

Tech System 731

Chapter 731 Discussion

“We are fucked” would perfectly capture the situation for anyone who had reviewed the now-assembled information. Although much of it was still being processed and filtered to form a complete picture, certain revelations didn’t need further analysis—particularly the intel sourced from one individual: Xalthar.

He was the reason behind the chaos that was barreling toward them, and the scale of the threat was staggering. According to Xalthar’s knowledge, combined with that of his crew, they were on the verge of facing military forces that rivaled the entire population of the solar system—a force far beyond what they had in their hands at the moment.

Considering the scale of the bait that Xalthar had dangled, anyone reviewing the data would realize the enemy was preparing to strike with full force, holding nothing back. They knew other factions would be vying for control of the star system, so they would arrive with everything necessary to not only sustain a prolonged battle but also ensure they could take over and hold the system once the dust settled. It wasn’t just about winning the fight—it was about securing dominance for the long term, which meant they would come armed to the teeth with overwhelming resources and military strength.

It was literally going to come down to the winner of the initial face-off against them—a force that had never experienced a full-scale interstellar war. And that was the best-case scenario.

If the Astral Conclave’s forces failed to intercept each other outside the star system, they’d face the nightmare scenario of contending with all those forces simultaneously, right inside their home territory.

In such a case, the odds would tip drastically against them, making it nearly impossible to defend the system without catastrophic losses.

“Two weeks might not be enough for us, but that might be the opposite for the other side,” Aron began, addressing the room filled with John, the heads of the two ministries, and the high-order AIs. “Whatever they can prepare in two weeks will be better than what we can muster on our side, but it also means they won’t be coming with everything they have—just everything they can gather within that period of time. Still, that alone will be powerful enough.”

Aron paused for a moment, letting the gravity of the situation settle in before continuing. “So, what are the things we can do to prepare for the upcoming mess?”

“Since we’ve already positioned our spearhead fleets in stealth mode throughout the exterior of the Solar system as a security measure against surprise attacks, that gives us a solid foundation for an initial face-off,” John began, speaking with a calm yet focused tone. “But considering the sheer number of forces we’re about to face, combined with our lack of understanding of how their wormhole technology works—

especially the precision of their coordinates and whether they can create entry points on the opposite side of the system—we need to prepare for the worst.”

John’s expression grew more serious as he continued, “We’ll need to deploy every available countermeasure and be prepared for things to go off-plan. But at the same time, we can’t afford to be passive. We must double our forces in every sector and ensure readiness across the board. If things take a turn for the worse, we should have our weapons of mass destruction on standby.”

The room fell silent for a moment as the weight of his words sank in.

“Of course, this is only if there’s absolutely no chance of containing the situation,” John clarified, his tone grim. “We will suffer heavy losses, no question. But if it ensures we can fend them off this time and buy ourselves time to regroup and prepare for their inevitable return, we need to be ready to make that sacrifice.”

Youssef, the Minister of the Interior, frowned, deep in thought as he listened to Jeremy’s argument. “Is there a way we can end it without using those destructive weapons?” he asked, his tone contemplative. “Deploying them might backfire on us in the long run. The damage could cripple our relationship, and we might end up locked in a never-ending war with the Conclave. Is there a way to prevent reaching that point?”

Jeremy, the Minister of Exterior Affairs, shook his head, pausing for a moment before responding. “I think the opposite is true.” He let his words sink in, then continued, “Based on the intel we’ve gathered from the captured crew, the Astral Conclave respects strength above all. Pulling our punches to appear favorable will only invite future trouble. If we face them, we need to strike hard and fast, show them that we are a force to be feared.”

He glanced around the room, his eyes scanning each face to gauge their reactions. “We need to leave an impression so strong that the Conclave will have no choice but to think twice before ever challenging us again. If we do that, they’ll realize it’s better to have us as allies than enemies. If we don’t, we risk inviting centuries of conflict, sabotage, and even worse—being enslaved or having our technology stolen and used against us.”

Aron nodded slowly, digesting the implications. Jeremy continued, “And let’s not forget, the Conclave isn’t the only major power out there. Other civilizations in the region are going to be watching after they receive the information Xalthar has made public. If we show weakness, we could find ourselves forced to join the Conclave under unfavorable terms due to fear of other civilizations ganging up on us. But if we demonstrate enough power, we can negotiate a mutually beneficial agreement—one where we remain independent but not seen as an easy target.”

Youssef still looked hesitant. “That will still leave us open to attacks from other alien factions that aren’t aligned with the Conclave.”

Jeremy conceded the point with a slight nod. “True. But that’s a sacrifice we’ll have to make. If we want to have our cake and eat it too—remain independent and strong—we need to make it clear from the outset that crossing us has consequences.”

Yes, the Astral Conclave isn’t the only civilization out there. Imagine it like Earth, but on a galactic scale, where the Conclave is just one of many nations. Although the Conclave is a significant player, it’s only one part of a larger network of civilizations within their region. To fully benefit

from these various civilizations, it's crucial not to become too closely affiliated with any single one. Aligning too closely with one could shut off opportunities with others and limit their overall influence and actions.

"But do we have what he reported, or was it all a fabrication?" Jeremy, the Ministry of Exterior asked.

{While the current technology does not yet exist, it turns out we can actually create it using our existing tech by compressing mana until it becomes solid, which is achievable on a large scale}
Gaia responded.

"Then we should go all out," Youssef, the Ministry of the Interior, said changing his mind. "This technology will be our TSMC to the Galaxy. It will deter organizations, unions, or civilizations from attacking us, as losing access to it would be a significant blow. Additionally, it will give us a unique position in the star system market. Being the only producers means everyone will have to meet our demands. Since having a strong entry into the interstellar market will prevent potential attacks and give us leverage, I fully support Jeremy's plan."

Chapter 732 Discussion II

"Then at what point do you suggest we interfere? Do we wait until everything is settled between them and fight, or do we jump in amidst their skirmishes and attack all of them?" Youssef asked, now reconsidering his earlier stance.

"I suggest we act after issuing a formal warning once they make their move," John replied without hesitation. "If they refuse to back down, we deploy one of our WMDs to wipe out a significant portion of their forces. That will send a clear message—we're not bluffing, and they'll take whatever we say next very seriously."

"Why do you think that's the best approach? Wouldn't it make more sense to wait until they've exhausted their forces fighting each other?" Jeremy asked, seeking further clarification.

"Although they have powerful forces, you have to remember they also possess exceptionally strong individuals, something we are still not equipped to match one-on-one, despite having some capable people ourselves. If we wait until they exhaust themselves, sure, we might win the fight, but it could leave them thinking they only lost because they were weakened. They'll believe that with full preparation, they could come back and defeat us—meaning they'd likely attempt another attack down the line.

