

## Mech 4601

### Chapter 4601 Exploiting Desires

"Do you know how I managed to put both a hostile pioneering fleet and a dangerous alien battleship on a collision course?" Ves asked with a smile.

The daughter that he carefully embraced with his armored hands furrowed her brows in thoughts.

This was a rather advanced question as Aurelia did not have access to all of the information she needed to explain the full story.

Nonetheless, she was clever enough to guess at his methods.

"The alien warship's priority is to remain hidden." She remarked. "The best way to draw her out is to attack her, but that is liable to scare her into running away."

"Correct, my dear. The ship that we have codenamed the Tower of Babel is obviously not interested in fighting another battle after all she had gone through. Even if the Cenatus Prospecting fleet is relatively weak, it is still not wise for the aliens to stay any longer in a star system that is within the domain of human civilization. How have we been able to stop that from happening?"

"By... giving the aliens a reason to stay and fight." His daughter guessed.

"You planted something in the star system that will make sure of that, am I right?"

"You are right, but anyone can come up with such a scheme. The important part is to prepare the right bait. You need to present something that is attractive enough to lure the Tower of Babel into abandoning her efforts to hide from prying eyes but also construct a reasonable story around it to prevent our targets from developing too many doubts. Can you guess at what I have done to meet both of these criteria?"

"Uh..."

"Can you tell me what we have used to play the Cenatus Prospecting fleet like a puppet on a string?"

"..."

Ves smiled and bent his head to plant a kiss on top of his daughter's head.

"It's fine if you can't figure it out yet. I didn't come up with this plan on my own. It took the combined efforts of myself, Minister Shederin, Director Calabast, General Verle, Marshal Ariadne and Master Benedict to come up with all of the necessary steps."

He had come a long way since the start of his career. The addition of all of those talented leaders allowed him to avoid many potential disasters while grasping a lot more growth opportunities.

He would have never been able to make it this far if he was still relying on himself. He wanted to make sure to drill this lesson into Aurelia's head. It was especially important for a designer baby that excelled in social skills to build an expansive network of subordinates and allies!

"Together, we managed to formulate a low-risk but also high-impact plan." He explained. "Do you know what those words stand for? It means that our plan will benefit us a lot if it succeeds but cost us nothing if it fails. This is the benefit of surrounding yourself with a lot of smart, competent and most importantly trustworthy people. Of course, it is hard to enact a clever scheme without sufficient strength and resources."

His daughter nodded as she became more awed by her amazing father.

"What did you do, exactly?"

"That's not the question you should ask, Aurelia. If you want to understand our plan, you should first figure out the conditions of our targets. Let's begin with Otrus Magrin's fleet since a human pioneering group is much easier to understand. You should have done your homework on Cenatus Prospecting,

so I expect you already have a basic understanding of its history and prominent figures. What does Mr. Otrus Magrin want the most?"

"He wants... to become more powerful than anyone else." Aurelia said as she drew from her memories.

"What does Saint Neville Magrin want?"

"That is an easy question. The ace pilot wants to make his own papa happy!"

"That's right!" Ves grinned. "Normally, there is nothing with a child trying to please his father, but in this case our plan takes advantage of this. Tell me, Aurelia. What is Otrus Magrin's greatest reliance?"

"His son, naturally." She said in a slightly cultured accent that resembled that of her mother. "Saint Neville Magrin has become his greatest enabler. Without at least one loyal ace pilot at his disposal, the elder Magrin will not be able to become more powerful, especially when he is in the Red Ocean."

"Mhmm. By that logic, this means that anything that can make Saint Neville Magrin stronger and help him get closer to advancing to god pilot is beneficial to Cenatus Prospecting. Now how do you think we have exploited this circumstance?"

Aurelia's eyes lit up as she finally understood the essence of the plan!

"You offered them a way to help their ace pilot become stronger! Uncle Lufa told me that he can help many mech pilots get better!"

That surprised Ves a bit. "You talk with Lufa?"

"Uh huh." The dark-haired girl nodded. "I try to talk with all of our design spirits, papa! They're so fun and interesting, but not all of them want to talk to me. Grandma sometimes visits me and pats my head. Helena is a funny aunt while Lufa is a nice uncle. He has taught Mana a lot on how she can use her powers in different ways."

"That is... interesting."

He felt a little disconcerted that his design spirits talked to Aurelia without him being present. He didn't exactly know what they were talking about and what their agendas might be. Still, as long as they didn't hold any malicious thoughts, he felt it was fine for his daughter to forge a good relationship with the design spirits.

Ves shifted the topic back to the matter at hand. He gestured at the live feeds that showed what was happening in the Ramage Repulsor System.

"In any case, we decided to take a risk and expose a glimpse of what Lufa was capable of in order to lure the Cenatus Prospecting fleet deeper into peril. The key here is to generate enough interest from the Magrins to proceed forward, but not go too far for fear of making the situation look too good to be true. Old dogs like Otrus Magrin are especially sensitive towards traps. You can't really beat that, to be honest."

"Then how did you manage to overcome it anyway, papa?"

"That is one of the more brilliant parts about my plan." Ves grinned. "Calabast and Shederin have been especially helpful in figuring this out. You see, the best way to override Otrin Magrin's considerable caution is to distract him with the hope of a powerful gain. Giving his son and the expert pilots under his command an opportunity to advance faster is enough of an incentive. Lufa didn't even need to expose his transcendence glow for long. Just teasing the Magrins for a few seconds is enough to drive them crazy!"

"Why so short?"

"There are two reasons, honey. First, the longer Lufa showed up in Saint Neville's range, the greater the risk that the latter would figure out the truth. Don't underestimate the intuition of ace pilots. They are highly sensitive towards threats. The only way that Lufa hasn't directly triggered Neville's

danger sense was to keep Lufa's role as benign as possible. I instructed him to be sincere about wanting to help the mech pilots of Cenatus Prospecting break through their limits."

Aurelia looked confused. "And that works?"

Ves grinned. "It works as long as there is enough separation. Lufa doesn't know the full plan and I deliberately told him to keep his curiosity in check. This way, we can ensure that Lufa comes across as a benign influence to the likes of Saint Neville Magrin."

This was probably the most difficult part about the plan. Ves had to depend heavily on his theories and understanding of the intuition of high-ranking mech pilots to configure an action plan that could successfully deceive their danger sense!

His daughter looked impressed. She raised her little hands and clapped.

"Wow. You are so clever, papa!"

"I surely am." Ves grinned even though a part of him suspected that his manipulative little girl was putting on a show. "Anyway, the point I am trying to make here is that you can fool the most experienced vultures and the strongest ace pilots as long as you figure out their desires and exploit them to your advantage. Greed is a powerful motivator and it can often make people set aside their doubts."

Aurelia's eyes glittered like stars. "Mech pilots all want to become stronger. None of them want to remain weak."

"That is right. There is nothing that attracts a mech pilot more than an opportunity to become stronger. Even though Saint Neville Magrin is already a lot more powerful than almost anyone else, even he has flaws where Lufa can help. His incredibly flawed upbringing under an awful father like Otrus Magrin

has probably left a lot of hidden dangers in his psyche. It is already impressive that he managed to advance to ace pilot in the first place."

"Then what about the aliens, papa?" She asked. "What did you use to lure them out of the sun? Is it Lufa again?"

Ves shook his head. "We thought about that, but we felt it was unlikely to work. Can you figure out the reason?"

His daughter frowned but couldn't come up with an answer.

"I do not know, papa."

He sighed. "That's okay, but you need to do better next time. When you grow older and assume more responsibilities, you cannot afford to miss important details that can affect the outcomes of your decisions, even when they are difficult to spot. You can gather experts and specialists by your side that can help you see more, but it is best to get good at this stuff yourself, do you understand?"

Aurelia nodded. "I will not disappoint you, papa. I will do better, I promise!"

That was Gloriana's influence again no doubt. While Ves certainly wanted her to do better, she was still a young girl.

"Hey, don't be too bothered by what I said. You still have plenty of time to grow and learn. Anyway, the answer that I wanted you to find is species."

"Species?"

"Yes. It might not be obvious to you anymore, but Lufa is a human design spirit."

"He is an angel!"

Ves shrugged. "Close enough. What I am trying to say is that if Lufa shows up in front of a bunch of aliens, the latter will probably react as if they are under

attack by humanity, which means that their chances of avoiding our trap is far greater than normal. That is exactly what I don't want to see. Do you know how I have managed to gather the interest of the aliens?"

"You used a different design spirit."

"Which one?"

Aurelia paused for a moment. "It has to be a native one, so either the Titania or the Phase King. It has to be the latter!"

"Why the latter?" Ves grinned down at his girl.

"Because the native aliens envy the phase whales! Everyone wants to become as powerful as these whales. If the Phase King shows up and disguises himself as a member of this powerful race, the aliens of that warship will go mad, because phase whales can help them grow stronger!"

"That's true more or less. You've learned, Aurelia. The Phase King can play the same role for aliens as Lufa does for humans. This shows how life that originates from different galaxies value different roads to power. The indigenous aliens are obsessed with becoming gods by stuffing their bodies full of phasewater, and no one is better at doing so than the phase whale race."

"What about you, papa?"

"Huh?"

"The Phase King told me you have phasewater in your body as well." His girl stated as her innocent eyes looked up at him. "Will papa turn himself into a phase whale?"

"What? No! How did you get that idea?!"

"Hihihi!" Aurelia burst into giggles. "Just kidding!"

## Chapter 4602 Blinding Greed

Ves was right about one thing.

The Magrins had become completely hooked.

After getting a taste of the transcendence glow from a mysterious 'alien' wreck, the Cenatus Prospecting fleet remained close to the mysterious site.

A few starships spread out in order to find whether other valuable alien relics were floating around.

More and more scientists and engineers had been transferred to the mysterious piece of ship debris. Each of them had been tasked with increasing their understanding of this separated ship section and figuring out how to get the latest alien artifact to reproduce the same effect that caused Saint Neville Magrin to spike his resonance strength.

The science teams tried to be as careful as possible. They did not dare to engage in any destructive investigation methods for fear of breaking the circumstances needed to make the alien artifact activate its special power again.

Though a number of scientists wanted to move the alien wreckage further away from its current orbit to the brown dwarf star, others objected to this proposal for fear of breaking anything important.

This caused the important wreck to remain in its current place, which meant that Otrus Magrin became extremely reluctant to pull back his fleet to a safer and more comfortable distance from the brown dwarf star.

As time passed by, Saint Neville Magrin began to look back on what he had just experienced. The more he revisited that fleeting moment of discovery and exposure, the more he began to think about the more dubious aspects of this situation.



He was not a suspicious person by nature, but it was the job of ace pilots to watch out for possible threats.

Saint Neville became increasingly more concerned as he reviewed his thoughts inside the cockpit of his active ace mech.

"The source of this second event is not the alien beast goddess that I have communicated with earlier." He stated with a frown. "He not only feels like a man to me, but he is also a lot less alien as well. That doesn't seem to match with the alien artifact. What is going on? Why is a single missing and damaged alien ship involved with two different powerful gods, one of which may be human?"

The possibility that the second god may be human could explain why Neville felt so stimulated at the time. He wondered whether the native aliens of the Red Ocean had managed to capture a human deity, and that the ship that produced this debris was involved in this extremely important affair.

However, he lacked the sense that hinted to him that he had stumbled upon a major development that was critical to humanity.

This told him that he may have been led astray.

The problem was that he didn't have proof that supported or rejected this conclusion. Saint Neville had far too little to go on and that was concerning in itself.

"Father?" Neville spoke over the private communication channel. "Have you ever thought that we are being plotted against?"

Otrus Magrin was quick to reply. "I did. It was the first thing I thought. I won't deny that it is possible, but so what? The two pieces of alien ship wreckage are completely authentic as far as my men can determine. The alien artifacts are priceless treasures. I have never heard or obtained anything that could do

anything comparable. Even if we get nothing else, we can most likely earn a fortune from selling them to the right buyers!"

