

Mech 2951

Chapter 2951: Raw Power

Ves and the living gem implicitly cooperated with each other because they were heading in the same direction. The soldiers in their way impeded both their progress, so Ves did not mind the fact that the gem unleashed the cyclopes on them in order to clear the way.

Yet now that their paths diverged at the final stretch, those giant beasts were no longer on his side!

He had no doubt that if he attempted to screw the living gem over, the humanoid monsters would crush him and his Larkinsons the same way they crushed all of those poor infantrymen!

Ves had no way of fighting back against the might of these terrible experimental monstrosities. He was cut off from his airfleet and didn't have any of his powerful mechs and mech pilots by his side.

Though he thought highly of the combat prowess of his honor guard, they were never meant to fight against mechs or giants who approached the size and combat power of an actual mech!

Fortunately, all was not lost. Gems weren't indestructible and Ves was still confident enough he could shatter the cage that kept the remnant of the Supreme Sage alive before a cyclops could do anything.

"Sir?" Dr. Perris shuddered as she stared into the cruel and hungry gazes of the cyclopes looming over her tiny figure. "The Supreme Sage... is... a great man. His reputation... has always been good. He won't... renege on his promises."

Ves ignored her statement. Everything she knew about the Supreme Sage came from her upbringing as a Lifer. The horrors he witnessed from this lab presented a very different image!

A minute passed by as the air continued to grow more tense. Ves wasn't sure how long a cyclops was able to restrain itself. Ves could sense the violence in their bodies. Their programming may have restrained their bestial instincts, but the annoying part about life was that no organism was completely predictable. They were all unique and could deviate from their programming at any time for any reason.

As Ves continued to wrack his mind on trying to come up with a solution that was acceptable to both sides, Dr. Perris spoke again.

"Patriarch Ves, if both of you don't trust each other, then why not take baby steps?"

"Huh?"

Ves briefly turned to her, but did not slack off in keeping the living gem under his control. The only leverage he had right now was his ability to destroy the container that kept the remaining spirit of the Supreme Sage safe.

It was vitally important that he retained his leverage!

Avalon Perris gestured at the gate that the living gem wanted to pass through before waving her arm at the gate that led to the core lab that held the secrets of Special Project 'V'.

Why not just open both entrances first before doing anything else? Once they are both open, you can both get what you want at the same time.

That sounded like a decent compromise to Ves, but the gem didn't agree. It shook from side to side.

"Why won't it work?"

It took more than a minute for Ves to figure out the meaning behind its gestures.

"You need my help to activate the process to revive you? How come? Can't you rely on your current form or your huge helpers to proceed?"

It turned out that it couldn't. The cyclopes might be obedient for the moment, but they were brutes designed to inflict as much violence as their bodies allowed. They were not smart and delicate enough to operate complicated computer systems!

As for the gem, it was the subject of the procedure this time. A patient could hardly operate on himself, and this case was similar to that. Another factor was that the Supreme Sage never anticipated he would end up in this form. Due to security considerations, only a human could operate the vital control panel that could activate the procedure!

Ves thought about the situation. "It sounds like you can't do it without me. If that is the case, how about this. You help me retrieve the serum first, but you can keep your cyclopes close to prevent me from running away. Only when I help you activate the restoration process will my team and I be able to leave. Is that okay?"

They spent some time hammering out the details. Neither of them wanted to get screwed by each other, so it was difficult to form a plan that would make them both satisfied.

Fortunately, while their interests didn't align with each other, they didn't conflict either. Both of them could get what they want without stepping on each other's toes.

In this situation, they didn't have to be enemies towards each other. They were able to forge a tentative compromise that pleased them both.

"Alright, first open this gate. Do you know how to do that?"

The living gem did not have the ability to open the gate itself, but it was not without a solution.

Under its vigorous instructions, Ves activated his comm and prepared to transmit a powerful electronic signal.

Surprisingly, the signal that the gem wanted to transmit was not some elaborate code or pass phrase.

It was just a simple unencrypted message.

[OPEN.]

Surprisingly, the gate doors began to slide open!

The cyclopes and the exploration team hurriedly stepped back in order to allow for the massive slabs of bone metal to slide outwards. The entire floor seemed to shake as the heavy gate doors moved apart.

Darkness welled inside. Ves wasn't able to peer what was inside because there was a distinct lack of light sources in the enormous lab space. Only a few systems seemed to be active. Their projections lit up a couple of enormous organic machines.

Yet his attention wasn't on the powerful organic lab equipment up ahead. Instead, he looked at the lifeform that was likely responsible for opening the gate from the other side.

A strange fleshy octopus-like creature hovered just inside the open gate. The artificial creature possessed big eyes that showed at least some form of intelligence. Ves felt there were other unusual aspects about this organism.

Was this the Supreme Sage's pet or something?

"Before we proceed inside, help me get what I want first." He spoke.

Under the cooperation of the living gem, Ves transmitted a few simple commands to the floating octopus beast. The creature floated out into the corridor and crossed over to the other side. Once it reached a control panel, it began to press one of its tentacles into a port before exchanging some signals.

The second slowly slid open.

According to the agreement, Ves and his team were allowed to venture inside, but only under the company of a cyclops.

Ves felt deeply uncomfortable stepping inside while a giant humanoid was following his steps. He constantly felt as if a huge eye was looking at him as if he was a snack.

"Wow."

Different from the first core lab, the one that the Larkinsons had entered was more modern and familiar. Not only was the lighting a little brighter, they also spotted an abundance of high-end conventional lab equipment that the Supreme Sage redeemed from the MTA.

Obviously, the production process of the vital serum was so complicated and demanding that the Supreme Sage couldn't rely on his own organic machines to do the job.

Ves studied the extensive pharmaceutical production line. While he was not familiar with most of the machines, he was already able to hone in on his prize. He didn't need any directions to reach the end of the production line. He stopped before a large, shuttle-sized vault.

Dr. Perris had already approached the central terminal. The serum was not as important as the complete research files on Special Project 'V'. Even though she knew that she was dealing with tainted research, her curiosity as a biotech expert finally won over this time. There was no way she could resist the temptation of discovering the secrets of high-grade life-prolonging treatment serum!

"Open this vault."

The octopus creature only had to interface with the vault for a handful of seconds to unlock and open the vault. As it opened up, Ves carefully stepped inside and approached a pedestal which held an illuminated cage.

The sheer amount of life energy that he was feeling right now was making his mind, body and spirit incredibly excited!

He was so close to obtaining his prize!

"One, two, three, four, five! Five vials! Damn! How many expert pilot brains did it take to make so many vials?!"

Though he did not know the exact potency and efficacy of the serum, they shouldn't be too worse off than the vial he originally obtained from the Flagrant Vandals.

With so many samples of serum, Ves could truly supercharge his spiritual engineering projects and create all kinds of powerful spiritual products!

Yet it was not time yet for Ves to grab these precious treasures. The octopus creature opened the illuminated cage and took out each vial with an individual tentacle.

"Hey! Be careful with those! Don't drop any of them! They're worth more than entire planets!"

Of course, Ves was just being fussy at the moment. The containers of the serum were incredibly hard and impervious. There was no way the Supreme Sage would store such an expensive substance in fragile bottles.

He waited for Dr. Perris to load several duplicates of the research data on Special Project 'V' onto multiple data chips. The living gem didn't seem to mind that Ves wanted to steal his valuable research on this core project.

Coming back to life was much more important! Nothing else mattered!

"I'm done." She spoke. She looked excited as she returned to hand Ves and Nitaa a data chip. "I still can't fathom all of the steps required to make the serum that everyone in the galaxy wants to obtain. The amount of expertise I need to make it is too much. It would have been better if I specialized in this field! Did you know that the 'V' stands for vita?"

"That sounds nice, but we need to uphold our end of the deal now. Let's head back to the other lab."

They exited the well-lit lab that was filled with reassuring mechanical lab equipment and instead crossed over into another core lab.

This time, Ves felt a lot less at home. Visibility was down not only due to the lack of illumination, but also the excess moisture in the air. His suit registered elevated temperatures and lots of strange interference.

What was even weirder was that the deck no longer consisted of bare bone metal. Instead, the entire surface was covered by a strange carpet of fleshy biomass. Every step they took caused the flesh carpet to squelch a bit!

He looked at the massive bulbous growths around him. It looked as if he was surrounded by a myriad of strange, giant organic lab equipment. Their purpose and workings completely eluded Ves and not even Perris was able to decipher their role.

"I can only tell you that a lot of power is running through these enormous organic machines." She tentatively said. "They are consuming significantly more power than biomechs."

The octopus that was leading the way forward eventually stopped at a single terminal.

Unlike the organic machines that surrounded them all, the central workstation was entirely mechanical. Ves could see why the living gem needed the help of a human. Unlike the other MTA control interfaces operated by the octopus, the one before him was made by the MTA and did not make any accommodations for other species.

"So what do I do now?"

He didn't need to do anything too complicated to operate the control panel. While some of the instructions were rather complicated, his engineering background along with his familiarity with computer systems quickly allowed him to log in and activate some pre-prepared commands.

The entire lab shook a bit. Just ahead, an enormous invisible energy shield went off-life. Some of the mist parted a bit, allowing Ves to see an enormous pillar in the distance.

"I need to go forward?"

Though Ves felt increasingly more uncomfortable, he became more curious as well. He and his team moved forward. They soon reached some sort of fleshy ramp that caused them to move higher.

Eventually, reached the base of an enormous fleshy pillar that extended so high up that Ves couldn't even see the end. It was as thick as a biomech and emanated so much power that he almost became dizzy.

"Your body is inside?"

The gem nodded.

"Then... how do I get you inside?"

The gem didn't know the answer. That was strange. It was as if it lost the knowledge on what to do next. The octopus pet didn't know how to proceed either.

Ves frowned as he tried to find the entrance to this organic structure. He curiously approached the enormous pillar until he was able to touch it. He idly pressed the living gem against the meaty surface, not expecting much out of this random action.

A strong suction force took the gem from his armored finger.

"What the?!"

That wasn't supposed to happen!

The resilient layer of flesh should have never been able to absorb the living gem so easily!

The entire lab structure began to shake. It was as if Ves had somehow triggered an earthquake!

The only instance where Lucky's gems got absorbed in this fashion was...

His eyes widened in realization. "Oh."

"What is the matter, sir?"

"We need to step back and get out of here!"

He didn't wait for Dr. Perris to acknowledge his command. He turned around and punched the octopus with his armored fist!

"Wrmmm!"

The creature let out a painful roar and spasmed as his floating body flew a bit back. Ves quickly approached and pried the vials from its tentacles one by one. Once he collected all five of them, he put them into storage containers built into his Unending Regalia and hastily ran down the ramp!

While the rest of his team didn't know what was going on, they nonetheless trusted Ves and followed behind his heels.

They soon exited the ramp and continued to head for the exit as if their lives were on the line!

Soon, the lab shook so much that Ves and the rest had to activate the antigrav systems of their suit to remain stable.

When Ves briefly turned around to take a look, he noticed that the ramp he had just descended had risen from the surrounding flesh layer.

"Is that...?!"

A lot of hot mist had cleared at this time. Ves could clearly identify the shape of human toes.

The problem was that the scale was too immense! These were by far the largest human toes he had ever seen! Not even the feet of regular biomechs were this big!

It was at this time that he learned that the ramp he just walked over was actually a giant foot.

That meant that the huge fleshy pillar was not some sort of enormous lab machine. It was actually a humongous leg!

When Ves tried to extrapolate the size of the body that this limb was a part of, he finally figured out the truth behind the Supreme Sage's body.

The NuMan he encountered at Prescott Museum was practically child's play in comparison to this enormous creation!

"What... what are we looking at, sir? This... does not seem like a regular biomech."

"That's because it's not." Ves watched on with fear as he noticed that the enormous biological construct was waking to life. "It's a biological juggernaut that is as large as a starship!"

The Supreme Sage was so crazy that he plotted to replace his fragile human body with that of a biological supergiant!

Chapter 2952: Special Project 'U'

Ves remembered the time when he encountered his first juggernaut.

At the beginning of his career, he left the Bright Republic for the first time and traveled to the Friday Coalition in order to take part in a contest.

When Ves first toured the campus of the Leemar Institute of Technology, he beheld the partially-restored remains of a mechanical war machine that dwarfed every mech he had seen by a huge margin!

The size, mass and other properties of the defunct juggernaut were so exaggeratingly big that not a single visitor remained unimpressed. It didn't matter if the model was horribly outdated or if it was ruined beyond any chance of restoration. The juggernaut represented the pinnacle of size in mech engineering and had altered the course of the mech industry forever.

Eventually, juggernauts fell out of use, but that was not because they were too weak. Just like how humans were woefully outmatched by mechs due to scale, anything that qualified as a juggernaut enjoyed the same advantage against regular warmachines!

