

Mech 2231

Chapter 2231 New Discoveries

Though the second experiment seemed to have made no difference, after studying various other signs, Ves still considered it a partial success.

His original intention was to isolate his second test subject's cruelty or aggression and lock it up in a box.

While Ves indeed managed to make these changes, the results were much more modest than he anticipated.

First, the box he created to contain the pirate's undesirable spiritual attributes wasn't big enough to fit much.

Second, he could only stuff away a portion of the spiritual attributes related to the test subject's aggression before the defense mechanisms kicked in. He felt very frustrated by these hindrances, but he also felt hopeful he could slowly overcome them over time.

One of the guesses he formed was that the degree of control he could exert on someone's spirit was partially determined by his mental strength.

Becoming stronger probably wouldn't help him override someone else's defense mechanisms. What he did expect to get better at was the fine control he could exert.

As the third, fourth and fifth test subjects came around, Ves experimented with various methods. He found out that he had a lot of difficulty in manipulating someone's weaker and less prevalent spiritual attributes.

He needed to exert more and more strength in order to grasp the rarer spiritual attributes. At some point, he hit a ceiling as he reached the upper range of his spiritual exertions.

This caused him to develop a new hypothesis.

The stronger his Spirituality, the more fine control he could exert over someone's rarer spiritual attributes.

This meant that if Ves wanted to turn the original William Urbesh into a courageous mech pilot, he had a much easier time in bottling up his fear rather than amplifying what little courage he possessed.

Through his subsequent experiments, he also figured out some other rules.

"It's difficult to change someone into something he is not. It's easier to amplify something that is already important."

Turning a bloodthirsty killer into an even greater homicidal maniac was easy. Ves essentially avoided arousing his test subject's defense mechanisms by inducing a change which the pirate in question had always desired to become.

"I WANT TO CUT YOUR LIMBS FROM YOUR BODY! I WANT TO CARVE OUT STRIPS OF YOUR BELLY!"

Ves and Calabast looked at each other again.

"I still don't know what you are doing exactly, but you seem to have a talent in bringing out the worst in people." The spymaster remarked.

"That's because they are deplorable to begin with. I'm sure I'll achieve much different results when I apply these techniques to someone decent."

The limitations of using pirates and awful criminals as test subjects had become very apparent at Ves. Due to the rule that stated that it was easier to induce changes that people already desired, it was difficult to transform them into better people.

The few attempts he made to force the process did not end well. He either broke them to the extent that their defense mechanisms kicked in, or found himself short of the power necessary to overcome all of the resistance.

Ves did grow curious at whether he could employ some other method to reduce his difficulties.

Perhaps he could expend his own spiritual energy in order to force a change.

However, when he tried to push it, his test subject violently rejected his influence and treated it as an intruder!

A living spirit was different from a lifeless one. Once something spiritual came alive, they turned into their own self-contained beings. They naturally resisted external influences unless a close relation existed.

This was why his mother was able to absorb his spiritual energy and why Gloriana willingly hosted his spiritual fragment in her mind.

This little experiment didn't yield any fantastic results, but Ves intuitively guessed more rules. He began to get a better sense of his own spiritual domains as he continued to manipulate his test subject's spirits.

His design seed hosted two strong domains. Just like any other mech designer, one of those domains centered around mechs. Pretty much every strong mech designer that Ves had met shared this particular focus.

What it actually did, Ves wasn't too sure. He knew that it was responsible for imparting extraordinary properties to mechs and mech designs, but he didn't think it was that simple.

Now that he manipulated something that wasn't a mech, Ves began to make a bold guess.

Perhaps his mech domain enabled him to treat everything else as if they were machines.

Though this domain mainly enhanced his affinity and fluency with mechs, Ves suspected that it also came with side effects that he could leverage.

This explained why it became a little easier for him to craft other gear such as weapons and totems.

A small portion of this benefit also affected his ability to manipulate human spirits, but only to a minor extent. When he attempted to expend his spiritual energy in order to empower this aspect of his, he did find out that he was capable of exerting more control over his test subjects, but only to a modest degree.

The biggest problem with this method was that it was very inefficient! Ves wasted much more of his spiritual energy than he wanted to in order to effect a change.

"This means that while it's possible to force a process, I'm not strong enough to achieve anything too meaningful."

He needed to grow stronger before achieving a better effect. He certainly did not wish to halt this direction of inquiry.

His initial in depth exploration of his own mech-attributed spiritual energy even caused him to make another bold conclusion!

The great importance of this specific domain caused him to develop the suspicion that developing it and nurturing it was the key to advancing up the ranks!

The logic made a lot of sense. When domains grew more powerful, they became capable of distorting reality to a greater degree.

To mech designers, the mech domain determined how much of their intrinsic specialties could stick to their mech designs.

A low-ranked mech designer possessed a very weak ability to empower a mech design. Part of that was due to their low spiritual energy, but the attributes that it consisted of also played a role.

All of this meant that when Ves grew stronger, he needed to make sure that his mech domain grew in the same pace as his life domain. If the latter's growth outpaced the former, then he feared whether he could still design a good mech.

As for the life domain, Ves became inspired by the way the life-attributed spiritual energy from the serum easily fed other spiritual entities during the Superior Mother's birth.

Though the spiritual remnant that originated from his mother absorbed most of it, before that the other spiritual ingredients managed to absorb it as well. Ves became particularly impressed at how life-attributed spiritual energy exhibited no incompatibilities at all no matter which spiritual entity it encountered!

Could Ves achieve the same?

It would provide him with an alternative to using up his finite supply of life-prolonging treatment serum if that was the case! His eyes lit up at the amazing benefits he could secure if that was the case!

The next test subject that the Black Cats brought into the room looked angrily at Ves and Calabast. Just like any typical pirate who knew they were destined to die, the fellow was very defiant.

Ves didn't care. He ignored the pirate's meaningless ramblings and began the tedious process of isolating and infusing his life-attributed spiritual energy.

For a moment, Ves believed that the pirate's spiritual potential fed off his donation.

"Ahh!"

Then, a huge rejection reaction took place!

From the brief moment of contact, Ves sensed that while the pirate's spirit desperately wanted to absorb the life energy that Ves had cultivated, the spiritual imprint that came with it ruined the entire process!

They were too incompatible!

"Hmm. Damn." Ves shook his head in disappointment.

It was too good to be true. He at least learned something interesting from this failed test. The high-quality spiritual energy from the serum possessed special properties which

allowed it to become compatible with everything. Perhaps its spiritual imprints were unusually docile and unpossessive.

Ves speculated whether he might find more success if he infused his life energy into someone more intimate to him. After all, his mother effortlessly sucked him like a popsicle because of a lack of resistance from his own spiritual imprint. By this logic, it might be possible to transfer some of his life energy to a Larkinson.

The closer his relationship to a Larkinson, the greater the likelihood of success!

It was far too soon to try out this idea, though. Considering the pain and personality changes that his test subjects experienced, Ves was far from confident in applying any of his current methods on people he actually cared about!

He fell into thought as the latest test subject was brought away. The fellow's spiritual potential had collapsed in on itself in order to defend itself against the hostile intrusion of life energy.

"Maybe I need to erase the imprint first."

Ves had already developed a technique to erase spiritual imprints. When he applied it to his own spiritual energy, he actually had to expend quite some effort to do it because his imprints were strong!

When he fed the ownerless life energy to the latest pirate test subject, the result he anticipated did not take place.

The pirate's spiritual potential did not absorb the meal that Ves prepared!

"What the hell? Why? Am I not tasty enough?" Ves puzzled.

After exploring the situation further, he began to develop a good guess why his life energy met with a different reaction.

The lack of imprint robbed his spiritual energy of his unique strengths.

The role of spiritual imprint went beyond claiming ownership. It actually imparted spiritual energy with some unique properties that were more valuable than he thought!

Spiritual energy without an imprint was akin to form without substance or food without flavor.

Ves disappointingly reclaimed the ownerless spiritual energy. As soon as he did so, the energy seemingly came to life again. The imprint they gained seemed to make it part of his spiritual domain again.

After messing a bit more with the test subject, the pirate eventually got dragged away.

"You've run through all of the pirates you have marked out, Ves. Unless you want to grab more pirates from their cells, we can't supply you with more."

"It's useless." Ves shook his head. "The pirates who I've passed over don't have the properties I want. The Larkinson Clan can handle them according to our existing rules and customs."

A brief silence ensued as Ves reflected on this session.

"I can see from your expressions that you have managed to make many discoveries." Calabast interrupted the silence. "Despite your gains, you don't appear to be very satisfied. You wanted to achieve something, but fell far short of your goal."

Ves shrugged. "That's the normal outcome of experiments, especially preliminary ones like mine. You're right that I've learned plenty of new interactions. Messing with people is a lot more difficult than I thought. Still, I'm glad that I managed to gain a lot of insights and learned a bit more about my own strength."

In particular, he believed that he could leverage his life-attributed spiritual energy for something more than facilitating his communications with sentient animals and exobeasts.

As long as he could figure out a way to feed it safely to other people, he might be able to accelerate the advancement of those with spiritual potential!

An even greater hope was the possibility of granting spiritual potential to people who did not possess it in the first place!

This was such a wild and revolutionary possibility that the very course of human civilization would change once word of it spread!

However, Ves did not need to make use of his intuition to know that this was a very daunting and challenging goal. It was best if he set his sights a little lower.

"Changing people is harder than I thought."

Chapter 2232 Adverse Developmen

After several days of taking control of Xiphard Base, Task Force Predator looted it of all of the valuables it was willing to carry. With nothing left for the Larkinsons to take, they readied their fleet to depart.

Most of the Crona Lords the Larkinsons had captured were put on trial, for whatever good it did. In order to save on time, a clansman proposed the bright idea of

programming an AI that automatically judged every pirate based on the evidence gathered from interrogations and the data banks.

It only took 0.00034 seconds to pass judgement on every single pirate or slave.

Predictably, the judge AI sentenced most of the pirates to death. The slaves received mixed treatment. The most innocent ones regained their freedom while the slaves who had become corrupted were supposed to receive various prison sentences.

As it was, the Larkinsons simply decided to keep them in their cells and let the recently-freed slaves decide how to handle the mess. What happened next in Xiphard Base was none of the clan's business.

Before the task force resumed its journey, the Larkinsons made sure to dismantle and destroy any illegal weapon. They stripped the enhanced nuclear payloads from the Alpha Mines, used the Beta Ships as target practice and salvaged the most valuable materials from the Omega Laser before completely destroying it beyond recognition.

"Those freed slaves won't end up better." Calabast told Ves as they looked at the large asteroid base becoming smaller as the Scarlet Rose slowly flew away. "There are hardly any intact mechs left at the base. Even if the slaves manage to repair a couple of dozen of them, they don't have the mech pilots to make use of them. The base will be overrun by some other pirate group in a month."

"We left more stuff behind than just the base. There's also the few intact ships we managed to capture from the surrendered Crona Lords."

"If the former slaves are smart enough, they will take those ships and flee towards the periphery of the Nyxian Gap. Even if their ships don't have any FTL drives, they can at least hope for rescue from a benevolent Peacekeeper outfit. What's more likely though is that their lone and defenseless ships will get raided by some other pirates, thereby landing them straight back into slavery."

Ves shrugged. "We aren't going to haul tens of thousands of slaves along our journey. They take up too much space and life support capacity. Keeping them with us is a distraction at best and dangerous at worst."

"I'm not arguing against the choices our task force has made. It's just that you shouldn't kid yourself that you are doing those freed people a favor."

"I know that." Ves frowned. "The best we can do is to give them a chance. Our own priorities come first. That is something I won't compromise on. The days where Larkinsons are expected to sacrifice themselves to the benefit of others is over. What I mainly want is for our fellow clansmen to think our clan is acting in an honorable manner. The ugly truth that you have described doesn't matter. The perception that we are doing the right thing is what I truly want."

She looked a bit confused at him. "That sounds strange. You know you're rather contradictory, you know that? Much of the decisions you have made as clan patriarch are focused on shaping a culture of honor and integrity. While I do not have any objections towards this development trajectory, I find it strange that you hold little of the values you try to instill on others."

It was like a man leading a woman's association or a norm leading a mech outfit. It seemed wrong that the leader of an organization held the opposite ideals. Yet Ves seemed determined to make it work!

"Just because I'm.. different.. from the other Larkinsons doesn't mean that I want them to become like me." Ves calmly replied. "If every Larkinson becomes a scumbag, who can I trust to support me and my clan? Trust is important. Even if I'm lacking in it, I hope I can make up my shortfall by borrowing it from my fellow Larkinsons."

