Given the high density of mana in the planet's atmosphere, this would be the most powerful attack he had ever unleashed.

After thoroughly charging the rune, he sent it into the cylinder shield.

Moments later, he activated it.

“.....”

Anyone observing this, whether through the live stream or their senses, instinctively closed their eyes. The intensity was so overwhelming that it felt as if the sun had suddenly appeared before them. They could perceive nothing else; the shockwave and the explosion were entirely contained within the shield, leaving them in stunned silence.

The shield contained the explosion and shockwave, trapping them within its walls. As the energy bounced off the shield's interior, the pressure and intensity of the explosion increased. The only outlet was the bottom of the shield, where the roots were being incinerated, and the burning expanded to create a hole more than half a kilometer deep. This excavation also formed a massive bowl of molten mirror.

Despite the shield's containment of the explosion, the aftermath couldn't be contained in the same way. The detonation was several magnitudes more powerful than the Tsar bomb. As a result, the entire planet experienced violent tremors, with the underground shockwave reverberating around the globe multiple times over the next few minutes.

With the ground shaking violently, everything within it, including the tree folks' roots, endured the same tumultuous vibrations. If they had nerves, they would have been overwhelmed by the pain, but fortunately, they lacked such sensory responses.

Nevertheless, the attack and the ongoing tremors provided a sufficient distraction, allowing Aron's plan the freedom to do whatever it was doing without concern for discovery. The tremors were so overwhelming that anything else that might have been detected would be dismissed as part of the natural chaos, avoiding any suspicion.

Chapter 694 FAFO 10

“Did you feel what I felt?” Oak asked, his voice tinged with unease. As the tremors and explosions shook the planet, some of his core roots had disintegrated under the intense heat and pressure, beyond what they could withstand despite their strength.

For the first time in his existence, Oak felt a profound sense of danger—a sensation so foreign to him that he struggled to categorize it.

“Although I’m not certain it’s exactly the same, I felt something too,” Mangrove responded, sharing in the unsettling sensation. Like Oak, some of his roots had also disintegrated, but the feeling they both experienced wasn’t merely a reaction to the damage. It was something deeper, something far more disconcerting, and it left Mangrove with a growing sense of unease.

“But we’ve experienced earthquakes before—what’s different about this one?” Oak asked, trying to make sense of the unfamiliar feeling. “Other than the loss of some of our core roots, which isn’t too significant considering the end goal.”

He searched his memories for a similar reaction during past earthquakes, but since they didn’t have such advanced sensations back then, he couldn’t be sure if they had felt the same way before.

The possibility that this strange feeling was related to the loss of their roots crossed his mind, as it was the first time they had experienced such destruction. However, he couldn’t shake the sense that this was something more profound—something akin to fear, though he hesitated to name it as such.

“It doesn’t matter,” Mangrove replied, trying to focus on the task at hand. “But it doesn’t seem like he plans on stopping, and we can’t halt the mana absorption now that we’ve started, or all the mana we’ve gathered will go to waste.”

While they conversed, a small portion of their attention was dedicated to monitoring the situation, including Aron, who appeared intent on continuing his destructive actions after the first devastating attack. The pressure was mounting, and they knew they couldn’t afford to falter now.

“I have an idea to deal with him, but there's a chance it could fail,” Oak said, then quickly outlined the plan he had come up with. After explaining the concept, he waited for Mangrove’s response, giving him time to process the idea and come to a decision.

“There’s no harm in trying,” Mangrove finally responded. “If it works, it will benefit us. If it doesn’t, we can stop what we’re doing and manage the loss after we deal with them once and for all.”

With that, they jointly reached out to the other tree folks, summoning them for a meeting in the timeless meadow.

“I really don’t have time to deal with you people, especially since my focus is already stretched thin,” Birch said, glaring at the two traitors seated across from him. The division within their once united group was now stark, with the two factions clearly having different agendas.

The other tree folks echoed Birch’s sentiments, voicing their dissatisfaction with the traitors for daring to harm their children by exploiting the control meant solely for emergencies.



“We created them, so we can do whatever we want with them,” Mangrove responded, speaking for both himself and Oak, his tone cold and unapologetic.

“That control is limited to your own children; you have no authority over ours,” Crabapple retorted, his frustration evident. His children had suffered the most due to the size discrepancy between them and the giants, as the dwarves were shorter even than the average Proximians.

“We can address that later, but right now, let’s focus on why we called this meeting,” Mangrove interjected, setting aside his belief temporarily. He knew that if they continued down this path, it would only lead to more arguments and wasted time.

“We’ll listen to you, but first, rescind the order you gave your children. I won’t entertain anything else until that’s done,” Crabapple demanded, laying down an ultimatum.