By striking them when they're at their strongest, we not only eliminate their fleets but also their most formidable individuals. This sends a clear message that we can take down even their best, whether or not we have a one-on-one match in terms of power. It removes any doubt in their minds that better preparation might have given them a victory.

Additionally, this strategy puts us in a stronger position for negotiations. They won't know our full capabilities yet, and it'll make them more inclined to consider us the stronger side. This will help us achieve our goal of forming a mutually beneficial agreement without fully joining them, which

would cut off potential cooperation with other civilizations and alliances," John explained, showing that, as usual, he was quietly listening and adapting the strategy to ensure their objectives were met.

"How are we going to make the announcement then? Have we finished deciphering the communication system on the ship?" Jeremy asked, now indicating his agreement with the plan to strike at the first announcement.

{Yes, we're in the process of replicating it. It should be ready for use within two days,} Gaia responded, reassuring them that the plan had all the necessary pieces in place. The only remaining obstacle was the emperor's final approval before they could proceed with full initiation.

Everyone turned their attention to the emperor, who had remained silent throughout the discussion, simply listening. Now, they awaited his response, eager to know if he agreed with their suggestions or if he had a better plan in mind.

"Let's proceed with that plan," Aron said, agreeing with their strategy. While it wasn't fully fleshed out, they had two weeks of real-world time to finalize their preparations and execute their plan before the inevitable face-off.

With the planning and course of action set, they left the task to the AI responsible for developing a detailed breakdown of the strategy. The AI would analyze all available information about the other side and refine the plan accordingly. Once the detailed plan was prepared, it would be reviewed for final approval or adjustments before implementation.

As the meeting continued, the team delved deeper into the remaining information to fully grasp the power dynamics within the Conclave. Aron, needing to assimilate all the knowledge and ensure he was thoroughly informed, left the meeting. His goal was to review and approve the final plan before announcing it to the public, ensuring transparency about the upcoming actions.

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Aron, having logged out of VR through his glasses, now needed to head to the pod for a more thorough assimilation process. His situation required a more meticulous approach compared to others, so he needed to complete his assimilation in the pod to ensure nothing went wrong in case of a complication.

As he opened his eyes, he saw his wife sitting beside him. Deciding to keep her informed, he began to update her on the situation and the upcoming plans.

Rina looked at Aron after he finished summarizing the situation and asked, "What's on your mind?"

Aron raised an eyebrow, intrigued by her question. "What do you mean?"

Rina studied him for a moment before replying, "From what you've told me, it sounds like everything's been settled. Yet, it seems like there's still something weighing on you, something you haven't fully resolved."

Aron sighed, acknowledging her insight. "It's the wormhole technology they're planning to use to get here. I'm trying to figure out how to acquire it as quickly as possible," he admitted, revealing part of his concern while keeping some details to himself.

The moment Aron learned about the wormhole technology, he immediately rushed to the system shop, hoping to purchase it. However, he was quickly dissuaded when he saw the exorbitant price;

he only had about a quarter of what was needed. Faced with this setback, he reconsidered his approach.

While the system did allow him to purchase parts of the technology, he would still need to fill in the gaps himself. Without the necessary knowledge to do so, obtaining the technology and expertise from the other side seemed to be the best option.

Rina nodded, understanding the gravity of the situation. "And the issue is that they're unlikely to hand it over willingly, right?"

"Yes, exactly," Aron confirmed. "Although the information they received from Xalthar is false, we can actually produce mana stones, which are the main fuel for the technology. It's like giving nuclear technology to a country with abundant resources for it. While we could choose to hide the existence of mana stones, doing so would mean giving up our bargaining chip. We need to use it as leverage to bring them to the negotiating table. Hiding it isn't an option.

Even if we manage to push them back with our initial attack, there's no guarantee they'll agree to a mutually beneficial deal. We could resort to threatening to destroy them all to force an agreement, but that could drive them to fight with everything they've got, which is something we want to avoid right now."

Chapter 733 Preparations

"How about turning them against each other, making them compete to give you the technology?" Rina suggested, after taking a moment to gather her thoughts and reflect on everything she had learned.

That was all Aron needed to hear. He immediately grasped where Rina was heading with her explanation, but he didn't interrupt, letting her finish in case she presented something he hadn't considered.

"From what you've said, even though they operate under a conclave, they're still competing with each other. So, as long as the incentive is right, they'll likely hand over the technology willingly—and might even be pleased to be the ones who do.

Offer them a deal: whoever provides you with the technology gets a permanent ten percent discount on all mana stone transactions, as long as the stones are used directly by that entity and not sold to others.

With that, the stronger ones might hesitate, but the weaker factions will scramble to deliver the technology. They'll rationalize that we'll get it eventually, so they might as well benefit from it.

Even if their version of the technology is less refined compared to the stronger factions, it will still give us a foundation to build on. From there, our specialists can optimize and advance it beyond its current level."

Aron nodded, signaling his understanding of where Rina was going. Though her approach differed slightly from what he had initially thought, it still aligned with the core of his idea. They were both aiming for the same outcome, just with slightly different methods to get there.

"Thank you," Aron said softly, hugging Rina and giving her a quick kiss before stepping back. With a final glance, he bid her farewell and entered the pod, ready to begin the knowledge assimilation process.

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While the plan was still undergoing refinements, certain parts were already being implemented. These core elements were essential and would remain unchanged, regardless of any adjustments made later. As a result, they were put into action ahead of time to ensure progress continued smoothly.

The first step was issuing a retreat order across the entire Solar System. All ships and personnel in space were instructed to return to Earth or the inner space stations within a week. The same directive was sent to ships traveling faster than light (FTL) between the Proxima Centauri star system and Earth, all of which were owned by the empire or the Emperor's company, ICARUS.

Ships that were close to completing their journey and could comply within the timeframe were allowed to continue, while those that couldn't make it in time were ordered to drop out of FTL, turn back to Proxima, and await further instructions.

Immediately after, the spatial lock engines, placed strategically throughout the Solar System and even extending to the Oort Cloud, powered up to full capacity. These engines were designed to create localised spatial statis that would prevent any attempts at spatial breaches within the area, ensuring that the empire wouldn't be caught off guard. At the same time, it allowed them to control the narrative of the inevitable conflict, even though they couldn't avoid the fight altogether.

This strategy would also create a one-light-year buffer zone from the imminent conflict, providing the Solar System portion of the empire with the peace of mind needed to deploy their weapons of mass destruction (WMDs) without risking irreversible damage to the Solar System itself. With this distance, they could engage in the fight while ensuring that the core of their territory remained protected.