Yet the costs were far too exaggerated to make them viable on an economic and industrial level. They not only demanded much more resources to build, but also demanded tougher and more expensive materials in order to ensure their enormous structures didn't collapse under their own prodigious weight!

The infrastructure required to support them was too onerous. An entire chain of specialized juggernaut pilots, juggernaut designers, juggernaut mech technicians and

so on had to be especially trained to service this extravagant industry. Not only that, but juggernauts were so huge that only dedicated fleet carriers with huge internal volumes were able to transport them from star system to star system.

Eventually, enthusiasm for these giant machines faded, especially when people realized that their immense height made it too easy for the enemy to attack them from a distance. It was a lot more efficient to spend the money it took to field a juggernaut on deploying a couple of hundred of thousand regular mechs instead.

This was why no mech designer expected to deal with juggernauts in their career! The concept had been tried numerous times in several different forms, yet their size always made them impractical to be used on a larger scale.

"Who says that juggernauts are dead, though?!" Ves complained as he and his exploration team hastily ran to the exit of the secret lab. "As long as someone is willing splurge enough money, they can build any juggernaut they want!"

The immense organic titan that Ves had inadvertently woke up was considerably larger and more massive than the juggernaut he initially encountered on the campus of the LIT.

What was even worse was the biojuggernaut was a fully functioning war machine that had just gained a conscious mind!

A crazy amount of spiritual activity emanated from the immense abomination. Ves could sense so much vitality from this artificially-cultivated body that he was certain that it must have been infused with a liberal amount of serum!

All of this vitality had remained for a long time, but now that it had gained a human spirit, the biojuggernaut no longer lacked conscious direction!

As the lab continued to shake as if an entire continent was drifting, the monstrous giant had finally completed its awakening!

Several hundred meters high, the giant's enormous head shuddered before its eyelids slid open. Two enormous pupils gained focus as they glowed in ominous red.

Its jaw hinged open and the air in the lab visibly vibrated as this terrifying biomonstrosity uttered its first word in a guttural deep pitch!

"UUUUUUURRRRRRAAAAAANNNNNUUUUUUSSSSSS!"

The roar released by the biojuggernaut may have originated several hundred meters above, but the entire lab floor shook at the vibrations elicited by the sound waves!

Ves and the rest of his team practically collapsed and fell onto the shaking flesh carpet as their armored bodies were buffeted by the raw power behind this gutturally loud roar!

If their combat armor weren't so good, their ears and the rest of their bodies would have shaken apart from being so close to the biojuggernaut as it unleashed its sonic attack!

In fact, its roar was so powerful that the octopus pet had practically exploded into pieces after getting buffeted by the powerful pressure waves. Many of the lab equipment also exhibited signs of damage!

Ves groggily tried to regain his senses. "I guess now I know what the letter in Special Project 'U' stands for. The Supreme Sage didn't have to announce it across the entire star system, though!"

The Larkinsons were so suppressed by the exaggerated presence of the humongous juggernaut that they were barely able to pick themselves up and resume their desperate flight.

Fortunately, the huge biotitan did not pay any notice to some trivial humans. In fact, it didn't possess much of a conscience at all. The spiritual remnant that was locked in the Supreme Comprehension gem had been freed, but there was too little of it left to control a humongous bio machine.

The mismatch was too great!

For this reason, what little rationality it retained quickly began to degrade as the monstrosity inhuman instincts of the giant biological body subverted the conscious spirit.

An indeterminate transformation ensued that Ves was only barely able to perceive from below. As he continued to stare upwards, he felt as if the biojuggernaut's remaining consciousness was quickly being subsumed by a more primal aspect that drew its strength from its prodigious body!

"Oh, hell. I don't think anything good will come from this!"

The different elements merged, resulting in a consciousness that retained aspects from multiple sources.

Yet as the presence of the biojuggernaut grew wilder and less constrained, Ves could already tell that there was precious little of the Supreme Sage's original consciousness left. The biojuggernaut absorbed everything in order to birth a stronger, vaster and much more primal consciousness!

The giant biojuggernaut's eyes shifted downwards as its cruel mouth started to open. The enormous humanoid monstrosity began to bend its knees and lower its upper body. The wind in the huge lab chamber swept up from all of the air being displaced!

The biojuggernaut, no, Uranus stared hungrily at the cyclopes that were still unmoving.

Uranus slowly reached out with its enormous hand and grasped onto a cyclops. It lifted the small monster up and slowly deposited into a mouth that was large enough to fit a mech.

The biojuggernaut chewed a couple before swallowing.

The meal seemed to invigorate the monstrosity so much that it began to gorge upon the rest of the cyclopes!

Its hand kept swooping down and lifting the maneating giants up before tossing them into its cavernous mouth. Blood poured from its gigantic lips, but Uranus didn't care about the mess it made!

Throughout consuming its first meal, the cyclopes did not move away despite the evident fear in their single eyes! Their instincts compelled them to run, but their bioprogramming was so ironclad this time that their bodies had forcibly locked up. This was their destiny!

A shudder ran through Uranus' body as it finished its bloody meal. Its fleshy, meaty surface rippled a bit until a lot of tissue emerged across its body.

"It's growing skin!" Dr. Perris shakily gasped. "Look at the speed of its growth. It's amazing how quickly it is able to convert its ingested biomass into resilient skin!"

"Stop admiring this tall bastard and keep fleeing!"

Though the mech designer side of Ves wanted to stay and see what Uranus was capable of, his survivor side firmly took charge this time and urged him to escape this doomed facility as fast as possible!

He didn't need to urge his fellow companions. His honor guard only had safety in mind right now and did not allow Ves and Dr. Perris to slow down in any way!

Uranus no longer fell within their sights as they exited the core lab. They continued to fly down the central corridor until they passed by the open gates that led back to the peripheral area.

Their sights continued to blur a bit as they navigated through several corridors. Once they reached the teleportal portal, they quickly activated it before passing through.

Fortunately, the changes that took place did not invalidate their access passes, so they were still able to enter the fourth floor unimpeded.

The haggard exploration team continued to make their way to the portal that led to the fifth floor. Once there, they urgently fled to the original escape tunnel and passed through the final portal.

In the meantime, Uranus had finished growing its new skin. Its tall body now looked a lot more human, though whether that was a good thing remained to be seen.

Short black hair even emerged from the top of its head. The strands were thicker than several human bodies pressed together and oily in a way that made them look like fuel pipes.

If not for its humongously exaggerated scale, Uranus wouldn't have looked that much different from an uncovered biomech or even an athletic human body.

The only shortcoming was that it lacked a reason to wear a codpiece.

Uranus was completely unique. Initially conceived as a way for the aging and decrepit researcher to develop a superior replacement of his failing body, the special project morphed into something more over the decades.

The Supreme Sage poured so much time and resources on this monster project that he considered it perfect in many ways. He wanted to design and create the ultimate biomech in order to gain power beyond imagination and attain true immortality!

Whether the former leader of the LRA accomplished his goals or not, this great and terrible biojuggernaut was the culmination of his entire career. It contained the best aspects of all of his best research without any compromises!

The biojuggernaut's eyes glowed brighter as the titanic monster's energy levels continued to rise. Its body released so much heat that the entire core lab became stuffed with cloying mist!

Uranus slowly looked upwards and lifted its entire arm in the air. The enormous limb grew hotter as its hand spontaneously transformed into an open cavity.

The unprecedented huge monstrosity roared yet again as an immense amount of energy accumulated within its shoulder.

"WHUUUUAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAH"

An exaggeratingly wide and powerful teal energy beam soared from its arm cannon and collided against the tall ceiling of the core lab!

The energy beam not only melted through the solid bone metal ceiling as if it was nothing, it also continued to melt through the dense material in between until it burned its way through the deck of the second floor.

The powerful energy beam continued to bore a wide hole through barrier after barrier until a giant pillar of energy shot straight from the bottom of Ruuzon Arena and soared straight into orbit!

The entire planet seemed to have fallen silent at the appearance of the giant energy beam.

Though it faded quickly after breaching through the ground, the nearby biomechs that were fighting on behalf of the conservatives and the opposition factions immediately ceased to fight.

The mech pilots directed their biomechs to back off in order to figure out what had just happened.

Several minutes passed by as the ground started to shake. The earthquake grew bigger and bigger until whatever remained of the ruined arena floor buckled inwards and collapsed into the depths.

An enormous biomachine soon floated up the tunnel. Despite its unimaginably high mass, Uranus was nonetheless capable of lifting its prodigious body into the air!

Of course, the amount of energy it took to carry its immense bulk upwards was not low.

Once Uranus fully emerged from the pinnacle lab buried far underneath Ruuzon Arena, it rose to its full height.

"How... how tall is that juggernaut?"

"A-A-Aproximately five-hundred meters, sir. It's half a kilometer long."

The biojuggernaut seemed to survey the territory before its eyes. Then, it opened its bloody maw to let out another roar!

"UUUUUUUUURRRRAAAAAAAAAANNNNNUUUUUUUSSSS!"

As the nearby biomechs were all buffeted by the sound and pressure released by this ridiculously large monster, an enormous hand grabbed hold of a nearby biomech and lifted it up to a hungry mouth.

Though its latest bite was a bit larger and tougher to chew through than a cyclops, the biojuggernaut visibly looked pleased.

Its eyes shone more ominously at the remaining biomechs. Soon it began to surge forward and began to gorge on the helpless organic machines!

The Supreme Sage's magnum opus had made its terrible debut!

Chapter 2953: Bionightmare

The Life Research Association changed forever this day.

The state had already undergone a lot of turmoil after the opposition to the dominant conservative faction sparked off a violent rebellion.

The descent into anarchy and lawlessness seemed to bring out the worst of the Lifers. Any gang member or criminal who previously felt oppressed by the authorities suddenly found that the sword hanging over their heads were no longer there anymore!

In fact, many law enforcement units got swept up in the civil war. They were compelled to join specific sides and tasked with fighting against their former brothers.

An uncountable amount of civilians suffered, especially on Prosperous Hill VI. The principal trade planet of one of the LRA's most important port systems had turned into a wartorn hell for both locals and visitors.

In the meantime, the factions that were responsible for unleashing all of this suffering became completely embroiled in their struggle for power.

The powerful biomech designers, beast designers, geneticists and other renowned biotech researchers no longer competed against each other in the academic arena.

Instead, they began to play general and leveraged the considerable networks they built up over the years to deploy whatever troops they commanded onto their enemies!

What was most notable on Prosperous Hill VI was the strange obsession that both sides acquired.

For some reason, the two factions kept fighting over an ostensibly worthless piece of territory centered around a mech arena.

Even though Ruuzon Arena used to be a famed competitive and entertainment venue in the Prosperous Hill System, its worth had plummeted since the outbreak of the war.

In fact, when its giant tree tentacles came to life and cruelly massacred hundreds of thousands of unwitting spectators, the factions bombarded the entire venue until there was nothing left on the surface!

The heavy shelling directed towards the murderous arena was so severe that even its tunnel network had partially collapsed! The first five underground floors had completely caved in while the floors underneath had become incredibly unstable.

Yet despite the precarious conditions underneath the ruined arena, the conservatives and the opposition members continued to deploy mechs and soldiers through the few intact tunnel entrances that were left in order to gain total control over the shambling site.

No one knew what the rulers of the factions were thinking. Not even the commanders who led the fighting knew the reasons why they were sending good men to die. Yet the decisions of the mighty biotech researchers had to be respected, because that was the custom in the Life Research Association.

Today, everyone knew what the different factions were fighting for. The emergence of an incredibly tall and incredibly powerful 'biomech' laid most questions to rest.

"What is that tall thing in the distance?"

"It's bigger than my father's trading ship."

"It's a juggernaut! A biojuggernaut!"

The skin-covered flesh titan that emerged from a giant hole underneath Ruuzon Arena towered over almost every tree structure in Veoline. While there were a number of gigantic tree structures that exceeded the height of the biojuggernaut, there was a profound difference between the two different products.

The tallest tree structures were marvels of bioarchitecture. It took a lot of planning, calculation and problem solving to grow tree structures that massed so much and extended so far up into the sky. They also demanded an enormous amount of high-quality resources in order to make them viable.

Yet the difficulty of designing and growing a tree structure was nothing compared to creating a biojuggernaut!

Even regular juggernauts made of conventional technology were much easier to design and build than their fleshy equivalents.

Special Project 'U' was a monster project that took an immense amount of time, effort and resources for the Supreme Sage to bring to completion. He spent decades trying to keep his work on the project a secret. He secretly siphoned resources from other research projects and deliberately made himself as unapproachable and unavailable as possible so that he could work on his greatest project in peace.

Not even Master Mech Designers could have engineered a bioproject as immense as the biojuggernaut. Its successful growth and creation was a testament to the Supreme Sage's legendary intellect.