“I’m sure you realize that’s the only thing preventing you from directly targeting us. Do you think we’re foolish enough to do so without an agreement in place?” Oak responded with a smirk, clearly aware that Crabapple was trying to outmaneuver them.

“Then I’m done here. I won’t waste my time talking to people who are actively sabotaging our efforts,” Crabapple declared, and before anyone could respond, he vanished from the timeless meadow, making it clear that he wasn’t bluffing and was entirely serious about his stance.

“Although I’m tempted to join him, I’m curious—what exactly are you trying to propose?” Cypress asked. Her children were relatively safe, as their natural ability to fly allowed them to avoid much of the chaos and focus on helping other Proximians.

Birch remained silent, signaling that she, too, was interested in hearing what they had been called for.

“As you’ve probably guessed, we’re currently gathering mana to reattempt the creation of a small number of bodies capable of containing our consciousness,” Oak began, getting straight to the point. “Our offer is this: deal with the imperial couple and bring their bodies to us, and we promise to create a body for each of you to transfer your consciousness into.”

The meadow fell silent as Cypress and Birch processed the offer, weighing their options carefully.

After a moment, Birch spoke first. “No, thank you. Now, if you’ll excuse me, I have other matters to attend to.” Without waiting for a response, she immediately left the timeless meadow.

“What about you?” Mangrove asked, not surprised by Birch’s decision. She had always been the closest to humans and Proximians, often acting as their representative. Her refusal was expected, and had she agreed, it would have raised more suspicion than gratitude. Turning to Cypress, the last

of the traitors still present, he sought her decision, not planning to waste time if the answer wasn't favorable.

"I'll accept your offer," Cypress replied without hesitation. "But first, I need you to stop targeting my children so I can focus on him. Also, I want to be the one to keep the original body of his." Her expression remained unchanged as she betrayed the others who had just left.

Mangrove and Oak were momentarily taken aback, a mix of surprise and anger flashing through them at her greed. But they quickly realized that in her position, they might have done the same. Cypress held the upper hand, and at this moment they needed her more than she needed them.

"Fine, you can have it," Mangrove agreed, carefully masking his irritation. He knew that showing anger might lead Cypress to demand even more, something they couldn't afford.

"That's why I like dealing with you guys," Cypress remarked with a hint of satisfaction before she too disappeared from the timeless meadow. Mangrove and Oak immediately ordered their children to leave the fairies alone, keeping their end of the bargain.

## Chapter 695 FAFO 11

Hovering above the massive cylindrical shield, Aron glanced at the timer Nova had projected for him. Only seventy-three seconds remained.

"Let's do it one more time," Aron muttered to himself. With determined precision, he moved the shield to a location near the previous one, preparing to unleash another massive nuke within the shield, intending to shake the entire planet once more.

Just as Aron was about to begin feeding mana into the fire rune for another massive attack, thousands of magic cycles materialized around him. Each one was targeting him with a different type of attack, showcasing the full extent of the tree folks' power when focused on a single target.

"That too can act as one," Aron responded calmly, his demeanor unshaken as the myriad of magic cycles closed in on him, unleashing every conceivable type of attack from the magic system taught to the Proximians.

"Let's make it a worthy final act," Aron said, resolutely choosing not to rely on his overgeared shield. Instead, he decided to face the incoming attacks head-on, aiming to make this confrontation a legendary moment that would be discussed for decades, if not millennia. He wanted to push himself to the limit and create a scenario that future awakeners could aspire to.

{I will be supporting you,} Nova responded. She activated specialized nanomachines within his body, further enhancing his already extraordinary concentration. Time seemed to slow down around him as he began his preparations.

Aron quickly set to work, activating hundreds of basic runes in his vicinity. As these runes came to life, he braced himself for the storm of attacks converging on him.

The activated runes each had specific targets assigned and locked onto them, thanks to Nova's precise guidance. Each incoming attack was met with a carefully chosen counterattack, tailored to exploit the weaknesses of the original assault. Fireballs were intercepted by water spells, lightning

strikes by earth-based defenses, sound waves by silencing runes, and many more. The scene unfolded like something out of a high-stakes action film.

Explosions of various colors and sounds erupted around Aron as his defenses neutralized the attacks before they could breach a two-hundred-meter radius around him. Within this protective zone, he countered any magic cycle attempts and defended against anything that emerged from outside.

For over a minute, Aron maintained this impenetrable barrier, all while keeping a close eye on the timer ticking down. His focus was unwavering as he continued to fend off the relentless onslaught, preparing for the final phase of his plan.

As the timer counted down, Aron's focus remained intense.