At that moment, all atomic printers within the Solar System—whether owned by the empire or the emperor's companies—were operating at full capacity. They were churning out various types of military gear, with a significant focus on cargo-type ships. These vessels were being equipped with cargo compartments filled exclusively with humanoid robots, their necessary weaponry, smaller ships, and other essential supplies. Once completed, each ship was swiftly dispatched to its designated location, ready to support the impending conflict.

A common factor among all the ships leaving the atomic printers was that each one was carrying different types of weapons of mass destruction (WMDs). These were either intended for targeted deployment in specific areas or kept on board as a precaution. This strategy ensured that if one group of ships were to be destroyed, the others would be prepared to take over and maintain the upper hand in the unfolding conflict.

They were meticulously preparing for every possible oversight, ensuring that no matter what happened, nothing would spill over into the Solar System. Every contingency was accounted for, aiming to maintain control and prevent any unforeseen events from jeopardizing the safety of the empire's core territory.

Most of these movements were conducted openly, as the empire kept its citizens informed throughout the process. They provided basic regular updates on the situation while the populace awaited the emperor's address.

Understanding that the empire typically communicated openly about ongoing events, many individuals whose work wasn't affected by the evacuation order continued their tasks with a sense of normalcy. They were confident they would receive notifications when the emperor was ready to address the empire, allowing them to focus on their responsibilities without unnecessary worry.

However, not everyone remained calm during the waiting period. Some individuals resorted to spreading rumors, claiming that the imperial family was merely buying time to escape, potentially leaving the rest of the population behind as sacrifices.

For these dissenters, their influence had dwindled to the point where they were viewed as the "weird kids" of the school. Despite their efforts to spread rumors, sentiments of distrust toward the imperial family had become more of a gimmick. Over the past five years, the empire had consistently promised much and over delivered, earning the trust of the majority of humans. Most believed in the empire's intentions, having seen no reason to think otherwise.

The imperial government maintained a strict approach to ensure loyalty and prevent any thoughts of rebellion, even though they could easily quash any uprising if necessary. As a wise man once said, "Prevention is better than cure."

Meanwhile, among the Proximians, there were no skeptics; their faith in the imperial family was and remained unshakeable.

Chapter 734 Post Assimilation

Aron stepped out of the pod after spending several hours inside, now far more knowledgeable about the Astral Conclave than before. With this newfound understanding, several uncertainties that had previously clouded his thoughts seemed to vanish, as though a fog had been lifted from his mind.

But despite his newfound knowledge, none of the decisions he had made earlier were altered. In fact, his conviction to stick to them had only strengthened. The primary reason for this resolve was now hovering directly in front of him, reinforcing his belief that his choices were the right ones.

In front of him was the description of the mana oath, now registered in his system the moment the knowledge entered his mind. This integration also allowed him the option to upgrade the oath if he wished and paid the price for it.

[Mana Oath (Low-Grade)]

The Mana Oath is a basic magical contract that binds two or more parties through the essence of mana, enforcing agreed-upon terms with consequences for breaches. As a low-grade version, it is relatively simple and, while effective at establishing trust, contains several exploitable loopholes, particularly for skilled magic users.

Despite its utility at this level, it struggles to enforce vaguely worded or open-to-interpretation terms. Phrases like "reasonable effort" or "in good faith" are easily manipulated by cunning parties who can argue they've technically adhered to the agreement.

Moreover, due to its low grade, the Mana Oath may fail to detect subtle breaches, especially those involving indirect or third-party actions that circumvent the original terms.

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Upgrade Price: 10,000,000,000 SP]

The description was far more detailed than even what Xalthar, a sage-level figure, knew. This indicated that these loopholes were likely known only by those in power and the higher echelons of society, which means they likely have been exploiting the contracts to their advantage, allowing themselves an escape route should they need to break the terms.

Meanwhile, the weaker parties—unaware of these loopholes or how to exploit them—were the ones who suffered the most, often facing the full consequences for breaching the oath. It was a system built to maintain the upper hand for the elite, leaving the less informed at a significant disadvantage.

As Aron stared at the price to upgrade the Mana Oath, he couldn't help but take a deep breath. Though he could afford the 10 billion SP, it would significantly reduce the amount of SP he'd have available for upgrading the Wormhole technology—something he prioritized far more urgently. He knew that once he had that technology, paired with mana stones and a few other resources, it would allow him to slowly advance his long-term goals without much interference. His enemies would be forced to work with him in one way or another.

Plus, he already had an alternative. Although it required to be in a written form to be used, it was still a reliable option and one he could fall back on without having to drain his reserves at a critical moment. For now, the upgrade would have to wait.

As for the issues of slavery and brutality embedded within the system, Aron had placed them at the bottom of his list of priorities. He knew that tackling those problems would invite immense pushback from those who benefited, and until he had the power to handle such resistance, addressing them would only create more chaos. As an intelligent individual, he could despise those injustices, but as the leader of an empire, he needed to be strategic. He wouldn't risk creating problems unless he was confident he could manage the fallout. Otherwise, he might worsen the situation for the very people he was responsible for as they were providing him something money couldn't buy, SP.

{Sir, it's time for you to address the empire,} Nova reminded him, signaling the next item on his agenda.

“Okay, let's do that. Although things appear calm, there's still worry among the citizens. We need to ease those concerns,” he replied, standing up and heading to the elevator. It transported him to the roof of the CUBE, fully equipped for a live address. He intended to speak in person rather than in VR, making it clear that he wasn't hiding from anyone.

Reporters would be able to attend as holograms through their devices, allowing them to ask questions should there be an opportunity to do so as if they were there in real-time. This ensured transparency, preventing any claims that he was avoiding them.

Aron had started this practice a few years ago after growing tired of spending too much time in VR. Knowing everything about that world felt akin to being the creator of a drug, and he was determined not to become addicted to his own creation. He wanted to remain grounded in reality, especially during critical moments like this.

{Everything is ready, sir. You can start,} Nova reported directly to his mind through the implants.

Now alone on the rooftop of the CUBE, which was still an active training base. He took a moment to gather his thoughts, looking out over the vast expanse as he prepared to address the empire.

Shortly he began to speak.

After greeting the audience, Aron got straight to the point. "I'm here to provide an update on the situation with our visitors and to explain what's currently happening.

As many scientists have pointed out in the past, the prospect of a face-off against aliens often ends in conflict. Just a few hours after we initiated communication and began exchanging information, it became clear that their destination was Earth—and they were not here in peace."

He paused, allowing the tension to build among his listeners. Many would now speculate that the military's current movements, along with the retreat orders, were either a sign that the situation was deteriorating or a precautionary measure against an imminent fight.

Having been an emperor for some time, he had honed the ability to tap into people's emotions, ensuring his messages resonated as intended.