Yet all of the people who initially witnessed the emergence of the giant flesh construct were mistaken about one factor.

A juggernaut, whether it was made out of metal or biomatter, was defined as a war machine that operated under the direct control of a specialized juggernaut pilot.

The monstrous creature that had briefly paused before moving in to capture and devour biomechs in rapid succession was anything but a biomachine that was controlled by a rational human pilot.

"UUUUURRRRAAAAAAANNNUUUUUUSSSSSS!"

The roar that announced its name to the entire planet was so loud that the pressure waves emanating from his throat caused the nearby biomechs to briefly falter.

This allowed the berserk biojuggernaut to easily catch up to the next batch of fleeing biomechs and pick them up only to stuff them into its blood-soaked mouth!

Even though the gigantic biotitan wasn't always able to stuff every mech into its abyss-like mouth in one go, its sharp, gigantic teeth along with its extraordinary powerful jaw muscles allowed it to bite any helpless biomech into pieces!

As the gigantic Uranus chewed through half-a-dozen biomechs, the runaway biojuggernaut even started to savor its meals. The monstrous titan's eyes glowed brighter as it started to pick up a biomech that had been a tad bit slow in fleeing.

Instead of biting through its torso straight away, it tore off an arm before tossing it into its mouth. The pleasure on its face was evident as it started to learn how to savor its meal.

"What kind of a biomachine eats other biomachines?"

"That's not the worst part. You know what is even more depraved? Some of the mech pilots of those biomechs that got caught never managed to eject!"

"Monster. It's a monster."

Though there weren't many people living in the city districts that were close to Ruuzon Arena, the immense titan was so tall that its enormous body along with its actions could clearly be seen from kilometers away.

Millions of citizens and refugees in Veoline watched on with horror as the greatest and most sophisticated 'biomech' produced by the Life Research Association also happened to conform to one of their worst fears.

Biomechs were supposed to be under human control at all times. Every biomech designer who graduated from an educational institution knew this lesson by heart.

One of the greatest impediments of the popularization of biomechs was the persistent if misguided fear that they spontaneously came to life and went out of control. It was largely a myth as biomech designers took exceedingly great care in preventing their mechs from developing any sentience or functional intelligence.

Yet the biojuggernaut known as Uranus did not just stray from this rule. It utterly broke this consensus! The bestial intelligence that controlled all of its actions was like a nightmare come true for the Life Research Association's fairly disciplined biomech industry.

There was no human consciousness in control of its actions!

All of its decisions were driven by an inhuman mind that was completely irrational and driven by primal emotions!

There were no safeguards and restraints in place that could stop it from engaging in the forbidden act of eating human flesh!

Its entire existence was a walking violation of every ethical principle that the LRA's biomech industry painstakingly enforced in order to lower everyone's vigilance towards its principal product.

When footage of this rampaging biotitan would surface on the galactic net, which will assuredly happen, the biomech designers who observed this calamity already knew that their industry was ruined.

No one in the star sector would consider buying biomechs again!

The entire biomech industry in not just Majestic Teal but every other star sectors across human space where biomechs were sold would suffer an enormous setback after this man-made disaster spread far and wide.

Even though this unfolding tragedy took place in a rather marginal state at the edge of human space, the horrifying size and majesty of the biojuggernaut was so awe-inspiring that it was already assured that it would enter into the galactic news cycle.

Forget about being mentioned in renowned regional news portals such as the Rimward Star Herald. It was already certain that snippets of dramatic footage would show up in Galaxy News One, the most bland but widely-watched news portal of humankind!

Even the colonists exploring the Red Ocean would know about this terrifying new bionightmare within twenty-four hours!

Meanwhile, the person responsible for reviving and unleashing this terrifying experiment gone wrong was grinning like a shark.

After he and his team barely managed to make it back to the warehouse complex before the final portal and the entire pinnacle lab collapsed, Ves had lots of reasons to celebrate.

"I hit the jackpot!"

Safely ensconced within his Unending Regalia were five vials of high-grade life-prolonging treatment serum. Though Ves already knew that the Supreme Sage must have synthesized more serum over the years, much of it had already been expended on special Project 'U'.

It was actually an unexpected surprise that the Supreme Sage had that much spare serum left. Evidently, even though he constantly complained in his research notes that the yield was too low, he did not suffer a shortage of expert pilot bodies.

Ves completely disregarded the fact that his loot was tainted. The Supreme Sage was the one responsible for defiling the bodies of heroes, not him. The ancient bastard deserved all of the blame for being the biggest hypocrite in his own state!

"I'll make good use of your products. Don't you worry." He chuckled under his breath.

An arguably even bigger harvest from his loot run was that he also managed to secure all of the research files pertaining to Project Cain and Special Project 'V', along with a handful of other related research projects!

Though Ves was sure he missed a couple of essential projects that were housed in the upper floors of the pinnacle lab, he knew for certain that Cain and Vita were the key projects that the Larkinson Clan absolutely needed in order to reconstruct the production product one day!

While Ves was already dreaming about secretly breaking the monopoly on high-grade life-prolonging treatment serum, Dr. Perris looked completely hollowed out at this time.

The successive revelations and impacts she received was too much for her to bear. Though adrenaline had managed to keep her together when they were venturing in the pinnacle lab, now that she made it back, she collapsed onto the floor.

"What have we done...?"

Fear, guilt and other negative emotions roiled through her mind. The final part of their exploration impacted her especially hard. Unlike nearly everyone else who would soon learn of the feral biojuggernaut, she happened to know some of the truth about the consciousness that drove it to slaughter and devour every biomech within reach.

Uranus was supposed to be the Supreme Sage's replacement body. If all went well, the founder and leader of the Life Research Association should have ascended into a greater kind of existence by transferring his consciousness to a titanic vessel!

This god-like body should have created the perfect biological lifeform according to the Supreme Sage. As long as he was able to transfer his entire mind, knowledge and intellect to the most powerful physical humanoid body he had ever created, the combination between the two should have resulted in a new form of life that completely transcended the human race in every possible aspect!

"If this experiment succeeded... would that mean the Supreme Sage attained immortality?"

Dr. Perris didn't miss the principal reason why the legendary researcher worked so hard to grow such an exaggeratingly huge body. Though she hadn't been able to access too much documentation about Special Project 'U', she nevertheless managed to infer that the main reason why Uranus was so huge to begin with was because it possessed amazing vitality!

The implications were just as massive if the Supreme Sage actually succeeded in his risky consciousness transfer procedure.

Sadly, it didn't work out. The Supreme Sage failed at the most crucial juncture.

The ground suddenly shook. Half of the people milling about in the ruined warehouse complex almost lost their footing.

"What is going on?!"

"Are we under attack?"

"Look over there!"

A huge cloud and shockwave spread out from the direction of downtown Veoline. Soon enough, the Larkinsons began to hear distant roars and explosions. Several bright teal energy beams soared in various directions.

Some launched straight into orbit, but others swept across the surface, destroying thousands of tree structures and killing lots of hunkered citizens at once.

One energy beam even came awfully close to sweeping the current location of the Larkinson airfleet!

If not for the distance from the disaster site being a bit too far, thereby causing the energy beam to fly over everyone's head due to the curvature of the planet, the airfleet might have suffered horrendous casualties!

Alarms began to ring throughout the airfleet. A calamity had set upon Prosperous Hill VI and everyone needed to flee as far as possible from the city!

Chapter 2954: Unsurpassed Energy

A vast swathe of land around Veoline descended into hell!

The entire city district disappeared in flame and ashes as an energy beam that was as powerful as the main battery of a warship swept across the war-scarred tree structures without rhyme or reason.

"UUUUUUURRRRAAANNNNNUUUUSSSSSS!" The biojuggernaut cried as it became swept by its overpowering emotions!

The creature showed no inkling of self-control at all. It was like a newborn designer beast that was just learning how to cope with its new existence.

The only difference was that Uranus was at least a hundred if not a thousand times bigger than a typical designer beast!

When Uranus grew hungry, he devoured every juicy biomech within range without caring for what side they were on. No matter if the mech pilots inside fought for the preservation of the current tradition or supported radical change, the voracious giant cared not for their ideals.

The primal consciousness controlling the massive giant simply found it interesting to sample biomechs with different colors and markings on their surface. It was just like a kid who just discovered the pleasure of eating candy!

Naturally, the titanic monstrosity drew plenty of opposition for its action. No matter who made it or where it came from, it had clearly gone horribly out of control. Both sides of the civil war implicitly stopped turning their weapons against each other in order to take care of the greater threat.

The higher echelons of the warring factions knew that there wouldn't be any LRA left fighting for if this walking example of the horrors of unrestricted biotechnology continued with its rampage.

Though no melee mech pilot dared to get close to the immense biotitan, a large amount of ranged units opened fire onto the very large and obvious target.

This was one of the few instances where its massive size worked against its favor!

Yet even after hundreds of rifle and cannon-wielding mechs turned their weapons against the monstrosity, the damage they inflicted were practically as trivial as bee stings to humans!

The hard skin layer that Uranus had recently grown was actually thicker than the frontal armor of heavy mechs. It was only thin relative to its titanic stature. Perhaps a warship-grade cannon might be capable of penetrating its surface layers straight-away, but the biomechs that looked like toys in front of the massive horror were simply too weak to inflict serious damage onto its enormous mass!

"What does it take to make it bleed?!"

"Concentrate our fire, goddammit! Focus on the throat or the joints! Contact the enemy and get them to coordinate our fire. We're not getting anywhere if we're spreading our attacks!"

The biotitan might possess unsurpassed strength, but speed was not its forte. Each movement it made looked agonizingly slow for a human. It was as if Uranus was a human who moved two or three times slower than everyone else.

Yet with arms and legs stretching for hundreds of meters, its plodding movements easily allowed it to traverse a lot of distance. This threw several mech pilots off as their biomechs got caught by the gluttonous biojuggernaut.

"Don't stick around! Just eject as soon as it becomes clear you're next on the menu. We can't allow this giant to eat any more humans!"

As time went by, the different factions managed to bring hundreds more ranged mechs to bear. The pinprick attacks they accomplished against the juggernaut did not immediately result in any persistence despite concentrating their fire, but the desperate mech pilots never let up on their assault.

Both sides had united for a cause that was greater than their political and societal ambitions.

No matter whether they were traditionalists or radicals, no matter whether they advocated for peace or clamored for war, at this moment in time, every mech pilot in the area was part of the same side now.

"Fight for the future of the Life Research Association!"

"Fight to preserve the Supreme Sage's Legacy!"

"Fight for the continuation of our biomech industry!"

Their individual differences no longer mattered. At this horrible time, the mech pilots all stepped up and resisted the urge to flee. Their duty to their state compelled them to stay and do their best to stop the calamity from unfolding any further.

It was too bad that bravery and heroism alone wasn't enough to stop a biomonster whose physical strength and capabilities vastly exceeded that of a second-class biomech.

The Supreme Sage poured decades worth of high-quality resources into its growth process. Though only a small fraction of the materials consisted of low-grade first-class exotics that were extremely hard to come by, the sheer amount of high and medium-grade second-class exotics stuffed inside its huge and dense body magnified its power beyond belief!

"Are we fighting against a mech or warship?!"

The awesome resilience and disproportionate power exhibited by the bioconstruct known as Uranus was exactly why ambitious but unsatisfied mech designers originally came up with the juggernaut concept.

Some of the people who invested in this ambitious new war machine sought to challenge the supremacy of warships. There were even rumors that the MTA aimed to challenge the hegemony of warships when it came to top-end destructive war potential with this radically new mech classification.

Though the sheer amount of practical problems eventually caused the supporters of this initiative to give up their plans, technically speaking, the juggernaut concept was never proven weak.

As long as someone was crazy and obsessive enough to spend an endless amount of money in making a juggernaut, the results were literally mind-blowing!

"Damn, it's continually regenerating its wounds! Just look at how fast it restores its broken skin. We can't slack off our attacks at all if we want our attacks to cut deep!"

Compared to other juggernauts, the gigantic biological monster solved one of the greatest shortcomings of its type.

Its enormous size made it easy to attract concentrated firepower, so damage kept accumulating at a rapid pace. Yet with the high-speed regeneration technology applied to its enormous frame, the biojuggernaut was constantly able to negate the incoming damage, thereby ruining any attempt at wearing it down over time!

As long as Uranus continually fueled its rapid healing process by ingesting more flesh, it could continue to persist even if the entire planet turned its guns against the monster!

Though every biomech in the vicinity had long flown out of the reach of the hungry beast, there were other kinds of high-energy foods available to the undiscerning biotitan.

Its enormous eyes gazed across the lands before its feet. The advanced biosensors and other detection systems integrated in the protected eyeballs and other organs embedded into its frame rapidly recorded and processed a lot of data.