The true reason why he wanted to foster a proper and upright clan that centered around kinship and honor was to minimize the chance of betrayal.

One of his worst nightmares was that his clan would become similar to him! If everyone became selfish bastards who wouldn't hesitate to break the rules the moment they became an obstacle, the Larkinson Clan would quickly tear itself apart from the inside! That did not benefit Ves the slightest!

Since his influence over the development of the clan was very great, Ves wanted to make sure that it stayed on the right path!

This was why he needed to make careful and deliberate decisions on behalf of the clan. Rather than slaughtering every human in a pirate base right away, Ves encouraged the clan to judge them all properly even though they did not have to do that. The objective of this decision was to establish a pattern where the clan always attempted to act honorably.

What Ves didn't tell Calabast was that he had another reason to foster such a culture!

The experiments he conducted earlier provided him with a wealth of new insights. He gained a comprehensive new understanding of the nature and mechanics of spiritual phenomena, and this was just the start!

One of the conclusions he tentatively made was that it was easier to enhance someone's existing traits than to suppress or supplant them with something else.

With his current spiritual strength and repertoire of techniques, it was too impractical for Ves to do anything else aside from amplifying someone's existing inclinations.

This meant that he could turn a killer into a mass murderer, a mech enthusiast into a passionate mech fanatic and a noble soldier into a paragon of duty.

If Ves ever wanted to apply this method to his own Larkinsons, he needed to make sure they possessed something desirable for Ves to amplify. It would be much better if the clansmen in question already possessed a strong positive trait!

After chatting a bit more with Calabast, he left her side and moved to the isolated chamber which held the Darkbreak module.

He turned it online and called someone who he never dared to approach before.

The physical projection of Master Willix appeared into view. The eminent mech designer apparently expected this call and looked ready to discuss serious matters.

"Mr. Larkinson. It is good to see you today."

"Good afternoon, Master Willix. Have you evaluated all of the documents and proof I sent about the numerous violations of the Crona Lords and the Allidus Alliance?"

If Ves didn't want to come across as rude, he would have asked the Master how many merits the MTA was willing to award him for punishing the wicked pirates!

The Alpha Mines and the Omega Laser of the Crona Lords along with the weapon batteries and the Judgement Lasers of the Allidus Alliance all represented gross violations of the rules set by the Big Two!

Ves expected to earn much more merits this time!

The Master looked grave. "The alarming implications of the discoveries that you have made are too great to be decided by myself. I convened with my fellow colleagues at Centerpoint and discussed your proof as well as the other scattered information that we have gathered from the Nyxian Gap. It's clear that the Nyxian pirates are not content to maintain the old status quo."

Why didn't she tell him how many merits he earned? Didn't she realize he had been waiting for days to hear the good news?!

"Uhm, we were very surprised at how many taboo superweapons we encountered. According to the intelligence that we have gathered, it's not unusual for pirates to prepare some trump cards. However, they shouldn't possess so many superweapons."

Master Willix nodded in agreement. "According to our own analysis, this is a fairly recent development. The rise of certain pirate organizations such as the Allidus Alliance that have begun to sell destructive warship-grade weapon batteries and weapon emplacements are at fault here. Allidus make too much light of the CFA and MTA because we have been remiss in enforcing our will upon them. The safety afforded by the anomalous environment they inhabit has given the rats the courage of a lion."

"While the rats are still fairly small, their fangs have grown sharper. It's not easy to defeat these pirate groups that make use of weapons of mass destruction. Our task force has lost over fifty mech pilots and at least double the amount of mechs in our latest battle."

The Master's projection threw a look at him as if she knew what he was doing.

She was not in a hurry to provide him with the answer he wanted to hear, though!

"We have always monitored the Nyxian Gap and tried to keep on top of what is taking place there. Despite our efforts, it is still difficult to ascertain how many taboo weapons the pirates have obtained. Serious confrontations are rather rare and pirates often cease their conflicts before one side is willing to go all out. We are quite grateful that an outside factor such as you who doesn't play by their rules has exposed some of the actual state of this region."

Did that mean that Ves was entitled to a bonus?

"From what we have gathered from our own investigations, the Crona Lords and several other pirate groups they are friends with have only recently begun to augment their arsenal of superweapons."

"Part if that is due to the recent escalation in the conflict between the Nyxian pirates and the Sentinel Kingdom." Willix stated. "The recent Friedmont Massacre where a large number of nuclear-armed doom crawlers has nuked an entire planet has only enflamed the situation. The incident dealt a severe blow in the confidence and prestige in us. Along with other factors, this has led to a greater willingness to ignore the rules we have enforced for centuries."

Ves awkwardly scratched the side of his head. "Yes. The Friedmont Massacre. What a tragedy. Billions of Sentinel citizens dead. The pirates sure are unrepentant scum for slaughtering so many innocents."

"After a discussion with our CFA colleagues, we have decided to alter the rewards related to this set of rule violations. We will publish an official notification on all of our platforms later this week, but it will in effect state that the merits we award for the discovery, seizure and destruction of taboo weapons is directly doubled."

"What?! Double?!" Ves lit up. This was better news than he hoped! "Does that apply to my current submission as well?!"

"Yes. After analyzing and verifying the proof that you have submitted, we have determined that the service that you have provided in dealing with the various violations committed by the Crona Lords and the Allidus Alliance is significant. Your base reward is 643,423 MTA merits, but since your reward is doubled, your account will be credited with 1,286,846 MTA merits before the end of this day."

Ves was floored! He knew the MTA would likely award him generously, but he never expected to earn more than a million MTA merits at once!

Greed began to fill his eyes. Forget about tracking down Solok Reyva. Forget about fulfilling various other difficult missions for the MTA. Why should he go on a wild goose chase when he could just smash apart pirate bases instead?

With the strength of Task Force Predator, Ves was confident he could topple several more pirate fortifications similar to Xiphard Base!

He bowed towards the projection. "Thank you for rewarding us with this generous amount of merits. We are glad to be of service to the honorable Mech Trade Association."

If he could earn 1 million MTA merits after defeating any established pirate group in Maynard Fields, he was confident he could accumulate at least 5 million merits during this excursion! He might even be able to earn 10 million merits if he pushed his Larkinson Clan further!

There was no way Ves was going to waste this opportunity!

Chapter 2233 Friend of the Friday Coalition

The Komodo War unleashed slaughter on an unprecedentedly greater scale than the Bright-Vesia War.

The two titans of the Komodo Star Sector directly locked horns with each other, pitting enormous amounts of superior mechs and soldiers against each other in a brutal struggle that resulted in horrendous casualties!

The sheer intensity of the fighting presented opportunities for the Friday Coalition and the Hexadric Hegemony to expend all of the resources and combat assets that they accumulated over centuries.

In any single contested star system, the debris of broken mechs and ships that littered space was worth enough money to fund the annual government expenditure of any third-rate state!

There were many contested star systems! And since the Komodo War was still kicking into gear, many more major battlefields had yet to emerge!

The madness and battlelust that affected both sides had made a profound impact on Ghanso Larkinson.

Since the CRC assigned Unit L to the Marrakath System, Ghanso witnessed much of the desperation that had overtaken the Fridaymen and Hexers.

Both sides wanted to take possession of the Crestfallen Stars at all costs! Controlling this string of stars was much like taking possession of a wall.

If the Friday Coalition lost control of this wall, then the Hexers would have much easier access to the interior of its space! The Carnegie Group would especially be exposed as its Fortune Legion, though numerous, was not sufficient enough to defend every star system!

Famed and strategically-important locations such as the famed Leemar System and its many universities already started to panic. While the Leemar Institute of Technology and other famed schools would easily be able to relocate if necessary, losing their original campus grounds to the Hexers would deal a severe blow!

With so much at stake, the Fortune Legion staked their ground and tried their best to repel the Hex Army, or failing that at least bleed the female supremacists as much as possible before losing control of Marrakath III.

The famed Dosth Orbital Defense Matrix had only lasted for weeks before falling into ruin. Successive Hexer assaults had rapidly chipped away at the ring of orbital defenses until most of the pieces either dropped onto the planet or spun aimlessly around the exposed planet.

The walls of Marrakath III had finally been breached! Yet this did not spell the end of the campaign!

Reinforcements kept flowing from the interior of the Friday Coalition. While the Fortune Legion's Opel Trident Mech Army Group formed the main line of defense on Marrakath III, several other mech regiments and mech divisions constantly tried to fight through the contested orbit of the fortress planet and land more mechs and troops on the surface.

The Hexers attempted to do the same! The Hex Army's Wrathful Doves Mech Army Group directly challenged their Fridayman counterparts on every front, and didn't hesitate to call upon other elements of the Hex Army to take over the planet.

The fighting on the surface and beneath the surface of Marrakath III therefore turned into a fast-paced tug-of-war that resulted in the downing of at least tens of thousand of mechs!

Neither side paid too much attention to the constant destruction of mechs. This was because both sides made use of their considerable amounts of industrial capacity to replenish the lost machines.

The Friday Coalition possessed a great advantage as Marrakath III was their turf to begin with. Thousands of underground and well-defended manufacturing complexes constantly took in the salvage scraped from the battlefields and either fixed them up or recycled their parts and materials to fabricate new mechs!

While the Hexers brought down their own production machines onto the territories they conquered, as the intruders they always fell behind.

The only way the Hexers could keep up with the prodigious rate of attrition was to ship more mechs from the Hexadric Hegemony. Though costly and strenuous in terms of logistics, the Hexers were willing to commit as much resources as possible to make the invasion succeed!

Therefore, the losses the Hexers sustained in taking over the fortified positions of the Fridayman had always been several times costlier.

One combatant responsible for making the Hexers bleed was Venerable Ghanso Larkinson.

As an imported expert pilot from a backwater third-rate state, many Fortune Legionnaires initially questioned the Brighter's presence at one of the most critical battlefields of the Komodo War.

Yet as soon as Unit L appeared at several heated clashes, the third-rater that everyone despised continually slaughtered one expert mech after another!

With the fifty quasi-expert mechs that accompanied the Charlemagne, Venerable Ghanso Larkinson quickly accumulated great fame and honor for his impact on the local battles!

By bringing his numbers advantage everywhere, the foreign expert pilot constantly gained the upper hand against isolated or small groups of expert pilots. Unit L alone was worth several expert mechs together!

In particular, the sheer quantity of resonance-empowered energy beams that the entirety of Unit L was able to output was particularly deadly against mobility-oriented expert mechs.

Famed expert pilots of the Hex Army had succumbed within a minute of making contact with Unit L as their swift but agile light mechs could not weave their way through a forest of high-powered positron beams!

Several notable female Hexer expert pilots lost their lives against Ghanso, thereby removing several great threats to the Friday Coalition off the board. These unquestionable accomplishments considerably boosted Ghanso's popularity among the Fridaymen defending Marrakath III!

He should have felt honored or gratified for the recognition he received. It was the dream of every third-rater to perform well enough to stand equal to their second-rate colleagues.

Yet Ghanso did not feel happy at all at the moment. The bloodshed inflicted on the people and soldiers of the Carnegie Group as well as the constant deployments took a toll on his wellbeing.

Currently, he sat on a bench in one of the ready rooms of an underground base. He groaned and clutched his head against his palm as he tried to endure the persistent headache that always built up after piloting the Charlemagne.

Piloting a single expert mech was already challenging. Piloting one while simultaneously extending his mind to fifty semi-autonomous mechs was a much bigger burden!

He grabbed the injector he placed on the side of the bench and lifted it up to the bare skin of his neck. With a single pull of the trigger, a small cocktail of chemicals entered his bloodstream.

Minutes later, his headache subsided, but only partially. While he did not return to normal, he deemed his condition sufficient enough to make another sortie.

Before he did so, the projection of one of his minders appeared in the room.

"You are putting great strain on yourself by doing that. Master Huron specifically stated that the master of the current iteration of his asymmetrical neural network cannot deploy into battle more than once every twenty-four hours. Unit L is supposed to fight selectively at critical junctures in battles. It is not supposed to be a rapid deployment force that is sent to put out as many fires as possible!"

"I can't stop." Ghanso replied. "Each Hexer we kill here will spare the interior of the Friday Coalition a lot of suffering. The longer we hold this planet, the greater the losses to the Hex Army. If my contributions can just delay their advance by a day, thousands if not tens of thousands of precious Hexer mech pilots will succumb to our meat grinder!"

Aisling looked frustrated. "You.. expert pilots are so foolhardy! Look, out of all of the expert pilots that we have tried out, you have achieved the best results with our asymmetrical neural network. Your worth to Master Huron and our future product line is far more important than the minor difference you can make in the Battle of Marrakath System. While you have already taken down numerous notorious Hexer expert pilots, the Hex Army has many more to take their place. Marrakath III will fall. There is no doubt about that. Rather than overwork yourself and take too many risks in battle, move past the moment and conserve your strengths to the battles to come."