That was one of his strengths. He knew how to reach a large crowd of ill-informed buyers who had too much money on their hands but not enough sense to know they were being scammed.

Saint Neville was okay with this. His father desperately needed the money and the buyers always thought they got what they wanted. Mostly.

However, Neville's concerns extended beyond profit. The situation looked more and more fishy in his opinion and he wanted to know if his father recognized the same dangers.

"I have been thinking about what the Golden Skull Alliance may have possibly been doing in this star system." He said. "The Larkinson Clan is well known for selling mechs that can influence people's moods and emotions. I think we have even seen some of them at a distance in the past, but I have never examined one in person. I've read the descriptions, though, and they seem to match."

"What are you suggesting, son?"

"We may be getting fooled by their glows. Maybe that is why the precious two contact events only lasted a short time. We didn't receive enough time to properly study their effects on people. If this is the case, then I suggest we pull back most of our fleet and prepare to evacuate this star system."

Saint Neville unknowingly strayed quite close to the truth! Just because he was known to be an unflinching follower and supporter of his father didn't mean he was stupid!

Mech pilots who weren't clever or observant enough rarely made it as far as Neville.

"Neville." Otrus Magrin spoke. "You may be right, but you may also be wrong. Do you truly wish to give up on this small but promising chance to grasp greater strength because of your unfounded assertions?"

"True strength can't be gained through shortcuts." Neville reflexively said.

"That is not true. There are always opportunities that can help people do the unlikely and succeed. What is important is that they take the initiative to seek out these chances. Take god pilots for example. Who among them has lived a normal life? If you read their biographies, you will always be able to detect instances where they could have obtained an enormous benefit that has helped them bridge the gap between senior ace pilot and god pilot. All other Saints have fallen, but only this small minority managed to succeed. This tells me that ordinary ace pilots aren't able to advance on their own. They need help, and we may be on the cusp of obtaining it for yourself. I will not turn away from what may be the only possibility for you to make up for this gap! Carpe diem!"

Carpe diem might as well be the official motto of the Magrins.

Neville would be lying if he said he wasn't tempted. While his concerns still remained valid in his opinion, the thought of missing out on a chance that could help him survive the dreaded Mech Body Merger Process was too painful for him to accept!

Becoming his god pilot might not be his ultimate goal, but it would definitely help him fulfill it! Someone as strong-willed as a Saint was more than willing to brave a few risks if that was what it took to complete his most important mission.

He started to breathe heavier as he used the Unrelenting's sensors to look closer towards the alien ship wreckage that he was guarding.

Did it truly hold the priceless chance that his father referred to? Was the alien artifact locked inside the debris truly capable of helping him grow stronger?

His intuition didn't tell him no, so that was a reassuring sign. As Neville concentrated deeper, he felt that his father might be right after all. This ship wreckage might truly be able to facilitate his growth!

He and his father's men just had to figure out the right way to activate the earlier effect.

Whether they needed to plug a new power source to an alien mechanism or tow the wreckage away from the brown dwarf star, Neville didn't know. All he knew was that he wasn't willing to give up so easily!

"Besides." His father spoke up again. "Have you ever heard of a glow that can make mech pilots advance without any effort? Something like that is too ridiculous to ever contemplate. No human technology can possibly produce such a miracle. It is too absurd to even consider. If the Larkinsons have mastered such an amazing glow, then they would have been able to field ten times as many expert pilots and several ace pilots by now. There is no need for the Larkinsons to go out and explore this risky border region."

Saint Neville's concerns faded away. "I suppose you are right as always, father."

"That is why I am in charge and you are not. There is a place for caution, but I haven't managed to build my way up to this point by being timid. Remain on guard but try to figure out how you can get the alien artifact to activate its power again."

"Will do, father."

That ended this particular inquiry. Though Saint Neville still felt bothered to an extent, he obediently abided by the instructions of his father and busied himself with other matters.

Time passed by without much change. The scientists still hadn't made any progress as Neville continued to keep an eye on the empty star system.

The greatest threat he was taking into account was the Golden Skull Alliance, but even then the danger wasn't too great.

Even if the enemy fleet returned to the Ramage Repulsor System again, it wouldn't have been able to launch any attacks because they would have appeared far away from the Cenatus Prospecting fleet's current position!

As the Unrelenting went on another circuit around the fleet to make sure that there were no hidden threats sneaking up on the ships under the ace pilot's protection, his intuition suddenly began to sense something amiss.

"Neville!" Otrus Magrin spoke in an excited tone. "I don't know what our scientists have done, but they have briefly managed to activate the alien artifact once again!"

"They did?! What happened?!"

If the Unrelenting hadn't gone on patrol, Saint Neville would have been able to remain close enough to the second alien ship wreckage to sense what had happened.

"The effect is different from before." Otrus Magrin became a bit less enthused.

"None of our people described that they felt closer to a breakthrough. Most of the scientists have told me that they felt a distinctly alien mind, while a few others also feels that this has something to do with phasewater."

"That... does not make any sense." Neville grew confused.

It was at this time that another development took place.

The ace mech stopped accelerating as the ace pilot frowned as he began to sense something dangerous approaching from afar.

He had no idea what had triggered his danger sense, but it was growing stronger by the second.

He hit an emergency button on his cockpit. This activated an emergency alarm throughout the entire Cenatus Prospecting fleet!

"What is wrong, Neville?!" His father asked.

Unlike before, Otrus Magrin exhibited genuine concern and maybe even fear this time. He trusted that his son would never hit the alarm without good cause.

"I sense danger, and not the vague kind like I did before." Neville spoke in a tone that conveyed the gravity of the situation. "It feels... alien. It isn't coming from the wreck. It is approaching... from a greater distance."

"Can you tell me where?"

"Not yet, but it will show up soon enough."

Otrus Magrin did not procrastinate. He instructed the mechs under his command to scramble en masse while ordering the rest to prepare for a battle or a hasty retreat.

The science teams stationed in the alien ship wreck all exited in a hurry while a bunch of mechs slowly dragged the alien ship debris into the cargo bay of the flagship of the fleet, the Seeker of Wealth.

As soon as the wreckage was concerned, the fleet proceeded to accelerate towards the nearest Lagrange point just in case it needed to run in a hurry.

It wasn't until some of the fleet's sensors detected a large, high-energy object rising from the brown dwarf star itself that Saint Neville finally figured out the reason why his sense of danger went haywire.

"That... that is an alien warship! An alien warship has just emerged out of that failed star!"

"Wait, the newly emerged warship is heading straight in our direction! We are detecting multiple heat spikes. That battleship is preparing to open fire with her main gun batteries!"

"How could we have missed such a powerful alien vessel?!"

#### **Chapter 4603 Messages**

"What is going on?!" Lord Pearian yelled as he was being unceremoniously carried back to the alien battleship's cell block.

Now that the Fractured House of the Collapsing Star woke up and readied for combat, a nunser guard unceremoniously grabbed a hold of his body and brought him out of the circular audience chamber.

The most undignified part about all of this was that the nunser guard carried him by biting the side of his shirt and lifting him up! It made him feel as if he was a naughty kitten who had to be carried back to his nest by his overprotective mom cat!

"I am a human! I can walk on my own! There is no reason for you to hold me like this. It hurts!"

Unfortunately for the first-class scion, the armored guard remained completely unmoved by his pleas. Perhaps the nunser soldier's helmet didn't contain any translation modules that allowed him to interpret standard human language.

"You!" Pearian loosely pointed at the only other human he had met on this ship. "Tell this blue cow that he should let me walk by myself!"

The robed and masked figure of Jugal Meren no longer assumed an extremely undignified cattle-like posture anymore. The proud cosmopolitan held his back upright as if he had nothing to be ashamed about.

At least he became more human again.

"I do not command authority on this homeship." Mr. Meren replied in his synthesized voice. "The Trampler of Stars has instructed his men to return you to your cell, so that is what will happen. I suggest you remain as still as possible to make your journey more comfortable."

At least that overgrown four-legged tyrant kept him alive. Lord Pearian might prefer to die like a human than persist as a slave to these filthy aliens, but that didn't mean he was eager to cut his life short!

He didn't know what happened and why that strange alien relic prompted the Trampler of Stars to go berserk, but he was not stupid. He could make a few guesses.

This was also one of the reasons why he was more willing to bide his time and see how this situation would unfold.

Maybe rescue was on its way after all. It just took a lot longer than he thought for assistance to arrive.

As his body continued to dangle below the powerful mouth of a nunsen guard, he kept sending glances at Jugal Meren.

Though the man's thick robes and solid mask pretty much made it impossible to read the man's body language, Pearian tried to recall all of the lessons he learned about other people.

It was harder for him to do so without the benefit of the perfect memory search and recall functions of his cranial implant, but he could still fall back to the endowments bestowed by his designer genes.

Pearian observed and mentally recorded many different variables. Despite all of the cosmopolitan's attempts to hide his body and form, the man's gait, reaction speed, posture, distancing and so on could not be obscured.



Of course, Pearian had always taken into account that a skilled diplomat like Jugal Meren was a master at controlling his body and deceiving others through its purposeful manipulation.

The first-class scion couldn't rule out the possibility that the figure underneath the robe was a remote-controlled android, though it was rather unlikely that the Trampler of Stars would tolerate speaking to a robot construct rather than a flesh-and-blood human.

Even then, there were still many ways for humans to alter their entire bodies after undergoing a short procedure.

A man who possessed all of the associated functional reproductive organs could easily turn himself into a full woman after a single day.

Though such procedures never truly amounted to full conversions, as long as someone was willing to pay enough money, they could afford faster and more thorough transformations.

Other biological alterations such as removing mass, increasing one's length and adding more physical strength could all be performed with ease as long as the technological facilities were advanced enough.

This was why Pearian couldn't necessarily trust any of the data that he had gathered on Jugal Meren.

Cosmopolitans were one of the most hated and reviled groups of humanity. They even ranked below pirates and violators of the taboo against warships and weapons of mass destruction.

This was because the deranged followers of the Cosmopolitan Movement directly threatened the survival and continuation of a proud, strong and independent human civilization!

Though Pearian could trust almost nothing about what he observed from Jugal Meren, he still dared to make a few conclusions based on the time he spent with the cosmopolitan.

Mr. Meren appears to have isolated himself from human society for a long time. This was not a man who was fully in sync with modern humanity anymore. There were many small touches that suggested that he was a bit old-fashioned.

This suggested that Meren was fairly old. The silver-masked man definitely conveyed himself as a member of an older generation than Paerian, but not old to the point where the cosmopolitan carried himself as a legendary figure who has experienced an entire age.

Pearian confidently guessed that Mr. Meren was between 100 and 175 years old. Anyone older was probably too high-ranked and valuable to go on a field assignment.

The man was also truly a man underneath all of his disguises. Though Jugal Meren made an extensive effort to hide his true identity, Pearian guessed that the cosmopolitan still possessed enough pride in himself that he disdained altering his own body.

This was a rather strange conclusion as Pearian had personally seen Mr. Meren utterly debasing himself in front of the Trampler of Stars, but that was the man's job.

It was this particular conclusion that also allowed Pearian to extrapolate Meren's possible origin.

Of all of the humans he knew who took great pride in maintaining their 'original' human form, one group clearly stood out in this aspect.

"You're a Terran, aren't you, Mr. Meren?" Pearian abruptly spoke.

Though the Fractured House of the Collapsing Star became more active and busy, a well of silence had descended on their little group.

Much to Pearian's disappointment, the suspected Terran member of the Cosmopolitan Movement declined to respond at all. It was as if the accusation fell into the depths of space without producing any further ripple effects.

The silence lasted until they finally reached the cell block. After the nunser guard unceremoniously dropped the captive in the same cell that was devoid of anything aside from a typical nunser watering pool, the cosmopolitan finally spoke again.

"Sit tight and wait until this incident is taken care of. I cannot say when you will next have a chance to prove your worth to the Trampler of Stars, but he will only call you when he desires to see you. As you are not a particularly important captive in his mind, that may take weeks, months or even years."

That sounded outrageous to Lord Pearian!