Soon enough, the juggernaut took a few steps before bending down. It punched through the surface of a ruined tree structure and pulled out a fleshy orb that used to be an industrial organic power generator.

As soon as it ingested and digested the food that ended up in its stomach, the juggernaut's wounds healed at a much more rapid pace than before.

The mech pilots who turned their guns onto this monstrosity began to despair as they saw their efforts come to naught!

"Don't stop firing!" A desperate commander shouted on an open communication channel. "We can't give up! No matter how many times it regenerates its wounds, there has to be a limit! We'll fight day and night if we have to. We'll exhaust every single one of its cells as long as we persist!"

Yet Uranus soon showed why their plan of trying to exhaust it over time was likely to fail. After enduring continuous pinprick attacks from opponents that were too distant for it to reach in a short amount of time, the biojuggernaut proved once again that it did not lack any weapons.

It stretched out its arm while causing it to morph into a different shape. After a slight moment of aiming, it unleashed a powerful energy beam that instantly slammed into a distant formation of artillery mechs!

That wasn't all. While the arm continued to unleash enough energy to wipe out an entire city, the tall biomonster rapidly tilted the arm in many different directions. A tracking program had taken over the energetic limb as it precisely directed the arm cannon to wipe out a succession of different ranged mechs units!

No matter whether they were on the ground or in the air, Uranus exhibited a disturbing degree of accuracy as its advanced targeting and firing systems allowed it to destroy distant targets with great efficiency!

If the biojuggernaut was piloted by a sane, obedient human, then this could have been used to great effect in any war or conflict.

Yet now that this capability was being harnessed by an inhuman consciousness, the damage it dealt went far beyond eliminating the ranged mechs that caused Uranus to feel pain.

As the powerful energy beam kept sweeping from area to area, anything in its path was laid to waste. Entire city districts turned to ash or became swept by flames as the excessive energy was too much for the tree structures to bear. Millions of citizens burned or vaporized from existence as the uncaring Uranus did not exhibit sympathy for the plight of the ants beneath its gaze!

As Veoline and its surroundings exhibited long burn scars that were so large and extensive that they could be seen in orbit, the biojuggernaut finally ceased fire.

Though it possessed considerable internal power generators that were able to restore its energy levels, it could not squander its power without limits.

Its hunger had reemerged stronger than ever. The biojuggernaut strolled over the areas it hadn't burnt to a crip and began to dig through the ruins for any high-energy biomachines. No matter whether they were power generators, industrial production equipment or anything else, as long as they held a sufficient amount of energy, they were edible in the giant monster's mind.

The ground shook with each step it took. The few survivors who were unfortunate enough to survive its rampage up close had to hold onto nearby furniture in order to prevent their bodies from flying all over the place due to the miniature earthquakes the half-kilometer tall giant generated by walking.

In fact, the mass of the giant biojuggernaut was so immense that the Supreme Sage had to exaggerate the size of its feet in order to prevent it from caving in the ground too easily!

As it continued its process of hunting down rich energy and nutrient sources, the Life Research Association's counterattack had finally come.

While the forces in the service of the political factions may have failed to fell the giant biomonster, there was a stronger force present in orbit and on the surface of Prosperous Hill VI.

After someone issued a command, thousands of laser beams descended from the skies and struck the biojuggernaut and the land around it! Even though all of the air in the way reduced the integrity of the energy beams as they passed all the way from high orbit to the surface of the planet, the sheer volume of fire still caused Uranus to heat up at a worrying rate!

Soon enough, an enormous salvo of fiery hot kinetic rounds bombarded the entire area occupied by the biojuggernaut! Though these rounds were considerably less precise, they nonetheless hit harder than regular rounds!

Uranus uttered a wordless cry of pain and frustration! Just as its eyes began to scan the upper reaches of Prosperous Hill VI's orbit for targets, a salvo of different glowing energy beams slammed into the eyes of the biojuggernaut!

While the simultaneous attack failed to breach the protective energy shields projected over these critical organs, they somehow stressed the barriers a lot more than previous attacks.

"The military has finally made its move! Our expert pilots have come to save us all!"

"Our expert mechs will definitely prevail over this evil beast!"

Far above everyone's heads, a rapidly-descending organic combat carrier struggled to maintain control as her underside heated up from the friction of her extreme trajectory.

It didn't matter if the vessel broke up from her descent. Her only purpose was to deliver her cargo. As her hangar bays opened up, more than a dozen expert biomechs flew out in quick succession.

Some of the best and most impressive mech pilots of the Life Research Association had mobilized to take down the bioterror that had the potential to ruin their entire state.

"Onwards, Venerables! Let us slaughter this rogue experiment and bring the purpose to justice! Via Veritas Vita!"

"VIA VERITAS VITA!"

Yet just as the expert biomechs started to spread out and employ all of their strength to fell the biggest biomachine they had ever fought in their careers, Uranus keenly recognized the elevated threat from these powerful opponents.

It raised its arm yet again and fired a searing energy beam into the sky!

After a dozen seconds, its biological warship-grade cannon ceased fire.

Every expert biomech that had descended from orbit had turned into charred and flaming wrecks. They descended uncontrollably from the air and crashed onto the ground with not a single hint of life left in their once-impressive frames!

Moments later, the split pieces of the burned and ruined wreck of the biocarrier rained down onto the devastated city, inflicting additional destruction onto an already-wounded planet.

"Our expert mechs..." Someone shakily said.

"No..."

"What will it take to fell this monster?"

Chapter 2955: The Power of Science

The armageddon that erupted in downtown Veoline did not stay confined to the immediate area.

Uranus was too big, too tall and too powerful for its attacks to stay limited.

In fact, it suffered from the same problem that plagued every mech and biomech.

Normal mechs were much bigger and taller than infantrymen. Compared to tanks, their combination of destructive power, resistance against damage and ability to traverse a diverse set of terrains resulted in war machines that could easily lay waste to entire cities if left unrestrained.

Of course, no mech pilot was ever crazy enough to go out of control like that. Other mech pilots did not take kindly to such indiscriminate behavior. The consequences of deliberately killing a huge amount of civilians with mechs were so dire that every mech pilot learned how to exercise some restraint.

However, mechs couldn't shackle themselves too heavily. They were designed and equipped to wield massive, powerful weapons in order to fight against other mechs that were armed with similar weapons.

If one side went too far with restricting the use of its weapons, then the other side would most certainly gain the upper hand as long as it didn't follow suit!

Therefore, in order to allow mechs to retain their usefulness, mech pilots learned to fight according to a specific set of rules that explained how much force they were able to bring to bear in many different scenarios.

The rules of engagement differed from state to state, star sector to star sector and so on. Yet they were almost identical in most areas because those were the standards that the MTA heavily encouraged everyone to adopt.

Those that diverged from the Association's recommendations rarely found their actions to be worth it. Since the MTA was one of the only sources of life-prolonging treatment serum, rulers rarely wanted to get on the bad side of this powerful organization.

Through the constant efforts of the mechers, the widespread adoption of mechs in the current age was a grand success. Humanity still waged war among itself, but the level of destruction they exhibited was but a fraction from what happened before.

While the smaller and more limited destructive potential of mechs limited how much damage they could inflict onto an environment, the restraint exhibited by mech pilots also deserved a lot of credit.

Yet what if a new war machine came along that broke these conventions that allowed humanity to flourish again during the Age of Mechs?

Uranus was far bigger than a typical mech. Its ability to inflict collateral damage was so high that no amount of restraint could prevent it from ruining large parts of a city.

What was worse was that its controlling consciousness did not even bother to spare the innocent from its devastating area attacks.

This meant that Uranus effectively became a walking apocalypse. The immediate area around this titanic monster was already ruined beyond recognition. The areas further ahead might have a higher chance of making it out unscathed, but the monster's energy beams were so far-reaching that no area in view was safe!

"Aramaggedon has come!"

"Forget about everything. Just run! Our homes are already doomed!"

"If even expert pilots can't defeat it, nothing can!"

The losses suffered by the military was horrendous. The expert pilots that had bravely attempted to confront Uranus directly had all flamed out along with their expert mechs without even getting the chance to show their full might.

The difference in scale led to an insurmountable difference in power. Even though Uranus did not exhibit the qualities of an expert mech, it was nonetheless able to defeat these powerful machines with ease due to the abundance of power conveyed by its prodigious size.

The expert pilots had all died unjustly due to this simple reason!

That wasn't all. Now that Uranus recognized the threat from the skies, it turned its massive eyes upwards and began to scan every attack source that were floating in orbit thousands of kilometers away.

Then, the biotitan lifted its infamous arm cannon once again.

This time, it did something differently. Instead of firing a single overpowering energy beam, it unleashed dozens of smaller beams that slightly angled away from each other.

Though half of them missed their targets, plenty more managed to slam into spaceborn mechs that were never suspected to be attacked from the surface of a planet in such a fashion!

Though the firepower of the smaller beams was diluted, the attacks still possessed plenty of power to burn through the frames of every mech and biomech, particularly when they lacked adequate defenses!

As for the spaceborn mechs that happened to dodge or move away fast enough to stay safe, they did not last much longer as the individual energy beams raced across the skies and tracked the biomechs that the juggernaut had initially missed!

Uranus roared again and again as it continually unleashed bright beams of energy through the clouds and beyond the atmosphere of Prosperous Hill VI. The lack of cover in space became a deadly disadvantage as the biojuggernaut's sensor, targeting and firing systems were so good that no mech in orbit was able to escape destruction!

Those that tried to hide beyond space stations, starships and artificial satellites only provoked more destruction from Uranus. With the destruction of these massive orbital biovessels and bioconstructs, the skies soon began to light up as numerous chunks of massive debris was about to descend all across the surface of the suffering planet.

"Fly faster! Dump all excess cargo and overload the engines if you have to! Just get out of here as fast as you can!"

Though the Larkinson airfleet was already a fair distance away from downtown Veoline, Ves and his subordinates did not tarry.

Their airfleet consisted of an eclectic collection of aerial biomechs and flight-capable biovessels of different shapes and classes.

Some were relatively modest bioshuttles that could only carry up to twenty passengers if they all squeezed tight against each other.

Other vessels were larger transports with enough internal volume to carry five or so biomechs in their cargo bays.

Yet because the entire airfleet was composed of a random collection of vehicles brought by refugees or salvaged from the immediate environment, their properties diverged enormously.

Speed was never the greatest priority of the airfleet, but now Ves was growing increasingly more frustrated at their lack of progress.

The transport he was on shook a bit after a hefty chunk of debris from a ruined space station descended from the sky in flaming fury and collided onto a nearby city district with the force of a tactical nuclear weapon!

The shockwaves unleashed by this destructive collision not only ruined the entire rural district, but also buffeted the airfleet with a powerful gust. Some biovessels even collided against each other!

"Goddammit!" Ves cursed as he slammed his armored fist against the surface of the central command table. "Abandon every vessel that is lagging behind!"

"Pardon, sir?!"

"Just do what I say! Evacuate every vehicle that is dragging down the pace of our flight. Don't fuss about the cargo we are leaving behind. Those materials are worth nothing compared to our lives and the continued existence of the rest of our airfleet! I bet that after this incident passes, the LRA won't be able to justify its blockade anymore, so we will definitely be rescued soon. However, all of that assumes we are able to survive this immediate disaster, so get to work!"

The airfleet had lost most of its meaning now that Uranus had upended the game on this planet. Ves was even willing to abandon all of the biomechs he managed to gather if that would help his airfleet move faster.

"What is our destination, sir?"

"I don't care! Just take us as far from this giant thing as you can! Don't stop flying until we have reached the antipode of the rogue juggernaut's coordinates!"

No place on this hellish planet was truly safe now that Uranus started shooting down space stations and space platforms from orbit, but that didn't mean it was pointless to flee.

As long as they remained within a direct line of fire to the tall humanoid's energy cannons, the airfleet would always be at risk of getting wiped out from existence at any time!

The safest place on this planet was the exact opposite side of the globe they were on. In fact, as long as they traveled far away enough for Uranus to be unable to maintain a line of sight to the airfleet, then the Larkinsons would already escape the immediate danger zone.

After Ves issued his emergency orders, the desperate clansmen did not delay too much. Many of them used to be Lifers who recently escaped other disasters, so they knew quite well how important it was to let go of everything that slowed them down.

The Larkinsons ruthlessly abandoned hundreds of different biovessels. They also dumped a lot of cargo from the vessels they deemed fast enough to keep. This not only lightened their mass and increased their speed, but also freed enough room to house the crew and passengers of the abandoned vessels.

Though this entire process had to take place in midair in order for the airfleet to keep running away, the Larkinsons exhibited plenty of competence this time. No disasters took place and no clansmen fell overboard during the chaotic transfer process.

"Sir! The juggernaut is flying!"

"What?!"