The war was far from over. It would take years to resolve this deadly conflict, and if both sides remained even for a long time, it was not impossible for the war to last more than a decade!

There would be plenty of opportunities for an expert pilot such as Ghanso Larkinson to distinguish himself in subsequent battles.

Yet taking it easy was never the Larkinson credo.

Ghanso only had duty and honor in his mind! So many other comrades were fighting and dying on the frontlines. How could he possibly ignore all of this suffering?

"I'm heading out, whether you say so or not." He stated with conviction as he tried his best to force out the remnants of his mental strain. "While I respect your great Master, I take orders from the CRC, and my superiors have given me wider discretion on which battles I may join."

This was one of the rewards he gained after his previous dazzling performances. Having killed over five Hexer expert pilots, he had accomplished more than many other Fridayman expert pilots during the Komodo War!

The strength he demonstrated and the fame he accrued during this campaign made it so that nobody treated him like a third-rater anymore.

Even so, Aisling Curver still exhibited a lot of concern. She knew quite well how Ghanso was pushing the limits.

Ordinary expert pilots weren't able to take charge of an asymmetric neural network that comprised of fifty slaves.

One of the biggest enabling factors was the specialized multi-tasking implant that Master Huran had specially arranged for expert pilots such as Ghanso!

The necessity of this implant was also one of the determining factors why other Fridayman expert pilots couldn't take part in Master Huron's experimental new product. They already possessed existing piloting implants of their own!

Even so, this implant could not make up for the pressure mounting on Ghanso's organic brain.

Seeing that Ghanso insisted on his current course, Aisling no longer bothered to persuade him. This wasn't the Hexadric Hegemony where a woman like her could unilaterally take charge of a boy.

Her projection sat down on the bench next to Ghanso and sighed. "You wanted news of the Larkinsons, right?"

The mention of his relatives caused him to jerk his head at her. "Are they all right?"

"I believe so. The Larkinson Family led by Venerable Ark Larkinson is currently performing various boring contracts at the border between Komodo and Vicious Mountain."

"Heh. It looks like my uncle is waiting for an opportunity to bring his family into Vicious Mountain." Ghanso huffed. "Coward. Oathbreaker. He doesn't deserve to be in charge. Our Bright Republic is wounded and diminished. Our home state needs our strength more than ever, but instead of staying behind to resolve our misunderstanding with the government, he just listens to Ves and runs!"

"It's very troublesome if the Larkinson Family actually manages to cross over. Our relations with Vicious Mountain are very shallow and mostly based on trade. We won't be able to tell the Vicious Mountainers to send the Larkinson Family back. At worst, you'll need to enter the neighboring star sector and drag your relatives back while they are kicking and screaming."

Ghanso sighed. "I will do whatever is necessary to correct our family's dereliction of duty. I just hope to gain the Friday Coalition's support when I do so. Even I recognize that it will be difficult to accomplish my goal by myself."

"And you will have it so long as we win the Komodo War." Aisling nodded. "Let it not be said that we do not take care of our guest expert pilots. In the future, you'll be fighting alongside more foreign expert pilots. The CRC is very pleased by the result of its experiment to import third-rate expert pilots such as you. One of our state's biggest advantages is the good relations we maintain with many third-rate states. While most of their mech pilots are useless to us, their expert pilots are rapidly able to adapt to second-class battlefields. Obtaining hundreds, if not thousands of extraordinary individuals such as you will make a huge difference in the Komodo War!"

"That's.. a remarkable plan!"

Ghanso looked a bit startled as she revealed one of the Friday Coalition's latest initiatives to win the war. He realized that this plan might actually work!

The Hexadric Hegemony could never match the Friday Coalition's efforts. How could it when most of the third-rate states under its sphere of influence disliked the female supremacists?

For a very long time, the Hexers mostly ignored the lesser states out of contempt and disgust. There was no way those third-rate states would lend their expert pilots to the female supremacists so easily!

When it came to diplomacy and making friends, the Fridaymen always possessed an advantage!

Chapter 2234 Sandwiched

Whenever the Charlemagne and the Scara, the local Fridaymen forces always cheered for their arrival!

The blue-and-gold expert rifleman mech and its ever-present honor guard became an extremely iconic sight on the battlefields of Marrakath III. Even the propaganda broadcasts of the Friday Coalition started to parade the magnificent sight. There was just something about seeing an expert mech acting in complete coordination with many other quasi-expert expert mechs that allowed the combination to stand out!

"It's Venerable Larkinson!"

"What an impressive unit!"

"We're saved! Those Hexers are doomed!"

Just a year ago, a third-rater such as Ghanso could only look up at the second-class mech pilots of the Friday Coalition. His humble birth and origin caused him to develop the impression that the Fridaymen were all giants in his mind.

Yet now that he had the privilege to pilot a fantastic if demanding second-class expert mech, he no longer felt lesser to his current comrades.

The Fridaymen were human as well. Their mech pilots might enjoy a better upbringing and gone through far more rigorous training, but the differences weren't as great as he imagined.

Even so, he still felt strange when the Fortune Legionnaires all cheered at him in the same way the soldiers of the Mech Corps used to do so. No matter their class, they respected his battle prowess and the efforts he made to support them in the field.

Ghanso felt proud he could make a difference in this foreign battlefield.

He was also glad he could help the Fridaymen win the war. No matter the current nature of his status, he still considered himself a Brighter at heart. Both were enemies of the Hexadric Hegemony.

Even if Ghanso hadn't been compelled to serve under the Coalition Reserve Corps, he still would have rooted for the Fridaymen, because the Hexers posed an existential threat to the way of life of his home state!

Therefore, even if he fought under the flag of the Friday Coalition, he still performed his duty to the Bright Republic!

The same could not be said for the derelict Larkinson Family and the outright treasonous Larkinson Clan, but that was something for Ghanso to consider for another day.

Right now, his Charlemagne and the Scara flew low over the partially-cratered battlefield of some sort of urban stronghold. Whatever civilians who lived here had long

been pulled out, thereby allowing both sides to fight against each other at higher intensities.

Ever since the Battle of the Marrakath Systems moved to the surface, the fighting actually took place on both land and in space!

Up above his head, the spaceborn elements of the Opal Tridents and the Wrathful Doves constantly struggled for orbital supremacy. Neither side went all-out as orbital supremacy could never be truly achieved until all of the enemy ground forces were defeated.

The threat of deploying hidden surface-to-orbit weapons on any point of the globe was not negligible!

This was especially so in second-class warfare where the power levels of weapons was significantly greater. Back in the Bright Republic, the same threat was much less acute due to the difficulties in overcoming so much air, gravity, distance and other practical constraints.

All of this meant that Ghanso and every other surface combatant did not need to worry about getting shot at by a rifleman mech floating in high orbit.

That said, the Hexers did everything they could to overrun Marrakath III! After establishing a beachhead at great cost, the female-led forces expanded in every direction and constantly wrestled away fortified city after fortified city from the entrenched defenders.

Each city, built and reinforced with strong exotic alloys that were just as resilient as mechs, practically turned into ruins by the time the Hexers succeeded in forcing the defenders to pull back!

No matter how hard the defending forces resisted the indomitable Hex Army, the latter always threw more and more mech regiments at the defensive lines until the job was done!

"Break through no matter the cost!"

"The Marrakath Systems belongs to the Hegemony!"

"Boys must submit!"

Whenever Ghanso heard the Hexer mechs broadcast these slogans, his blood boiled.

The Hexers were evil! They sought nothing less than to repress every man! Such a travesty must not spread in the galaxy!

His comm crackled as one of the CRC officers assigned to coordinate his actions directed him to his next battle.

"Venerable Larkinson, there is a local underground industrial complex called the Beehive that is under heavy attack. While the Fortune Legion anticipated that the Hexers would prioritize the Beehive during their general advance, we did not expect them to form a spearhead and thrust ahead of their main line so soon. A considerable amount of industrial equipment and supplies are still being loaded onto transports."

"Am I being sent to relieve the defenders of the Beehive?"

"Not quite, Venerable. Our strategists believe that the Hexers have grown impatient and overconfident this time. The forces they invested in this assault are overextended and can easily be cut off as long as we block off their escape route."

Ghanso frowned. "I'm not sure whether it's wise to underestimate the Hexers. This smells like a trap."

"Even if that's the case, we need to grasp at every opportunity to delay the Hexers. The Opal Tridents has already mustered a strike force to cut off the Hexer assault mechs, but we would like you to be present as well in order to guard any accidents and thwart any Hexer expert mechs that might appear."

"Roger that. Send me the coordinates and route."

A short beep sounded out in the cockpit as the Charlemagne received the files.

The Charlemagne and the Scara accelerated slightly and flew along the route designated by the CRC. It was usually a bad idea to stray from an assigned route as there was a decent chance of stumbling upon Hexer mechs.

While Ghanso did not mind beating up Hexer mechs whenever he caught sight of one, he could not let these minor encounters delay him from fulfilling his primary goal!

As the Charlemagne continued to generate hopeful cheers and well wishes from the Fortune Legionnaires on the ground or in the air, he soon reached the Fridaymen mech forces that had gathered to cut off the escape route of the attacking Hexers!

"It's Venerable Larkinson!"

Ghanso performed his customary greeting with his fellow comrades before he piloted his mech to a small collection of Friday Men expert mechs. A knight mech, a swordsman mech and a light skirmisher supported the operation.

"Hello."

"Larkinson."

Ghanso frowned. "Three melee mechs is not enough to cover the thousands of regular mechs marching underneath us. Why aren't there more ranged mechs of our caliber?"

"Your pretty mech and your groupies already have that covered." One of the Fridayman expert pilots explained. "We're basically here to prevent any of the witches from getting close to your mechs."

"I don't need your protection." Ghanso stated.

"Let us be the judge of that. If you think you have seen everything the Hexers are capable of in just a couple of weeks of fighting, then think again."

The hasty effort organized by the Fortune Legion went smoothly. Ghanso and his expert colleagues remained on standby as the regular mechs overwhelmed the small number of mechs that had been assigned to patrol and guard the supply line.

Whoever was in charge of planning the attack on the Beehive did not spend much effort into guarding the rear of the assault force!

The Hex Army was in trouble. Thousands of mechs were trapped at the Beehive. While the Hexers were no doubt sending reinforcements to smash through the blockade, the Friday Coalition was moving in as well!

As long as the blockade could be maintained for an hour or so, the Fortune Legion could move over enough forces to annihilate the overextended Hexers!

"Here they come."

The Hexer lines moved. Numerous Hexer mechs moved forth and began to probe the blockade forces.

After deploying temporary barriers and other fixed defenses, the Fridaymen mech forces were already tough to deal with. The Hexers continued to sustain severe losses as their preliminary attacks were all crushed!

Ghanso directed the sensors of his Charlemagne to the fallen mechs and grimaced.

"They look like male mechs."

The Hexers callously expended a lot more male mechs than female mechs! The Hexer mech pilots who had fallen in this initial probe consisted predominantly of boys as well!

After testing the strength of the Fridayman blockade force, the Hex Army did not throw away more mechs.

An hour quietly passed by. At this time, the Fortune Legion was supposed to encircle and overwhelm the Hexers who attacked the Beehive, yet the news that Ghanso received sounded very different!

"This is bad, Venerable! The Fortune Legion's other lines have come under heavy assault! The forces that they have assigned to sweep the Beehive of Hexers have been redirected to defend more important sites!"

"What?! This late? They should have been here by now!"

"Their progress was slower than anticipated as the Hexers at the frontlines have already been making some aggressive movements. Ah, I have just received a revised instruction. The Fridayman mechs that you are overseeing must lift their blockade and make an orderly retreat to friendly lines. Their strength is sorely needed elsewhere!"

"What about the Beehive."

"We have already evacuated the most expensive and irreplaceable production equipment. The rest are being scuttled as we speak. We—"

"..."

As Ghanso patched into the other communication channels, he received varying amounts of static. That usually meant that a lot of jamming went up in the surrounding territories.

"Enemies approaching!"

"They're coming from two sides!"

The Hexers had finally made their move! Just as Ghanso expected, the Hexer assault forces wanted to break through the Fridayman blockade force with the help of reinforcements from the other side.

While Ghanso felt relieved that the reinforcements only consisted of a couple of thousands mechs, getting pressured on two sides was not easy to deal with! If the Fridaymen weren't careful, they might get encircled instead!

"Have the Hexers gone crazy today? They're already attacking dozens of fortifications at once!"