'7, 6, 5, 4, 3, 2, 1'

'We are done,' was the only message that was sent to him.

Aron, having just sent out his final rune, paused and addressed Cypress directly, "Okay, I think it's enough."

Instantly, the magic cycles that had been materializing deactivated, and the area returned to its peaceful silence. The chaotic scene of destruction was replaced by an eerie calm, with no visible signs of the fierce battle that had taken place. Despite the amount of water evaporated during the confrontation, the ocean had more than enough to replenish it, leaving no trace of the earlier conflict.

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"....."

The two tree folks, Mangrove and Oak, were left in stunned silence as they processed what had just occurred. They had been closely monitoring Aron's battle with Cypress, initially impressed by his ability to hold his ground against the relentless attacks. They had expected that, with such a high level of focus and concentration, it was only a matter of time before something would slip through his defenses and lead to his downfall. But when Aron casually instructed Cypress to stop and she complied, it was as if their entire understanding of the situation was upended.

"Did I hear and see what I think I heard and saw?" Mangrove asked, his voice tinged with disbelief.

"Yes, you did," came the response, but it was not from either Mangrove or Oak. Instead, it came from Aron himself—the very individual they had sought to defeat, kill, and ultimately recreate his body for their own use.

Before the tree folks could fully grasp their shock or react, they found themselves gathered in the timeless meadow, now with an additional presence—Aron. This was a significant shift from the usual five members of their meetings.

"So this is what we call the timeless meadow," Aron said, offering a slight bow to the three tree folks who had joined him, each with mild smiles on their faces.

“But first, let’s stop the chaos,” Aron declared, extending his hand dramatically. As if responding to a universal command, he shouted, “STOP.” Instantly, the giants and dark elves ceased their attacks in perfect unison, as though they had received direct orders from their elders.

“Return to normal and help the injured,” Aron continued. This command, too, was obeyed immediately, though this time the control over their minds and bodies was returned to the individuals themselves. They swiftly understood what had transpired, and without complaint, they began to assist the injured, working to restore order and bring the situation back to normal. The once chaotic battlefield began to settle as the combatants turned their efforts toward healing and aid.

The tree folks stood in stunned silence, their mouths agape as they struggled to comprehend the spectacle before them. Their advanced processing powers churned relentlessly, yet they found themselves at a loss. No precedents existed for such a situation, and no viable hypotheses could be formulated.

Aron’s actions defied all their expectations and understanding, leaving them grappling with the reality of his capabilities and the implications of what had just unfolded. The sheer impossibility of the scenario had rendered their analytical faculties ineffective, leaving them in a state of bewildered disbelief.

Aron shifted his focus back to his metaphysical presence in the timeless meadow, his calm demeanor and serene smile contrasting sharply with the chaos he had just resolved. “I can see you have many questions on your minds,” he said smoothly. “Don’t worry, I’ll answer them before delivering the punishment for the attempted betrayal.”

His words carried a sense of composed authority, as if the extraordinary feats he had just performed were nothing out of the ordinary.

Some of the tree folks, still grappling with the enormity of what had just happened, awaited his explanations with disbelief. Others braced themselves for the inevitable consequences of their actions.

## Chapter 696 Aftermath I

Without hesitation, Aron conjured a screen within the timeless meadow, a space that functioned much like VR but was crafted from pure mana and guided by thought, allowing him to materialize anything he envisioned within it effortlessly.

On the screen, scenes played out, showing Aron entering the cylinder shield and attempting to sever the roots with his swords, only to be swiftly struck down by one of the roots. The perspective then shifted to the viewpoint of the sword itself, revealing one of the core roots being used to form a humanoid figure. This figure approached, picked up the sword, ascended from the ocean, and deliberately shattered the sword before letting the fragments fall into the water.

As the pieces descended to the ocean floor, they gradually disintegrated into microscopic fragments, invisible to the naked eye. These nanomachines spread out across a hundred-kilometer radius, infiltrating various roots. The infiltration process was executed with precision and went completely

undetected. The nanomachines' minuscule size made them imperceptible to the bodies they entered, bypassing physical detection. Magical detection was also evaded, thanks to active stealth runes, coupled with the fact that those being infiltrated were deeply engrossed in other matters, allowing the nanomachines to penetrate unnoticed.

Upon infiltrating the bodies, the nanomachines quickly latched onto what appeared to be mana veins within the roots, allowing them to be transported to the nearest and most vital areas of the tree folks' bodies. Once there, the nanomachines immediately began their work.

Given that the tree folks' bodies were composed of carbon and mana, the nanomachines activated their runic and carbon computing components, each focusing on overtaking a specific function.