Ves turned back to a projection that showed a direct feed of Uranus in action. The jamming across the planet had subsided some time after the juggernaut emerged. This not only restored some communication networks, but also allowed most people on the planet to patch into the many feeds that broadcast the ongoing disaster.

Despite its immense size and mass, the biojuggernaut was no longer content to remain on land for some reason. After firing a lot of energy beams and supplementing its consumption by digging up large biomachines from the surroundings, the monstrous titan evidently decided that the planet no longer had anything to offer.

After activating a specific command, Uranus began to grow a massive bony flight system from its back!

Like a demented angel growing wings, the god-like bioconstruct showed that it maker integrated yet another ability to its immense frame.

"Is it...?"

Through a combination of internal antigrav modules and upwards thrust from its massive flight system, the biojuggernaut did something that many people thought was impossible for a construct of its size.

It slowly ascended into the air!

Though the amount of energy and thrust power required to lift a skyscraper-sized mech was mind-boggling, the Supreme Sage did not incorporate so much high technology and expensive resources into its growth for nothing.

Uranus flew higher and higher!

First, its oversized feet reached fifty meters above the ground.

Then, the biotitan reached 100 meters above the ground.

When it started to reach a kilometer into the air, its ascent slowly accelerated as the biojuggernaut's powerful flight system slowly gained power even as the force of gravity acting upon its half-kilometer long body started to grow a little less severe.

The beginning of the liftoff was always the hardest for any vessel that wished to escape the gravity well of a planet.

The fact that Uranus had already succeeded up until now showed that it was very viable for it to reach open space!

"Is it... escaping from this planet?"

"Don't tell me it has an FTL drive! Damn, I bet it has! Unlike an ordinary mech that needs phasewater in order to gain FTL capability, this biojuggernaut is so immense that it could easily fit a cruiser-grade FTL drive inside its stomach!"

"Hahahahaha! Behold, you fools! This is the power of science! No one can surpass the greatest invention that our state has ever created! Embrace its might and worship its perfection, for you are witnessing the ascension of our new god!"

What would happen if Uranus entered deep space and fled from this star system?

Nothing good, probably! A rogue god-like biotitan that was driven by a primal, violent consciousness had the potential to be an enormously powerful space marauder!

"We have to stop it before it can get away!"

"How?! Much of our military assets are gone. Even if reinforcements make it back in time, they stand no chance against this terror!"

Will the LRA be able to stop Uranus from getting away? No one knew for sure, but everyone began to fear the worst. As long as this rogue biojuggernaut escaped the star system, the chances of catching it and defeating it would surely go down!

Chapter 2956: The Sins of the Life Research Association

"UUUUURRRRAAAANNUUUUSSS!"

The Life Research Association suffered an unprecedentedly huge calamity today. A biocreation that the Lifers undoubtedly developed in secret had not only gone out of control, but also turned against its own creators in one of the most devastating manners possible!

This day could have only gone worse for the citizens of Prosperous Hill VI if Uranus sought to continue its spree of destruction.

Instead, after wiping tens of thousands biomechs on the surface and in orbit, after destroying a huge amount of surface and orbital infrastructure, after slaughtering millions of citizens with the excessive collateral damage it inflicted on its surrounding, it apparently had enough.

Whatever bestial consciousness was driving its titanic body seemed to figure out that sticking any longer on this planet would only put it in greater peril.

That, or it simply got bored with the current locale.

Since the moment it began to ascend in the air, many people guessed that it not only had flight capability, but also FTL capability!

A monster as humongous as Uranus might look like a biomech that was horribly scaled up, but that also caused its properties to resemble that of starships.

One of the benefits of its horrendously oversized frame was that it could actually hold an FTL drive!

At first thought, this was an absurd notion. Why would a bioconstruct as large as this be able to maintain independent operation and perform interstellar travel?

Yet the notion that mechs were not supposed to travel in space without a mothership was no longer an absolute notion. Ever since the MTA announced the new mech generation, the mech industry recently began to release mechs that were capable of performing FTL travel with the help of the newly-developed and popularized minidrives.

While it was true that something as advanced as phasewater and minidrives had yet to proliferate across the galactic rim, the 'mech' that was attempting to ascend into orbit did not need to rely on high technology when it was already the size of a mid-sized sub-capital starship!

If a ship as small as the Barracuda possessed the capability to transition into FTL travel, why shouldn't a juggernaut that outsized the corvette to a large degree not be able to do the same?

At this moment, every Lifer who was watching Uranus escaping the planet of its birth felt despair.

They knew that if the rogue biojuggernaut truly managed to get away, the reputation of their state and biotech industry would become completely tarnished!

In fact, their reputation had already been thrown into the toilet, but it could still be pulled out before it was too late. Yet if Uranus succeeded in proving that the LRA was too incompetent to prevent one of their out-of-control experiments from leaving when it wanted to, then the reputation of the entire state would truly be flushed!

When Ves and Dr. Perris watched the broadcast of the seemingly-invincible biotitan tearing through the military forces of the LRA with ease, they felt very mixed about the monster they had unleashed.

The biomech designer was wracked by guilt. Her eyes quivered and her emotions were moving all over the place. She felt she was greatly responsible for putting these devastating events into motion. She had so much blood on her hands that she could drown in it many times over!

As for Ves, this wasn't the first time he went through an experience like this. He had already rationalized away his guilt by now.

Sure, he may have inadvertently unleashed a mass-murdering bionightmare of epic proportions onto the galaxy because he was too greedy to give up on his pursuit of high-grade serum. Still, it wasn't his fault that the spiritual remnant of the Supreme Sage was too damn weak to succeed in taking over control of his own masterpiece!

The great researcher had been dabbling in a field of science that fell way beyond his extensive expertise. The man should have never engaged in this insane consciousness transfer procedure to begin with. All of the researchers in his state had never succeeded. Why did he think he could do any better when he was not even capable of grasping the basic principles of spiritual engineering?

As far as Ves was concerned, the Supreme Sage got what he deserved. He refused to surrender to his own mortality and violated every principle that was supposed to make his state great. Now, his own magnum opus had single-handedly ruined all of his life's work. Once the Lifers made the inevitable conclusion that Uranus stemmed from their great idol's hands, they would definitely suffer cognitive dissonance on a grand scale!

The Life Research Association might even come to an end due to this disaster!

"It has nothing to do with me, though." Ves excused himself. "If the Lifers couldn't resist playing with fire so many times, they have no one but themselves to blame if they get burned!"

As for him, he was just a bystander. Although a part of him appreciated the horrible majesty of a supermech that was able to match the might and capabilities of warships to an extent, even he didn't possess the courage to design a monster like Uranus!

"Look, the monster has already reached the clouds!"

The giant biojuggernaut that had made a mockery out of the LRA did not slow down in its ascent. Its massive bone-like wings that stretched out of its back continued to provide a humongous amount of thrust to its massive frame.

As the monstrous humanoid creation continued its ascent, it became increasingly clear that the LRA had nothing in their arsenal that could contend against its apocalyptic might.

Deploy an even greater number of biomechs? The LRA's military couldn't bear the losses! The armed forces already suffered heavy losses in the previous massacre without inflicting any meaningful damage.

Dispatch more expert mechs? They wouldn't even last more than a few seconds despite their resonance shields and high-quality armor systems!

It was irresponsible to sacrifice the lives of valuable mech pilots when the LRA was already in disarray. All of those biomechs and expert biomechs were sorely needed to reassert order on Prosperous Hill VI and beyond.

Regardless of whether the Life Research Association had a future, the soldiers still had a duty to defend the people. It would become a lot harder to protect the common folk if the military garrison in the star system lacked the numbers to keep the peace!

Though the decision made by the military was understandable, it was an implicit admission of defeat!

The strongest arm of the state was unable to clean up a rogue experiment. This was an astounding mark of shame to the LRA and the Lifers would definitely suffer from it for many years.

Yet compared to preserving the remaining lives of their soldiers and people, it was a lot more preferable for them to bear this cross!

As Uranus looked upwards, the enormous creature's disturbingly human-like face adopted a gleeful expression. It was as if the biojuggernaut looked forward to continuing its rampage across the galaxy!

Yet just as it was passing through the initial layer of clouds, a portal came into existence some ten kilometers away from the mass-murdering biocreation.

Uranus did not pay attention to it, and that turned out to be a grave error on its part.

A squad of twelve impressive-looking mechs emerged out of the portal. The blue-and-white mechs contrasted sharply with the biomechs that were prevalent throughout the state.

The markings on their armor made their identities clear.

"It's the Mech Trade Association!"

"The MTA is finally intervening!"

"Will the juggernaut defeat these mechs as well?"

Many people did not have a good understanding of the power of first-class multipurpose mechs. It was difficult to make a good comparison when the mechs fielded by the MTA rarely clashed directly against inferior forces. Most people and organizations knew better than to provoke the Big Two.

Obviously, the biojuggernaut did not understand the need for caution. The stupendous destruction it unleashed, the millions of people who died as a result from its actions and the complete lack of rational control it exhibited were more than enough reasons for the MTA to intervene at this time!

Yet had they sent enough mechs? As the twelve highly-advanced mechs surged forward at blazing speeds and began to surround the biojuggernaut from different directions, a lot of people feared the mechs were underestimating the threat.

The first-class mech models adopted by the MTA were a bit taller and larger than the second-class mechs that were prevalent in the private sector. Yet no matter what size advantage they held over other mechs, they were still dwarfed by the biojuggernaut!

How many seconds could they last in the face of the biomonster's enormous arm cannon? Would they be able to resist a punch? How could they possibly restrain a biomech that was the size of a starship?

The MTA mechs soon took action. The identical mechs opened some kind of gun ports on their chest and began to fire a salvo of destructive projectiles at their massive target!

"Stupid! Why are they spread out like that? The mechs could have concentrated their firepower. The mechs are too arrogant!"

Yet the doubters quickly shut up once they saw the explosive results. Explosions rippled on the surface of the monster's upper body from every direction. Huge sprouts of human-like red blood fell onto the ground as the initial attack broke through the biojuggernaut's resilient skin as if it was made of paper!

"UUUUURRRRAAAAAANNUUUUUUUSSS!"

The attack angered the gigantic monster! For the first time since it awoke, Uranus suffered severe damage! Though the explosive rounds did not blast apart its humongous torso into pieces, it nonetheless suffered considerable flesh injuries that it struggled to regenerate!

The biotitan's ominous red eyes shone as it beheld the mechs that were responsible for its suffering. It lifted its massive arm cannon and began to fire a powerful teal energy beam at the nearest target!

"No! Dodge! Don't get hit by it! Not even our expert mechs managed to survive!"

Yet the mech being targeted had no intention of avoiding the obvious attack. It simply hovered in place like an arrogant knight and allowed Uranus to hit it head-on with its signature energy attack!

Ves widened his eyes as he tried to observe the battle in more detail. The resolution and fidelity of projection was too bad for him to see how the MTA mech fared against this attack!

Fifteen seconds passed. Strangely enough, the biojuggernaut never diverted its aim in order to attack the other eleven mechs.

When the arm cannon finally ceased firing, it became clear why Uranus never let up. Its gigantic face scrunched up in confusion as it saw that its initial target did not even incur a single scorch mark on its frame!

It turned out that its blazing blue hexagonal-patterned energy shield managed to resist and divert the stupendously powerful energy beam!

"What?! How can a single mech resist so much damage with its energy shield alone?!"

"Is the juggernaut actually this weak or is the MTA too strong?"

Ves zoomed in on the projection and managed to spot faint glowing lines connecting the various mechs together.

It turned out that the mech that got struck did not entirely rely on its own power to resist the energy attack on its own. It had borrowed the strength of its companion mechs in order to present such an impressive image!

As Uranus tried to figure out why his attack failed, the MTA mechs leisurely made their next move.

They extended their arms and activated a setting that caused long and thick plasma blades to extend out of them. The plasma swords reached an impressive length that was twice the height of the mechs deployed in battle!

"Wait, why are they giving up their ranged advantage. Don't tell me they are going to fight the juggernaut up close. Can these MTA mechs even withstand getting punched?!"

It seemed that the Mech Trade Association was here to make a point today!

Chapter 2957: Size Doesn't Matter

"Who am I speaking to?" A dutiful female voice asked.

"My name is Ves Larkinson. I would like to report a crime."

"Please describe the nature of the incident in question."

"A squad of mechs is in the process of bullying a giant. The former is beating up the latter to such a great extent that the latter doesn't stand a chance!"

"Oh dear. How horrible. This certainly goes against common sense. Unfortunately, I am unable to process your report any further."

"What? Why not?"

"Because I work for the MTA!"

Though this conversation did not happen in reality, it might as well be considering how domineering the MTA acted at this time.

Twelve resplendent metallic mechs succeeded in doing what no LRA biomech managed to do before.