"Hey, Hexers are always crazy. It's probably their general's time of the month today, so they're being extra crazy this time!"

After scanning the numbers of every force, Ghanso estimated that the Hexers had brought just enough mechs to rescue their blocked compatriots, but not much more.

The ranged firefight proceeded normally. The Fortune Legion mechs directed the majority of its ranged mechs towards the reinforcements in an attempt to suppress them and slow their advance.

It did not work that well. The Hexers, eager to rescue their fellow sisters, pushed through the storm of fire by the hundreds, then the thousands!

The Charlemagne gripped its rifle tighter. Ghanso readied himself to resist the expert pilots that inevitably accompanied the masses of regular machines.

The moment that two tides of melee Hexers mechs crashed against the Fortune Legion from opposite directions, it was as if a sandwich had formed.

The fighting at the two fronts had become incredibly violent as thousands of melee mechs tried to smash each other apart as brutally as possible!

Cockpits already launched from the backs of fallen mechs left and right. Right now, few mechs paid attention to them as the enemies in front of them posed a much more immediate threat!

Considering the relatively even numbers, Ghanso expected the Hexers to get stalled.

His expectations were off.

One of the Fortune Legion's lines actually started to buckle!

The reinforcements that advanced from Hexer-occupied territory fought harder and more valiantly than their Fridayman counterparts. At the same time, the Fortune Legion mechs that had already faced off against Hexers several times seemed to move a bit more lethargically than usual.

This shouldn't be possible!

"What is the matter?! Why is the Fortune Legion losing ground?"

The pushback the Hexers had already accomplished so far was incredibly alarming to the Fridayman commanders. If the Fortune Legion was already faltering at this point, then a total rout was inevitable!

A small hunch came over Ghanso. He rapidly scanned the mechs deployed by the Hexer reinforcements. He spotted several familiar-looking standardized Hex Army mechs. He already memorized their main characteristics. His cranial implant stored the rest of their properties and also contained detailed guides on how to exploit their weak points.

Yet despite the relatively complete database in his implant, Ghanso nevertheless failed to identify a distinctly new mech model.

It was rare for the Hex Army to field a new mech model!

Though it looked like a middling male knight mech, the way the Hexers and Fridaymen mechs fought around it was very unsettling.

Through the heavy jamming in the air, Ghanso finally managed to hear some disconcerting statements.

"These Hexer mech pilots are fighting twice as hard today!"

"What is this pressure? I feel like I'm being stared at by mother!"

"I feel it as well! The moment my mech steps closer, this sensation grows stronger."

"Just ignore it! Remember your training and steel your minds!"

A dreadful realization dawned on Ghanso.

Chapter 2235 The Disapproving Mech

Across Marrakath III, a brand new mech model appeared on the surface!

No word of the new Hexer mech had spread to the Fridaymen. The Hexers in charge of bringing them to the battlefield had done an unusually good job at hiding their movements.

The Fortune Legion who considered Marrakath III to be their turf were completely floored. The Friday Coalition's intelligence agencies always managed to warn them in advance whenever the Hex Army revised an existing mech line or introduced a new model that the matriarchs approved.

Yet this time, the spies had failed!

On the surface, this wasn't necessarily a disaster. Some mech models were more influential than others.

The main assault mechs that were piloted exclusively by female Hexers were critically important. Their impact on the battlefield was great and each revision forced the Friday Coalition to adopt slightly different battle tactics in order to cope with the improved machines.

In contrast, most male Hexer mechs weren't that consequential. Whether they came in the form of a knight mech, rifleman mech or support mech, the machines piloted by the

repressed boys usually didn't amount to much. Their budgets were cheaper and their performance was noticeably worse.

In most cases, the Hex Army employed their male mechs as cannon fodder. The only debate that raged among the Hexer commanders was how expendable they were.

Some argued that male mechs were completely worthless and should just be used up whenever convenient. In the eyes of militant Hexers, it was worth it to sacrifice the lives of their entire pool of male mech pilots as long as the Friday Coalition fell!

Others argued that the Hexadric Hegemony did not possess limitless manpower and resources and that they should really make an effort at conserving the male mechs. The more cautious Hexers did not disagree that male mechs were expendable, but they should at least aim for the highest return on investment.

Ghanso had encountered Hexer battlefield commanders of both camps during the Battle of the Marrakath System.

He felt enormously disgusted at the first group, but did not think much better of the second group either!

Both kinds of Hexer leaders treated their boys as lesser, and both of them had to be toppled in order to save the Komodo Star Sector from their gender-based tyranny!

Yet today, Ghanso witnessed something that confounded this paradigm.

The Hexer mechs, whether male or female, rallied around a notable new mech model as if it was the bannerguard of their respective units!

This strangely-looking knight mech looked a bit slimmer than the other knight mechs of the Hex Army. It possessed two strange tentacles that extended from its waist. Its sharp spikes gently interfaced with the external ports of the Hexer mechs that had taken a number of steps back from the firing line.

What was the new mech doing? Was it supplying energy to the other machine?

"It's a support mech as well?"

Ghanso even noticed the new mechs plunging the sharp tips of their tentacle appendages through the exterior of the mechs that had been downed. According to the powerful sensors of his Charlemagne, a power flow emerged that caused the new mech to supplement its reserves.

"This!"

As a mech pilot that had taken part in three wars, Ghanso instantly became aware of the enormous implications of this new mech model.

One of the most persistent flaws of the Hex Army was that their female mech pilots were too aggressive. This not only caused them to launch a lot of attacks, but also pilot their mechs in a wasteful manner.

Blocking the ferocious Hexers and letting them tire themselves out was one of the favored strategies the Fridaymen employed against their hated rivals!

Yet it was not so easy to accomplish. If the Hexer mechs were able to top up their spent energy on the frontlines, then they would easily be able to sustain their aggression, making it much more likely that they broke through!

This reality was already unfolding before his eyes as the most reckless but also the most aggressive Hexer mechs unleashed their might without holding back at all. It didn't matter how much energy they expended. As long as one of the new mechs was close, they could always prolong their offensive!

What was worse was that their actions played right in the hands of the new mech model. The more enemy mechs the aggressive Hexers defeated, the more immobile energy sources the new mech model could tap into! Even if the energy transfer process was fairly slow and inefficient, it made a huge difference in the later stages of the battle when the Fortune Legion mechs started to lose steam.

This was already enough for Ghanso to prioritize the new mech model. What he heard from the communication channels made him realize that the threat of this new machine was much, much worse!

Before he joined the CRC, he was a loyal mech pilot of the Mech Corps. He fought alongside more Desolate Soldiers than he could count during the frantic days of the Sand War.

Their glows, though artificial and forceful in his opinion, brainwashed the mech pilot and people around them. They fought much harder against the sandmen and died at a higher rate as a consequence!

Ghanso thought he had rid himself of his loathsome cousin's influence. The Fridaymen would never make use of the products of their enemies and the Hexers were well-known for rejecting the products made by boys!

"Yet why has his damned mech showed up here?!"

He couldn't understand it! Had the Hexers ignored their own rules?!

His eyes went red as he saw how big of an influence the mechs exerted on both the Fortune Legion and the Hex Army.

The former fought as if they had weights on their shoulders while the latter simply gained more confidence!

"It's different from the Desolate Soldier."

Yet no matter what, the presence of this glow posed a major threat to the Fortune Legion mechs sandwiched between two Hexer forces!

He couldn't hold back any longer. The Hexers may not have deployed their expert mechs as of yet, but Ghanso had to do something before the Fridaymen lost!

"I'm going in! Those new tentacled knight mechs have to be taken out at all costs!"

The three other Fridayman expert pilots were floored.

"What?! It's too soon! Their expert mechs will gain an advantage if you expose yourself!"

Doing nothing is exactly what they want! Can't you see? We're already losing!" Ghanso admonished his colleagues. "Those new mechs are force multipliers. Even one of them is enough to affect fifty other mechs!"

He ignored their subsequent responses and commanded his mech and his Scara to fly forward! As soon as he reached an acceptable range, he immediately commanded the Charlemagne and his slave mechs to fire!

Fifty-one bright beams momentarily descended onto the Hexer mechs from above! Ghanso tried his best to target as many of his cousin's new mechs as possible, but at this angle he could only target twelve of the abominable machines.

The mech his Charlemagne targeted instantly fell onto the ground with a huge hole through its chassis. The power of an expert mech's rifle was too much for even a knight mech to withstand!

The quasi-expert mechs had mixed success on the other hand. Five of the new mechs fell down, but the rest only suffered varying degrees of damage.

The knight mechs still possessed a formidable amount of defense. In addition, the Hexer commander in charge of the reinforcements was already aware of the importance of the new mechs and assigned several ordinary knight mechs to guard the machines that emanated glows.

"Damnit, Ves! Your mechs are heinous! I'll remove every single mech that is based on your designs!"

His Charlemagne and Scara recklessly flew closer in order to reach more of the new mechs, but the Hexers didn't sit still!

They responded quickly. Every single new model mech soon became surrounded by numerous sturdy mechs.

Not only that, the Hexers finally dispatched their own expert mechs!

"Venerable Larkinson! Alert! Incoming resonance signatures!"

Three Hexer melee mechs rapidly advanced to intercept Unit L.

"So you're the famed woman killer, eh?" A short-ranged communication channel voiced. "You may have caught some of our sisters by surprise, but we know what you are capable of! We won't fall for tricks again!"

The Hexers sent three offensive melee mechs! With two swordsman mechs and one lancer mech, the enemy expert mechs wanted to eliminate the Charlemagne up close regardless of the risks!

"Venerable Ghanso! We'll hold them back! Go eliminate the new threat. Our lines are already faltering!"

Though only a short amount of time had passed, the unexpected enthusiasm of the Hexers along with the modest but unexpected suppression exerted on the Fridaymen made a huge difference!

The surprise factor was too much to the Fortune Legion mech pilots. They never fought under the influence of a glow, and the first time was always the most dramatic.

If they fell back to their training and properly organized their minds, then they would have been able to fight close to their peak.

Yet the destabilizing influence of the new mechs along with the unrelenting aggression from the offensive Hexer mechs delivered twin punches to them in quick succession.

This caused the Fridaymen mechs to lose all of their initiative! Aside from putting up a desperate defense and stepping back, there was nothing else they could do to reverse the tide!

As Ghanso and his Scara resumed his aerial assault, the urgency of the situation grew greater. There were thousands of mechs involved on both sides and the influence of Unit L could not single-handedly repel all of the Hexer mechs!

"I don't have to shoot down every Hexer mech! As long as I destroy my evil cousin's work, then that's enough!"

The Hexers began to counterattack. Their ranged mechs lessened the pressure on the enemies in front of them in favor of shooting the ostentatious expert mech and quasi-expert mechs in the air!

Though the Charlemagne's armor easily held for now, the Scara was not as resilient!

"I have to fly lower!"

The mechs of Unit L descended in unison until they floated closely above the heads of his enemies. This made it much more troublesome for the enemy Hexer mechs to fire on the Charlemagne and the Scara.

As the mechs of Unit L descended above a company of Hexer mechs, the Scara ruthlessly shot the machines that prevented them from firing on the new mech.

This was too abnormal! Not just the male mechs, but the female mechs were putting their frames in the way as well. It was as if the new mech was something inviolable!

"Get out of the way!"

The resonance around his mech grew brighter. His rage fueled his determination to fight. Even though his mech's energy reserves drained faster and his headache escalated rapidly, Ghanso didn't care at all! He just wanted to crush his cousin's mech!

Once every obstacle had been dealt with, his mechs flew closer. Ghanso did not hurry to eliminate the new mech immediately. Instead, he wanted to experience its glow in person.

As soon as the Charlemagne and the front-most Scara came into range, they briefly paused.

Ghanso's face grew uglier. He felt as if he was back in the past when he was just a young boy at the Larkinson Compound. He remembered pulling down his pants in order to relieve himself on some plants in the backyard.

Of course, compound's monitoring system captured everything. When his mother stormed over, the disapproval she directed towards him had always brought him shame!

Now, the glow of his cousin's new mech had caused him to dig out this awful memory from the depths of his mind.

"THIS IS UNACCEPTABLE!"

Even if the glow of the new mech did not pressure his strong mind at all, the faint associations it brought up nevertheless disturbed him to an incredible degree.

"And it's not just me! The Scara are affected as well!"

It was as if he was being affected by the glow at least a dozen times over! It practically drove him crazy!

"ALL OF YOU MUST DIE!"

The Charlemagne and Scara had already been charging for a powerful resonance attack. Ghanso had quickly accelerated the buildup and unleashed his mightiest attack to date!

In an instant, fifty-one empowered positron beams not only bore through the frame of the new mech, but pierced through the ranks of other Hexer mechs!