Although capable of operating independently, the nanomachines recognized that they were inside only five distinct bodies. Consequently, they established a communication network within each body, allowing them to coordinate tasks efficiently.

This collaboration drastically reduced the time required to complete their objectives from what would have taken days or months to mere hours.

The quantum computing component of the nanomachines, typically used for advanced technological processing, found itself with little to do in these organic, mana-based bodies. Instead, it took on the role of compiling and analyzing data.

The quantum processors gathered information, relayed it to the runic and carbon-based computing units, and provided guidance on the next steps while ensuring that the nanomachines remained as hidden as possible.

As time passed, the nanomachines subtly altered the tree folks' DNA, gradually integrating a copy of their carbon computing system within the cells. This ensured that even if the nanomachines were somehow flushed from the body, the newly embedded system would remain, deeply intertwined with the host's biology. The alteration wasn't limited to just a few cells; the entire body's DNA was gradually rewritten to include this carbon-based computer, making it an inseparable part of their biology.

Simultaneously, the runic computers worked within the mana plane, embedding themselves into the tree folks' mana systems.

This allowed the nanomachines to gain control over not just the physical aspects of the body but also the mana that coursed through them, effectively giving them dominance over two of the three realms of the tree folks' existence, with the third being the soul.

These monumental changes went unnoticed, largely due to the chaos and distractions Aron had orchestrated outside. The tree folks, preoccupied with the external turmoil, failed to suspect that something was happening internally.

By the time the changes were fully activated, it was too late; the nanomachines had already secured their control, with the tree folks none the wiser.

The video concluded, leaving the room in heavy silence. The onlookers were visibly stunned—some grappling with the fact that such an extensive modification had occurred within their bodies without their awareness, while others were struggling with a deep sense of betrayal.

Aron broke the silence, addressing the room with a calm demeanor. “Although we didn’t know which body belonged to whom during the embedding process, we could only identify them once the system was activated. Currently, the system is fully operational in these two bodies,” he said, pointing to the two tree folks who had been directly targeted.

“For the rest, it remains in passive mode and is not affecting your bodies in any way at the moment.”

He paused to let his words sink in, his expression resolute yet understanding their reaction.

“Does that mean you have control over our bodies and minds to do whatever you want?” Cypress asked, seeking clarification on the extent of Aron's control.

Aron nodded, his tone calm and transparent. “For those with the system active, I can control their actions but not their minds. I can make them perform tasks, but I cannot control their thoughts or consciousness. However, I can influence the outcome of their actions—if, for example, they initiate mana cycles or perform actions that could be harmful to the empire, the system can intervene to cancel or alter those actions. Essentially, I have control over their physical actions but not their mental processes.”

Birch, clearly troubled, spoke up. “I want you to remove it from us.”

Aron’s expression remained steady. “I’m afraid that’s not possible. The system has already integrated itself into your bodies at a fundamental level. Removing it would require a complete change of body, as it is embedded in every fabric of your being.” He paused before adding, “However, you needn’t worry. I don’t intend to misuse this control. I value mutual respect and cooperation more than exploiting others.”

A brief silence followed as the tree folks grappled with the situation. Aron, keen to secure his position and prevent any potential drastic actions, quickly proposed, “We can formalize our agreement with a runic contract.”

He then proceeded to explain the concept of a runic contract, why he believed it was essential, and how it would ensure that neither side could act against the terms without facing the consequences, thus providing a layer of protection and assurance for all involved.

For Aron, trust alone was not enough; it could easily be misplaced in critical situations without concrete enforcement. So, he provided that assurance through a runic contract.

## Chapter 697 Aftermath II

Before the discussion could proceed further, Aron swiftly created three runic contracts outlining the rules for using the system within their bodies. After signing them, he handed each tree folk their respective contract to review and sign. They did so quickly, as the fear of him changing his mind and activating the system prompted them to act fast once they confirmed that the contracts posed no threat.

The two traitors, who had been silently observing everything within the timeless meadow while being unable to speak or react due to Aron’s interference, expressed their frustration and shock through their eyes.

Aron, having dealt with the primary concerns, then turned his attention to them. “Now that we have established the necessary terms for trust,” he said, addressing the traitors directly, “we can move on to your matters.”

“What are you going to do with us? Now that you can control our bodies, are you planning to make us your slaves?” Oak asked, his tone and expression attempting to convey calmness and dignity despite his loss.

“There’s nothing you can do that will make us submit to you. I don’t understand why those three have left you to your fate without retaliation, but I want you to know that beings like us are far too elevated to disgrace ourselves by bowing down to people like you. You can have control of our bodies but you will never have the submission of our minds” Mangrove said, channeling his pride to mask his concern.