They were hurting the rogue biojuggernaut.

This was already quite impressive. After everyone witnessed Uranus withstand the collective bombardment of entire mech regiments worth of biomechs, they began to believe that only warships were powerful enough to put a dent on its massive frame!

Yet right now, a trivial amount of mechs whose sizes simply could not compare against that of the unleashed bionightmare were clearly making a mockery of their target!

Though it was not wise to make light of an opponent in a battle where anything could happen, the MTA mech pilots were so confident in their own strength that they did not even treat this battle seriously!

When their first-class multipurpose mechs deployed their expanded plasma swords, they looked like toys that projected an unrealistically large weapon.

If Ves attempted to design a mech that projected that much plasma at such a difficult length, then the power systems of the machine would probably collapse in seconds!

Yet these MTA mechs extended these massive high-heat blades with no concern for the strain they put on their frames!

The mechs moved into action. They danced and circled around Uranus like nimble flies. They not only exhibited a lot of speed, but also demonstrated their agility. While they looked like medium mechs, their mobility parameters vastly exceeded that of Ferocious Piranha or any other second-class light mech!

It was practically surreal to see mechs perform this impressive in a star sector like Majestic Teal. The people who live here had never personally witnessed a first-class mech in action. How could they know how far behind they were in comparison to one of the apex powers of the galaxy?

After today, no one would doubt the MTA's power anymore. Just twelve 'ordinary' MTA mechs possessed the courage to confront Uranus up close whereas the Lifer mechs never even made a serious attempt to do the same.

At first, the MTA mechs relied on their superior mobility to perform simple but effective hit-and-run attacks.

Each time they made an attack pass, they easily evaded the slow and clearly-telegraphed attacks of the biojuggernaut. As soon as the first-class mechs flew close enough, they slashed their plasma blades against their humongous fleshy target, burning lots of biomass and inflicting horrible burnscars that inflicted more stress on the monster's high-speed regeneration capabilities!

"UUUUAAAAAAGHHHH!"

Uranus didn't seem so tough now that it was absorbing the hurt instead of dishing it. The feral mind that was in control of its humongous body didn't possess much of a tolerance of pain. The more it got hurt, the sloppier it moved!

"If you disregard its size, the juggernaut is actually very clumsy!"

Each punch took at least ten times longer to pull off compared to that of a normal mech. Though its immense scale came paired with an even greater degree of strength, its agility and mobility hadn't caught up. It took so much time for Uranus to move around its limbs that the nimble MTA mechs easily danced around its reach like mosquitos.

As the mechs continued to perform their attack runs, their plasma blades were slowly adding more and more burnscars onto the large and vulnerable frame of the biojuggernaut.

It was as if the MTA mechs were torturing the biocreation for its many crimes!

After getting hit again and again, the monstrous creation slowly lost altitude as it had to divert energy away from its flight system in order to take care of other priorities. It desperately tried to speed up its kicks and punches, but there was only so much it could do to combat its own sluggishness.

In fact, at some point, Uranus did succeed in hitting one of the MTA mechs with its considerable might.

Yet this was by design. One of the twelve biomechs deliberately flew in front of the biojuggernaut's face and maintained a stationary position relative to the descending biomonster.

The MTA mech was just asking to get punched by maintaining this position, and Uranus readily obliged!

Frustrated at its continued inability to hit the small metal mechs, the biojuggernaut reared back its fist before launching it forward with so much might that the air around its arm seemingly whipped up a storm!

An arm that was bigger and most certainly a lot heavier than all of the MTA mechs put together rammed directly into one of them without missing!

A loud crunchy collision ensued as the MTA mech that got struck flung backwards by a hundred meters or so. Yet despite its inability to maintain position, the powerful first-class mech managed to withstand the powerful attack! Its energy shield was so strong that it only looked slightly stressed after resisting the direct blow.

In fact, Ves doubted that the first-class multipurpose mech would incur any significant damage if it deactivated its energy shield. He knew how hard it was to damage first-class armor and was confident that the MTA mech could have taken the hit directly.

The only troublesome part was that it was a lot more difficult to prevent the enormous force slamming into the frame from affecting the internals. Ves was sure the MTA had solutions for that as well, but he wasn't fully up to date with all of the modern innovations the Association stuffed in its mechs.

Regardless, Uranus failed to achieve its desired result. The giant looked both pained and confused. Its partially-charred form shook as the juggernaut began to feel an emotion that it never experienced before.

Uranus began to feel fear.

From the moment its urge to survive surpassed its violent impulses, the biojuggernaut completely lost its aura of invincibility!

Its immense power no longer seemed so intimidating now that the MTA had come to punish this rogue creation!

The MTA mechs stopped playing with their prey. After proving in multiple ways that the mechs fielded by one of the most powerful forces of humanity could easily deal with this bloodstained giant, they finally proceeded to do their actual jobs.

The impressive machines spread out again and surrounded the biojuggernaut in every direction. They retrieved a strange-looking grenade and threw it at their target at precise trajectories.

When the grenades flew close to Uranus, they activated, causing them to project a strong gravitic field that abruptly increased the gravity force acting on the biojuggernaut.

This was a devastating development for Uranus. Its immense size and density resulted in a total mass that was higher than the equivalent of a starship of the same length.

The fact that it managed to lift itself straight into the air under its own power was already a miracle, but that did not change the fact that it took an enormous amount of effort to even lift its feet off the ground.

Now that the local gravity around it turned several times stronger, the biojuggernaut lost altitude even faster. The clouds slipped further and further out of reach as Uranus desperately reached out its injured arms towards the open skies.

Its freedom lay beyond! As long as it was able to enter space and reach the nearest Lagrange point, it could have disappeared from the star system and made itself much harder to find.

Yet now that the Mech Trade Association decided to take action, the powerful organization did not leave any chance for the rogue biojuggernaut to escape.

Even if it possessed a means of entering FTL travel that was not restricted by the gravity well of Prosperous Hill VI, the MTA mechs most certainly had means to interrupt such an escape method.

As the pained and regretful-looking biojuggernaut approached the ground, the MTA mechs kept up with its descent but did not take any further action. Their mech pilots did not have any doubts in their ability to control the situation!

"How powerful..." Ves expressed his admiration at the superiority displayed by the MTA mechs. "My work still has a lot to go before it can approach this level of strength."

First-class mechs unquestionably towered over second-class mechs and not by a marginal degree either. The disparity between the best and second-best mechs was incredibly large, but that was logical considering the difference in cost was even more extreme!

Even though the Supreme Sage channeled decades worth of funding siphoned from the income earned by an entire second-rate state, Ves seriously doubted that its total cost exceeded that of one or two MTA mechs!

In essence, this matchup was unfair from the start by this measure alone.

"Size doesn't matter."

There was a reason why the entire mech industry and the MTA preferred to work with mechs with modest height.

When they became too large, they became too expensive and much less practical for use.

When they were too small, they were lacking too much strength because their reduced scale limited this advantage.

Their current size was just right. They packed plenty of power but remained relatively easy to mass produce and ship to various destinations.

Now, the Mech Trade Association clearly proved to everyone that their normal mechs were more than powerful enough to handle this incident!

BOOM!

From the moment the biojuggernaut landed on the ground, another earthquake set off in the immediate area.

It was fortunate that its previous rampage had already killed or scared away the majority of the survivors who lived in the vicinity.

The powerful gravitic grenades lost effect at this time. They deactivated and flew back to the mechs that initially threw them forward. Once the MTA machines stowed the valuable hardware away, they withdrew a special launcher that was mounted behind their backs and began to fire a salvo of sparking projectiles at Uranus.

"HUUGAAAAAAAGH!"

The biocreature roared in agony as the projectiles embedded in its massive frame began to release a powerful current that shocked and pained it in a way that quickly caused it to lose control over its own limbs!

BOOOM!

The ground shook as it fell to its knees.

BOOOM!

The earth quaked a third time in rapid succession as its upper body fell over, causing the once-frightening bionightmare to lie flat on the ruined ground!

A few intact tree structures flattened under its immense bulk, but no one cared about this triviality at this time.

"The giant has been felled!"

As the strange shock projectiles continued to paralyze the enormous biocreation, a single MTA mech dove in and planted its feet on top of the messy hair that covered the monster's gigantic head.

It withdrew a spiked lance from its back and plunged it straight into the terrible humanoid beast's head!

"WUUUUUUUGHHHHH!"

Even though Uranus continued to express its pain, fear and frustrations, the MTA mech that had landed on its head remained rock-solid. After punching the odd lance through the skin and skull of the rogue biocreation, its spiked tip began to affect the massive brain of the biotitan in mysterious ways.

The creature stopped screaming. It stopped resisting the shocks that prevented it from lifting itself up its feet. Its eyes grew dull as the red glow grew dim.

Silence reigned as Uranus lost consciousness.

"..."

"The MTA did it. The MTA mechs actually subdued the juggernaut."

Recent incidents in the Komodo Star Sector caused many citizens in the star cluster to question the readiness of the MTA. Was the powerful organization still strong enough to perform its duties? Or had its latest preoccupation with the Red Ocean Dwarf Galaxy spread its presence too thin?

After this day, no one held these doubts anymore. Even a handful of their first-class multipurpose mechs were capable of wiping out an entire second-class mech division with ease with the capabilities they just demonstrated in public!

It wasn't just their raw might that made the MTA mechs strong. This brief and one-sided engagement also reminded everyone that all of the high technology that the Association mastered over the centuries provided it with astounding capabilities!

Although it should have been easy for these first-class mechs to destroy Uranus, the Association was not content with that outcome. The MTA mechs were deliberately armed with high-tech tools that easily allowed them to restrain and subdue monstrous biotitan while leaving it reasonably intact.

Anyone could see that the MTA obviously wanted to capture this horrible invention whole. Inferior technology or not, there were many aspects about Uranus that made it worthy of study.

The Association's mech designers were probably eager to probe the depths of Uranus. They would do anything in order to figure out the biodisaster's dark and forbidden secrets!

Chapter 2958: Farcical War

The event that quickly became known as the Supreme Calamity had finally ended.

The degree of destruction inflicted on Prosperous Hill VI almost matched that of a war. The losses suffered by every stakeholder of the Life Research Association was disastrous.

The sheer loss of life and property not just set back the planet as a favorable trading destination, but also caused it to become tainted in the eyes of every foreigner looking to make a trade.

There was no way that the foreign trading partners that used to do business with the LRA would be eager to visit the planet and star system anytime soon after this incident!

The reputation of the LRA and its once-renowned biomechs had truly been flushed through the toilet.

The fact that the MTA bailed them out and prevented the monster that the Lifers had birthed from disappearing into space did not avail them much.

The MTA's intervention just proved that the LRA was just too weak to take care of its own mess!

A lot of condemnation and accusations circulated across the galactic net. Even if the officials of the LRA attempted to jam communications and put out their own spin on the calamitous incident, it was too difficult to shut up all of the people who were close enough to witness the biojuggernaut's rampage up close.

The mass destruction that Uranus inflicted on the planet and orbital infrastructure caused many of the devices that were responsible for blocking communications to disappear.

The few jammers that were left intact were unable to cover all of the holes that emerged. This allowed plenty of people to transmit their data to distant fleets.

In fact, even if the jamming network was still intact, there were still numerous organizations on the surface that were still capable of sending signals off-planet. The

only difference was that the Lifers could no longer control all of the people who wanted to get their word out for various reasons.

Some wanted to get the word out and inform the public.

Others tried to process their grief at the loss of their friends and family.

A few citizens even wanted to tear down their own state and ruin its future forever!

Now that the month-long tragedy on Prosperous Hill VI was finally over, the traumatized Lifers unleashed many of the emotions they held inside their hearts.

The newly-recruited Larkinsons in the airfleet were no different. They spontaneously erupted into tears or collapsed onto the surface as they tried to work out their heavy feelings.

"I don't want to stay in this state a second longer than is necessary." Someone muttered. "The Supreme Revolution is a giant farce. The conservatives, radicals and all of those other heartless researchers and politicians were just playing a game with our lives. They never cared about us since they began to fight among each other. We're just collateral damage to them. Their only goal from the beginning was to take control of that walking disaster!"

Whether these assertions were accurate or not, there was no doubt that a lot of Lifer that were lucky enough to survive the civil war and the emergence of Uranus developed a great degree of disillusionment towards their state and its rulers!

For the first time in centuries, many Lifers started to doubt their leaders. The biotech researchers who mostly remained in their ivory towers and rarely mixed up with the common citizens were completely absent throughout these difficult times.

No one offered them any sympathy.

No one made attempts to rescue the weak.

Too many citizens had to fend for themselves and escape the ravages of war without any preparation.

Yet even during the most chaotic moments of the Supreme Revolution, the majority of Lifers still maintained their faith in biotechnology.