Over 120 Hexer mechs fell at once!

Chapter 2236 Rollout Plan

The Hex Army welcomed a new mech model!

Since the main military branch of the Hexers only employed around 600 mech models, this was big news!

For a very long time, the Friday Coalition's intelligence services kept a very close eye on the Hexadric Hegemony's mech industry.

One of the disadvantages of the high amount of control and restrictions the Hexers imposed on their mech designers was the ease in which their efforts could be tracked.

The Hegemony only possessed so many Masters and Seniors, and the Fridaymen developed a great understanding of their work and design style.

Many of the mech models currently in use in the Hex Army were continuations of existing lines. The same team of mech designers constantly iterated on them and released new revisions every decade or every few years.

As a mature mech military, the Hex Army's mech doctrines and customs were highly developed! They already developed almost every possible mech they predicted that they would need in order to defeat the Friday Coalition.

These days, it was extremely difficult for Masters to propose an entirely new line of mechs to the Hex Army. At the very least, the Masters had to engage in years of

lobbying in order to build up support among every important stakeholder such as the mech industry, the matriarchs and the mech pilots themselves.

To build up such a comprehensive amount of support was not something that could be done in a month! The Coalition's spies and observers were very proficient at observing any major influencing activities in the Hegemony's ruling society.

Oftentimes, even before the Hex Army finally rolled out a new line of mechs, the Friday Coalition already developed a detailed breakdown of its weaknesses!

Yet this time the Hexers caught the Fridaymen by surprise!

For once, the Hex Army unveiled something new without causing any alarm.

The lack of forewarning combined with the widespread deployment of the new model caused the situation on Marrakath III to change incredibly quickly.

Prior to the change, the Opal Tridents and the other elements of the Fortune Legion put up a lot of resistance against the Wrathful Doves. The aggressive Hexers constantly had to commit considerably more mechs and assets in order to overcome the prepared defenses and fortifications occupied by the Fridaymen.

Even though the Hexers eventually pushed the Fridaymen back, the female supremacists lost considerably more mechs and mech pilots than their foes. Every fortification they took was littered with the blood of hundreds, if not thousands of prime, valuable mech pilots!

Though the Hexers were able to salvage the wreckage and debris from the battlefields they wrestled from the Fridaymen, in the Komodo War, losing resources was no issue. With centuries of accumulation, neither states would run out of exotics anytime soon!

What truly mattered were the mech pilots. Every state could only foster so many potentates and mech pilots, and taking them off the board was the best way to win the Komodo War!

Therefore, the Friday Coalition considered everything else such as planets and star systems to be expendable resources. It hurt to lose territory, but as long as they could exchange it for enough enemy blood, it was worth it to make this trade!

So far, the Fridaymen's battle plan for Marrakath III largely went according to plan. Even if the Hexers constantly nibbled at the territory occupied by the original owners, they suffered way too much casualties for every victory.

The endless reinforcements pouring into the star system helped mask the incredible losses the Hexers sustained. The fact that much of the deaths consisted of unimportant

boys who piloted less resilient and less important mechs also caused the female commanders to turn a blind eye to the losses.

Obviously, the higher ups of the Wrathful Doves Mech Army Group largely belonged to the militant camp! To them, sacrificing the lives of their male mech pilots was hardly any loss at all! They believed that the Komodo War would instantly swing in their favor if they managed to conquer the Marrakath System and the Crestfallen Stars as quickly as possible.

The Hexers disdained the attrition warfare that their enemies were fond of! As the superior and more enlightened state, the Hegemony ought to be able to defeat an inferior state head-on without dragging conflict for too many years!

Even so, the losses suffered by the Wrathful Doves and other elements of the Hex Army was still unsustainable. If the fighting on Marrakath III stretched on for months, then it was doubtful whether the mech army group would still be able to fight without undergoing an extensive, time-consuming reorganization!

All of this changed after the Hexers unveiled their surprise!

"What is this new mech model?! Why can it affect so many people at the same time?!"

"Reporting, sir! The new knight mech is called the Blessed Squire! It's a supportive knight mech that possesses ordinary defenses, below average mobility, low offensive power but considerable utility. Its energy transferring abilities allow it to provide fantastic support to offensive Hexers, thereby significantly allowing them to prolong their peak output in battle! As for the mind-altering field they are surrounded with, this so-called glow is capable of elevating the morale of Hexers while exerting minor pressure on our own mech pilots!"

"What?! A glow? That mech isn't glowing at all!"

"It's a figurative term for a specialty developed by a famed mech designer called Ves Larkinson..."

A lot of Fridaymen who never paid attention to the news of lesser states suddenly became familiar with a rising star in the mech industry. Known as the Devil Tongue, his products had already taken the third-class mech market by storm!

Now that he extended his hand to second-class mechs, this forgettable figure to most Fridaymen suddenly turned into an incredibly powerful enemy!

"Why didn't we eliminate him before he could affect Marrakath III with his work?!"

"We did try, but our attempts have failed!"

"Idiots! The CRC is led by a bunch of bureaucrats who have no idea what war is truly like!"

The Fridaymen weren't the only people who became astonished. The Wrathful Doves and the other Hexers on Marrakath III became fascinated by the Blessed Squires as well!

Technically, the Blessed Squires wasn't deployed by the Hex Army. Instead, an obscure, forgettable auxiliary force silently worked to gain permission to ship the new mechs to a single destination in order to serve as a trial.

DIVA prepared a very careful plan to introduce the Blessed Squire model to the Hex Army. The intelligence agency had tested the mech internally for a lengthy period in order to understand its true value. The information provided by Calabast also assisted DIVA in understanding how to maximize the use of the new mechs.

The fact that the mech was inescapably tied to a male mech designer presented a huge hurdle for its adoption. Therefore, DIVA remained patient and waited for the best opportunity to showcase its use.

In the meantime, the agency secretly reached out to a small number of matriarchs and important Hexer stakeholders to lay the groundwork for the Blessed Squire.

With the help of the Little Angel, the sole masterwork copy of this innovative Hexer mech, DIVA finally received permission to field the Blessed Squire on Marrakath III!

As expected, the manner in which DIVA abruptly slipped the Blessed Squires into the main combat units of the Wrathful Doves went well!

Even if the Hexer mech pilots initially showed distrust and hesitation at fighting alongside a completely new mech model, they soon accepted the Blessed Squires once they felt the glows!

Many Wrathful Doves did not have it easy on Marrakath III. The hard fighting and the grueling attrition warfare affected both males and females alike.

Therefore, these stressed mech pilots became unusually receptive to the Blessed Squire. The mech's glow, which reminded every Hexer of the Superior Mother, seemed to be able to soothe their nerves and grant them confidence.

"It's as if my mother is cheering me from behind!"

"The Superior Mother has blessed the Wrathful Doves!"

The change in mood and the easing of worries affected the Wrathful Doves on a wide scale. With the large amount of Blessed Squires deployed on the surface, hundreds of

thousands of Hexer combatants suddenly regained the confidence and illusion of superiority they initially possessed at the start of the Battle of the Marrakath System!

The mech divisions and mech regiments of the Wrathful Doves assaulted the Opal Trident positions with twice as much ferocity!

Even though the Hexers mechs hadn't grown stronger and even if the energy transfer abilities of the Blessed Squires was not omnipotent, the improvement in mindsets alone resulted in a lot more breakthroughs!

Hardfought sieges that usually lasted for weeks suddenly ended in a decisive Hexer victory in a matter of days!

The defensive lines of the Opal Tridents that were usually capable of repelling multiple waves of Hexer offensives began to fall apart after just a single determined attack!

The Fridaymen soon became familiar with another insidious aspect about the strange new mech model.

Any enemy of the Hexers experienced some form of mental suppression!

The influence wasn't very strong. Fridaymen researchers who began to study LMC mechs noticed that the Doom Guard model was considerably more impactful in this regard.

However, as long as anyone who did not agree with Hexer ideology came within range of a Blessed Squire, they experienced a very specific form of discomfort.

It was as if their mothers disapproved of their hostility towards Hexers!

The negative effects of this sensation wasn't very strong, but it couldn't be blocked or ignored. Anyone who came under the influence of a Blessed Squire felt as if their mother was observing all of their actions.

No one liked to be watched all the time. Who enjoyed being stared at by their own mothers when they ate a meal, used a toilet or slept in bed?

It was quite unnerving!

The mech pilots of the Fortune Legion were highly trained and very disciplined. None of them were weak-minded in the slightest as every second-rate state knew the importance of training mech pilots who could endure many difficulties.

The problem was that mech pilots were still human in the end! The highly emotional component of the Blessed Squire's glow evoked their own thoughts, feelings and memories towards mothers!

Only expert candidates and expert pilots remained unaffected by the Blessed Squire's glow. Everyone else, even the elite crack troops of the Fortune Legion, still possessed chinks in their armor which the so-called Superior Mother exploited!

As long as the ordinary mech pilots of the Friday Coalition became affected, they no longer found their mental balance. They were unable to enter into their most optimal battle moods where they felt as if they fought as one with their comrades. They could no longer reach the states which allowed them to fight without conscious thought and display their battle skills at their best.

Since battles between mechs were actually fought between mech pilots, the widening differences in morale completely accelerated the takeover of Marrakath III.

"The first of the Crestfallen Stars shall fall to the hexagon!"

"The Superior Mother wants us to crush the Coalition!"

"We shall liberate the unjustly oppressed women of the Friday Coalition!"

Even though a short amount of time had passed, the drastic shift in balance completely dominated the news in the two states!

This was just as DIVA and the supporters of the Blessed Squire intended. Instead of introducing the Blessed Squire cautiously across many battlefields, it was best to make one explosive good impression!

Already, other army groups in the Hex Army cast jealous eyes at the Wrathful Doves.

They clamored to obtain this new wonder mech as well! The other Hexer commanders heard so many stories about the Blessed Squire that they began to bombard high command with requests to ship the Blessed Squire to their respective mech forces.

All of these urgent requests put high command and the matriarchs in charge in a difficult position. Normally, it shouldn't be a problem to approve of the use of a fantastic new Hexer mech, but this time they faced a very big problem.

"The Blessed Squire is mainly designed by a boy! Not only that, he's also a foreigner!"

Chapter 2237 Foreign Aid

The Hexadric Hegemony was a very hierarchical state. Older, wiser women than other Hexers acknowledged as matriarchs generally exercised firm leadership over many aspects of Hexer society.

The Hex Army was no different. Jointly managed by the six matriarchal dynasties, the strongest and proudest mech force of the Hegemony adhered to a rigid set of rules and customs.

Every change needed to undergo a process. Every action needed to be approved by an authority.

To the matriarchs, not even the best and most influential Hexer Master Mech Designer was allowed to arbitrarily add a new mech model to the Hex Army's lineup! Every single proposal had to undergo an extensive approval process before showing up at the battlefields.

Of course, it was not good to delay the introduction of new mech models too much during times of war. Ever since the Komodo War broke out, the matriarchs loosened some of the restrictions in order to expedite the process, but it still remained a daunting challenge to propose any changes!

Now, the board of matriarchs that ordinarily wanted to tackle every proposal at its own pace suddenly faced a huge clamor from the lower ranks of the Hex Army.

News traveled quickly within the unified Hex Army. The Wrathful Doves, which previously suffered heavy losses in order to obtain gradual progress, suddenly tripled their pace!

The battle footage that circulated within the Hex Army had become incredibly evocative.

Each time, the Hexer mechs attacked the fortified Fridayman positions with undaunted aggression and courage!

The modest amount of energy supplied by the Blessed Squire allowed valiant female Hexer mechs to overwhelm more opponents!

And by the speed in which the enemy defensive lines fell apart, the Fridaymen who faced the new mech in battle obviously didn't feel comfortable!

All of these factors propelled the Blessed Squire into a mech that every landbound mech unit within the Hex Army coveted!

The incredible utility provided by the Blessed Squire not only attracted the mech divisions in charge of invading Coalition space, but also appealed to the Hexers in charge of defending Hegemony space!

There was no way to suppress this demand! The Wrathful Doves did not introduce any other mechs or noticeable measures. Since the first day, too much news and footage had spread throughout the Hex Army to suppress the difference the Blessed Squire could achieve on the battlefield.

Marrakath III, which was known as one of the toughest fortress planets of the Carnegie Group, was already collapsing under the unstoppable momentum of the Wrathful Doves!

Who didn't want to obtain the same power the Wrathful Doves were lucky to grasp? The Hexers believed that as long as the rest of the Hex Army achieved the same level of success, taking over the Friday Coalition was just a matter of time!