Aron regarded them with a detached expression. “Normally, matters like these would be handed over to the imperial justice department. However, since you are not part of the empire, I have the discretion to deal with you as I see fit.” His gaze was almost dismissive, as if addressing overconfident children despite their extensive age.

He continued, “I will be using you to handle tasks that would normally require a powerful magic wielder, tasks that would have otherwise necessitated my direct involvement. Your sentence will have no set end, and only I will determine when your punishment is complete.”

He essentially banished them to a form of slavery, though he framed it diplomatically. While he could have inflicted pain as he had done with the spy who had attempted to kill him, he found that such methods did not bring him the satisfaction he anticipated. Instead, he chose to make use of their skills for his own tasks, effectively turning them into powerful assets who would excel in any mana-rich environment.

After assigning their punishment, he dismissed them from the timeless meadow, leaving only himself and the remaining tree folks. “Although you can now access the VR, let’s complete our handover meeting here,” he said, signaling the continuation of their previously interrupted discussion in the timeless meadow.

As Aron continued with the handover meeting, the situation outside was gradually stabilizing, but recovery was going to take time. The extent of the damage meant that rebuilding would be a lengthy process, far more complex than the initial destruction.

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“Mh...” Rayyan groaned, pausing mid-sentence as she was struck by a slight headache.

The moment the order was given, Rayyan was swiftly handled by Nova through a tractor beam and placed into a stasis pod. She was awakened once the order was retracted.

As a consequence of the order, she, along with all the giants and dark elves, experienced a collective subconscious struggle against the command. This internal conflict manifested as intermittent headaches, affecting them at various intervals.

“{Have this},” Nova said, offering Rayyan a blue-colored drink through her nanomachine body within the imperial ship.

“Thank you,” Rayyan replied, taking the drink and consuming it. Almost immediately, the headaches began to subside, eventually disappearing entirely. She looked at the cup in surprise, taking a second glance as she tried to recall if she had seen anything like it before.

{It’s a new drink designed to counter headaches. By drinking it twice a day, you should have your headaches completely resolved within a week, compared to a few months without it. We are currently mass-producing it for distribution to everyone,} Nova explained.

“Thank you for that. But where is Emperor Aron?” Rayyan asked, immediately after expressing her gratitude for the drink. She was puzzled as Aron had returned the control she gave back to her and then disappeared, leaving her to manage the recovery process for her citizens. Additionally, he had granted her temporary control over the imperial assets on the planet to speed up the process.

{He is currently continuing the meeting with the remainder of your elders,} Nova replied, giving a short but concise explanation without giving more than needed information.

Upon hearing the mention of the elders, Rayyan decided not to pursue the matter further, trusting that she would be briefed if needed. Given the chaos caused by the elders’ greed, she wasn’t inclined to divert her attention from the recovery process to speculate on their situation.

Nodding in acknowledgment of Nova’s response, she refocused on her work. Despite her curiosity about the outcome, she remained dedicated to managing the recovery efforts, still aboard the imperial ship orbiting the planet with the shield active.

On the planet, ships were seen coming and going in a steady stream, transporting individuals to designated gathering points. Those with life-threatening injuries were directed to these locations, where they were promptly placed in medical pods for treatment. The scene was one of organized chaos, with every effort being made to ensure that the injured received the necessary care and that the recovery process could begin as swiftly as possible.

Ayaka was seen tirelessly working with those on the brink of death, who wouldn’t have enough time to wait for the medicine’s effects. Fortunately, the statis pods suspended all functions, including the process of dying, allowing her to stay in one place where all critical cases were brought to her.

This setup also gave her brief moments of rest when needed.

If credits were to be awarded, she would be among the top ten contributors, even alongside the elders, the imperial couple, and the AIs, reflecting the extent of her contribution during and after the crisis.



## Chapter 698 Aftermath III

"See you later," Aron said with a casual wave to Crabapple, Birch, and Cypress, before vanishing from the timeless meadow.

They had finally concluded their meeting, which had lasted more than a day, meticulously finalizing every detail of the handover process. Surprisingly, the tree folks didn't contest the handover at all and instead directed their attention toward the next phase.

Since their children would be treated as ordinary imperial citizens, that part of the process was relatively quick. What consumed the most time, however, was determining the fate of the tree folks themselves—what classification they would fall under and what rules they would be governed by moving forward.

After lengthy discussions, they agreed that the tree folks would be classified as "special entities." Under this status, they would have the freedom to do as they wished, provided they did not break the imperial constitution and sought prior approval from the emperor for major matters. Additionally, they would have direct access to the emperor whenever necessary.