Chapter 735 The Good & Bad news

Once he sensed that the tension had reached a peak, he continued, "As a result, conflict erupted between the two sides... and by the end of the day, we achieved victory," as he was saying that, he could almost hear the collective sigh of relief from those who had feared they were losing the fight.

He paused his speech as a short video played behind him. It began with Xalthar demanding the emperor's surrender, then shifted to the opening shots fired at the massive ship. The footage showed breaching forces making their way into the vessel, capturing it meter by meter until every section was under control. The video concluded with footage of the recovery process, where captured aliens were being collected and sent back to their ship. As the video ended, the feed returned to focusing on Aron.

"With that, I have both good and bad news to deliver," he said, pausing for emphasis. "The good news is that we won the initial contact and captured the majority of the enemy alive, allowing us to extract valuable information and gain leverage for potential retaliation." He let the news hang in the air, aware that the audience remained cautious, reluctant to fully embrace it with the bad news looming.

"As for the bad news, during the fight, the leader of the enemy forces contacted their home, the Astral Conclave, and deceived them into believing we possess a highly desirable resource—and that we have a significant quantity of it. He convinced them to come to his rescue in exchange for our coordinates. Given their access to Wormhole technology, which they can use at a steep cost, they will be here within two weeks at most, bringing with them a level of forces unlike any we've ever faced or imagined before."

He took a deep breath, determined not to let panic take hold among those on Earth. "But not everything is bad. The knowledge we've gained, combined with their expected arrival time, gives

us ample opportunity—not only to avoid being caught off guard but also to prepare adequately. We can take the necessary steps to minimize any potential damage to our solar system.”

As he spoke, the visual backdrop shifted to display footage of fleets mobilizing across various locations. Ships were seen moving into position, reinforcing the reality of his words and demonstrating the empire's readiness for the impending conflict.

The sheer number of ships in the fleet sent chills down the spines of everyone watching; the vessels seemed almost endless. Many citizens were astonished, unaware that their empire had amassed such a formidable fleet. A map of the solar system materialized behind him, highlighting the locations of the ships and revealing that nearly every entry point into the solar system was covered by forces ready to respond. This comprehensive display of power reassured the viewers that they were not defenseless against any incoming threats.

However, the majority of the forces were concentrated in one area where the foreign ship still lingered. Although the fleets were positioned several light-minutes apart, they formed a tight cluster. Additional ships were en route to ensure that a vast region was fortified in layers, allowing them to respond swiftly. This way, if one area were breached, they could prevent the enemy from exploiting the gap to enter the solar system.

“As you can see, we are doing everything within our power to ensure they don’t succeed. Our plans focus not only on stopping them but also on preventing any future attacks after they regroup. If everything unfolds as we envision, they could potentially become the gatekeepers, connecting us to other civilizations in this part of our galaxy—if not the entire galaxy. But for now, that's merely a hope we’ll entertain once we’ve dealt with the immediate obstacle before us.”

“There are some among you who speculated that I might be escaping. Unfortunately, I must disappoint you; I have no plans to flee. This is merely a speed bump on the road to a bright future for our empire, and it would be foolish of me to run away at such a critical moment.

To ensure we can focus on the challenges ahead, we’ve already issued orders for a retreat from the outer reaches of the solar system, directing all ships to return to the inner territories to avoid unnecessary losses.

Rest assured, there will be no significant interruptions to your lives. The war will be broadcast for all to witness, though there will be a slight delay to prevent giving enemy forces any tactical advantage should they breach our communication systems.

Additionally, if we determine that we cannot stop the enemy, our focus will shift from defense to buying time for our military forces on Mars to reach Earth and begin evacuating everyone. In such a scenario, we would migrate to Proxima Centauri while our military fights to buy us time, even if it means fighting to the last man. Though this may seem unlikely at the moment, I assure you we are fully prepared for such a worst-case outcome.”

Thank you all for listening. I wish you a peaceful day—one of many that lie ahead. Now, I’d like to open the floor for any questions you may have.”

For the next thirty minutes, reporters posed their questions, and he responded calmly, providing evidence that was displayed behind him to support his answers, before concluding his address.

After concluding his address, the live stream flickered to life, showcasing various areas around the solar system. This allowed those curious about the unfolding conflict to observe in real time, with many of the viewers being Proximians. They felt a mix of worry and helplessness, unable to intervene directly in the situation. Meanwhile, their military personnel had been called back to active duty at a moment's notice, which heightened the Proximians' curiosity. They were yet unaware that their forces would soon be piloting their robots in response to any breaches that might occur following the initial assaults.

The empire seamlessly shifted into a war footing, mobilizing resources and rallying the populace. Everyone was preparing, hoping, and praying for what was poised to be their most formidable challenge since surviving the Cambrian filter of life.

Chapter 736 This Part of the Galaxy

Time has a way of moving at exactly the wrong speed, especially for those who find themselves in a moment of anticipation.

For the inhabitants of the solar system, it felt like time was speeding by when they desperately wished for it to slow down. In the blink of an eye, twelve days had passed, bringing them to thirteen and a half days since Xalthar had sent out his message. The countdown was almost over.

Despite all the preparation, no one in the military felt confident that things would unfold as planned. Their extensive VR training had shown them that when facing the unknown, unpredictability is inevitable. This awareness kept everyone on high alert, a state they were able to maintain with ease due to their rigorous training. It also helped that they had already entered their military pods a week prior, ensuring they were mentally primed for the upcoming confrontation.

To humans, death evokes a tangle of emotions. Sometimes, we long for it to rescue us from despair, while other times, we fight desperately against its approach, knowing full well it's an unavoidable end. Most people shy away from places where death is likely, yet some willingly march into those very places, laying everything on the line to ensure their lives—if lost—are not lost in vain. It's in these moments of peril that humanity shines brightest, as if the human spirit were a dying star, radiating one final, brilliant burst of light to leave a lasting mark on the universe.

But what happens when you take that ultimate price—death—and remove it from the equation? What happens when the bravest among us are given the ability to display this unyielding human spirit again and again, without the fear of it being their final stand? It becomes a game—a high-stakes challenge where the fear of death is no longer a limit, and courage can be displayed limitlessly.

This was exactly what the empire aimed for. In the upcoming conflict, every soldier controlling their robotic counterparts, which had dozens of backups spread across different locations, knew that their real bodies were safe. This allowed them to fight without hesitation, unburdened by the carefulness that can often hold back those afraid of dying—a mindset that could be detrimental to the ultimate goal.

By ensuring that no soldier had to fear the loss of their life but still understood the gravity of the empire's fate, the empire created warriors who could fight with everything on the line, without ever

holding back. The result was not going to be just a battle—it was going to be a performance of pure human spirit, played out in the face of an uncertain future.