The scion could tolerate being belittled, but he could not accept being forgotten! That was a fate worse than death in his opinion!

The younger man quickly scrambled back onto his feet. "Then do something about it! You can talk to him, right?"

The robed figure didn't respond. The diplomat's posture conveyed so much distance and lack of sympathy that it seemed as if he cared nothing about his fellow humans.

Perhaps Jugal Meren didn't represent every cosmopolitan, but the fact that such an individual turned into such a monster to begin with caused Pearian to develop an even greater contempt towards the Cosmopolitan Movement.

Pearian decided to switch to another strategy. People often liked to boast about successes. He wondered whether Meren could resist the temptation.

"Are your ploys to stop the Big Two from taking over the Red Ocean gaining any ground?"

"They are." Meren freely replied. "No one can stop us from uplifting the local aliens. Even if many of them are not receptive to our appeals, there are still enlightened groups such as the Red Cabal that can look past our appearances and recognize our goodwill towards them. Under the lead of these cooperative alien groups, their entire societies are about to undergo an extensive metamorphosis which will allow them to unite and form a proper resistance against the Big Two's unjustified incursion into their territories."

"It can't possibly work. The MTA and CFA are too strong. As long as they transfer more warfleets through the greater beyonder gate, no amount of uplifting will prevent the native aliens from getting crushed by superior numbers and firepower."

The cosmopolitan remained stoic. "We have accounted for that and more. Of all of the species we have studied, we understand humankind the most. We know its strengths, its weaknesses, its beliefs and most importantly its fault lines. We are hardly alone in our mission to free the human race from the hegemony of the Big Two. The mechers and fleeters have made many enemies, more than you will ever know. Together, we can topple the two giants. We only need to provide the catalyst that can trigger this inevitable rebellion!"

Pearian took a step back as he looked at the cosmopolitan in fear. "You're mad. You're utterly mad."

"In my viewpoint, you are the ones who are sick in your minds.." Mr. Meren stated. "The mechers, the fleeters, the Terrans, the Rubarthans and almost every other member of human civilization has completely fallen into the trap of human supremacy. My fellow cosmopolitans and I are the only ones who are sane enough to recognize your collective insanity. Forgive us for our actions,

but we recognize that only the most extreme shocks can wake you all up in the nightmare that you have embraced."

With those final delusional words, Mr. Meren made a short bow before he exited the cell block.

The silent nunser guard left as well, leaving Pearian alone in his isolation once again.

The Yorul-Tavik scion let out a tired breath and sank onto the deck.

He experienced too much in this brief period of time. From meeting a cosmopolitan for the first time to almost getting trampled by an overgrown quadruped alien warlord, Pearian never imagined that his adventure would expose him to the darker side of reality!

Just as Pearian tried to revisit these moments to see whether he had missed anything, his left wrist began to sting.

He idly scratched his wrist and tried to fall back into his thoughts.

"Ouch."

His wrist stung harder. This was odd because there was no reason for him to feel this pain at this moment.

Though Pearian tried his best to remain nonchalant, he had actually become a lot more alert.

As he tried to do his best to control his heartbeat and other physical indicators, his wrist started to sting multiple times. Though the pain was frustrating, he couldn't care about that at the moment.

He paid close attention to the frequency and timing of these stings.

It was old-fashioned Morse code.

Pearian had been forced to learn it when he was young in order to expand his means of transmitting and receiving covert messages.

Though it was a primitive and not that sophisticated method of communication, there were times when simplicity was enough to do the job.

This was exactly such a case.

Pearian guessed that whoever was communicating with him had slipped a tiny batch of nanomachines in the alien artifact that the aliens had retrieved and brought before the Trampler of Stars.

That was the best moment for the nanomachines to depart from the recovered alien artifact and onto his body.

The violent outburst from the Trampler of Stars even created the perfect opportunity for the nanomachines to move without tripping any alarms!

Right now, Pearian tried his best to contain his excitement and confusion as he translated the message.

LORD PEARIAN YORUL-TAVIK.

RESCUE EFFORT UNDER WAY BUT MAY TAKE TIME.

IF YOU WANT TO LIVE LONG ENOUGH TO EMBRACE FREEDOM AGAIN,  
YOU MUST COOPERATE.

THIS IS MANDATORY: PRAY TO HELENA, THE DAUGHTER OF DEATH.

THIS IS NOT A JOKE.

IF YOU DO NOT PRAY TO OUR DEATH GODDESS, YOU WILL DIE.

YOU WILL DIE.

YOU WILL DIE.

IF YOU WANT TO LIVE, BELIEVE IN HELENA AND RECEIVE HER GRACE.

IF YOU ARE SINCERE ENOUGH, WE CAN COMMUNICATE FURTHER.  
YOU WILL NOT BE ALONE.

SIGNED, GOLDEN SKULL ALLIANCE.

P.S. THESE NANOMACHINES WILL SELF-DESTRUCT AFTER  
REPEATING THIS MESSAGE FIVE TIMES TO REDUCE THEIR CHANCES  
OF EXPOSURE.

" ... "

#### **Chapter 4604 Puelmer Firepower**

From the moment the Unrelenting's sensors detected the emergence of an alien battleship that stretched for 1.7 kilometers, Saint Neville Magrin understood that he and his father had been utterly fooled.

All of the events that took place so far made a lot more sense all of a sudden. The inexplicable actions of the Golden Skull Alliance also became a lot more logical.

"The Golden Skullers led us into a trap!"

For some reason or another, the Golden Skullers knew that a powerful alien warship had been hiding in the gasses of the brown dwarf star.

Like blind and ignorant fools, his father had unknowingly brought his fleet close to the location of the alien battleship.

This meant that when the latter emerged from the top layer of gasses of the brown dwarf star, they were positioned almost right on top of each other!

It was impossible for this to be a coincidence. The second alien ship wreckage had been a piece of bait all along. Its main purpose had been to lure Cenatus Prospecting into the perfect killzone of the newly emerged alien battleship!

As Saint Neville Magrin made all of these realizations in an instant, his battle-oriented mindset understood how exposed his father's fleet had become.

The distance between the fleet and the newly emerged alien battleship was far enough that it would take melee mechs a lot of time to close the distance.

Ranged mechs would also find it difficult to hit a starship at such a large distance, especially if this alien vessel was capable of activating warp travel on an active battlefield.

The chance that this advanced alien battleship could dictate the range of the engagement was high!

In short, the thousands of mechs fielded by the Cenatus Prospecting fleet could hardly play a role in this fight. Their offensive power was practically irrelevant in the face of such a powerful enemy. The most they could do was force the warship to expend more shots to eliminate the opposition.

Not even the expert mechs could make a meaningful difference!

The disparity in combat power was simply too great. Although the analysts working for Cenatus Prospecting only had time to discern the basic details of the alien bogey, the preliminary data already showed that the specs of this warship had reached first-class standards.

A single first-class multipurpose mech could already inflict a serious blow against the fleet!

A battleship could inflict much more damage!

"The enemy ship is about to open fire again!"

"Disperse and take evasive maneuvers! Make sure to cover the Seeker of Wealth and buy time for her to evacuate this killzone!"

After taking the time to charge up and lock onto its targets, a single gun battery installed on the hull of the alien warship unleashed its might.

The triple-barreled puelmer kinetic cannon battery fired three different kinetic rounds at slightly different angles.



Even though the range was rather long for kinetic weapons, the modern transphasic armaments of the alien battleship were able to speed up their projectiles to an impressive degree, causing them to close in much faster than normal.

Each of these projectiles happened to strike three different combat carriers with amazing power!

If space could transmit sound, the surrounding area would have been bombarded with simultaneous thunderous impact noises!

The heavy kinetic rounds that were roughly the size of mechs or larger possessed incredible mass and power.

The guns of the alien battleship fired them out with such great power that the energy shields and the hull plating of the affected vessels played no role at all. They easily folded as if they were made of paper. Hull plating and structural parts deformed and disintegrated at such great speeds that the vessels peeled open like flowers!

Though the kinetic projectiles transferred a massive amount of destructive forces onto the combat carriers, they pushed forth with such great momentum that they actually drilled right through the hulls and continued to plunge deeper into space on ballistic courses!

"The battleship's main guns have overpenetrated!" A weapons officer spoke with horror in his voice.

Overpenetration!

This was the clearest sign that the pioneering fleet had bitten off more than it could chew after encountering this powerful foe.

If the main guns of the alien battleship possessed enough power to not only demolish entire combat carriers with a single round, but also have plenty of

power to spare, then that meant that their effectiveness against capital ships was definitely just as threatening!

As the wreckage and debris of the fallen combat carriers continued to spread across space, pain and loss affected the only ace pilot of the fleet.

He could see and feel the thousands of bodies that had become utterly mangled and crushed after getting affected by the prodigious firepower of the alien vessel.

"This is too much..."

Neville had never witnessed brutality at this scale. The alien battleship was by far the most powerful alien warship that he had encountered in battle, and she was definitely showing that she was built to defeat other warships!

Against this level of firepower, his father's fleet possessed no effective means to mitigate the incoming attacks.

No matter whether it was a combat carrier or a fleet carrier, neither type of vessels had ever been designed with resisting battleship-grade attacks in mind!

"This... this is about to turn into a massacre."

Saint Neville Magrin could do little to prevent any of the three combat carriers from suffering a direct hit each, and that hurt him a lot.

Even if he wasn't particularly close to the men and family members who served aboard these proud vessels, they were still comrades who he vowed to protect!

"The alien battleship is reorienting her guns. As far as we can tell, her secondary gun batteries are beginning to target our sub-capital ships."

"What about her main guns?!" Otrus Magrin personally asked.

"They are slower to move. Wait. It appears that her primary kinetic cannon batteries are turning to aim their muzzles at our capital ships!"

The Unrelenting had to take action. Even though the disparity between an ace mech and a first-class alien battleship was still too large, it was impossible for Saint Neville Magrin to cut and run even though this was the most rational course of action to take!

"Father!" He roared over their private communication channel. "What is the progress of your evacuation?!"

"We have made no progress, son." Otrus replied in a grave tone. "My flagship has tried to enter into warp travel numerous times with the help of her superdrive, but our engineers tell me that our proximity to the brown dwarf star along with the strong warp interdiction field produced by the alien battleship is making it impossible for us to speed away."

"What?!"

When Saint Neville attempted to activate the Unrelenting's powerful transphasic flight system, he could immediately feel a large amount of resistance from the surrounding space.

It was as if he was now trying to move his body around while submerged in a pool of water instead of walking around in open air.

Anything that wasn't strong enough to push back against the increased resistance would not be able to speed themselves up in realspace.

In other words, the various ships equipped with warp drives and superdrives were unable to jump out of the effective range of the enemy battleship fast enough!

This was a major disadvantage. If the ships of the vulnerable pioneering fleet could all enter into warp travel, then they could easily split up and move in

rapidly different directions, thereby making it infeasible for a single warship to prevent at least some of them from escaping with their hulls intact.

However, the battleship's powerful warp interdiction capabilities prevented this from happening!

Otrus Magrin knew this but still wanted to make sure he did not lose his entire fleet and mech force.

"Keep dispersing and accelerating as hard as possible! The range of the warp interdiction field has to be limited. As long as some of our ships can lure this battleship away from the remainder, the latter will eventually be able to warp away. Right now, we must all fight to evacuate as many of our people as possible!"

The leader of the fleet did not speak anything about covering the flight of the Seeker of Wealth.

No ship was safe in the face of so much firepower. Otrus Magrin was afraid that if he commanded all of the ships at his disposal to block the line of sight to his flagship, the alien ship would just fire a missile or something that circled around and smashed the vessel he was on in a single titanic blow!

He judged that it was much better for every ship to disperse and look as indistinguishable to each other as possible.

The plan worked more or less. The alien battleship didn't seem to be able to distinguish which human starships were more important than others.

Her powerful kinetic gun batteries possessed a low firing rate, but each time they struck, they easily broke open the defenses of a fleet carrier and inflicted crippling internal damage to their hulls!