Beyond that, they would also be granted access to more information than ordinary citizens, particularly regarding government matters and the emperor's companies, with the condition that they do not disclose this information to anyone.

The part about information access was unanimously agreed upon, as most of the tree folks were eager to gain access to knowledge about mana. However, Crabapple made a special request to include information about Aron's companies as well, driven by his curiosity. Aron readily agreed, but with one condition: Crabapple had to conduct all of his research within Lab City and grant Aron the right to use any discoveries made by Crabapple for his companies.

Aron also agreed to purchase anything the tree folks needed from his own funds, as long as the requests were reasonable. This arrangement spared them from having to lower themselves by working or using their children as labor to obtain what they wanted.

In addition to the benefits, the tree folks were required to participate in any upcoming situations that demanded powerful magicians. Their contributions would also be compensated once the situation concluded as that was the rule set by the government.

Moreover, they were explicitly prohibited from using their children for personal gain or to the detriment of other citizens.

Regarding the systems embedded in their bodies, Aron had already activated them but modified their parameters. Instead of being used to control or aid individuals directly, the systems now functioned as routers and access ports to the imperial network, including VR. Finally allowing the tree folks to log in the VR and experience life similar to humans or proximians.

Additionally, the systems acted as monitors, capable of intervening if they violated the agreements. This monitoring function served as a backup for the mana contracts, ensuring that any potential loopholes or breaches in the agreements could be addressed.

"I need to check on the VR and see what all the hype is about, so see you later," Crabapple said, eager to experience the virtual reality for himself. But he still waited for the others' responses before making his move.

“See you,” Birch replied. “I have some things to review before joining you.”

With that, Birch, Crabapple, and Cypress left the timeless meadow, which then faded away as they departed.

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[DING!!!!!!!!!!!!]

[SYSTEM QUEST COMPLETE!!!!]

Congratulations on successfully completing the system's emergency quest.

Quest Completion Level: Perfect

Rewards: +2 of the system's awakening requirements (provided).

Good job! Please continue working hard to further awaken the system.]

Aron's face lit up with a smile as he read the quest completion screen in front of him. The rewards, having been directly applied, had significantly accelerated the awakening of his system. With only two requirements remaining, he was now closer than ever to discovering the promise of the system.

His actual body was currently still hovering exactly where he previous was, above the ocean, as he had immediately entered the timeless meadow the moment he received the update that the project protagonist nanomachines had completed their job.

{Sir, Empress Rina is still holding a humanoid prisoner and is seeking instructions on what to do with it,} Nova's message snapped him back to reality from his focus on the system screen.

“Oh, where exactly is she?” Aron inquired, planning to visit Rina.

Once Nova provided the location, Aron took off immediately. This time, he was not in stealth mode, meaning anyone looking up would see him streaking through the sky at Mach 50. Normally, such speed would create a deafening sonic boom, but he countered this by activating a silence rune around himself, which absorbed all the sound generated by his high-speed travel.

As he flew, he received updates on the planet's situation. He was pleased to see that there had been no actual fatalities. The tree folks had prioritized rescuing those in the most critical condition, either shielding them or sending them directly to the nearest status pod. From there, they were transferred to Ayaka, who provided basic treatment to stabilize them until more comprehensive care could be administered.

“What is the mental reaction of the Proximians? Are there any signs of hatred between the races?” Aron asked.

{Since everyone knows the orders came directly from the elders, the anger has been directed primarily at the two elders who issued them. The absence of deaths has mitigated widespread animosity between the races.

However, some individuals are experiencing guilt from having attacked friends, lovers, and family members. This feeling of guilt is expected to fade over time.

A more detailed report will be provided later once the handover is complete and brain data is updated and analyzed.} Nova responded, supplementing her answer with footage that illustrated the current situation and the reactions described.

After a few more seconds, Aron's enhanced vision caught sight of Rina in the distance. In no time, thanks to his incredible speed, he went from spotting her to coming to a full stop directly in front of her, where she hovered, still imprisoning the humanoid.

"Good job," Aron said, offering her a hug. As he did so, he subtly deactivated the shield rune he had discreetly cast on her.

## Chapter 699 Reaction

While everyone on Proxima B was occupied with the recovery process, the situation was quite different for the watchers back in the solar system. They were limited to observing and reacting to the live stream, unable to intervene or influence the events unfolding on the planet.

The live stream setup was sophisticated, featuring multiple cameras positioned in various locations.

These cameras were capable of focusing on different significant events simultaneously, with the ability to zoom in on objects without any loss of quality, provided the objects weren't protected by privacy laws.

This meant the empire was employing military-grade surveillance technology for what was essentially a live broadcast. Numerous cameras were placed throughout the star system and above the planet's orbit, ensuring comprehensive coverage.