Under the tide of so much demand from the lower and middle ranks of the Hex Army, the higher ups found it very difficult to take their time on this difficult decision.

While the higher ups wielded an incredible amount of power in the Hegemony, the state was simply too big for a small number of matriarchs to impose their will on every Hexer citizen.

In particular, the Hexer mech pilots was the most important interest group in the Hegemony at the moment! As the ones who had to bear the burden of fighting the Fridaymen and winning the Komodo War, the matriarchs did not dare to do anything that would result in widespread animosity or dejection from their own soldiers!

The matriarchs involved in this pivotal but incredibly controversial decision were constantly gnashing their teeth ever since the Blessed Squire debuted.

No leader liked to be forced into doing something by their own underlings! The matriarchs especially did not like to be forced into adopting a decision which went against their own rules and traditions!

Many Hexer leaders knew that DIVA was the ultimate party responsible for driving up demand for the Blessed Squire.

"Those spies are too insolent! They're forcing our hand!"

"What can we do? Even if DIVA ambushed us, it's too late now. Too many Hexer generals are calling me every day asking whether we put our stamp of approval on this tainted mech."

"Rules are rules! Our Hegemony rests on the superiority of women! The quality standards of the Blessed Squire design is wholly inferior to the works of any of our Seniors. It's just a Journeyman-level mech, and a rather rough one at that due to the lack of time and manpower invested into its design!"

"The Blessed Squire's performance parameters are secondary to its value. The main reason why it has caught on so much is because of that boy's unusual design philosophy! It's something that we have never witnessed before!"

"Perhaps we should take a look at it ourselves. I recall that DIVA has invited us to witness a presumed masterwork reproduction of the Blessed Squire..."

Regardless of the hype that emerged around the Blessed Squire, the matriarchs did not want to be rushed and forcefully announced a period of deliberation.

The longer they delayed their approval, the greater the frustration of the Hex Army! If the problem grew significant enough to affect the overall state of the war, then it didn't matter if the matriarchs kept dragging their feet.

The Hex Army would just start to produce and field the Blessed Squires on its own, thereby openly defying the authority of the matriarchs!

That was a nightmare scenario that the higher ups of the Hegemony did not want to come to pass!

When the good news spread to the Larkinson Clan, Gloriana immediately became ecstatic!

Though she was busy with working on her next projects while simultaneously taking charge of the wedding preparations, she still made contact with the Hex Army and various other important institutions in order to lend her own weight to the Blessed Squire's adoption!

The news of the Blessed Squire and its drastic impact on Marrakath III already spread throughout the rest of the star sector. Yet again, the Miracle Couple had stirred up the waters!

Within a star system which was formally hailed as the economic heart of the Bright Republic, two resplendently-dressed women stood alone in one of the observation chambers of a fleet carrier.

The sandy surface of Bentheim provided the two observers with a desolate view of the planet that once hosted a lot of industries. Billions of productive Brighters had perished when the sandmen descended from orbit and swept every human construction.

"Ves Larkinson has succeeded in leaping from the pond of the Bright Republic." One of the women stated. She wore an alluring red dress that was decorated with various medals and combat awards. "The annoying mech designer you met several times has grown into a formidable monster."

The other woman, who wore a highly-decorated military uniform, scowled for a moment. The neat brown hair that framed her face seemed to grow a little frayed as a strong aura vibrated around her very being!

"While Mr. Larkinson is deplorable, his design prowess is considerable." She stated. Her voice seemed to convey a lot of force! "Ever since he aligned himself to the Hexers, it was only a matter of time before one of his works emerged in the Komodo War. The Sand War has already proven that his works can play a major role in the outcome of any conflict no matter the scale."

The two women fell silent for a moment. Neither of them cheered the success of one of their adversaries.

"Does this change your decision?" Lady Amalia of Imidris gently asked.

"Yes." Venerable Foster admitted.

As one of the most talented expert pilots of the Hafner Duchy, her strength was recognized by the entire Vesia Kingdom! Even though the Bright-Vesia War and the Sand War had already ended, her resonance strength still grew at a measured pace. At her relatively young age, that turned Foster into one of the dazzling stars of the Mech Legion!

Yet this famed and decorated expert pilot plainly admitted her reluctance to a very important offer.

As part of the Friday Coalition's strategy to employ foreign expert pilots to gain a numbers advantage in high-end mech combat, its diplomats had already reached out to the Vesia Kingdom.

Venerable Relia Foster was a particularly prized commodity in the eyes of the Friday Coalition. With her amazing genetic aptitude and unconstrained growth, she was already destined to become a powerful expert pilot.

Advancing to ace pilot was not out of the question either!

Therefore, the Friday Coalition offered substantial compensation to the Vesia Kingdom in order to obtain Venerable Foster.

Unfortunately, expert pilots couldn't be bought and sold like cattle.

Their strong will and rigid principles made it so that they could never be persuaded to do something that acted against their own purpose.

Every expert pilot needed to be persuaded to fight on behalf of the Friday Coalition. While there are several expert pilots who eagerly grasped at the opportunity to enter a higher arena of combat, there are more expert pilots who were incredibly stubborn!

Venerable Foster grew up with a great amount of loyalty and affection for the Hafner Duchy and Vesia Kingdom. She could not bear to turn her back against her own state. Not when they did so much to nurture her and enable her to grow into power.

The negotiators from the Friday Coalition were aware of the nature of expert pilots, so they tailored their offers.

For example, Venerable Foster received an offer that stated that she was only obliged to fight for the Friday Coalition for a duration of 20 years.

During that time, the Friday Coalition would take charge of everything related to her training, augmentations, expert mechs and so on. In exchange, she was only expected to fight the enemies of the Fridaymen, which in this case meant the Hexers!

Knowing that Foster was devoted to the Vesia Kingdom, the Fridayman negotiators also offered to support her state with economic subsidies and various infrastructure programs.

The Vesians sorely needed this assistance after waging two successive wars! The Sand War especially wrecked a lot of Vesian star systems, and it took trillions of nova sovereigns to rebuild everything.

On top of that, the Vesians also intended to claim and colonize much of the devastated territories of the border states that had fallen to the sandman invasion. Colonizing so many star systems when the Kingdom was already deep in debt was incredibly difficult!

Facing this choice, Venerable Foster was already leaning towards accepting this deal. In any case, even if she was a woman, the Hexadric Hegemony posed a very serious threat to her home state. Helping the noble Fridaymen fight back the unreasonable Hexers was for a good cause!

Yet the news of the introduction of the Blessed Squire caused the normally decisive and fearless expert pilot to express considerable doubt!

"Are you.. reluctant to face Mr. Larkinson's work in battle?" Lady Amalia asked with furrowed brows.

"I am not threatened by this detestable fellow's mechs. It is the regular Fridaymen soldiers who need to fear his glows. Just a single mech model is able to swing the tide of a planetary battlefield. What if this mech model spreads? What if Mr. Larkinson introduces more Hexer mechs?"

Lady Amalia loudly chuckled. "You are letting the Devil Tongue's reputation get the better of you! Do you truly think that a single mech designer can never single-handedly topple an entire state? The Friday Coalition is filled with great and powerful Masters! Anyone of them can probably develop a counter to Mr. Larkinson's specialty. Otherwise,

they do not deserve their exalted titles. Have faith in the Friday Coalition. Their rulers are far more rational than their Hexer counterparts. Ignorance can never prevail. Only the wisest and most enlightened state shall rule over our star sector."

Venerable Foster looked unamused at the noblewoman. "You sound like a Brighter."

"I have never disrespected our old opponents."

The expert pilot gestured at the sand-scoured planet floating in the distance. "For all their cleverness, the Bright Republic has fallen into ruin. Only an empty shell remains. Do you know why?"

"Why?"

"Because being clever doesn't mean you are strong."

"..Does that mean you will reject the offer?"

A burning conviction started to form around Venerable Foster. "No. I intend to accept it. Regardless of the mechs that Mr. Larkinson provides to the Hexers, our state is already intricately tied to the Friday Coalition. It is my duty to advance the cause of the Vesia Kingdom!"

The Friday Coalition would soon welcome a new guest expert pilot in their ranks!

Chapter 2238 Riled Up

As the principal mech designer of the famed Blessed Squire, Ves Larkinson quickly received word of his first Hexer mech's success.

Standing in the isolated chamber that hosted the Darkbreak module, Ves listened patiently as the projection of Gavin passed on all of the pertinent news and development from the core regions of the star sector.

Though Ves Larkinson already accrued a considerable amount of fame across the star sector, the snobbish second-class citizens of the Coalition and the Hegemony still looked down on him. Even their industry insiders believed that his specialty wouldn't be as effective on second-class mechs.

Those skeptics were drastically wrong. The Blessed Squire's glow not only surpassed their estimates, but also exhibited an extremely high fit with Hexers!

Just like how the Transcendent Messenger, Holy Soldier and Deliverer mechs fascinated the Ylvaine Protectorate, this time the Hexers welcomed their unique glow!

Every Fridayman who looked up Ves Larkinson's record and early accomplishments soon began to shake with dread.

If the amazing third-class mechs he designed was any indication, his second-class mechs might all exert a considerable impact on the battlefield!

Even a small change was enough to affect the balance of the war!

"The amount of investigations directed to the LMC and the Larkinson has increased by a hundred times." Gavin helplessly brought up. "The Fridaymen are responsible for the overwhelming amount of snooping, but we are also starting to notice a considerable amount of interests from the second-rates of other star sectors."

"This much?"

"Well, did you think your Blessed Squire would make no impact at all? The course of the battles on Marrakath III have completely changed! Even if the Opal Tridents are starting to show signs that they are learning how to cope with the Blessed Squire's glow, it does not help the fact that the Wrathful Doves are fighting considerably better. As long as these outcomes can be replicated in every contested star system, the momentum of the Hex Army will likely reach a new peak!"

Though Ves should be inordinately happy at this news, he tried his best to temper his expectations.

"While I'm glad that DIVA has finally unveiled my Blessed Squire design, I'm also concerned."

"What is the problem, boss?"

"Previously, our products mainly fell into the hands of the private sector. Mercenary outfits and security companies are normally disunited and tangled with many different interests. It's only during the Sand War that my mechs were employed in a unified fashion, but our opponents at the time were just the sandmen. As a bunch of aliens who have already crossed the Big Two's bottom line, there is no need for us to be concerned about their opinions towards our mechs."

It didn't take long for Gavin to understand the gist of his superior's concerns. "I see. The moment the Hexadric Hegemony has started to field one of your mech models in a systematic fashion, the entirety of the Friday Coalition and not just the CRC considers us as an enemy."

Before, only a small number of Fridaymen officials and decision-makers took the threat of LMC mechs seriously. This allowed Ves to completely disregard his hostile relationship with the Coalition once he traveled to Hegemony-aligned space.

Since he had crossed into Hexer-controlled space, there was no need to fear any hidden attacks from the CRC!

Yet now that every Fridayman leader and military officer hated his guts, the Coalition was much more likely to invest in a serious attempt against his life!

Even Hegemony-aligned space could not stop a determined assassin or elite strike force. No perfect space wall existed. A line of star systems like the famed Crestfallen Stars of the Carnegie Group only posed a hindrance to a huge state-backed military like the Hex Army because bypassing these fortified star systems would inevitably prove devastating to the Hexer supply lines!

This was not the case for smaller operations which did not rely on any supply lines to begin with. Hegemony space was actually filled with many holes, enough to allow a small army of mice to squeeze through!

"Uhm, we don't have to be concerned about our security. The Wodin Dynasty has recently reinforced the Glory Battalion with hundreds of mechs. By the time of the wedding, we'll be protected by a thousand second-class mechs!"

Normally, Ves disliked seeing the Glory Battalion grow larger. No matter how much Gloriana's stature grew, the Glory Battalion ultimately answered to her mother first!

It was different now. With the Friday Coalition gunning for him and his fiancé, he could use all the help he could get. If Constance Wodin wanted to boost the protection around her daughter, then she was welcome to do so! With the rapid growth of the Larkinson Clan, Ves did not believe his own mech forces would remain inferior!

"Are there any issues concerning the addition of so many Hexer troops in our orbit?" Ves asked.

"Well.. I will probably get in trouble for saying this, but she.. has been trying to get her Hexer underlings to join the Larkinson Clan."

"I know."

"Huh?"

"I am always connected to the Larkinson Clan, Benny. It's my clan, after all." Ves stated in a mysterious fashion. "Let Gloriana bash her head against the wall for a few months. She needs to learn that while she is my lover, that does not give her the right to transform our clansmen into Hexers."

Ves was quite aware of the threat of cultural invasions. He had spent a lot of time on planning and making decisions on the cultural evolution of the Larkinson Clan. There was no way he would allow his future wife to ruin his elaborate designs!