The much more numerous combat carriers on the other hand began to get peppered by highly accurate transphasic laser beams!

The puelmers developed the most advanced warship-grade weapons in the Red Ocean. Their reputation for possessing the greatest firepower out of any alien race was not undeserved!

While the primary armament of the alien battleship was purely designed to overcome the defenses of enemy battleships by relying on brute force and little else, the secondary armament possessed a lot more finesse.

The alien battleship actually possessed significantly less secondary laser cannon batteries than normal, but their calibers were also greater as a result.

This allowed the battleship's laser weapons to assist with taking down powerful battleships faster by employing their sustained precision to destroy critical surface modules or exploit narrow gaps in an opponent's defenses.

Their power almost made them overkill when employed against combat carriers!

Weapons designed to disable powerful battleship modules easily broke any energy shield in the way. Though the respectable hull plating of these smaller carriers were still respectable, they could hardly put up a serious resistance.

Many combat carriers that were lucky enough to retain enough functionality began to collect an increasingly greater quantity of massive half-melted holes in their hulls!

"Our entire hangar bay is melted into slag!"

"Our FTL drive has incurred too much heat damage. Repairing it will take at least fourteen days!"

"Half of the crew stationed aboard this ship have been vaporized or burned! There is nothing left of my immediate superior aside from leaving behind a pile of ashes!"

Death and suffering spread across the pioneering fleet at a rapid rate!

Even though thousands of mechs have already opened fire against the distant terror, the alien battleship deftly avoided most of the incoming fire by swimming through space like a playful fish with the help of her active warp drive!

"It's not fair! Why can the aliens activate their warp drives while we can't?!"

Superior technology. That was it. While the Big Two mastered even more powerful tech, the indigenous alien races possessed a much greater institutional understanding of phasewater technology. It would take far too long for humanity to close this crucial gap!

Before that happened, humanity had to deal with situations where they met alien opponents who were clever enough to maximize this disparity.

Neville gritted his teeth and tried his best to channel his fury at all of the losses into his machine.

He began to resonate much stronger with his ace mech. The boost in strength allowed him and the Unrelenting to resist the active warp interdiction field with greater effectiveness than before!

The ace pilot made an important decision.

"I'm going in, father!"

"Are you sure?"

"This is the only way I can buy your ship time to evacuate." Neville rapidly explained as his ace mech raced towards the distant enemy vessel. "I can't block the incoming attacks because they are just too powerful. The Unrelenting isn't suited for defense. The only way I can contribute is to divert most of the firepower of the enemy vessel. Don't worry, father. My chances of escaping are much higher."

Otrus Magrin sounded weary. "...Fine. Just be sure to suspend your mission as soon as my flagship gets away. I do not want to lose you so soon. You still have a mission to complete."

"I will make it back." Saint Neville promised to both himself and his father.

#### **Chapter 4605 218 Seconds**

As the Unrelenting utilized its superior mobility to rapidly close in on the alien battleship, Saint Neville paid close attention to the state of his father's fleet.

After getting caught by surprise, the different fleet carriers, combat carriers and support vessels had all turned around and tried their best to distance themselves from the advancing alien battleship.

Since the latter could only travel in one direction at the same time, the human starships tried their best to shift their course to ensure they kept moving away from the powerful threat.

Even so, carrier vessels still failed to escape the effective range of the warp interdiction field!

Saint Neville had heard that the aliens mastered powerful warp travel blocking capabilities in order to prevent their targets from escaping all of the time, but this was ridiculous!

It was difficult to believe that an alien warship that was only 1.7 kilometers long was able to block warp travel to this extent.

He soon figured out why the ships of his father's fleet failed to overcome the blockade.

"Their warp drives are too weak!"

Whether it was the warp drives mounted inside the more important ships of the fleet or the expensive superdrive installed inside the Seeker of Wealth, each of them were actually limited in strength.

The strength of the warp bubbles they could produce around a starship was dependent on many factors, but energy, phasewater and distance were definitely the key variables!

A first-class warp drive that used up a lot more energy or leveraged a larger quantity of phasewater should have been able to wrench free from the alien battleship's blockade.

It was too bad that Otrus Magrin had opted to go for quantity instead of quality. Most of his starships were only equipped with relatively basic warp drives that could provide respectable speed boosts but did not perform that well under these kinds of circumstances.

The only possible exception was the Seeker of Wealth. Otrus Magrin invested a lot more in the strength of his flagship, and her superdrive should be able to escape sooner under normal circumstances.

This wasn't a normal circumstance, though! As the alien battleship kept advancing forward, it became clear that she was closing in on a specific human starship.

"The enemy battleship is on a direct intercept course to the Seeker of Wealth! The aliens have identified our flagship!"

"How?!"

"It's not that difficult to determine..."

That was true. While Otrus Magrin was content with equipping his starships with relatively ordinary parts and modules, he had concentrated a considerable amount of advanced technology onto the Seeker of Wealth.

While that made the flagship a lot stronger and more adept at survival, it also turned it into an obvious priority target!

"You will not have my father!" Saint Neville roared as his eyes went red.



The thought of his father getting hunted down and butchered like a dog sent him over the edge!

The Unrelenting's Saint Kingdom glowed brighter in orange as Neville's desperation boosted his resonance strength to another record!

The ace hybrid mech's long-ranged weapon systems weren't particularly powerful, but they could still pack a punch.

Neville concentrated on the Unrelenting's shoulder-mounted gauss cannons and fired a powerful pair of rounds that soared across space and struck one of the segmented energy shields of the alien vessel with great force!

The attack failed to inflict any real damage!

The alien battleship's forward energy shield had only twenty percent or so of its integrity at most, but the orven shield generator responsible for producing it had rapidly shifted it to the side.

This allowed another orven shield generator to plug the gap with another fully intact energy shield.

As the Unrelenting fired multiple rounds that were powerful enough to strip open the defenses of the Seeker of Wealth, Saint Neville noted to his dismay that repeated hits only struck segmented energy shields that shifted away as soon as they incurred damage.

This meant that it would take forever to overcome this powerful barrier.

The only way to defeat this persistent energy-based defensive measure was to attack with a single overwhelming attack!

It just so happened that the Unrelenting possessed a powerful means of attack. The ace mech gripped its lance tighter as Neville already decided to build up enough momentum to strike the alien battleship with the most powerful possible blow.

"Help me calculate how much power I need to breach the alien battleship's energy shield defenses!" Neville asked his staff that was stationed within the Seeker of Wealth.

No ace pilot should have to rely completely on himself in battle. It was customary to provide lots of support in the rear. The right information could easily turn defeat into victory, and Neville already understood that he needed to make use of every possible advantage against an opponent as strong as the alien battleship.

It only took a short moment for his staff to call up the information from a group of engineers and starship experts.

"We have completed our calculations." A staff officer reported. "According to our estimates, the alien battleship can project two or possibly three layers of energy shields at most. We are certain about this conclusion because her hull is not large or broad enough to accommodate more capital ship-grade shield generators. If you want to punch through all three layers of energy shields in an instant, then you will need to accelerate at your maximum rate for at least 218 seconds in order to build up sufficient momentum. We recommend you add a few more seconds just to be sure. You should also mind that we have performed these calculations with the assumption that you will charge into the warship head-on. You will need to spend more time on building up your charge attack if you attack from the sides or rear."

"Understood."

218 seconds was a relatively short time as far as space battles went, but an ace mech as fast as the Unrelenting could build up a horrible amount of momentum in that time.

By the time the ace mech finally reached the alien battleship, it could easily destroy itself or incur heavy damage if Saint Neville wasn't careful enough!

The Unrelenting actually had to circle around in order to make sure it did not approach the alien battleship too soon.

Neville tried his best to distract and put more pressure on the powerful enemy vessel by launching gauss round after gauss round at the metal monstrosity, but his target did not show any sign of taking the ace mech seriously!

"Come on, you alien murderers!" The ace pilot roared as his blood ran hotter than before! "Fire at me with your guns! My gauss cannons are more powerful than that of any other mech! My Unrelenting will soon be ready to inflict a hammer blow on your defenses! If you don't attack me soon enough, it will be too late for you to stop my assault!"

Perhaps the aliens heard his cries, because some of the massive guns of the alien battleship started to shift their aim towards the approaching ace mech!

Saint Neville easily sensed when a powerful primary kinetic gun battery was about to open fire. He jerked his Unrelenting to the side with the help of her maneuvering thrusters and easily evaded the massive transphasic kinetic rounds that could overpenetrate combat carriers.

Just because a warship cannon was enormous didn't mean it was the right tool for every job!

The alien ship captain must have realized this as well because the other kinetic gun batteries no longer bothered to track the fast and elusive Unrelenting.

Instead, the singular alien battleship no longer fired her comparatively weaker but more nimble secondary laser cannons at the combat carriers, but instead began to fire a withering barrage of laser beams at the ace mech.

Saint Neville had a much harder time with blocking and mitigating incoming attacks!

The targeting systems of the alien battleship were top-notch and were able to reach a 30 percent hit rate, which was quite respectable at this distance.

The Unrelenting's Saint Kingdom had to expend a considerable amount of strength to weaken and soften the transphasic laser beams that threatened to strike the ace mech.

Even then, whatever power the domain field hadn't been able to wear out eventually struck the round shield held by the ace mech's other arm.

The shield was incurring a horrible amount of damage. Though it was somewhat tolerable by ace mech standards, Saint Neville knew that he couldn't keep this up forever!

As the seconds went by, more and more human ships succumbed to the overwhelming firepower of a single battleship.

The powerful vessel only needed a single cannon to destroy a ship in a short amount of time. Saint Neville could sense the massive and continuous loss of human life, but could do nothing about it aside from attracting as many laser beams as possible.

The number of fleet carriers and combat carriers rapidly dropped. While their downfall didn't affect the mechs in the field, the crews who served aboard them didn't even have time to hop into their escape pods due to how rapidly the hulls folded under fire.

The worst part of it all was that the battleship hadn't even shown any noticeable drop in combat power!

Her powerful transphasic energy shields possessed enough capacity and redundancy to resist the firepower of thousands of mechs with ease.

While the comparably tiny kinetic and energy attacks were definitely having an effect, their collective damage potential was simply too low, especially when hardly any of them were augmented with phasewater.

The battleship's defenses essentially acted like an umbrella against the rain!

This was why Saint Neville knew it was crucial for him to wait until his Unrelenting was ready to unleash a devastating charge attack. His mech still wasn't fast enough to deal the necessary amount of damage, and that infuriated him. The longer he delayed, the more people got killed!

As the distance between the alien battleship and the Seeker of Wealth rapidly started to shrink, the former activated another measure that expressly targeted the latter!

The Seeker of Wealth actually started to slow down despite the fact that her thrusters were burning hotter than ever!

"Ah!" Otrus Magrin released a frustrated noise. "My people are telling me that my flagship is caught in some sort of spatial depression generated by the enemy ship. Why are the aliens so insistent on targeting my ship in particular?!"

That suddenly caused Saint Neville to connect a few dots.

"Father! I think these aliens aren't targeting us, but rather the ship wreckage that we have retrieved! I suggest you order your men to dump them out into space as quickly as possible so that we can divert their attention!"

"That... might work, but it may also be the only reason that the aliens have scruples about blowing up my flagship."

"The Seeker of Wealth will get intercepted by the alien battleship if this situation persists." Neville quickly told his father. "The spatial depression can even block shuttles and escape shuttles from moving away from your flagship."

The only way to buy you a chance to make it out alive is if you give them what they seek."

"...You're right."

In a situation of life and death, Otrus Magrin did not hesitate and immediately made the correct decision. It took less than thirty seconds later for one of the cargo bay hatches of the Seeker of Wealth to slide open.

Two different pieces of alien ship wreckage were soon tossed into open space.

For a moment, the battlefield entered into a brief lull.

Many human soldiers hoped that the aliens would restrain their firepower now that their true goals became exposed.

It seemed that even the alien ship wreckage agreed as the latest one that the pioneering fleet picked up earlier started to produce a shadow of a phase whale.