As a result, viewers had the option to watch the live stream from the same camera but see entirely different perspectives based on their preferences. The official broadcast provided a general view, while viewers' personalized AIs allowed them to request specific zooms and tailored views that catered to their individual interests. This customization ensured that each viewer could focus on the details that mattered most to them, enhancing their overall experience.

As soon as the situation unfolded, most viewers adjusted their interest parameters to focus exclusively on the ongoing events. Since these customized settings could be made public for others to replicate, the most popular configurations quickly became trending on the live stream's parameter page. This allowed anyone wanting to catch up on the situation to select the most popular or detailed view, ensuring they could follow the events in the most comprehensive way possible.

This led to a widespread viewership of the situation, as people everywhere were now able to see the full scope of events. Videos detailing the situation were quickly uploaded to every social media platform, allowing those who couldn't access the live stream in real-time to catch up through these recordings. The result was a global audience thoroughly informed about the unfolding events.

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"Yep, that's it, I'm out," an awakener said as he stood up from the meeting, where the group had been strategizing on how to use their powers to rally more of their kind and gradually increase their influence for a potential coup d'état.

The mood in the room had shifted dramatically when they were alerted to watch the live stream, as the emperor had been attacked. The possibility that the emperor might die had given them fleeting hope.

However, when they watched the livestream and witnessed the extent of the emperor's power, their hopes quickly dissipated. The footage showed him effortlessly fending off over a thousand attacks per second for more than a minute, with none of the attacks even coming close to reaching him. This display of overwhelming strength made it clear to everyone that even if over a million awakeners were to gang up on him, they would surely face certain defeat. The realization that their plans were futile led them and him to reconsider their ambitions.

No one even attempted to stop him from leaving, and some even followed behind him, their hopes and dreams shattered by the overwhelming display of power they had just witnessed. Within minutes, only about five people remained in the meeting room—extremists among extremists—clinging to their delusions despite the clear evidence of their insignificance.

"I think we should look for those who won't be intimidated by his show of force," the would-be leader suggested. "It's most likely just theater designed to deter people like us. Otherwise, why keep the live stream going? The problem is, we won't be able to convince anyone since they'll see our efforts as sending them to useless deaths." His friends nodded in agreement, sharing his resolve despite the odds.

"I agree, but for now, we should lie low and wait until others who think like us reveal themselves," his friend, the self-proclaimed mastermind, said while adjusting his glasses—purely for show since everyone on Earth currently had perfect vision. "Then, and only then, will we retry what we were attempting to create today."

Just as flat earthers existed even during the era of space stations, there will always be those who view everything shown to them as part of a conspiracy. They believe it's all a ploy by the "evil government" to maintain power and keep them subservient.

Similar conversations with varying outcomes were unfolding across the solar system. Many groups either disbanded in the wake of the overwhelming display of power, while others formed fan clubs and support groups, rallying around the newfound respect and admiration for the emperor.

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"My expectations of his power were already high, but this—this is beyond even the strongest I imagined him to be," Youssef, the Minister of the Exterior, remarked as he watched the live stream. His feed had all public limitations and blocks removed, supplemented by additional data from various sensors both on and around the planet that were not available to the general public.

"I'm now wondering why he didn't interfere during the last world war," Jeremy, the Minister of the Exterior, mused, extending his thoughts beyond the current situation.

"He never needed to intervene personally. His position ensured that he wielded absolute military power, capable of handling situations from behind the scenes,"

John, the Minister of War, replied. He had joined them in watching the live stream, having seen the earlier discussion between the emperor and the tree folks before the situation escalated and the emperor's decisive actions took place.

He was the least surprised among them. Whatever challenges the emperor faced, he always believed the emperor would emerge victorious. This conviction was consistently reinforced by the miracles he had witnessed during his service.

“That is true,” Youssef agreed, recalling files he had read from the omniscient perspective. Those records revealed how the emperor always held the necessary cards to resolve any situation but chose to withhold action until he had no other option but to intervene.

“Do you think they will now hand over their people to us, or will they turn into our enemies now that two of their elders have essentially been dealt with?” Jeremy asked. Although he was not yet fully briefed on how the situation had been handled, he moved on to the next step, knowing he would be updated once the entire situation was concluded.

“Based on what we saw during the fight and the Proximians' reaction to the situation, I think that even if they don't join us, they won't turn into enemies, at least,” John said. He knew that although the emperor usually pulled his punches, he wouldn't have left the situation unresolved. When the emperor acted, he always made sure to finish what he started to prevent any reappearance of the issue.

## Chapter 700 Preparations for the Handover

A week later.