His assistant looked quite relieved. "I'm very glad to hear that. None of us here want to become Hexers either."

"Okay, enough about Gloriana's shenanigans. Is there anything else I need to know right away?"

"Aside from the Fridaymen, the Hexers have already started to poke around us. The Hegemony is a very big state, and it's split up into many different dynasties and powers. Some of them have a lot of reasons to dislike you and your works."

"Because I'm a boy?" Ves smiled amusingly as he said those words.

"Not just that, though there are plenty of bigoted Hexers who think you need to know your place." Gavin sighed in an exasperated manner. "The bigger threat from the Hegemony comes from the mech designers and mech companies that feel threatened by your products. The Blessed Squire alone has already caused the Hex Army to lower their priority on a number of mech lines that consists of their current mainstays. We have received word that the Hexer mech designers who are behind the Good Boy HEV-77S support mech model are considerably upset at our Blessed Squire!"

Ves couldn't help but erupt in laughter at this news. "Hahaha! That's good!"

"This is serious, Ves! There are several powerful female Master Mech Designers who are behind the Good Boy model! They wield considerable influence in the Hegemony's mech industry. We believe that they are already working behind the scenes to stop the matriarchs from approving the Blessed Squire!"

"Do you really think that will happen?" Ves crossed his arms.

"Well, no. The Hex Army's demand is too great to be ignored. It's just that the opponents of our products can still push for various restrictions."

Ves casually waved his hand. "The utility of the Blessed Squire is undeniable. No political opposition can stop the will of the soldiers who are fighting for the future of the Hegemony. We don't need to confront our Hexer adversaries directly. We should just hide behind DIVA and the Hex Army and let them fight our opposition."

Just as Gavin was about to tell his boss about the interest they received from powers outside of the star sector, the Darkbreak module suddenly released an alert.

Ves frowned as a new notification popped in front of his face.

His face turned grave as he read that someone was calling him. The identity of the caller was very special and not that much worse than that of Master Willix!

"Sorry, Benny. I'll have to cut your briefing short. Someone very important is calling me. I guess the impact of the Blessed Squire is greater than I thought."

"Ah, I understand. Don't mind me, boss. Good luck with your talk."

As soon as Gavin's projection disappeared, Ves raised his finger and was about to tap the projected button to accept the new call.

He hesitated.

Of all of the people who could possibly call him after the debut of the Blessed Squire, he never expected this particular individual to get in touch with him again. She had already made it quite clear that the two of them no longer maintained any active ties.

In other words, they should be strangers.

Yet humans were not so easily able to forget their friendships. Ves still possessed a lingering good impression to his early backer. He always regretted falling victim to Gloriana's scheme.

"I guess I might as well accept."

The projection of Master Carmin Olson soon appeared in front of Ves. She wore a fashionable business outfit which made it seem that she had just left an important meeting with some government officials.

Despite the flaws of her physical projection, his former master exuded a sense of presence and brilliance that Ves had only seen in Master Willix.

There was just something about Master Mech Designers that caused them to give him the illusions that they had transcended their minds! Even with many light-years of distance between him and Master Olson, Ves still felt as if he was affected by her considerable gravitas!

"Mr. Larkinson." Master Olson calmly greeted. "It has been years since we last spoke. Are you well?"

What kind of a question was that? Officially, they should be enemies!

Yet.. just like his odd relationship with Tristan Wesseling, Ves simply couldn't paint Master Olson with the same brush he used towards other Fridaymen.

He decided to indulge her. "I am pretty great, actually."

"Ah, it is not difficult to imagine that. Recently, you have accomplished a string of successes. The success of your Doom Guard, the creation of two masterwork mechs in

quick succession and now the explosive unveiling of your Blessed Squire has propelled your fame to greater heights."

In truth, Ves was more ecstatic about all of the plunder and research gains he harvested from Maynard Fields. He not only expanded his collection of B-stones, but also learned many new facets on spirituality and the properties of his own design philosophy!

With plenty of test subjects to experiment upon, Ves was having the time of his life!

As an added bonus, his mech forces also grew sharper with each successive confrontation against the pirates. His dream of molding the mech pilots of the Larkinson Clan into battle-hardened warriors was becoming more and more true!

He coughed. "I suppose you haven't called me to flatter me, right? Why did you call me? I was under the understanding that we wouldn't be talking to each other again."

"That.. is what I originally intended. Yet seeing one of your works adversely impact my state is not very pleasant. Do you know that if the Marrakath System falls faster than we have expected, Leemar will suffer unimaginable losses?"

"Oh." Ves scratched his smooth-shaven cheek. "I didn't mean to do that. Sorry."

An awkward silence ensued after he issued his half-hearted apology.

Master Olson eventually shook her head. "Forget about it. Since you have cast your lot with the Hexers, you do not deserve any blame for helping their war effort. As long as we are not neutral, mech designers such as you and I are obliged to support our respective states."

"Thank you for your understanding." Ves slightly bowed. "I have no ill will against you, Master. It's just that the Friday Coalition has acted several times against myself and my clan. I cannot regard your state with fondness."

"That is regretful. Certain Fridaymen have acted with undue haste. Since your opposition to my state has reached this level, then I have no choice but to act."

"Uhm, what do you mean?" Ves frowned.

An ominous feeling entered his mind.

Master Olson's projection stared straight into his eyes. "Other Fridayman mech designers may be clueless about your specialty, but I have known you for years. I have tracked your career progression from the beginning, and I have already developed a certain understanding of your mechs. Your Blessed Squire will not terrorize the combat troops of the Friday Coalition with impunity for long. In some time, I will publish a mech design that is designed to counter your glows!"

What?!

Chapter 2239 Higher Level of Competition

The moment Master Olson made her statement, a bomb detonated inside Ves.

His former backer and current adversary plainly stated that she and her fellow Fridayman Masters had begun to work on countering his mechs!

His design seed heated up as it acutely felt threatened. Of all of the mech designers in the galaxy, Master Mech Designers and Star Designers existed on a completely different level. For a Journeyman to confront anyone of them was madness in many cases.

Disregarding the mythical Star Designer, the sum of a Master's knowledge, experience, judgement and design philosophy far exceeded those who were still finding their way!

The mech industry did not treat Masters far above Seniors for no reason. They were the only ones who realized their design philosophies and transformed it into something permanent!

Not only would their design philosophies live after their death, their works would also remained fully empowered no matter where they found themselves.

In fact, during the initial opening of the Red Ocean, it was already proven that mech designed by Masters still retained their potency!

This was an incredible observation!

From his few personal encounters with both Master Olson and Master Willix, he knew that their respective spiritualities were not only immense, but very developed. Both their quality and quantity far surpassed what Ves was capable of reaching at his current state.

The disparity in spiritual strength alone caused Ves to feel despair. If a Master or a group of Masters went all-out and invested all of their design capabilities in countering his design philosophy, how could he possibly hold his ground?

He would have to reach Master himself in order to compete fairly against the likes of Master Olson! Even if Ves was optimistic about his progression speed, he did not believe he would be able to break his former Master's record!

Reaching Master just as he turned a hundred years old was a feat that truly underscored Master Olson's exceptional talent in mech design. Ves did not dare to put her below her fellow colleagues just because she advanced quite recently.

At his level of strength, Masters were still giants no matter their individual differences!

As his confidence began to sink to the bottom, his beliefs in his own strengths and qualities suddenly asserted themselves!

His eyes sparkled as he forcibly shook himself out of his despair!

Why should he feel afraid of Masters? From how Master Willix continued to scratch her head with regards to his design philosophy, it shouldn't be easy to grasp the operation of his specialty!

While reverse-engineering his design philosophy was far more difficult than countering it, both acts required his adversaries to grasp at least some understanding of what they were dealing with. He did not believe that every Master possessed enough ability to counter his mechs!

For example, Master Olson was known as a maestro in designing landbound mechs. Numerous staple military mech designs of the Vermeer Group incorporated her exquisite mechanical integration along with her efficient engines, turning them into hardy machines that possessed a clear edge in mobility!

Yet what did these features have to do with glows? Master Olson's specialty did not intersect with his design philosophy at all! At the very least, she needed to work extra hard in order to develop a solution that interfered with the operation of his specialty.

On top of that, Ves had another reason to feel confident. Due to his use of external design spirits, the spiritual nature of his mechs was far stronger than the products of other mech designers.

Certainly, Ves did not believe that all of his design spirits could hold their ground against the Friday Coalition's Master Mech Designers.

However, the true contest only pitted his Hexer mechs against the Fridaymen. This meant that his adversaries needed to overcome both him and the Superior Mother in order to gain absolute superiority in terms of spirituality!

Ves briefly concentrated and inspected the dormant Superior Mother. Ever since his mother had fused a portion of herself into the newborn spiritual product, the combined entity did not make any moves.

That did not mean the Superior Mother remained stagnant! Its strength constantly increased each time Ves checked up on her. In fact, this time he noticed that the Superior Mother had received a significant boost in strength, enough to allow her to come within reach of Qilanxo!

This signified that his latest spiritual product was already taking shape as the ancestral spirit of the Hexer people!

The Wrathful Doves and every other Hexer who became enamored by the Blessed Squire or its glow were already starting to feed the Superior Mother!

When he increased his concentration, he noticed the addition of millions of very faint bonds.

They were similar to the bonds that the Golden Cat had formed with the members of the Larkinson Clan.

There were differences, though.

The nature of their respective spiritual networks differed in scope and scale.

The Golden Cat maintained what Ves considered to be the best and most intimate spiritual network. It was akin to a private network that was closed to outsiders in order to maintain as much control and cohesion as possible.

The connection between the Golden Cat and every individual clansman was quite strong. The downside was that both sides needed to actively form this bond. This was why every clansman had to pledge to join the clan in the presence of a loyalty medallion, Bright Warrior or the Larkinson Mandate.

The Superior Mother maintained far more bonds, but they were much weaker. It didn't take much to enable a Hexer to form a connection with the Superior Mother, but the bandwidth and mutual exchange between the two was not as impressive.

It didn't matter. The Blessed Squire had only been out for less than a week, and already the Superior Mother far surpassed the Golden Cat in terms of quantity!

Ves believed that his own mother's symbiosis with the Superior Mother might be able to improve the ancestral spirit's efficiency in absorbing all of the spiritual tribute.

He also guessed that as long as a few of those worshippers comprised of spiritually-powerful expert pilots and mech designers, the quality problem that plagued his other design spirits should not pose a big hindrance!

Of all of his expert pilot-level design spirit, the Superior Mother possessed the highest chance to break through and reach a strength level equivalent to that of an ace pilot!

Ves felt very happy about that. Cynthia Larkinson's life was intertwined with the Superior Mother. Therefore, the declaration made by Master Olson was nothing less than an existential threat to his mother's continued existence!

Regardless if every single Master Mech Designer of the Coalition poured all of their efforts into countering his design philosophy, Ves could not afford to back down! He needed to confront his challengers head-on and ensure that the Friday Coalition never gained the upper hand in the Komodo War!

His surging war intent invigorated his entire body, mind and spirit.

He was not afraid of challenges!

Master Olson's projection silently observed her former apprentice throughout this process.

If an ordinary Journeyman heard that a Master targeted his works, there was a large chance that he would immediately lose faith in himself!

This was a very fatal blow to deal to a younger mech designer! This was one of the reasons why she took the initiative to reveal this news to Ves. No matter what sentiments she held towards him in the past, they were enemies now. She could not be lenient towards the enemies of her state and people.

If she succeeded in collapsing Ves' confidence, then his subsequent design work would definitely be impaired. This slowed down his contributions to the Hex Army.

Sadly, someone as exceptional as Ves was not as easy to take down. He belonged to the rare category of Journeymen who not only enjoyed exceptional success, but possessed the arrogance that he could resist the full attention of Masters!

A part of her felt proud at the mental fortitude of her former student. Despite his obvious shortcomings and problematic history, Ves possessed several excellent qualities that the mech industry sought in a mech designer. It was no wonder that Master Willix, who Master Olson was casually acquainted with, exhibited obvious favor to Ves and his lover.

When Ves regained his composure, he looked at his former Master without any fear.

He had no idea that Master Olson attempted to strike a fatal blow to his confidence.

"I await your state's response to my mech designs." He grinned. "The Blessed Squire is just a preview of what is to come."

Master Olson smiled back. "Welcome to the real arena of mech design. Small, controlled comparisons such as design duels are merely child's play compared to the competition that takes place between mech designers of my level. In the normal course of your progression, you shouldn't be exposed to this level of competition until you have progressed very far as a Senior. Only then should mech designers be qualified to take part in the struggle between states!"