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{Anytime now, sir,} Nova said softly to Aron, who sat in a meditative pose, his eyes closed, body still.

The room was colossal, spanning the size of ten football fields, with the only entrance located on the ceiling. Otherwise, the massive chamber had no visible openings, resembling a gigantic water tank. And in a way, the assumption was correct—this was indeed a tank, but not for storing water. Instead, it held liquid mana, a shimmering substance harnessed in its purest, second most concentrated form.

These tanks had been specially designed by Aron, not for anyone else's use, but as a personal reserve. The liquid mana inside had been converted from the electricity generated by powerful reactors, a process he'd refined over the years.

This reservoir wasn't for everyday needs; it existed solely for those rare, extraordinary circumstances when Aron might need to perform something so immense that the ambient mana from the surroundings wouldn't suffice. Whether it was a massive spell or an operation that required immediate action, this stored mana allowed him to bypass the usual limitations of scale or time, ensuring he always had the raw power needed at his disposal.

“Looks like I really have an almost infinite mana tank,” Aron remarked as he opened his eyes, observing the tank now nearly depleted, with only a few small puddles of shimmering liquid mana remaining.

He had spent the last seven days focused solely on absorbing mana from these tanks, and this was the seventh—his final reservoir filled to the brim with mana.

{For practical purposes, we can consider it to be nearly infinite,} Nova replied, materializing as a hologram in front of Aron. {However, in comparison to true infinity, the amount you've absorbed is still quite minuscule.}

“That's for later, but first, let's leave this place,” Aron said, floating toward the door on the roof of the tank.

{Should I start refilling the tanks now that the reactors are idle?} she asked. When Aron began absorbing mana, he had paused halfway through the first tank, directing Nova to start refilling it while he moved on to the others. This strategy was designed to maximize efficiency, allowing the reactors to fill the first tank despite that process being slow, while he absorbed from the subsequent tanks, ensuring that no time was wasted with the reactors being idle.

“No, we'll only attract the attention of the incoming forces. My presence here is meant to be a last resort,” Aron replied as he passed through the door, entering a corridor that led to a control room. The room displayed the vastness of space outside, where he found himself on the third line of defense. He was alone on this line, prepared for the possibility that the first line might be breached too quickly.

"I really hope I don't have to step up," he murmured, gazing at the vast expanse displayed before him. The sensors they had deployed through the Oort cloud were continuously monitoring and updating the every base with their requiren information.

{Just in time,} Nova remarked, shifting the sensor feed to show him the current situation unfolding in real-time.

Space appeared as though it were being drawn into an invisible vacuum, powerful enough to even swallow light. For about fifteen seconds, beams of light seemed to spiral backward toward the center of this enigmatic void. Moments later, the absorbed light and surrounding space were forcefully repelled, creating a black void at the center of the chaos. The surrounding area looked as if it had been pushed outward, forming a shape that resembled the outline of a bracelet, a stark contrast against the cosmic backdrop.

Seconds after the wormhole fully opened, it seemed like a torrential rain of ships poured forth, as if they were fleeing from something unseen. Just ten seconds later, the reason became clear: the wormhole abruptly contracted to a pinpoint before vanishing entirely, as if it had never existed. The only evidence of its fleeting presence was the fleet of ships now left behind, scattered in the void of space.

The initial wave of a few hundred thousand ships was just the beginning. As each second ticked by, more and more wormholes began to materialize in the distance, each one spitting out additional ships into the fray. By the end of ten minutes, the chaotic scene had transformed into an overwhelming display of military might, as if the other side had completed their grand entrance, ready to assert their presence in this part of the galaxy.

Chapter 737 Warning Shots

A brief silence fell over the battlefield as both sides took in the data that was still being collected by their sensors, with the other side immediately realizing that Xalthar the person who brought them here has already being captured, making their work harder than inntiatily expeted as not matter where he is they had taken an oath to rescue him and they had to keep that oath no matter what.

At the same time they were also surprised by the sheer numbers displayed before them as despite it being lower than them by maginiutes it was still beyond their expectations.

The only one unfazed was Aron, who stared passively at the massive number of enemy forces without a hint of emotion on his face as even if the number on the other side doubled it would still be within his expectation.

"Start sending the broadcast signals," he instructed calmly, aware that this was the only window he had before the chaos began. Once the other side finished analyzing their surroundings and pinpointing allies and enemies, all hell would break loose.

As always, Nova, Aron's most faithful companion, acted swiftly. She activated the ship's communication module, powering it with enough mana to ensure that every entity in the sector would receive Aron's broadcast. {You can begin}, she signaled.

Simultaneously, she enabled the translator she had developed by analyzing the brain data of everyone captured from the ship. This translator ensured that the message would be understood in

both the Conclave's universal language and the species-specific dialects of the various beings present.

"This is Aron Michael, Emperor of the Terran Empire. You are currently in imperial territory. As foreign forces, you are ordered to halt your advancement and cease all attempts of attack, or we will respond with extreme force," Aron declared, his tone firm and concise. He knew that in moments like these, a short and direct warning was more effective. Anything longer might make it seem like he was bluffing or buying time.

The message was broadcast three times, ensuring that anyone with a communication system matching the required specs would hear it at least once. Now, all that remained was to see how the other side would respond to his warning.

Despite waiting for several seconds, the other side gave no response to Aron's broadcast. It became increasingly clear that they had chosen to ignore his warning entirely. The visible number of imperial ships hovered around two million, a fraction of the other side's fleet. Meanwhile, the opposing forces, with over a hundred million ships in total, didn't seem the least bit fazed.

After a minute of tense silence, the enemy fleet began to shift, their ships turning to face the direction of the imperial fleet. It was clear now—they had decided to deal with the "ants" in front of them first. They would eliminate the imperial forces before turning on each other to claim their spoils. The stage was set, and the confrontation seemed inevitable.

"Detonate them," Aron said calmly, his voice devoid of emotion as he watched the enemy fleet continue their maneuvering, showing no intention of responding to his warning.

{Copy that,} Nova replied promptly, immediately setting the plan into motion.

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In a sector filled with the arriving forces of one particular faction, their ships loomed, weapons primed and ready for a signal to launch a coordinated attack against the native forces. Their focus was solely on the battle ahead, strategizing the best approach for overwhelming their enemy before dealing with one another.

Unnoticed amidst the enormous vessels, a small bubble of space existed, cloaked in invisibility so perfect that even the most advanced sensors wouldn't have registered its presence. At the heart of this invisible bubble hovered a sleek, black spherical object. For a moment, it remained silent, almost serene, until a faint hum emanated from its core, signaling that it had shifted into operational mode.