Following a full week of recovery efforts, the rebuilding process for the destruction caused by the fights and the planetquake triggered by Aron was well underway.

During that period, nearly all details of the meeting, except for a few classified points, were made public. Along with this, the announcement of a handover agreement was revealed, alongside the news that strict limitations would be imposed on the elders to prevent them from interfering in the lives of the Proximians, ensuring such an incident would not repeat itself.

The news was met with overwhelmingly positive reactions from both the empire's citizens and the Proximians. After enduring the recent chaos, many Proximians had been anxious that another elder might go rogue, plunging them into a similar situation once again.

While joining the empire was already seen as a favorable step for them, the announcement that the emperor had made it impossible for the elders to interfere in their lives — combined with the swift punishment of the two who had caused the turmoil — elevated their respect for him even further.

The emperor's decisive actions reassured them, solidifying his already high standing among the Proximians.

However, the official handover of the Proximian government to the empire would take place three weeks later. This delay was necessary for the paperwork to be processed and all relevant data to be analyzed and proofread before being officially handed over to the imperial authorities.

Despite the formalities, there would be little change in the actual governance structure or officials in power, as all had already been selected according to imperial leadership guidelines.

This ensured that the current government was composed of the best-qualified individuals, fully aligned with imperial standards.

With that positive news, the Proximians began returning to their day-to-day lives, reassured that little would change even after the handover. The only noticeable shift would be the removal of the live stream facing the planet, which was set to be taken down after the handover, marking not only the official transition but also the end of the exploration mission.

The star system would formally shift from an exploration zone to imperial territory. From that point forward, the Proximians themselves would take over the research and exploration of their own star system, as part of their new responsibilities under imperial rule.

During that three-week period, the Emperor and his entourage would be—

"Enjoying the vacation while doing some light work," Aron said with a grin, looking at his friends, who shot back envious glances, knowing they wouldn't get to enjoy the downtime as much as they wanted.

"Are you sure you brought us here for a vacation?" Sarah asked, recalling the list of tasks Aron had assigned them for this waiting period. It hardly resembled a vacation at all.

"Why can't you do both?" Aron replied with a smirk, trying to hide his amusement. "All you have to do is send out announcements, and people will line up with their resumes. From there, you can easily choose those who fit your needs and start the companies' creation process."

Felix, curious, asked, "What would you have done if we hadn't come here?"

Aron shrugged nonchalantly. "There's the VR network. It wouldn't have been a problem at all since you could handle it from Earth."

"How about you make it easier for us and provide some information about the people?" Sarah asked, trying to negotiate for less work.

"Nope, I can't do that," Aron replied with a grin. "Do you want me to break the rules and invade citizens' privacy before the handover is even complete? I promised their elders that I'd treat them like imperial citizens from the moment we finalized the deal. I can't make exceptions now, especially not before they're officially part of the empire."

"Anyway, let's get going," Felix said, grabbing Sarah's arm and leading her out of the room. "We've got companies to register and workers to recruit." Despite the hectic

days ahead, they didn't mind. It was a welcome change of pace that reminded them of their beginnings.

"Are you planning to have those discussions during this period?" Aron asked his wife.

"Yes," Rina replied. "After reviewing your recent battle, I had some significant realizations. I want to explore those insights further with them." She remembered her astonishment at how Aron managed the overwhelming barrage of attacks so effectively, and it fueled her desire to develop similar capabilities in her own approach.

"If I can make a suggestion, you should start with Crabapple," Aron said. "He's the most curious among them and can explain things in the level of detail you need. Plus, he seems to be quite absorbed in VR." He shared this insight based on his monitoring of their activities over the past week.

"I'll keep that in mind. But what about you?" Rina asked, taking his recommendation to heart while inquiring about his own plans during this period.

"I have some places to visit and information to review, but I'll be available if you need me," Aron replied. His plan during this time was far from the leisurely vacation he had described to his friends. He, too, had a mountain of tasks to tackle over these three weeks, though he had playfully framed it as a vacation.

Their discussion continued briefly before Rina decided to proceed with her conversation with Crabapple, leaving Aron to focus on his own tasks.

Once alone in the room, Aron asked, "Did you finish analyzing the brain data of the tree folks?"

{The analysis is complete, and I think you should join me to take a look at it. I discovered something extremely interesting about them,} Nova responded, teasing an intriguing revelation without disclosing any details.

Upon hearing Nova's response, Aron immediately lay back on his bed and logged into the VR, eager to delve into the information. He didn't want to waste any more time, given the extensive period it took for Nova to complete the analysis of all the data collected about the tree folks.

"Let's take a look at it," he said, his tone laced with excitement for what he was about to see.