However, the phase whale barely showed up to 'greet' the incoming alien battleship before it broke apart.

The alien artifact locked inside the broken wreck seemed to have lost all of its strength and turned into a regular piece of alien artwork.

Saint Neville widened his eyes as he realized how the aliens might interpret this sequence of events.

"NO!"

Before he could put his Unrelenting in the right path, one of the primary kinetic cannon batteries had shifted its aim towards the Seeker of Wealth and opened fire!

The flagship bearing his father immediately suffered a massive blow!

## Chapter 4606 The Overachiever

"Each of you are part of the future of our Magrin Family." A vigorous and stern-faced man spoke in front of a lectern in front of a classroom.

Dozens of young children obediently sat on their chairs as they had been taught and looked up to the speaker with varying degrees of love, respect and adoration in their expressions.

Neville Magrin was one of those children. He was almost indistinguishable from his other brothers and sisters.

Though each of them were born from different mothers, they all shared the same father.

They hardly ever saw their father in reality. Their mothers told them that he shouldered great burdens and had to work hard every day in order to complete a grand mission.

Even if the children had no idea what all of that meant, the importance of what his father was doing had already been drilled into their minds before they grew old enough to understand human speech.

"I have high expectations for all of you." Otrus Magrin continued his speech. "The school that I have set up for you will teach you essential skills. Each of you will need to be good at something when you grow older because the galaxy we live in does not tolerate useless people!"

Becoming useless was one of the greatest sins in the Magrin Family! Little Neville Magrin stiffened his back and resolved to work harder than everyone else to earn his father's personal recognition.

The older kids told him that the ones that performed better received more attention from their father!

In contrast, the ones that never amounted to everything usually got transferred away from the orbit of their father so that he would never have to waste his time on failures.

Otrus continued his speech.

"Learning is a struggle. Becoming good at something requires a lot of dedication and hard work. Some will tell you that you will need talent to become good at something, but that only applies to a small number of professions such as mech piloting. I do not believe that talent is relevant in everything else. Therefore, if you don't succeed, you have no one to blame but yourself."

This was a harsh message, but the children had all heard this message many times. Their father tolerated no excuses from them. If they failed, it was their fault.

Though their father could be harsh, he was also fair. Their mothers repeatedly emphasized this point.

"Each of you are lucky to be my children." Otrus Magrin claimed. "There are many children in this galaxy who have no parents, who don't have a roof over their heads, who have never felt the touch of love and aren't able to get into any decent schools. Compare that to yourselves. Here, you have everything you need. You have access to a good school that possesses all of the necessary learning facilities. You will receive a light set of augmentations that will help you keep up with your studies. I have even been generous enough to free plenty of hours in your weekly schedule."

The Magrin children each knew they were enormously privileged. While they were a bit sheltered from society, they heard how many children grew up in poverty. Some literally had to live on the streets!



Otrus Magrin swept all of the children with his piercing gaze. Kids such as Neville felt as if they were exposed to the great responsibility that their father had always shouldered!

The man's voice grew softer and more gentle. "You are all sons and daughters of mine. My love for you is boundless, so I have made sure to give you enough playtime to let you be children. However, do not forget that children cannot rule the galaxy. Only the strongest and smartest grown ups have earned the right to reign over everyone else. If you want to join me at the top, then do the best you can. Only you have the power to make yourself succeed. Excellence is within your reach, but you will need to work harder than everyone else to succeed. Make me proud. For Magrin!"

All of the children raised their fists! "For Magrin!"

Little Neville Magrin became completely entranced by their father's strong voice and wise words.

Many kids worked hard for a time, but they eventually fell back to their youthful impulses. Spending so many hours of studying ahead or understanding the lesson materials more thoroughly was utterly boring compared to playing with all of the games in the playrooms.

Neville used to play with his toys as well, but ever since he met his father, he locked them into a lockbox that he had requested from his mother and resolved to never open them again.

The box constantly tempted him. He had placed it on the foot of his bed, so he was constantly aware that it was close.

His toy mechs, his stuffed dolls and his cool starship models always called him back and play like in the old days.

Many times, he came to stand in front of his lockbox and came close to opening the lid.

It took more and more effort to turn himself back each day.

Each time he did, he felt saddened and pained for rejecting so much fun, but he constantly reminded himself that his father would always approve of his choice.

The desire to earn the recognition of his father ultimately drove Neville forward.

The lockbox became easier for him to ignore. As he grew older, he became less obsessed over playing with his toys. Part of it was because he outgrew them, but another part of it was because he found enjoyment in other ways.

The approval shown by his mother, the admiration he attracted from his fellow brothers and sisters and the accomplishment he felt for doing a good job all turned into his new sources of fun!

Of course, Neville was hardly the only child in his class who worked harder than ever. There were numerous other children who constantly competed for first place. They all pressured each other into doing better, because they knew that if they slacked off even once, they would get further away from obtaining a chance to receive a compliment from their father!

It wasn't until he became 10 years old that his life changed forever.

From the moment the Magrin Family learned of his genetic aptitude, his father summoned him and his mother!

It was one of the most glorious moments of his long life. Even though Neville had attained much greater achievements since that time, he would never forget the pride and expectation his father directed to himself.

"A genetic aptitude of B is good." Otrus said as he stroked his large and hard hand on Neville's head. "Children with this aptitude can be considered talented in mech piloting, but don't let that go to your head. Even A-grade

potentates ended up becoming worthless because they thought their excellent talent was enough to replace hard work. If you want to be first, then work for it. Make me proud."

"I will, father." Neville politely said, though his little heart was burning with the desire to get another pat on his head.

In his 10 years of life, he never experienced as much love from his father as this day!

Neville threw himself into his training. The Magrin Family hadn't been large enough to set up its own mech academy back then, so Neville was forced to attend a public institution.

It was hard at first. There were so many people around him who were so different from the Magrins he was familiar with. Their personalities diverged and hardly any of his fellow mech cadets trained as much as himself.

Even so, he resisted the temptation to hang out with them or match their pace. He clung onto the motivation that allowed him to stop himself from opening his box of toys and pushed himself into both physical and mental training.

With hard work came rewards. He earned higher grades and greater appreciation from his mech instructors. That allowed him to take extra classes where he could receive personal tutoring from retired veterans who could teach a lot of materials that weren't necessarily included in the curriculum.

By the time he graduated from the mech academy with distinction, he entered a long but successful career as a mech pilot.

It almost seemed natural for him to achieve successive breakthroughs, but only a few people understood how much he sacrificed in order to meet everyone's expectations.

As more and more people in the Magrin Family expected greatness from him, Neville always made sure to never slack off in his training.

This was because despite all of the people looking up to him, the increasingly more accomplished mech pilot only truly cared about the opinion of a single individual.

His father.

Becoming an expert pilot and especially an ace pilot was enough to make a person feel fulfilled, but not Neville.

This was because his father expected him to go much further.

Whereas many other people thought that Neville would only amount to so much before he reached his limit, his father never believed that he had reached the end of his road.

"You are only halfway on your journey." Otrus Magrin gently said as he patted Neville on the back with great affection. "So don't celebrate before you have completed your marathon. You will need to work much harder from now on because the remainder of your route will be an uphill struggle."

"Do you believe in me, father?"

Otrus' eyes stared hungrily at his grown son. "I do. Do you know why? It is because you are my flesh and blood. Not only that, but you also took after my lessons better than anyone else. No one has matched my drive and urgency to excel as well as you. That is why I know for certain that you have what it takes to become a god pilot."

His father was the beginning and the end of his life. Though other people always reacted oddly when they found out how much Saint Neville Magrin remained dependent on his father, he never saw this as a weakness.

Instead, he saw this as his strength!

He had earned everything in his life with the help of his father.

As long as Otrus Magrin remained a part of his life, Saint Neville Magrin never had to worry about everything else. His only concern and responsibility was to become strong as possible so that he could help his father fulfill his great mission.

For over one-and-a-half centuries, his father served as Neville Magrin's bedrock.

The ace pilot never imagined a scenario where his father was no longer present in his life.

This was because Otrus Magrin was simply too strong, brilliant and clever to fail. The man hardly looked older and still tackled all of his problems with the same level of energy and conviction as before.

Though Otrus inevitably made mistakes from time to time, he never allowed that to put him down for long.

As Neville grew increasingly stronger, he felt gratified for being help his father tide over these difficulties with greater ease.

He should have been doing so for his father once again today.

"Father!"

Saint Neville didn't know why a part of his mind recalled all of his cherished moments that he had spent with his father, but he had an ominous feeling about what he was experiencing.

Past and present blended into each other as he remembered Otrus Magrin when he was at his greatest and when he was at his most vulnerable.

A much greater sense of urgency and pain burst in his heart, causing him to resonate a lot better with his Unrelenting than before.

However, his connection with his ace mech also became a lot more unstable than any other point in his life!

His ace mech's Saint Kingdom began to wobble even as it glowed brighter, causing it to draw even more laser fire from the alien battleship, but Neville cared nothing about his own ordeals.

He only paid attention to the wellbeing of a single person.

"Father! Talk to me, please! Are you still alive?!"

The lack of answer caused the dread in his heart to grow even stronger.

#### **Chapter 4607 A Good Father**

From the moment the alien battleship emerged from the gas layers of the brown dwarf star, Neville should have realized that his father's fleet had no chance of defeating this powerful opponent.

Instead of trying to save as much of the fleet as possible, he should have given up on most of his comrades and prioritized the safety of his father.

If his father was transferred to a smaller and less conspicuous starship and rapidly moved away under the escort of the Unrelenting, then the chances of saving his father were much greater.

In fact, if Otrus Magrin was willing to sacrifice everything, then he could have transferred to the cockpit of the Unrelenting and allow the ace mech to warp away from this star system!

The journey to a safer destination would be long and uncomfortable, but at least his father would remain alive and protected by a powerful ace mech.

Now, all of those possibilities became moot, because the Seeker of Wealth instantly crumbled when she was struck by the main guns of the alien battleship!

Though his father's fleet carrier and flagship hadn't instantly blown up after getting struck by a kinetic hammer strike, pretty much every human on the ship sustained massive shocks!

Thousands of bodies had already been pounded into mulch. Others screamed in pain as their bones broke despite the protection offered by their suits!

"Father! What is your condition?! Are you still alive?!"

It took four long seconds for Otrus to speak over the private communication channel.

"I... am still alive... for now." The old man wheezed in obvious pain. "The command center is the most protected compartment on my flagship, and my shield generator has blunted much of the blow. Even then... all of the people around me are dead."

"You need to get out of there, father! Let me turn around and take you away!"

"NO!" Otrus Magrin barked. "Do not turn away! You are the only hope my fleet has left! I will not allow you to give up on your charge. Let alone our men, you will not be able to escape the alien battleship's pursuit if she is still fully operational. The only way to give our people a chance to escape is to inflict so much damage onto the enemy battleship that it can no longer interdict the warp drives of our ships."

Saint Neville Magrin understood this logic as well as his father, but he couldn't accept this course of action!

The lives of his family members and the people employed by Cenatus Prospecting were worth nothing to him! They may be his friends and colleagues during his daily life, but here on the battlefield they were completely worthless compared to his father!

The forward acceleration of the Unrelenting already started to slow down as Neville started to think about how he could best pull his injured father from his flagship and bring him out of this accursed star system alive.

"Let me—"

"—Shut up." Otrus spoke in his most authoritative voice possible. It was the voice he used when he demanded absolute obedience from his children and his subordinates. "You have obeyed my instructions for your entire life. Do not ruin that unbroken record by spoiling it in my final moments."

Neville's alarm grew even greater when he heard the fatalism in his father's tone!

"You're still alive! Even if I can't pull you out myself, you can still count on the rest of our forces. As long as you are still breathing, we can still make a comeback!"

Otrus coughed over the command channel. "It's too late... for me. My flagship is ruined. The compartments and hallways around me are crushed and broken. Whatever spatial trap the alien battleship has applied to my crippled ship is not only preventing craft from launching out of the ruined hull, but is also preventing outside vehicles from getting inside. Even my personal teleporter is blocked. The Seeker of Wealth is isolated, my son. This vessel... will be my coffin, but it doesn't have to be your funeral as well."