With a rush of energy, the object's gravity generator and oversized capacitor absorbed enough power to sustain an entire planet for a week—all within seconds.

Then, in an instant, the black sphere collapsed in on itself, disappearing entirely from space.

What followed was an eerie silence—before the consequences of its activation began to unravel.

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"What are the orders?" Kauthar asked, his expression steady, as if the declaration of war barely warranted concern. Judging by the attentive silence of those around him, it was clear he was the highest-ranking officer on the ship. His appearance, nearly

identical to Xalthar's, coupled with his name ending in "thar," confirmed that he belonged to the same race.

"The order is to eliminate the smaller forces in our mini-sector before focusing on the larger enemy fleets, which we will strike in coordination with our allies. Our ship has been tasked with handling the empire's forces in our immediate vicinity," responded the communications officer. While Kauthar commanded this ship, he was still part of a larger command structure, awaiting directives from above.

"Xalthar, you foolish man. You should have contacted your civilization with this news, and we would have done everything to repay you. But now it looks like you're going to die," Kauthar remarked, his tone cold and dismissive, showing no concern for his fellow.

"Won't that break the contract? Won't we receive punishment if we kill him?" his assistant asked, his tone respectful.

"Currently, we don't know where he is. His presence among the ships is still speculation, so if he happens to be on one of those ships and dies from our attacks, we can argue it was unintentional. There's a clause in our agreement that protects us in cases of accidental death," Kauthar explained, his voice laced with indifference.

"Underst—"

Before his assistant could even finish his acknowledgment, a sudden and overwhelming sensation of impending doom washed over him and everyone on the ship. Goosebumps prickled their skin, and an instinctual fear coursed through them—though there was no time to process the danger. Instantly, their ship was caught in an unimaginable force. It was crushed, stretched, and pulled violently, with both flesh and metal alike reduced to paste, as the vessel—and everything aboard—was dragged into an unknown, unstoppable direction.

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"....."

Silence reigned on Aron's side as he watched the chaos unfold, though the ship he was on hummed with strain, fighting to maintain its position against the gravitational onslaught which has weakened quite a bit due to distance. Tremors rippled through the hull, but Aron remained still, his gaze fixed on the projections before him.

The projections showed light warping, bending unnaturally as if being pulled toward invisible voids. Massive capital ships, along with smaller vessels, crumpled under the immense gravitational forces unleashed by the detonations. It was as if the fabric of space itself had turned hostile, pulling everything into a singularities of destruction. Entire fleets were annihilated, compressed, and stretched beyond recognition, merging into indistinguishable masses within distances of light minute each.

Although the micro black holes existed for only a few fleeting seconds before evaporating due to Hawking radiation, the intense gravitational forces they exerted in such a brief span were devastating. Ships within their immediate vicinity were obliterated, torn apart and reduced to cosmic debris. Even those stationed further away were heavily damaged, their structural integrity compromised by the violent ripple of gravitational waves.

In that brief moment, without a single shot fired by the imperial forces, the invading armadas lost over five percent of their total fleet. The sheer scale of destruction sent a resounding message: this was no ordinary conflict. They faced a force capable of wielding the very fabric of the universe against them, turning space itself into a weapon.

“These are just warning shots. Any movement without reporting back to us will be dealt with immediately. You have thirty seconds to comply,” Aron announced once again, his voice steady and cold. The credibility of his threat weighed heavily, as the destruction just witnessed carried terrifying consequences.

Yet, it was a bluff—one that only he and Nova knew. The micro black holes he had just detonated were the maximum he could deploy without causing irreversible damage to the solar system. The side effects were already immense: portions of the Oort Cloud had been destabilized, with asteroids knocked out of their orbits, now either heading towards the inner solar system or drifting aimlessly into space. It left the empire with an enormous cleanup task, but Aron had deemed it necessary. If he was to strike, it had to be decisive. Mercy was something he granted only to a point—beyond that, sheer force was required.

As the seconds ticked down, Aron kept his gaze locked on the display, showing the aftermath of the black hole detonations. Ships that had been arrogant moments ago now hesitated, their formations disrupted, and fear rippling through their ranks. He knew they would weigh their options carefully now. They had seen what he was capable of, but they had no idea he couldn’t do it again—not without risking the empire itself.

Aron didn’t need them to know that, though. In war, perception was as powerful as any weapon.

Chapter 738 The Eternal Flame of Pride

In the next five seconds, silence gripped the Conclave forces as they struggled to process what had just occurred. The concept of a black hole was something they had only studied from afar, a distant cosmic phenomenon at the center of the galaxy, safely observed but never experienced. Now, faced with the unimaginable reality of being caught in its devastating force, panic set in. The terror was overwhelming—horror-inducing, will-breaking, and utterly impossible to combat.

Ten seconds later, the urgency hit them. With only fifteen seconds left to respond or face another round of annihilation, chaos erupted. Frenzied shouting filled the air as soldiers and commanders alike screamed for their leaders to surrender. Discipline, rank, and years of training were forgotten in the face of imminent death, as the overwhelming fear of being obliterated consumed them.

They were prepared to sacrifice their lives for their civilization, their organization, or any cause they believed in—but only if their deaths had meaning. Dying without purpose was foolish, and they knew it. In the midst of the chaos, as panic spread across the fleet, that thought echoed in the minds of many. They hadn’t come this far just to be obliterated without reason.

Amid the turmoil, a few factions managed to maintain enough composure for their leaders to communicate. These more organized groups quickly realized that their carefully laid plans had crumbled. In a scramble for damage control, they sought a path toward the least destructive outcome, knowing they were facing a force that had already shattered their expectations.

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While the various groups were either panicking or deliberating on how to minimize damage, maintaining a cautious distance, one faction seemed oblivious to the transmission—or perhaps, they simply chose to ignore it. They advanced steadily, undeterred by the warnings. Without hesitation, their ships launched a barrage of missiles, each accelerating to ten percent of light speed upon leaving the vessels.

Through mana vision, it became clear that a spell accompanied the missile barrage, boosting their speed even further. Hundreds of thousands of missiles hurtled through space, their velocity ensuring they would reach their targets within mere minutes, despite the vast distance separating them from the imperial fleet.

Not stopping there, the defiant faction transmitted a message to all forces within the Conclave:

"Their threats are hollow. They can't repeat what they've done without causing irreversible damage to themselves. They've done this because they know we outnumber them fifty to one and can't win in a direct battle. So, they've used their entire stockpile of weapons of mass destruction to scare us into surrender and break our pride. But we will not yield, even if every last one of you decides to cower. We stand firm, and even if we face them alone, we are more than enough to handle this situation."

The announcement radiated with unmistakable pride and defiance, as if daring anyone listening to doubt their resolve.