Until now. Uranus was probably the greatest and most powerful product of biotechnology that they had ever witnessed in their lives. Yet this immensely powerful creation was not used to defend the state against foreign enemies or perform some other noble purpose.

Instead, the massive biojuggernaut that was clearly developed in secret in the LRA turned against its own side and made all of the worst fears of biomech designers come true!

The crisis of confidence that this singular event sparked caused the entire state and its people to question their existence.

The survivors of the calamity and those who witnessed from afar were both beginning to question many of the assumptions they once took for granted.

It was clear that the LRA was on course to undergo a revolution. The only difference was that the change would no longer be driven by the leaders of the conservatives and other political factions.

The people themselves sought to come up and implement their own answers. Though this inevitably meant that the most ardent reformers among them would unite into a brand-new faction, it would take many years or decades for the Life Research Association to recover from this disaster if it managed to survive all of the condemnation.

Of course, the foreigners who were unlucky enough to get embroiled in this series of disasters didn't care about all of that. The Larkinson Clan were utterly done with the state. It didn't matter whether the locals expressed an explosive increase in their willingness to leave their state.

None of the Larkinsons wanted to stay any minute longer in this state!

Ves most of all expressed his desire to leave. As the person who was definitely not responsible for unleashing a rogue biojuggernaut that killed millions of people and wrecked half the planet, he felt very concerned about getting caught up in follow-up investigations.

If the authorities happened to hold up the Larkinsons on the surface, there was a considerable chance that people would find out that Ves stole five whole vials of life-prolonging treatment serum from the pinnacle lab!

The fact that their airfleet occupied the warehouse complex that served a secret escape route for the same lab could not be hidden. Once someone who was aware of this connection looked everything up, Ves and his fellow Larkinsons would definitely enter hot water!

The only consolation was that this secret route should be very obscure. The Teak Order and the ultralifers may have learned of it somehow, but Ves seriously doubted that the main players of the civil war were aware of its existence.

If someone as powerful as Master Cline of the conservatives or Master Brixton of the combinants learned of another entrance in the pinnacle lab, they would have descended upon it with at least an entire mech battalion!

Since this never happened, it meant that the amount of people who could tie Ves and the Larkinsons to the Pinnacle Lab, Special Project 'U' and Special Project 'V' should not be a lot.

This gave Ves an ample window of opportunity to get away before those fellows acted on their suspicions. After all, it is still a bit far-fetched that the Larkinsons were able to find the secret entrance, enter the pinnacle lab, overcome the soldiers employed by both sides and overcome all of the high security that prevented outsiders from intruding into the core labs!

"Still, I can't take anything for granted." He murmured. "I need to get as far from this state as possible. In fact, I should lead the entire expeditionary fleet out of Majestic Teal just to be safe!"

There was still a possibility that the Lifers would dispatch forces in order to 'persuade' Ves and his Larkinsons to return to the LRA in order to cooperate with an investigation.

He had no stomach for that, so getting out was his highest priority. He was willing to abandon any further gain he could make by sticking around in order to safeguard his freedom.

If there was one lesson he learned from this experience, it was that the Lifers couldn't be trusted!

After the final disaster, the LRA's credibility was completely shot. No one took the Supreme Revolution seriously anymore. Even the soldiers who fought for the conservatives or the radicals felt that they were being played.

Naturally, the inexplicable blockade that the Lifers maintained for such a long time could no longer be enforced.

As soon as people on the surface heard that a few space-capable vehicles managed to ascend into orbit and fly into deep space without getting destroyed, the floodgates had opened.

"Fly! Fly away from this terrible planet! We're never coming back here again!"

Thousands of vehicles and biovehicles ascended into the skies at once. More were being prepped and loaded for space travel as well, so the exodus was only growing bigger over time.

No one cared about the monopoly of the Prosperous Hill Transportation Service anymore. In fact, a significant proportion of transports that were ascending into orbit were originally property of the much-maligned service!

Though the initial wave of leavers mostly consisted of foreigners, there were plenty of locals who also decided to leave their home planet. Their numbers added to the flood of shuttles and transports that tried to get away, giving everyone the illusion that the entire planet was being emptied!

A significant portion of the Larkinson airfleet blended in with the outbound traffic. Since vessels rated for intersystem space travel were in short supply, the Larkinsons had to leave a lot of vehicles behind.

This forced the remaining clansmen to cram into a smaller number of vessels. The Larkinsons also abandoned all of their biomechs. They were not suited for long-ranged travel and did not add any value to the Larkinson fleet. Their inclusion into the Larkinson Clan would only complicate its logistics further.

The only mechs that Ves was willing to bring back to his fleet were the original Larkinson mechs that he had initially brought to the surface. Any of them that had survived the campaign on the surface were still useful, particularly the Piranha Prime.

Ves stood inside his temporary cabin while looking at a projected view of Prosperous Hill VI growing smaller and smaller in size.

The thousands of vessels that had joined the Larkinsons in getting off this forsaken planet stuck fairly close to each other. Every crew and passenger aboard those vehicles was a survivor. That caused them to develop an invisible bond among them that caused them to maintain a united front.

The vessels all flew through loose-flying debris and dodged rapidly-orbiting shards that had been flung into space after Uranus destroyed much of the orbital infrastructure.

Only a couple of hundred military biomechs flew in the vicinity of the escaping vessels. They did not stop the vessels from leaving even if lots of them were clearly stolen property.

The Life Research Association could hardly afford to provoke another controversy. It was in the best interest of the state if all of the survivors who developed the most negative opinion about it left on their own accord.

"Well, it's been a long day, right Lucky?"

"Meeeeooooowww..." His exhausted cat did not even acknowledge his question. He lazily rolled over the desk and began to sleep with its belly exposed.

Ves retracted the helmet of his Unending Regalia and took a deep breath of recycled air. While he did not remove his combat armor from his body quite yet, he already felt a lot safer now that he was no longer on that blasted planet anymore.

A sly grin emerged on his face.

"I've definitely won big this time!"

He slowly retrieved all of the vials he stored in his armor and placed them on the desk. Their faint, glowing contents seemed to radiate a mysterious luster to him. Both his eyes and his spiritual senses grew excited as they focused on the high-grade serum that Ves had successfully smuggled out of the planet!

Ves examined them carefully now that he had the time to do so without worrying about getting his head chewed off by a giant biomonstrosity.

"Well, their quality is not quite up to my standards." He briefly frowned. "Still, their quantity more than makes up for it. I have enough serum to last me a couple of decades if I use the contents sparingly!"

He could do so much with all of the universal life-attributed energies locked inside the serum that he felt a rush of power running through his body!

Chapter 2959: Pinched Face

The Larkinsons who survived the calamities on Prosperous Hill VI received a warm welcome once they reached the heart of the Larkinson Clan.

Though the progress of their return had stalled a bit due to the dubious space worthiness of some of their biovessels, the entire Golden Skull Alliance moved forth in order to receive their clansmen, both old and new.

Ves had already recruited thousands of new clansmen while he was on the surface. Each of them had pledged an oath to join the Larkinson Clan, but they never really developed a good idea of what they were getting into while they were all stuck on the surface.

All of that changed now that they beheld the massive fleet that would become their home now. Though the former Lifers among them felt rather disturbed by the abundance of metal objects and lack of organic machines, they had already received plenty of forewarning about this situation.

Anyone who made the decision to leave their state had to grapple with the reality that biotechnology was not ubiquitous in the rest of human space. They had to do their best to adjust to the galactic standard and be able to stay cool even when surrounded by cold, hard metal.

Fortunately, there were a few sights in the expanded fleet that gave the Lifers some comfort.

The Larkinson Clan had not been idle while its fleet lingered in the Life Research Association. Even when its patriarch remained inaccessible, the various leaders who stayed behind continued to work on fulfilling the priorities they set before.

They not only continued to recruit a lot of mech pilots and biotech experts, but also managed to expand the fleet by acquiring a small number of quality biovessels.

It was easier than usual to acquire them during the civil war. The devastation that had taken place on planets like Prosperous Hill VI not only led to massive loss of life, but also ruined a lot of companies. So many of them went bankrupt that a considerable number of their bioships were put up for sale.

Though the difficult times had put a premium on the price of starships, it was not that difficult for the clan to outbid the locals who were all earning less due to the war.

General Verle did not go crazy, though. He only decided to acquire a total of five organic combat carriers and ten organic support ships. This was a relatively hefty flotilla to normal people, but trivially small to the Larkinson Clan.

Of course, these sub-capital ships were not enough to impress the Lifers.

The Golden Skull Alliance already possessed a handful of capital ships from the beginning. The Spirit of Bentheim, the Indigo Tremor, the Hemmington Cross and the Antonio Cross all served as the anchors to hundreds of sub-capital ships.

Yet compared to a month ago, the fleet welcomed two new void giants to the fold.

After trading away the valuable but risky Auralis that the Larkinsons had managed to capture from the Fridaymen, the clan received two second-hand but decently serviceable capital ships in return.

The Graveyard turned into the new flagship and headquarters of the military wing of the Larkinson Clan.

Since she came into operation, she not only housed the Military Bureau, the Hall of Heroes, the Mech Pilot Management Bureau and several other military institutions of the clan, but also entered the Larkinson fleet's battleline due to her prodigious defensive properties.

Of course, all of that mass on her hull caused her to become quite ponderous, but there was little that anyone could do about it. The lumbering defensive ship single-handedly dragged down the average sub-light travel speed of the entire expeditionary fleet!

The only consolation was that her lack of mobility only mattered in realspace conditions. As long as the fleet primarily engaged in FTL travel, then she did not have to rely on her barely adequate propulsion systems to traverse distances.

This meant that the fleet would not suffer any slowdowns as long as it hopped from star system to star system without bothering to approach any planets.

Ves cared a lot about this because he did not want his journey to the nearest beyonder gate to suffer any further annoying delays.

Of course, the thousands of Lifers that had joined the Larkinson Clan only spared a brief glance at the Graveyard. Though she looked impressive in her own way, there was no getting around to the fact that her exterior consisted of scrap! The Lifers who were most repellant of modern metallic aesthetics couldn't stand the sight of this practical but messy starship!

Instead, their eyes drew towards the Dragon's Den. Though the large capital ship was only half-organic in nature, she was clearly designed with Lifers in mind. Designed and built by a local shipbuilding company, the vessel once sailed the stars under the flag of the Life Research Association.

Strangely enough, the capital research and beast transportation vessel entered the second-hand market after her former owners got caught with performing illegal experiments that violated several taboos.

That seemed to happen a lot in the Life Research Association.

In any case, the Dragon's Den now became the property of the Larkinson Clan, and the former Lifers among the clansmen eagerly embraced the ship that resonated the most with them. Though her hull incorporated plenty of metal components, her exterior was largely made of flesh and bone.

This made the Dragon's Den rather easy to maintain outside the LRA as much of her most critical elements utilized conventional ship parts that could be procured in any modern second-rate state.

As for the organic components that were mostly visible on the surface of the bioresearch vessel, the Dragon's Den contained a modest biogrowth facility. Though the production capacity was not much, it nonetheless allowed the capital ship to grow additional biomechs, bioship parts and other assorted bioproducts.

This was quite useful to Ves! Though he did not intend to adopt biomechs on a wide scale, he was not willing to give up on them entirely after he discovered that organic components were exceptionally compatible with his design philosophy.

Besides, he also had some future projects in store where the capability to grow organic products was indispensable. He already started to grin when he thought about combining those ambitious experiments with the serum in his hands.

"Wow. Is that going to be our new home?"

"You betcha. I told you that the Larkinson Clan welcomes anyone. We're an open-minded bunch of people. We even make room for different faiths."

"I'll miss my home, but I wouldn't want to miss this opportunity. I'm about to travel to an entirely new galaxy!"

When Ves surveyed the overall sentiment among the survivors who were departing their home planet, he was glad to hear that the Lifers didn't express much regret for their decisions.

The ruined planet they had just left played a large role in that, but Ves also sensed genuine excitement at the prospect of traveling to an entirely new region of space.

Ves needed his clansmen to maintain their enthusiasm to travel and explore. He did not want to raise a bunch of lazy colonists who intended to stop and plant their flag at the first dirtball they came across that looked nice.

His experiences on the surface of Prosperous Hill VI only strengthened his determination to avoid getting shackled to fixed locations!

"Planets are bad. They can't move and enemies can easily pin you in place. Ships are good. Ships can move and can easily run away in order to avoid enemy pursuit."

While he understood the appeal of starting a new colony that could eventually grow into a prosperous state, the downsides were far too great to him. As a mech designer with trans-galactic aspirations, he felt it was beneath him to get too attached to any state or piece of territory!

As the survivors continued to admire the impressive fleet, the refugee vessels eventually split up and approached different ships.