Due to his abnormally effective design philosophy, Ves essentially cut the line and reached an area that was normally reserved for the bigshots.

Ves slightly bowed. "I am honored. While I cannot compare to Masters like you in almost every aspect, I believe in my design philosophy! I will not roll over without a fight!"

Inwardly, Master Olson felt exasperated. The longer they talked, the more Ves grew combative. This was counterproductive from her standpoint.

"Brace yourself, then. Several teams of Masters have already started to design potential counters to your mechs, with a special eye towards defeating your glows. As a dedicated servant of the Vermeer Group and the Friday Coalition, I have provided all of my peers with my detailed analysis and understanding of your specialty."

Ves chuckled at this revelation. The more pressure he endured, the greater his desire to frustrate his adversaries!

"I'm glad that you and your fellow Masters find my design philosophy so threatening." He spread his arms! "Come, then! Target me! Teach me how to defeat my glows! I will not lie down and let you win. For too long, my glows have reigned supreme in the regional mech markets. It's good now that I have some serious competition! I will learn from the flaws that you and your peers shall expose and work towards eliminating them in my next mech designs!"

This was the cycle of competition that high-level mech designers such as Master Olson delighted in the most!

Only through direct confrontations with incredibly high stakes would Master Mech Designers be able to innovate and improve!

Though Ves had never touched this level before and only possessed a shallow understanding of it, he already recognized the amazing opportunity this represented.

Whether he won or lost, he would gain many useful insights as his adversaries designed brilliant counters that targeted all of the shortcomings of his specialty.

It was as if his opponents took the initiative to teach him what he was doing wrong! As long as he did not let the setbacks topple his confidence, he would definitely be able to progress faster as his enemies had already lit up some of the way ahead.

There was just one question that puzzled his mind.

"Why did you reveal your state's intentions towards my work?" Ves asked. "Aren't you doing your state a disservice by forewarning me of your intentions?"

"Our movements are too big to remain hidden for long. The Hexer intelligence services will learn of our shift in priorities quite soon. Even if they didn't, anyone who is clever enough to understand the significance of your glows can logically infer that we will not stay silent."

That made sense. "I see."

"I also wished to see how you are faring these days. We may stand on opposite sides, but we still share something in common. As mech designers, we belong to the same kind. It is not unusual for people like us to make contact with our competition. I talk regularly with a number of Hexer Master Mech Designers I am cordial with, so do not be concerned with our discussion today."

Ves nodded. "I understand."

He still maintained his friendship with Tristan Wesseling. Now, it seemed that Master Olson wanted to regain contact with him as well.

None of these personal relations changed his conviction in taking down the Friday Coalition. His grudge against the state along with his mother's entanglement with the Hexers meant that there was no way he would grow soft against the Fridaymen!

Chapter 2240 Feeding Life

Competition was one of the greatest sources of innovation and improvement in human space.

For a very long time, Ves stood alone in the mech community. His glows may not be able to make a mech move faster or resist more damage, but its strong effects on the psyche of mech pilots and the people around them still resulted in major swings in the outcome of many battles.

This was because Ves adopted a different perspective on mechs than most of his peers. He did not view mechs as standalone machines, but rather part of a pairing with mech pilots.

His focus on making mechs alive and his emphasis on increasing the integration between mech and mech pilot was outside the mainstream of mech design. This was why the MTA threw his specialty into the bucket of Class IX design philosophies. Hardly anyone, Master Willix included, could make heads or tails of his convoluted principles!

For years, Ves continued to gain greater prominence by borrowing the momentum of his unstoppable glows. As more and more customers became aware of the value that his products provided, they eagerly bought his products, thereby enriching the coffers of the LMC and the Larkinson Clan!

So far, the mech markets failed to form an adequate response to his products, but this period could never last. Now that he intervened in the Komodo War, the good times may soon be over.

His Hexer mech designs directly threatened the interests of a lot of very powerful Fridayman Master Mech Designers!

The five Masters who presided over the Leemar Institute of Technology should especially be motivated to develop an effective counter against the Blessed Squire. This was because the Leemar System would become exposed to Hexer raids and invasion as soon as the Marrakath System and the rest of the Crestfallen Stars fell!

This was the tragedy of the Carnegie Group. The Friday Coalition's most externally-minded partner was situated directly next to the Hexadric Hegemony. This meant that the members of the Carnegie Group would definitely fight tooth and nail in order to preserve as much of their homes as possible!

While Master Olson actually hailed from another coalition partner, the Vermeer Group wasn't in a better position either. It directly bordered the Hegemony as well and also faced immense pressure from the Hexers!

"It's a pity that those two coalition partners are first on the chopping block." Ves lamented.

Due to the realities of living next to a fearsome neighbor, the Carnegie Group and the Vermeer Group were rather tempered in their conduct.

In contrast, the Gauge Dynasty and the Konso Clan adopted a more belligerent posture. The hostile Fridaymen who specifically targeted his life and freedom likely came from these arrogant coalition partners!

It would have been nice if the Carnegie Group and the Vermeer Group survived the Komodo War and took over the rest of the Friday Coalition. With their rational and restrained leadership, Ves would have nothing to fear from the Fridayman anymore.

Sadly, it was not to be. As long as the Hexers breached the Coalition's initial defensive lines, both groups would likely join the ranks of fallen coalition partners!

If that was the case, Ves had no reason to go lenient on the rest of the Friday Coalition. Ves possessed an especially intense animosity towards Gauge Dynasty!

"Wait for me. With my help, Clarion University shall collapse under the might of Hexer bombardment."

He resumed his days of designing mechs, directing his task force and experimenting on his captive pirates.

It was a bit troublesome for him to do the latter. Due to the Scarlet Rose's lack of space, many of the prisoners had to be contained on other vessels. Ves had to board a shuttle each time he wanted to mess with their minds.

It was worth it, though.

On one day, Ves, Lucky and Nitaa entered an interrogation room that had already been prepared for him ahead of time.

A familiar prisoner lay strapped to a solid surface. As soon as Ves entered the compartment, the restrained figure began to struggle.

"Go away! I can't take it anymore! Why must you torment me all the time?!"

Ves calmly set up his jammer while Lucky roamed around to sniff the compartment for any bugs or monitoring equipment.

Though the chance that his experiments were being recorded was small, Ves did not let down his guard the slightest. His reputation would definitely take an enormous hit once the public learnt of his cruel human experiments!

"Please don't hurt anymore! I'm just a slave! I never wanted anything to do with the Crona Lords!"

Ves smiled as he approached his current test subject's body. "You are looking quite well today, Mr. Seterin. I see you have recovered pretty decently from the damage I've inflicted on you previously."

"MONSTER! GET AWAY FROM ME!"

Of course, he was exaggerating a bit. In his spiritual vision, he could still see the scars and other shortcomings of Peter Seterin's retracted spiritual potential. From the moment that Ves accidentally caused a part of it to crack, Peter had never been whole anymore.

Mind and spirit were both tied to each other. Damaging one automatically damaged the other. It was just that the relationship was a bit complicated. This was especially since Peter's spirituality had still withdrawn itself into a high-untouchable seed.

After numerous checkups, the abnormal state of Peter's spiritual potential showed no signs of subsiding. It was very difficult to manipulate something that deliberately went out of phase. Ves was starting to lose patience. No matter whether this condition was temporary or permanent, he knew he wouldn't have a second chance of affecting someone on a spiritual level anytime soon.

There were multiple cases like Peter Seterin among his current pool of test subjects. Ves had acted a bit too rough in a couple of experiments. Therefore, Peter was hardly

unique. Even if he was, Ves could just mess with the heads of some other test subjects until their spiritualities engaged their defense mechanisms as well!

All of this meant that Peter was a disposable test subject. Even if Ves broke him entirely, there were other pirates that could take his place!

"I have some good news for you, Mr. Seterin. This will likely be the last time we meet each other. No matter what will happen during this session, I will make sure your bodily remains will receive a dignified cremation. Considering all of the contributions you have made towards my research, I will do my best to preserve your ashes and bring them back to civilized space. You're coming home."

Those gentle words only caused Peter to become more and more agitated! No matter what pain his body endured, the former slave kept pushing at his bonds!

It was useless. The padded alloy manacles were as tough as combat armor. Human bodies were simply too weak to break these kinds of restraints.

"I'm not a pirate! I'm a human being! Where is your humanity?!"

Ves shook his head and placed his palm over Peter's sweating forehead. "You're wrong. You are a legally recognized pirate. We collected sufficient proof and submitted all of the paperwork to the Peacekeeper Association. You have no more recourse!"

He tolerated no more nonsense and began to work.

Though Peter Seterin's spiritual potential may have turned into a nigh-intangible turtle shell, it still maintained at least some presence in the material dimensions.

Only a tiny opening existed, but this was enough for Ves to perform something radical.

Since he embarked on his current research project, he only manipulated the spiritualities of his test subjects in a shallow manner. He wanted to establish some baselines and develop an understanding of the variables in play.

He was done with that.

After performing repeated experiments on his captives, he developed a good understanding on how to manipulate someone's spirit and personality by constructing specific spiritual constructs.

He also possessed a better grasp of his limits and what he could ultimately get away with when he tried to alter someone's very being.

No matter what, any change that Ves induced in someone's spirituality was unnatural. It had a tendency to correct itself and return to a stable equilibrium.

This meant that it was very hard to make someone act against their nature.

In contrast, Ves definitely confirmed that it was easiest to amplify someone's strongest states. It was not just because he found it easier to grasp the spiritual attributes that were more abundant.

What Ves found even more important was that the mind and spirit actively supported such a move!

His manipulations alone did not guarantee that his alterations would stick. If the mind and spirit of his test subjects fought hard enough, they were capable of unraveling an undesired spiritual construct!

It was better to indulge in someone's greatest desires and obsessions. Ves believed that strengthening someone's inclinations was the key to fostering more expert pilots in the Larkinson Clan!

Humans were complicated and they possessed a myriad of desires. There weren't enough mech pilots who dedicated themselves towards a specific pursuit or ideal.

This only related to the focus and purity of someone's spiritual potential.

There was another factor that influenced a mech pilot's advancement to a higher rank, and that was the quantity of spiritual energy.

If someone's spiritual energy grew purer but remained small in quantity, then nothing would happen. The person in question simply failed to feed his spiritual potential!

Right now, Ves did not possess a very good understanding of what caused it to grow. He suspected that living a rich, fulfilling life that was full of stimulation would do it, but he observed a lot of people in the clan whose spiritual potential had not grown stronger.

"Let's see what happens if I force the process."

He held out his hand. "Give me the P-stone."

Nitaa stepped forward and presented a box. Ves opened it to reveal a life stone, which was pretty much a P-stone filled with life-attributed energy.

This life-attributed energy didn't come from him. Instead, he extracted another drop of his precious high-grade life-prolonging treatment serum and separated its spiritual components from its material components.

Due to its unique spiritual imprint, the largely plant-based life-attributed energy was compatible with anything!

While this wasted another minute portion of an irreplaceable resource, Ves deemed this test to be worth the price!

Ves needed to know what happened if he directly fed the serum's life-attributed energy to a human!

While Peter kept shaking and babbling in fright, Ves steadily drew out the life-attributed energy and simply stuffed it into Peter's mind space!

As soon as the foreign but extremely alluring energy fell into place, Peter's retracted spiritual potential began to exhibit some reactions.

Ves became excited as Peter's feeble, damaged spirituality no longer hid in its turtle shell! It began to unfold itself and return into phase.

The purpose of doing so became clear! In an instant, Peter's spiritual potential forcibly engulfed the life-attributed spiritual energy that was filled with vitality.

"AAAAAH! MY HEAD! IT'S TOO HOT!"

Even though the dose was relatively modest, the life-attributed spiritual energy was too high in quality. It immediately caused Peter's spiritual potential to balloon as it desperately attempted to digest the excessive energy it absorbed.

Within a manner of seconds, Peter's spiritual potential seemed to double then triple in strength!

Ves observed with great interest as he saw that the life-attributed spiritual energy not only healed all of the damage, but also induced a lot of growth! The mix of spiritual attributes remained constant, which meant that Peter's personality did not suffer from any swings!

The only concern was that the growth happened so quickly that Peter's mind and spirit quickly couldn't handle the pressure. Like a balloon that continued to be pumped with air, the test subject's spiritual potential seemed to come under immense strain!

Just seventeen seconds after Ves introduced the foreign energy into Peter's mind, the test subject had reached his limit!

Boom!

Peter's head exploded just after his spirituality burst as well!

Chunks skull bone, brain tissue and other unpleasant matter splattered over Ves' body!

"...Why do people's heads keep exploding around me?"