Anyone who heard the announcement understood that the other side was not bluffing at all. The Valthorin race was renowned for their unyielding pride and all-encompassing sense of honor. Their culture revolved around a concept known as "Kairos," which translates to "The Eternal Flame of Pride."

This belief dictated that a Valthorin's worth was measured by how they upheld their pride in every aspect of life. It was deemed better to die with dignity than to live in disgrace, and any affront to a Valthorin's pride demanded a response—whether through combat, diplomacy, or cunning.

Within the Conclave, no one considered the Valthorin a weak race; they consistently ranked among the top ten civilizations. This reputation stemmed from their pride-driven society, which produced both warriors and scholars dedicated to excelling in their respective fields. Each individual aspired to climb the hierarchy and enhance their honor.

As a result, the Valthorin excelled in every discipline, and were also obsessed with their reputation which they would go to great lengths to maintain it, including assassination, sabotage, or forming temporary alliances with other races.

However, they would never act dishonorably against their own kind. Because while individual pride was paramount, the Valthorin were fiercely loyal to their people and empire. They believed that the success and survival of their race were intrinsically linked to their own pride, fostering a collective mentality of superiority.

As a result, when such a group sent out an announcement, it signified that they were backing it with their pride—a value they held more precious than life itself. This made their words carry immense weight, indicating a near certainty in what they were proclaiming.

As a result of that announcement, many of the forces present regained their composure, allowing them to see the broader picture that had eluded them in the chaos following the previous catastrophic event. Recognizing the truth in the Valthorin's declaration, they found a renewed sense of purpose. Emboldened by their collective frustration and the desire to avenge their earlier losses, each faction began launching their missiles and deploying every long-range weapon at their disposal. A wave of counterattacks surged through the ranks, as the forces united in a shared determination to retaliate against the enemy.

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"The Valthorin, a good race to have under our empire," Aron remarked, observing the unfolding situation with a sense of calm.

{If you can achieve annexing them, they will be the perfect asset for the empire and the expansion plan,} Nova replied, her voice steady. She understood that they were well-prepared to handle the majority of the initial wave of attacks without significant issues.

"Though I need to gather more information about their Pride Nexus and Honor Blades. If I can replicate those, it would make our plans much more effective and easier to implement," Aron mused, recalling the snippets of information they had collected from captured crew members of Xalthar's ship.

The Pride Nexus, he remembered, was a vast network of interconnected minds among the Valthorin elite. It allowed them to share thoughts, strategies, and memories, significantly enhancing their decision-making abilities. However, access was limited to those who had proven their worth meaning it might have even more capabilities than known by the rest of the Conclave.

In contrast, the Honor Blades were personal weapon—or any object created from specific materials—crafted upon coming of age. Each blade contained an imprint of its wielder's soul, forming a unique bond that rendered it utterly useless to anyone else. For the owner, it served as an irreplaceable symbol of pride and identity, a testament to their character and accomplishments.

"But first, let's focus on the current situation before getting lost in thoughts about the future and risking a mistake in the present," he said, his gaze fixed on the incoming attacks as they finally entered a range that allowed for an effective response.

Chapter 739 A Distinction Forged by Necessity

The imperial first-line fleets reacted instantly as the incoming missiles and spells entered the point of no return. They launched their own counterattack, deploying smaller missiles, which were accompanied by a barrage of sleek, black spheres. These spheres spread out in all directions, tasked with intercepting the incoming threats from every possible angle, given that the attacks were converging from multiple vectors in space to bypass potential defenses.

While the missiles handled the initial phase of interception, the sleek spheres communicated and coordinated seamlessly with each other. Each one generated a hexagonal shield, which linked

together to form an interlocking barrier around the fleet. This network of shields braced for impact, prepared to handle the incoming mana-powered attacks that could not be countered through conventional methods alone.

The first attack to challenge the hexagonal shields was an immense ball of fire, burning with such intensity that it could melt most metals by mere proximity, demonstrating its destructive power. As it reached the shield, it passed through seemingly without much resistance. However, by the time it emerged on the other side, it had been completely neutralized—disappearing into nothingness.

The hexagonal shields had not been designed to physically block attacks but to strip them of their mana. The moment the fireball entered the shield's zone, the shield absorbed all the mana sustaining it, rendering it inert. Without its magical energy to keep it alive, the fireball disintegrated before it could pose any threat to the imperial ships. This was the brilliance of the shield system—rather than stopping attacks with brute force, it nullified anything reliant on mana, making magical assaults ineffective unless they had their own protection against mana depletion.

This capability was strong enough to repel all basic attacks that relied on magic as the primary source of weapon damage. However, it appeared that some enemy weapons were immune to its effects, as a few attacks bypassed the shield entirely. These particular weapons became the focus of attention, as they were physical in nature but exhibited a phasing ability. Whenever they were about to be struck by an interceptor's explosion, they passed through it effortlessly, as if the blast were nothing more than wind through a net. Once these weapons reached their target ship, they phased through its walls and detonated inside, destroying a small attacking vessel with a single strike.

Hundreds of ships from the empire's side were destroyed by these attacks, yet it seemed that these types of weapons were rare, as only a limited number were deployed despite causing the bulk of the damage to the fleet. Most other weapons sent by the enemy were intercepted in time, with only a few making it through. These either caused varying degrees of damage or had their impact absorbed by the ships' shields.

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Amid the chaos, the empire was desperately trying to fend off relentless attacks that rained down in overwhelming numbers, making them nearly impossible to count. Nearly all of the hundred million ships had unleashed multiple weapons in the same time frame, aiming to annihilate the opposing forces in a single devastating strike.

Despite the semi-joint attack, each faction remained vigilant, knowing they had to keep an eye on one another in case anyone attempted to outmaneuver them by using this period as an opportunity and launch attacks at them.

The Valthorins stood out in this tumultuous situation, appearing resolute in their mission to obliterate the enemy entirely. They launched a greater volume of weaponry than any other faction, seemingly intent on ensuring that the opposing side was removed from existence.

As a result, the empire found itself unable to launch a counterattack, a situation deemed normal given their focus on avoiding annihilation. Meanwhile, the Conclave forces strategically advanced closer to the star system while maintaining a careful distance from one another. They understood that if this wave of attacks succeeded in decimating the opposing forces, it would not only be time

to refocus on each other but also the perfect opportunity to rush into the solar system and seize its advanced technology—particularly the terrifying bombs—before any rival factions could.

While the majority of the fleets were focused on advancing and preparing for their dash to the star system, one civilization's forces, the Shadari, noticeably halted their movements. Instead of following suit, they directed their attention elsewhere, opening fire toward an area that appeared empty, filled only with asteroids. To an outside observer unfamiliar with them, this might have seemed like an act of madness. However, knowing the Shadari's reputation as masters of stealth, no one dismissed it as such.