"NO!" Saint Neville Magrin boomed as his emotions hit another peak! "I won't accept this! Your approval is everything I have ever wanted! I haven't made you happy yet! I still need you to tell me that I did a good job once I have become a god pilot! I don't know what I will do if you are gone!"

Otrus coughed as blood leaked from his mouth. "Every child has to grow up and live a life outside of the protection of his parents! My negligence in



preparing you for this is my mistake. If I am fated today... don't compound my regret by following me into death. You still have a chance!"

"You're not dead yet, father! I can still beat the alien battleship! Let me block the attacks of the enemy vessel and buy enough time for you to get away!"

"No! I forbid you from tanking the most powerful attacks launched by the alien craft. Your ace mech can't cope with so much damage! Do not follow me into death!"

The ace pilot was in tears by now. He had never really imagined a life without his father guiding his actions. He felt so apprehensive about becoming alone that his mind became paralyzed at the thought of living in such a dreadful future.

Ace pilots rarely experienced any distress anymore, but when the subject they cared about the most was at stake, even the most hardened and transcendent warriors could break down and cry!

Many kilometers away from the Unrelenting, an old and broken man laid against the side of a torn bulkhead.

The air in the command center had already been sucked away. The surrounding compartments were in a total mess.

The only reason this space remained reasonably intact was because this crucial area had been reinforced thrice over.

Even that had failed to stop the massive kinetic rounds fired by an actual battleship from transmitting so much shock that the officers and specialists had all been shattered or flattened to death!

The sight of all of the broken bodies of his loyal descendents and workers had caused the infamous entrepreneurs to feel what it was like to be on the other side for once.

It was so ironic. A winner like him who did everything he could to climb his way up had reached the bottom of his life.

He had never failed as much as today.

As his protective suit tried its best to prevent his injured and infirm body from deteriorating, his mind became a lot more sober than before.

His grand ambition... his great mission... his ultimate goal...

They were all out of his reach.

Funnily enough, Otrus Magrin no longer felt upset about that. He would have felt completely different back when he was in his prime, but now that he was facing the end of his life, he realized that his legacy was not as brilliant as he liked.

If he was about to perish, then he did not wish to be remembered as a notorious vulture.

He wanted human society to remember all of the good that he had done.

The only gift to humanity that truly mattered was not his company, but the son that he had trained into an ace pilot.

"Neville..." He said as his voice grew weaker. "Don't stop improving. Keep growing stronger. You are your father's son. The stronger you become, the more you will elevate my legacy. This is a way to keep my memory alive. So long as enough people remember me, that is enough. I will always be with you. Fight to your heart's content, but promise me that you will do your best to live on your own. Promise me, my son!"

"What are you saying?!"

"You are my heir! You are my greatest accomplishment! You are the only relative that I love the most! Do not ruin this by disobeying my instructions for the first time."

Neville openly cried by this time. "Father... I can't. I don't know how to live on my own. I have never made my own decisions."

"Don't be ridiculous!" Otrus barked! "You are an ace pilot! You're 170 years old now. Don't you think you are old enough to take charge for once?! Besides, you do not have to do everything yourself. Most of my fleet will probably be ruined after today, but Cenatus Prospecting still retains many more assets. From the moment the company confirms my death, ultimate ownership and authority will pass on to you. Almost everything I possess that is still intact will become your personal property."

Saint Neville grew dizzy at the thought of leading the company of his father. He didn't know a single thing about running a business!

"I can't do this, father. I will ruin everything that you have built."

"Don't worry too much. Our other relatives shall follow your will and handle the work that you cannot do. Your strength is your most valuable asset. An ace pilot such as yourself will always be able to attract investment. I am not passing my remaining properties to you because I want you to build an empire. I am passing them on because you have a higher chance to get back on track and complete your advancement to god pilot if you have a stronger foundation."

"Father..."

"Live, my son. Leave a doomed father like myself behind. Don't die in this backwater star system. Don't let these aliens wipe out all of our men. Don't let the Golden Skull Alliance have the last laugh. Promise me that you will carry on, live your life and evolve into a god pilot. PROMISE ME, MY SON!"

"I..."

"THIS IS AN ORDER, SON!"

"I promise!" Saint Neville cried out in grief. "I promise, father! I will make you proud beyond your death! I will complete the mission that you have given me! I will build the empire that you have always wanted to build! I will avenge your death and bring total ruination to the culprits who were responsible for driving you to a dead end!"

Otrus Magrin's reddened eyes widened when he heard these vows.

"You idiot boy! Don't get consumed by vengeance! What happened... is no one's fault but my own. I should have controlled my greed. If I didn't order my fleet to shadow the Golden Skull Alliance... if I didn't lose my caution after trying so hard to secure a shortcut for your advancement... I wouldn't have doomed myself."

Before they could speak any further, the alien battleship decided to fire another powerful volley to finish off the pioneering fleet's flagship!

"FATHER!" Neville cried out in alarm!

"Fight, my son. Fight for yourself, not for me. You still have... a chance to escape. Do not let... our adversaries benefit from your downfall. Becoming the strongest mech pilot is the greatest way you can defy their expectations! You can do anything once you become a god! Maybe... you can even bring me back to life."

It was at this moment that one of the puelmer primary kinetic cannon battery opened fire.

The triangular arrangement of muzzles each fired massive transphasic projectiles that rapidly crossed from one end to the other end of the battlefield.

Once they struck the broken and crippled flagship, the Seeker of Wealth burst entirely!

There was no way her remaining defenses could keep the ship together! Countless broken and deformed parts sprayed in every direction, thereby ruling out any possibility for Otrus Magrin or anyone else stationed on the ship to survive this devastating blow!

"FAAAATTHHEEEEEER!"

From the moment the Seeker of Wealth burst apart, Saint Neville Magrin knew that the life of his father and greatest dependence had come to an end.

"FAAAAAATHHHEEEERRRRR!"

The Saint Kingdom surrounding the Unrelenting turned from orange to red as dark and negative emotions completely overwhelmed his mood!

Grief, rage, regret and other unsavory emotions completely overwhelmed his psyche to the point where there was nothing else in his mind!

The Unrelenting seemed to echo his emotional outburst. It too seemed to grieve the loss of the man who commissioned its creation!

The ace pilot and ace mech became so overwhelmed by their loss that they harmonized and resonated with each other in a much more profound manner than in the past!

The reddened Saint Kingdom centered around the Unrelenting started to balloon in size!

Not only that, but the power of true resonance became much greater and more focused.

The Saint Kingdom was no longer shaped like a normal sphere.

It lengthened and gained definition to the point where it had turned into a gigantic glowing figure!

The extraordinary manifestation that had reached a titanic size had taken the shape of Otrus Magrin!

"MY FATHER... IS STILL ALIVE!"

#### **Chapter 4608 The Power Of Gods**

Everyone who paid attention to this battle became shocked when they saw what happened to the Unrelenting.

The surviving members of Otrus Magrin's pioneering fleet, the aliens who were serving aboard the alien battleship and the Golden Skull Alliance who were observing the unfolding massacre from a distance all became slackjawed.

"Huh?" Aurelia grew confused as she saw the powerful mech beginning to project a giant humanoid figure. "What is happening, papa?"

Her father, who had been teaching her a lesson on manipulation, struggled to accept the reality transmitted by the observation devices planted in the Ramage Repulsor System.

He first suspected that Cenatus Prospecting managed to hack them all. It was much more believable if the current footage was falsified.

However, he knew in his heart that the live feeds were all working fine. None of them were close enough to get affected by any interference. They were so well-hidden that it was impossible for a single party to sniff out all of them in a short amount of time.

Ves had no choice but to accept the fact that Saint Neville Magrin had reached a state that few mech pilots ever got to experience!

"The enemy ace pilot... has entered into a special state of mind, honey. Saint Neville Magrin... has attained the legendary state of Unity of Man and Machine. This is already scary enough if he is piloting a normal mech or an

expert mech. If an ace pilot is able to reach this state with an ace mech... then the amount of strength he wields is unreal."

"How?"

"Humans have unlimited potential, my dear. You and I are constantly growing stronger. If we can do it, so can others. Each and every person can transform their spirit or willpower through exceptional means, thereby allowing them to summon much greater strength than anyone can imagine. Those who are able to succeed in this are the people who we truly need to pay attention to. They can be our greatest allies if they are on our side, but they can also become our most deadly enemies if they are on the opposite side!"

Aurelia became more and more awed as she was able to gain a faint glimpse of the immense power that Saint Neville managed to produce.

"Is he as strong as a god pilot, papa?"

"No." Ves spoke with certainty. "God pilots are much more astonishing than that. The Tower of Babel wouldn't even be able to remain intact if that was the case. Saint Neville has come close, though. The gap between his current state and his next rank has shrunk so much that..."

"Hm?" Aurelia turned her cute little head at her father.

"If my suspicions are correct, then Saint Neville has gained a much clearer idea on what he is working towards. The difficulty of becoming a god pilot... should be much less for him than usual!"

That alarmed Ves a lot!

Normally, he celebrated any event that allowed another god pilot to rise from the ranks of humanity.

The problem was that he did not want this to happen to one of his enemies!

It would be an absolute disaster if a new god pilot came into power who possessed an irreconcilable grudge against the Golden Skull Alliance!

Ves knew exactly what drove Saint Neville Magrin to this extent, and he clearly understood that he and his allies were primarily responsible for allowing this sequence of events to come into pass!

It was even an explicit part of his action plan!

Though he and his helpers were able to account for many possibilities, none of them thought that the most unlikely of events would actually take place.

Ves loosely estimated that the chance that Saint Neville Magrin might undergo a massive transformative boost in power was 0.1 percent or less!

That was already a generous estimate. Reaching the state of Unity of Man and Machine required the mech pilot to meet many strict criteria. Otherwise, it should have been a much more frequent occurrence on the battlefield!

As Ves tried to figure out where he miscalculated, the furious and empowered ace pilot didn't care about the magic of Unity of Man and Machine.

All he cared about was that his father was still with him, if not in body, then in spirit!

Saint Neville felt he could do anything as long as Otrus was still by his side!

"FATHER! YOU'RE STILL ALIVE! LET US COMBINE OUR STRENGTHS AND CRUSH THIS ALIEN WARSHIP! NO ONE IS ALLOWED TO TAKE AWAY YOUR LIFE!"

With the unflinching belief that his father was supporting him beyond his death, Saint Neville Magrin summoned more power and directed his supercharged ace mech to accelerate even faster towards the alien battleship!

He no longer cared about waiting for at least 218 seconds anymore!



He instinctively knew that he already gained the power to breach the alien battleship's defenses!

The Unrelenting abruptly sped up by several times! This was such a massive speed boost that even the aliens crewing the only warship on the battlefield grew alarmed.

What was especially dazzling was that the gigantic true resonance manifestation of Otrus Magrin became more solid and condensed!

It was as if Saint Neville's strong memories of his father were amplifying his current state of Unity of Man and Machine!

The aliens weren't stupid. They had fought against human forces long enough to develop a good understanding of the powerful and diverse means of the foreign invaders.

They had all learned that whenever something big was glowing with power, they were all about to have a really bad time!

The alien battleship no longer fired her guns at different starships anymore. The Cenatus Prospecting fleet had already disintegrated for the most part. Almost every fleet carrier had succumbed while the amount of surviving combat carriers had dropped by half.

Instead of wasting her firepower on finishing off these trivial targets, it was a lot more important to stop this gigantic growing human 'god' from getting close!

Every single primary, secondary and territory gun battery turned their powerful gun muzzles towards the approaching ace mech.

The slow but powerful primary kinetic cannons opened fire whenever they were able to do so, but before the powerful city-destroying rounds escaped the muzzles, the ace mech already evaded to the side!

Saint Neville Magrin's reaction speed had reached such an insane level that his actions were indistinguishable from precognition!