Most of them converged towards the Dragon's Den. Among the refugees that Ves had managed to pick up on the surface, a considerable proportion of them consisted of valued talents. These doctors, geneticists, implant surgeons, beast designers and even low-ranking biomech designers were about to join their counterparts which the clan had already recruited prior to the outbreak of the Supreme Revolution.

Even though the Larkinson Clan had yet to meet its ambitious recruitment goals, Ves did not worry about lacking suitable biotech experts anymore!

Only some vessels proceeded further ahead. A handful of transports slowly approached the Spirit of Bentheim and landed in one of her hangar bays.

When Ves stepped out with his bodyguard, he finally felt he had returned home. The air of his own ship along with the familiar glows of the LMC mechs stored nearby caused him to relax for the first time in a very long time.

He comfortably walked forward, luxuriating in the feeling of wearing more normal clothes. Back when he was still stuck on the surface, he did not dare to shed his Unending Regalia for fear of losing his life due to a moment of incaution.

He even slept in his armor!

Though he had designed his combat armor for the possibility of long-term use, it was not comfortable by any means. Humans weren't adapted to wearing the same bulky suit of armor for weeks and months on end. Now that he had returned a place he considered to be a lot more secure, he was finally able to regain a sense of normalcy.

"Ves." A female voice uttered.

His wife awaited his return. She had dressed up a bit this time. She wore a frilly purple dress with a long shawl and other accessories that accentuated her femininity.

As soon as Ves came close, they hugged and kissed each other with no regard to what kind of impression they made to other clansmen.

A light floral scent wafted in his nose as he luxuriated in the warmth that he had missed nearly every day. Though his relationship with Gloriana wasn't always smooth, they were still bonded by love.

"Never do that again." She growled even as she tenderly stroked his smooth-shaven cheek. "Do you know how much I have suffered while you were gone? Each day, I had to face the prospect of hearing about your demise. Do you know how many people got killed in Veoline and the surrounding regions? Every time, I feared that you would be one of them. Don't put me in this position again!"

Gloriana even pinched his smooth and hairless cheek to express her dissatisfaction.

"Honey! Don't do that!" Ves removed her soft and small fingers from his aching face. "I made it back. Shouldn't you feel happy about that? Let's leave aside the nitty gritty details for later. For now, I just want to enjoy your company and take a long break."

While husband and wife reacquainted themselves with each other, their pets also reunited.

"Miaow?"

Clixie, who was wearing a cute pink bow above her head, looked upwards with a curious expression.

Lucky wasn't moving under his own power this time. Instead, Ves supplied his pet with a small lifter platform which the lazy cat used as his portable bed.

"Meeeeooooowwww..."

Clixie jumped on top of the platform and began to lick Lucky's hard face. None of it helped the gem cat recover faster, though. Only time could restore his energy!

Many Larkinsons returned to the expeditionary fleet. A small number of Glory Seekers and Crossers also returned to their respective berths.

The Infinity Guards, who hadn't been able to play much of a role during this crisis, were still under contract, so they performed their protective duties as if nothing special had happened.

"Your orders, sir?"

"You know the plan. Let's get out of here!"

After abandoning the biovessels that the Larkinsons had 'borrowed' from the surface, the Larkinson fleet flew straight to the nearest Langrange point and transitioned out of the star system pronto.

Even though several government authorities wanted the Larkinson Clan to stay in order to cooperate with some investigations and inquiries, there was no way that Ves would agree to that!

"This marks the end of our visit to the Life Research Association. What happens next in this stupid state is none of our business. Let's leave this place behind as soon as possible before something else blows up in our faces!"

Chapter 2960: Reunited

The crisis that the Larkinson Clan got caught up in caused a lot of work to be delayed.

As the head and lead designers of the Living Mech Corporation, Ves and Gloriana held extremely important responsibilities that could not be replaced by anyone else.

Every hour of their time was worth a lot of money. It was quite wasteful for them to spend time on activities other than designing fantastic new mechs.

Yet on the first day after the survivors of the civil war returned to the expeditionary fleet, the married couple completely shoved aside their responsibilities in order to satisfy their emotional needs.

Mech designers were humans as well. Ves did not feel like getting back to work right after surviving another harrowing crisis.

While Gloriana did not endure any threats to her life this time, she suffered just as badly as him due to her persistent fears.

She had become so clingy after he returned that Ves even felt that she was the one who needed healing instead of him! She was so emotional that she almost broke out in tears when she described what she had been going through while she helplessly waited for his return.

"You are a meanie, Ves." Gloriana pouted as she softly pounded her fist against his chest. "Next time, don't do these kinds of visits yourself. These stupid states have no right to demand your presence. If anything, they should be the ones to pay a visit to us in order to exchange greetings! If the local authorities insist on meeting someone important, then just send one of your lackeys."

Ves sighed as he continued to embrace her while they were sitting on a comfortable couch in their stateroom. "We are still lacking a suitable diplomat who can represent our clan to foreign entities. It's not easy to find someone I can trust to represent us in the best possible light."

"Why do you keep complaining about this? There ought to be plenty of diplomats who would be happy to work for us in this capacity."

"I don't want a regular smooth talker." He shook his head. "I need someone who possesses enough business acumen and industry knowledge to make deals on behalf of our mech company. I also need someone who understands our military capabilities in order to adopt the appropriate stance towards different powers. Finally, I need someone who can do more than obey instructions. We need to make a lot of new friends in order to survive in a place as chaotic as the Red Ocean."

Diplomats of this caliber were in short supply. Most of them were already attached to other states and organizations due to the nature of their profession.

Still, Ves was willing to wait to hire a good diplomat. He could always lower his standards if he failed to find anyone by the time his fleet reached the beyonder gate.

The two mech designers continued to chat a bit. They did not always talk about clan-related matters. Both of them were already content with enjoying each other's company.

"Miaow."

Naturally, their cats also familiarized themselves with each other again. Clixie looked curiously at the infirm gem cat who was resting on a soft red pillow. She didn't understand why Lucky was sick. She nuzzled his neck and licked his face a few times, yet barely managed to get a response in return.

"Meeeeooooowww..."

Clixie turned her head and called out into the air.

"Miaow!"

Nyaaaa?

The Golden Cat half-materialized her glowing body into existence.

"Miaow miaow miaow."

Nyaaaaa.

When Goldie floated over to Lucky, she cautiously licked the closest thing to a father to her. Different from Clixie, her licks actually produced a small but notable effect.

"Meow...?"

"Miaow!"

Nyaaaaa!

Though the effect wasn't very strong, Goldie succeeded in alleviating Lucky's exhaustion, if only a bit! As she continued to lick Lucky's face, a tiny fraction of spiritual energy transferred over to the gem cat's spirit.

It was too bad that Goldie couldn't continue to supplement Lucky's shortage. Their spiritual energy compositions differed substantially from each other, so Lucky couldn't absorb too much foreign energy before compatibility problems emerged. The only reason why he was able to absorb some of Goldie's energy at all was because of their 'familial' relations.

Still, when Ves observed this brief interaction, he became quite surprised. He didn't know this was possible.

"For a man who just survived a civil war and the release of a berserk biojuggernaut, you don't seem to have suffered as much as I thought." Gloriana remarked.

"Huh? What are you talking about?" Ves innocently responded.

"You can't fool me, Ves. I know you quite well. While you are undoubtedly relieved to return to the fleet, you are way too upbeat compared to the others who had come back from a nightmare. Did you make any gains while you were on the surface?"

Ves couldn't completely hide his glee at the gains he managed to secure from the pinnacle lab. Coming back with the research files along with five finished vials of high-grade serum was such a great accomplishment that he couldn't completely contain his satisfaction!

He offered her a disarming smile. "I'm just happy that we managed to solve our acute manpower problems. We not only gained a large batch of mech pilots, but also solved our shortage of doctors and other biotech specialists. The Dragon's Den that we have recently put into operation will become very useful for my future plans. I'll be sure to make good use of the research vessel's large habitat areas over the coming years and decades."

"Are you planning to raise some bestial proto-gods?"

He coughed. "It's difficult to obtain good design spirits that can offer unique benefits to my mechs. After I discovered that exobeasts and designer beasts have the potential to expand my collection of design spirits, I think it's worthwhile for us to dedicate an entire capital ship to the growth and breeding of mutated beasts. As long as I can obtain more creatures like Arnold, I can empower my future mech designs with a greater variety of abilities!"

"That sounds great, but are you sure it will work? The Dragon's Den is a significant burden to our clan at the moment. She's not only fragile and lacking in defenses, but also requires us to divert more attention, funding and resources to biotech research. This is not an area that our clan is good at, Ves. We don't have to do everything ourselves. If you really want to obtain more mutated beasts, then why not shop around and leave all of the hard work to the professionals?"

How could Ves explain that he intended to leverage his high-grade serum to try and create powerful next mutated beasts who could also serve as his next generation of design spirits?

Though he thought about revealing some of the truth of what he had gained from Prosperous Hill VI, he eventually felt it was best to keep quiet.

She did not need to know everything. This was his business alone and she didn't possess the capabilities or expertise to assist him in this aspect. Her cousin Ranya was able to offer a lot more assistance in this aspect, so he deliberately chose to fill her in on some of his core secrets.

It was not that he distrusted Gloriana. As his wife, she had proven her loyalty to him on many occasions. They had already collaborated on many different endeavors.

He just felt it was a good habit to avoid spreading his secrets too much. He could already foresee that he would engage in even more secret projects as he became more adept in spiritual engineering.

Just like the Supreme Sage, there were some projects that Ves didn't mind cooperating with lots of other people, but there were certain activities that he needed to keep as isolated as possible in order to avoid unpleasant repercussions.

This meant adopting a more structural approach to divulging information. Those who weren't directly involved in his secret projects didn't need to know anything about what he was doing behind closed doors.

Fortunately, Gloriana did not press him much on this topic. This was a day of relaxation for them both and the last thing they wanted to do was to start another acrimonious argument.

"Where do you intend to take our fleet next?" She idly asked as she raked her hand over his black hair. "From what I've heard, we're heading to the border of the Winged Serenade Star Sector. Do you intend to pay a visit to one of the highly-developed star systems over there?"

The Winged Serenade Star Sector was the center of the Yeina Star Cluster and essentially functioned as its capital. A lot of fancy headquarters were based over there. Not only that, the development level was also the highest among the surrounding star sectors, so any visiting fleet could pick up a lot of high-quality ships, mechs and trained professionals as long as the money flowed.

Yet Ves shook his head.

"I don't plan to stop for an extended time over there. I don't want to get bogged down by too many pit stops. Our primary objective is to reach the beyonder gate that is situated in the Antilla Star Cluster. We have to travel through many star sectors and we can't afford to treat this trip like a pleasure cruise."

"Awww. It's possible that we will be leaving this region of space forever, you know. It's highly questionable if we'll ever return. We should at least make some new memories along the way. Of course, we'll only make landfall and visit planets that don't regulate how much mechs we can bring to the surface. I don't think it's a good idea for us to ever step foot on a restricted planet ever again."

He chuckled. "I think so as well, but as much as I would enjoy playing tourist, we have more important priorities. The Red Ocean is constantly evolving. I'm not satisfied with staying in this boring corner of the Milky Way anymore. It's a backwater, Gloriana. Just because some places of this rural part of the galaxy are a little more interesting than other places doesn't change the fact that all of it is backwards compared to the rest of human space!"

"Hmmm. Maybe you're right."

Winged Serenade was only impressive by local standards. There were many more star sectors in the galactic heartland that were at least ten times more developed.

"We won't stop recruiting or picking up goods along the way." He clarified to her.

"However, our fleet will always keep moving. If I have my way, we'll just pass through the rest of the Yeina Star Cluster and cut right through the Bardo Star Cluster until we reach the Fermi Star Cluster. We'll only stop for an extended amount of time once we get close to the Smiling Samuel Star Sector."

"Smiling Samuel again. What is it with you and this strange star sector, Ves? Why do you insist on visiting a bunch of xenophobic dwarves?"

"I have... business over there. It's difficult to explain. I hope it won't take too much time for me to complete my task."

Ves wasn't able to explain why he insisted on visiting the Vulcan Empire to everyone, so he simply brushed aside this matter. As the patriarch, he had the right to make decisions. It didn't matter if no one understood his intentions.

Actually getting in and retrieving the prize that he had buried over there was easier said than done, though. He had yet to hear back from Master Willix about a way to enter Smiling Samuel without getting a horde of angry dwarves on his back.

"By the way, Ves, my dynasty back home isn't doing too well these days. The Komodo War is putting more pressure on the Hegemony. The Glory Seekers have already welcomed a couple of batches of Hexers, and more are on their way. Don't be surprised if more Hexers rendez-vous with our fleet in the coming weeks."

"Oh. Okay. Just take into account that our expeditionary fleet won't slow down for anyone, so this window of opportunity won't last forever."