When the Shadari launched an attack in a seemingly barren direction, it signaled that something significant was concealed there. Realizing the implications of this, the other Conclave forces quickly pushed their sensors to their maximum limits, eager to uncover what could be prompting the Shadari to act in such a peculiar manner.

In the realm of stealth, the Shadari were unmatched, a distinction forged by necessity. Their home star system was located in a region where space-time was distorted, giving rise to natural stealth zones where light, sound, and even energy signatures were suppressed or redirected. This environment not only shaped their technological advancements but also influenced the evolution of the local fauna, resulting in stealth predators capable of becoming invisible or intangible for varying durations.

These adaptations rendered traditional combat methods nearly ineffective, compelling the nascent Shadari civilization to evolve and refine their own strategies for survival in such hostile conditions. As a result, they became masters of stealth, able to move undetected and strike when least expected, a skill that proved invaluable in their ongoing conflicts.

So when a species like the Shadari initiated an attack in close proximity (relative to space), it indicated that the enemy they were targeting possessed a level of stealth that even the masters of concealment struggled to detect until it was almost too late. This was evident as the attacks launched by the Shadari fleets simply vanished from existence upon reaching a certain distance.

Before the other forces could receive any meaningful feedback from their sensors, the enemy finally revealed themselves. Attacks began raining down from seemingly nowhere, catching many off guard. Alongside these assaults, tens of thousand of breaching pods descended, primarily aimed at the control ships or the largest vessels within each civilization's or organization's fleet. This strategic focus made it clear that the enemy was intent on targeting the leadership, aiming to destabilize the command structure and sow chaos among the ranks.

Chapter 740 1% Success

From a two-dimensional perspective, an observer witnessing this conflict would see two sides engaged in entirely different battles as a result of the ongoing attacks. The imperial forces remained focused on thwarting waves of incoming assaults, while the Conclave forces were also caught in a defensive struggle against attacks that seemed to emerge from thin air.

The invisible enemy skillfully capitalized on the gaps created by the Conclave forces, who had spaced themselves apart in preparation for a potential rush after the imperial forces were defeated. Their attacks, launched from these positions, caught the Conclave by surprise, throwing them into a scramble to respond effectively.

As the Conclave struggled to counter the incoming assaults, they faced the daunting task of not only stopping the initial attacks but also preventing breaching pods from infiltrating their ships. At the same time, they had to focus on eliminating the stealth forces that were orchestrating the offensive. This chaotic interplay of threats kept the Conclave forces on high alert, forcing them to split their attention and resources in a desperate attempt to maintain their defenses.

The enemy's positioning created a challenging situation for the Conclave forces. Nestled in the gaps between each other, they found it difficult to respond effectively without risking collateral damage. Any counterattacks aimed at the stealth forces had a significant chance of missing their intended targets and instead striking their temporary allies. This precarious positioning heightened the stakes for the Conclave, as they had to balance the urgency of their defense with the potential consequences of harming their temporary allies forces which might create more chaos, all while under relentless pressure from the ongoing assaults.

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"We should tell them where to aim," one of the Shadari leaders suggested, observing the varying degrees of difficulty faced by the Conclave members against the stealth enemies.

His body, along with those he was addressing, bore a humanoid shape, but that was where the resemblance to humans ended. They lacked visible eyes, ears, or any identifiable features. The only discernible aspect of their forms was the dark layer that enveloped them, which appeared to absorb light in varying degrees, depending on each member of their race.

"We don't have time to redirect our sensors to their positions when we need to use them at full capacity just to detect the enemies up close," replied the one with the second most light-absorbing layer among the many holograms engaged in the discussion.

"We don't need to adjust our sensors to assist them in that way. All we need to do is provide information that will enable them to mount a decent defense and minimize their losses. While it may seem advantageous for us if they lose this fight, it's actually quite the opposite. We need them weakened enough to continue resisting the enemy forces, but not so severely damaged that they become useless to us," countered another leader.

Their voices emanated from an indiscernible organ, leaving it unclear whether their dark layer was true skin or simply an active ability concealing their actual bodies like a veil.

As they deliberated, one of their ships launched a missile that appeared unremarkable at first glance. However, similar to the missiles inflicting severe damage on the imperial fleet, this one effortlessly passed through defenses, allowing it to penetrate the stealth bubble and transmit vital information back to the fleet. The data revealed a ship at the center responsible for generating the bubble, which enabled the other vessels to remain undetected.

In a frantic attempt to neutralize the missile, the surrounding ships targeted it, but their attacks either passed right through or detonated harmlessly at a distance. The missile continued its course

until it struck the stealth bubble's generating ship, exploding upon impact. This caused the bubble to rupture, exposing the imperial vessels to the sensors of every ship in the vicinity.

Though this exposure left them vulnerable, the ships showed no concern, as their capabilities extended beyond mere stealth.

With their camouflage stripped away, they unleashed their full flexibility. Ships that had once been limited to movements only in the stealth bubble were now free to maneuver, launch attacks, and deploy rebatching pods as they saw fit, adapting seamlessly to the evolving chaos of battle.

No one among the Shadari in the room appeared pleased that their phasing-capable missiles had successfully penetrated enemy defenses, inadvertently exposing their hidden ships. While the outcome of the missile's effectiveness was anticipated, it was still a troubling development.

These missiles were not only among their finest weapons but also some of the most costly and complex to manufacture. Constructed from rare materials and requiring the expertise of highly skilled Shadari artisans, their availability was limited, with each fleet allocated only a small supply.

Originally intended to maintain a balance of power against the other top ten civilizations, nearly a quarter of these prized missiles had now been expended to both destroy imperial ships and reveal their stealth forces currently targeting them. This loss represented a significant risk, compromising their strategic advantage at a crucial moment in the conflict.

"We don't have time; let's vote. Those in favor, make it known," declared the Shadari with the most light-absorbing skin.

Silence hung in the air; no one raised a hand or spoke a word.

"Then we'll send them the information about the central ship and instruct them to target it to reveal the other vessels," the one who called for the vote announced, interpreting the lack of response as tacit approval from the others.

As soon as the information was transmitted to the other Conclave members, they swiftly redirected their attacks to penetrate the stealth bubble, concentrating their fire on the central ships in each bubble that was responsible for maintaining them.

However, it appeared that the Shadari had deliberately chosen this moment to provide the crucial information, just as every other Conclave force was facing a few thousand breaching pods successfully infiltrating their ships from the hundreds of thousands launched at them.

This meant that even if they managed to handle the stealth forces, they would still have to contend with the enemy forces that had already breached their ships allowing the Shadari to reach their goal of weakening them without having to do anything with their own hands.