The Unrelenting even managed to evade many direct laser attack impacts!

Even as dozens of secondary laser cannons tried their best to weave an inescapable net around the Unrelenting, the powerful ace mech zipped around as if it was a light skirmisher instead of a medium hybrid mech!

Though the Unrelenting wasn't able to bend reality far enough to evade every incoming laser beam, the near-solid energy manifestation of Otrus Magrin easily sapped their strength!

The Unrelenting was unstoppable in this state!

It was as if Otrus Magrin himself was doing his best to protect his son from further harm!

This belief seemed to empower Saint Neville even further. His scorching hot eyes concentrated solely on the battleship that was responsible for 'almost killing' his cherished father.

As the ace mech braced its lance, the manifestation of Otrus Magrin lifted up its finger!

The lance and Otrus Magrin's arm were completely aligned. Both of them were united by a single purpose.

As the Unrelenting quickly closed in on the alien battleship, it started to enter into much more turbulent space!

It turned out that the alien battleship had shifted her spatial trap into a zone in front of the threatening ace mech.

However, the effect was far from matching the might of Neville's burning fury!

The ace pilot didn't even feel the additional resistance. The Unrelenting transphasic flight system was still accelerating the ace mech at an impossible rate!

By the time the Unrelenting was about to collide against the shielded bow of the alien battleship, Neville became unprecedentedly focused!

"MY FATHER COMMANDS YOU TO BREAK, SO BREAK!"

An incredibly powerful explosion erupted from the front of the battleship upon impact!

The ace mech along with its massive solidified Saint Kingdom collided against the bow of the vessel with such great speed and momentum that the energies released upon impact had reached cataclysmic levels!

No one except Saint Neville Magrin could track what was happening during this extraordinary interval of time!

Only Saint Neville could clearly feel that his 'father' had punched his finger through not three, but six orven segmented energy shields!

It turned out that the analysts employed by Otrus Magrin had underestimated the technology of the alien battleship.

If the Unrelenting had charged the enemy vessel in its previous state, then it would have been stopped at the fourth layer!

All of that was moot now that the Unrelenting had reached a completely different state.

The spear of the ace mech hadn't even touched any obstacles by the time that the giant glowing finger had destroyed every energy shield in its path!

Saint Neville barely had any time to process this massive result before the finger struck the hull of the alien battleship!

The bow was the strongest and most heavily-armored section of the alien vessel.

Layers of layers of Gugar Systems Arma-Lite DTT-F4 hull plating provided a lot of physical protection against both warship attacks and ace mech attacks!

Yet when the giant finger poked into the 'nose' of the alien ship, it managed to punch through all of those layers with unerring power!

The finger went deeper and deeper even as the surrounding compartment all sustained heavy damage!

Though the remaining limbs of the giant energy manifestation turned out to be more illusionary in nature, Saint Neville Magrin's amplified Saint Kingdom still crushed many ship components and pulverized the bodies of many alien crew members at closer ranges!

The ace mech drilled several hundred meters into the center of the alien battleship.

Not only did this devastating charge demolish a lot of essential offensive and defensive ship systems, but it also demolished many important compartments where officers and other essential crew members were stationed!

Over a third of all of the systems of the alien battleship immediately became inoperable because of this devastating charge attack!

At the end of the charge, the giant energy finger rapidly lost cohesion. Even the Unity of Man and Machine was not able to generate an endless amount of power!

Eventually, the shaped Saint Kingdom lost so much substance that the physical lance of the Unrelenting was forced to punch through the remaining core compartments of the battleship.

Once the ace mech finally lost all of its momentum, a brief pause ensued even as secondary explosions and other catastrophic phenomena engulfed the front half of the alien battleship.

Even though her rear half still remained functional for the most part, there was no doubt that the Unrenting had partially crippled her in just a single charge!

Saint Neville wasn't done. He wanted to do more than cripple the alien battleship. He wanted to destroy her utterly, and there was no better way to do that than to rampage through her insides where none of her warship-grade gun batteries could target his ace mech directly!

However, just as the powerful ace mech tossed away its ruined lance and lifted up its destructive warhammer, a powerful missile appeared out of nowhere and collided against the Unrelenting with such great force that the ace mech almost bounced out of the hole it had made!

The strange missile hadn't exploded upon impact. After a brief pause, it burst forward once again and somehow kicked the ace mech out of the hull of the alien battleship with so much power that a shockwave rippled through the surrounding space and shattered a decent chunk of the surrounding hull sections!

"Who dares?!" Saint Neville roared as he tried his best to force his Saint Kingdom to maintain its humanoid shape.

A single small shape emerged from the same hole.

The 'missile' turned out to be a surprisingly small armored alien individual.

Somehow, the alien was powerful enough to resist the might of an ace mech!

The Trampler of Stars could no longer command the battle from the seat of his power.

The fabric of space rippled around the powerful nunser warlord as the Trampler of Stars channeled the power of phasewater coursing through his veins.

The humans weren't the only ones who were capable of deploying gods on the battlefield.

The Trampler of Stars was determined to show these insolent foreign invaders how he came to be called this way his fellow aliens!

#### **Chapter 4609 Individual Power**

When the Big Two completed their centuries-long preparation and openly invaded the Red Ocean with great momentum, the human warfleets largely encountered little resistance at first.

Part of that had to do with the starting point of their invasion. The Mech Trade Association and the Common Fleet Alliance hadn't built the crucial gateway between the galaxies in the middle of the star system, but instead opted to place it in the periphery.

The concentration of resources was much lower here, which meant that the major alien races of the Red Ocean did not have a high presence in this neighborhood. The warships they utilized in the surrounding regions were second-line assets at best and were far from matching the highest standards of their respective civilizations.

It took a lot of time before the aliens recognized the full threat of these extragalactic invaders, but what could they do? Many of their most powerful warfleets were stationed much further inside the Red Ocean. The various alien races needed a lot of time to mobilize their best assets to the expanding frontlines!

Therefore, the MTA and CFA warfleets largely encountered little threat when they pummeled the local resistance.

It wasn't until they started to encounter strange anomalies that they began to experience more serious setbacks.

The phase whales were the most troublesome opponents to fight against. Their sizable bodies along with their excellent mastery of phasewater granted them much greater power and versatility than other combatants. The depth of their spatial abilities allowed them to come up with the right answers to many problems on the battlefield.

Though humanity already knew what to expect from the phase whales more or less, the fact that special individuals from other alien races were able to imitate the horrible strength and powers of phase whales to a degree was an unpleasant surprise!

Previously, the people assigned to study alien society never really took the native 'gods' that seriously. They learned that these powerful superwarriors were obsessed with injecting phasewater into their bodies in an attempt to imitate the most powerful phase whales, but they didn't understand how that allowed these delusional individuals to gain an unreasonable amount of power.

These native 'gods' sounded similar to high-ranking mech pilots who didn't need to borrow the power of mechs at first, but they rarely fought in any battles, which meant that information about their combat prowess was scarce and tainted with superstitious beliefs.

The so-called gods among the nunsers, orvens and other prominent intelligent alien races all assumed important leadership positions in their respective societies.

They occupied key positions such as heads of states, high council members, military generals, chief scientists and so on. They rarely condescended to serve as mere soldiers or champions who could be ordered around at will.

It was because of the difference in how humanity and the native aliens treated their most combat capable champions that led to a bias against the beings who paraded themselves around as if they were actual deities!

Too many humans assumed that they were merely alien leaders who made use of special augmentations to puff themselves up. It made for a convenient excuse to build a cult around themselves, which was a cheap and easy way to entrench their popular support and secure their power base.

A lot of mechers and fleeters became surprised once these supposed statesmen, members of parliament and chief scientists began to show up on the battlefield so that they could brawl against human mechs and warships with their own bodies!

Of course, the soldiers and officers of the Big Two were only briefly caught off-guard.

Many of these gods fought by relying on whatever phasewater augmentations they incorporated in their bodies. The cultural beliefs and customs surrounding their existence made it unacceptable for them to employ excessive technological gear such as mechs.

After all, if these all-powerful gods needed to rely on mechs or even stronger technological weapons to defeat their opponents, how could they be any better from the mortals they professed to rule over?

The awe and dignity of gods had to be maintained at all cost!

Practically every indigenous alien civilization of the Red Ocean had come to a consensus on this issue!

As such, these phasewater addicts got so full of themselves that they overestimated their importance in battle against the humans.



While many of these alien gods were able to exhibit absolute superiority in any infantry-level fight, they were mostly unable to maintain the upper hand when fighting against decent human mechs and warships.

Humanity had developed a lot more solutions against small but powerful combat units.

No matter whether it was first-class multipurpose mechs or a delusional alien 'god' who learned a few phasewater tricks, they were all the same to humanity!

It wasn't until the Big Two started to slaughter many of these arrogant alien gods in droves that the indigenous alien civilizations truly understood that they were facing collective extinction!

Most alien gods didn't actually amount to much. The proportion of native powerhouses that could give human ace mechs and warships a run for their money were rare, mostly due to the escalating difficulty of integrating phasewater into their bodies.

The Trampler of Stars could be classified as a middle-tier native god. He was clearly stronger and more prestigious than the younger and more inexperienced members of his exclusive group. He wouldn't have gained such a domineering title and assumed leadership over prototype warships that incorporated a blend of powerful human and alien tech.

However, he still fell short of the real powerhouses who often grasped the real reigns of power of their respective civilizations!

The owner of the Fractured House of the Collapsing Star began to gain a new respect for human ace mechs after testing out the power of the machine in front of his body.

The previous two collisions had given the nunser warlord a much better

The ace mechs fielded by the Mech Trade Association were so astonishingly strong that not even the Trampler of Stars dared to challenge them in single combat.

The ace mechs fielded by second-class human pioneers were much worse in this regard, but that didn't mean they were trivial to defeat.

"WHAT IS YOUR NAME?" The Trampler of Stars transmitted his inquiry to the opposing machine.

Though the alien had asked this question in his native language, he had opted to allow his translation suite to convert his words into human speech this time.

The powerful human warrior who was piloting the ace mech deserved much more respect in his opinion. The Trampler of Stars could already feel that the enemy ace pilot was incomparably strong compared to that sniveling human brat that he interrogated some time earlier.

It was unfortunate for the alien warlord that Saint Neville Magrin was not interested in a chat.

The man was still bereft with grief and rage, and he was quite aware that his temporary explosion of power was already starting to fade.

He needed to finish off the damaged battleship and complete his revenge against the aliens before he was unable to sustain the state of Unity of Man and Machine any longer!

"GET OUT OF THE WAY!" He roared as his ace mech began to attack the battleship yet again!

The shoulder-mounted gauss cannons fired a salvo of transphasic resonance-empowered gauss rounds that inflicted a thunderous hammer blow against the heavily damaged bow sections of the alien battleship!

Thousands of tons worth of hull structure shattered and broke apart from the enormous kinetic impacts produced by the seemingly casual attacks.

That wasn't all. Before the Trampler of Stars could charge forward and bounce the Unrelenting further away from the damaged battleship, the ace mech quickly lifted up its wrists and engulfed an enormous area in front of it with twin sprays of hot flames!

The flamethrowers not only caused the Trampler of Stars to disappear from sight, but also melted and engulfed all of the damaged but reasonably intact hull sections of the front half of the battleship!

However, before Saint Neville could bring his ace mech back into the hole so that the mech could burn the battleship from the inside, powerful phasewater fluctuations began to ripple in front before an enormous shockwave blasted the Unrelenting backwards!

"Ahh!"

It was as if the fabric of space had wobbled and rippled in a way that whipped the ace mech backwards!

Not only did the powerful spatial shockwaves repel the ace mech, they also shattered the cohesion of the resonance-enhanced flames, causing them to be unable to burn the battleship any further.

The Trampler of Stars came into view again. His heavy armor barely looked scorched at all. Stronger and more obvious spatial barriers surrounded his body, granting him greater protection against external attacks.

The alien warlord was angry now!

He no longer attempted to communicate with Saint Neville any further but instead started his follow-up move!

The alien 'god' floating in front of his homeship reared up his body before crashing his forehoofs onto an invisible surface in empty space!

The incomprehensible crash produced a massive spatial shockwave that radiated forward and struck the Unrelenting!

Saint Neville immediately felt uncomfortable as his ace mech struggled to resist this spatial attack.

The Unrelenting's humanoid-shaped Saint Kingdom managed to bleed away most of the damaging effects, but it had lost a lot more cohesion as a consequence.

Seeing that it became a lot more difficult for Saint Neville to keep his 'father' by his side, he grew more urgent than ever!

"Fine, then! If you want to get physical, then so will I!" Neville roared!

The Unrelenting fired another salvo of powerful gauss rounds at the battleship. Though the Trampler of Stars disrupted the trajectory of the projectiles by rippling the surrounding space, the attacks still managed to inflict glancing blows on the partially crippled battleship.

The more damage the Fractured House of the Collapsing Star sustained, the longer it took to make her travel worthy again!

The Trampler of Stars shot forward while rearing up his body in an attempt to crash his powerful hoofs against the frame of the ace mech.

The Unrelenting did not try to evade the incoming attack but instead tried to meet it by lifting up its warhammer in preparation for a thunderous blow.

Just as the hoofs of the alien warlord soared down with the force of a crashing warship, the Unrelenting quickly lifted up its round shield at an angle while trying to bring its hammer down onto the head of the alien god!

A huge explosion of power erupted from their positions as their attacks released a lot of different energies!

Two smaller shapes bounced away from each other as if they were marbles.

The Unrelenting sustained no obvious damage, but its Saint Kingdom had obviously become a lot more frazzled.

The Trampler of Stars also didn't seem to suffer any obvious damage as he had been able to rely on his powerful spatial shields to mitigate or deflect much of the damage of the hammer blow.

The two opponents only paused for a brief amount of time before they charged at each other once again!

This time, the Unrelenting attempted to soften up its alien opponent by firing its gauss cannons at its target.

The Trampler of Stars performed a strange spatial technique that bent the space in front of him, causing the projectiles to curve away from his small form.

At least, that was supposed to happen.

What actually happened was that the reality-defying properties of true resonance allowed the gauss rounds to resist the spatial warping effect just enough to strike the alien god's spatial shields!

The hammer strike that followed after that struck the alien warlord considerably harder than before!

Still, the Trampler of Stars also managed to bounce the Unrelenting backs by lowering its head and colliding it against the ace mech's chest area like a battering ram!

The defenses of both combatants sustained a lot of damage, but neither of them were willing to back down. Whoever managed to exhaust the defenses of the other first would gain a massive advantage in this duel.

#### **Chapter 4610 Limits Of Force**

As the crew of the half-ruined alien battleship desperately conducted damage control activities in an attempt to stop her from collapsing any further, an important duel took place just in front.

The Trampler of Stars used his own godblood-infused body to challenge the human ace mech that sought to finish the job.

After a few exchanges of blows, it became clear that the two possessed distinct strengths and weaknesses.

The nunser warlord showed unflinching courage and great endurance against his larger and more destructive opponent. His spatial barriers were uncommonly strong and he excelled at shaking and destabilizing wide swathes of space around his body.

What was particularly admirable about the nunser warlord was that he fought as if he could fight all day!

The Trampler of Stars was like an inexhaustible engine of destruction that could continually generate one shockwave after another without showing any signs of flagging!

Unfortunately, the Trampler of Stars did not excel in launching concentrated attacks. This made it difficult for the nunser powerhouse to punch through the ace mech's Saint Kingdom and pierce through the powerful armor system of the enemy machine.

The Unrelenting on the other hand was a much more focused war machine. Its shoulder-mounted gauss cannons could exert a decent amount of pressure

onto the alien god and inflict severe structural damage on the less armored portions of the alien battleship.

Its hammer strikes were even more destructive.

While Saint Neville Magrin was still plumbing the depths of his potential by sustaining the state of Unity of Man and Machine with his ace pilot, the Unrelenting's warhammer steadily broke down the strong spatial shields that safeguarded the alien warlord's life.

However, the Unrelenting's unreasonable level of performance could not be sustained!

This was most evident when its Saint Kingdom had started to shrink and lose more and more cohesion. Every time it was struck by a spatial shockwave attack, it lost more and more strength.

This was highly concerning for the humans who depended on the protection of the heir of their great leader.

Not only was Saint Neville Magrin unable to sustain the state of Unity of Man and Machine much longer, but he was unable to make any further progress in finishing off the alien battleship.

The front half of the alien craft might be ruined to the point that much of it was crippled, but her rear half retained a remarkably degree of functionality!

Her segmented energy shields easily resisted the damage inflicted by the surviving mechs of the human pioneering fleet. Her intact and relatively unaffected gun batteries continued to pound the remaining human carrier vessels with great power!

The fact that the battleship was able to perform so well despite receiving such a heavy blow was a testament to the design and the construction quality of the hybrid alien vessel.

Not all was well, though. Many intact sections of the ship lost a lot of power or control, causing many different functions to weaken or become inactive entirely.

The systems responsible for generating a powerful and far-reaching warp interdiction field had weakened to an extent, allowing many human starships that had traveled far away enough to enter into warp travel again.

Some of them fled immediately while others waited to pick up as many mechs and mech pilots as they could.

Seeing the surviving fleet carriers and combat carriers escaping the effective range of the damaged alien battlefield was a relief to Saint Neville Magrin.

As the heat of his fury began to fade and as exhaustion increasingly settled into his mind and body, his Unrelenting started to experience greater pressure from its immediate opponent.

Even when Saint Neville tried his best to keep his Unrelenting at an angle where the damaged alien battleship couldn't fire her gun batteries at his ace mech, the Trampler of Stars constantly tried to push his machine into killzones!

The more time passed by, the harder it became to prevent the Unrelenting from being shot at by the surviving secondary laser cannon batteries!

"Saint Neville!" A surviving mech officer of the remnant pioneering fleet transmitted to the faltering ace mech. "You need to leave right away! You have done enough for us. We anticipate that the damage sustained by the alien battleship will prevent it from entering into warp travel and chasing after the few ships that we have left. There is no need for you to risk your life any further. Please fall back before it is too late."

"I am not done yet!" Saint Neville hissed as his hatred against the alien warlord and his damaged battleship exceeded his desire for self-preservation.



"I am not leaving this job unfinished. This is my best chance to finish off this alien ship and take revenge for what they did to my father!"

"Your father did not want you to throw away your life in vain! We need you, Saint. Our ranks are in a mess and none of us have anything close to the prestige of your father. You are his only recognized heir. You are the only son of his that can suppress the monkeys that are jumping around and keep our fleet and organization together. Think about it, Neville. Your father invested over two centuries of his life to build his empire. All of his hard work will collapse if you continue to risk your life and get buried in this inconsequential star system. Forgive me for saying so, sir, but protecting his legacy is more important than giving in to mindless rage."

Saint Neville sobered up a bit after hearing this. His father had told him to prioritize his survival and the survival of the fleet, but it was hard for him to obey these instructions when the unthinkable happened.

As his ace mech futilely tried to circle around the alien battleship, only for the small but hardy alien warlord to charge and collide against the machine to push it back, Neville became increasingly more frustrated at his lack of progress.

Aside from the initial heavy charge attack, the Unrelenting failed to cripple the alien battleship any further.

In fact, the opposite was taking place. As the alien damage control teams steadily put out fires and repaired damaged systems, the battleship showed signs of revival.

Her segmented energy shields started to gain more cohesion and integrity than the opposite.

Her warp drives were being repaired and readjusted as fast as possible so that she could regain her mobility.

The alien vessel even started to launch her modest complement of starfighters!

Despite his aggressive and tyrannical reputation, the Trampler of Stars was not a mindless beast.

He patiently focused on displacing and exhausting the enemy machine as opposed to breaching its formidable defenses.

He clearly understood that the human ace mech in front of him could not sustain its peak performance for long.

The alien god was more than willing to stall the Unrelenting and wait until it had lost steam before going on the attack!

When Saint Neville Magrin could no longer maintain the Unity of Man and Machine, he felt a lot more drained than usual.

This was one of the downsides of entering this extraordinary state. Its power was incredible, but all of the energy had to come from somewhere.

Right now, Neville had severely overdrafted his strength. His willpower was normally strong and incredibly resilient, but now that he had fought at a level of strength that could rival that of a senior ace pilot, his entire head was buzzing with excessive strain.

The Unrelenting kept getting pushed back more and more by the Trampler of Stars. Seeing that it was impossible for Saint Neville to complete a part of his quest for vengeance today, the ace pilot let out a disgusted noise and decisively turned his machine around.

The ace mech's transphasic resonance-empowered flight system easily allowed the powerful machine to distance itself from its immediate adversaries.

The Trampler of Stars did not race after the retreating ace mech. He instead hovered in front of his damaged ship and remained on guard in case this was a trick.

Ultimately, the two sides diverged from each other. Neither side were willing to perpetuate this battle any further due to the heavy damage that they had sustained.

Only a fraction of the Cenatus Prospecting fleet was left, and many of the ships that had fled during the panic were scattered all across the star system.

The Fractured House of the Collapsing Star on the other hand was under no condition to pursue any of the fleeing human vessels.

Though she could still put up a decent fight if she started to run down individual human carrier vessels, that would only exacerbate the damage.

As the flames of battle started to fade, the masterminds who caused these two parties to collide in the first place were reasonably pleased at this outcome.

Ves had many reasons to be happy.

First, the Golden Skull Alliance managed to exact heavy punishment onto a vulture fleet. Even if it was impossible for the Larkinsons, Glory Seekers and Crossers to admit their responsibility for this scheme, plenty of smart people would be able to figure out the truth!

Once that happened, a lot of opportunists who held malicious intentions towards the expeditionary fleet should withhold their greed.

Hardly any other vulture fleet would dare to challenge a tough and aggressive opponent!

Second, the alien battleship codenamed the Tower of Babel had sustained enough damage to cripple her, but not enough to destroy her entirely!

Though Ves was disappointed that the rear half of the Tower of Babel held out remarkably well against the Unrelenting's brief assault, she was much less overpowering than before.

The most important question in his mind was whether Lord Pearian Yorul-Tavik managed to survive this turbulent battle.

"Is our target still alive and well?" Ves asked as he concentrated his mind onto Ylvaine.

The design spirit responded with a single affirmative impression.

"Thanks. It is nice to know that all of my efforts so far haven't been in vain."

The confirmation suggested that Lord Pearian Yorul-Tavik was being held in the rear half of the battleship.

From the perspective of the alien crew members, the human captive resided somewhere in the lower decks. The upper decks were mostly gone or heavily damaged, but many of the most essential ship systems were located below.

Ves became a lot more inclined to turn the expeditionary fleet around and jump straight back into the Ramage Repulsor System to complete his objective.

The alien battleship was probably at her most vulnerable condition at this time!

He would be a fool if he failed to take advantage of this crucial window of opportunity!

The Golden Skull Alliance just needed to be wary of the intact gun batteries of the enemy battleship. The remaining primary kinetic cannons and the secondary laser cannons could destroy a lot of starships if they happened to get close enough!

Ves quickly contacted General Verle.

"We need to finish off the Tower of Babel as quickly as possible."

"We are already on it, sir. We will need to employ all of our advantages as it will not be easy for us to minimize the damage. We also need to act as soon as possible as the greatest priority of the Tower of Babel is to leave human-occupied space before she is hunted down by a more powerful human force."

"Hmm. I understand. Keep studying the condition of the Tower of Babel. If you don't have enough confidence to pull off a clean attack, then maybe we can reconsider. I do not want our fleet to suffer the same degree of damage as the vulture fleet. The gains won't outweigh the losses if that happens."

General Verle smiled. "There is no reason to throw away the lives of a lot of good soldiers. We can still live without completing our mission."

The following days were crucial. The Golden Skull Alliance needed to pounce as quickly as possible in order to take advantage of Cenatus Prospecting's hard work!