The Mech Touch

Chapter 7561 Lining Up

Whatever the aliens had in mind, Ves doubted that they thought that the humans could actually block their amazing new weapon.

Twice more the alien superdimensional siege cannon attempted to tear open the Tortuous Scream's vulnerable hull.

The accuracy of these ultra-long-ranged attacks could not be faulted. The alien gunners even tried to vary their approach by targeting the sides as opposed to the fat juicy center of the human flagship.

Unfortunately for the aliens, both times the First Sword Mark III managed to repel the superdimensional slugs with unnatural skill and reaction speed.

Of course, as fast as the ace swordsman mech could move, the machine could not cross an entire kilometer in an instant.

There was only a miniscule window of opportunity to intercept the attack!

The moment Saint Dise's intuition managed to discern the trajectory of the incoming superdimensional slug, it was already too late for her to reposition the First Sword Mark III!

Perhaps the Dark Zephyr Mark III might be able to cross this small distance in an instant, but the ace swordsman mech clearly lacked this instantaneous movement ability.

However, neither Saint Dise nor Saint Commander Casella held much concern.

This was because the First Sword Mark III wielded far more than a single greatsword!

Of the sword fey that moved according to her will, there were always at least a couple of them that just happened to be positioned closely enough to intercept the enemy strike!

The timing was impossibly tight, yet Saint Dise managed to move the closest sword fey in the way fast enough for them to make a modest but crucial difference!

Unlike the Decapitator, the smaller sword fey lacked the strength and anchoring to properly block or deflect the powerful alien attack.

Even when empowered by true resonance, the sword was only able to offer enough resistance to deflect the incoming attack by 7 to 10 degrees at most.

However, this was just enough to spoil the potent attacks!

One superdimensional slug bounced off a sword fey just enough to turn a solid corner hit into a near-miss!

The next superdimensional strike managed to strike at a slightly more clever angle, making it so that when it deflected off the next sword fey, it still managed to pierce straight through the azure energy shields and punch through half-a-dozen sensor arrays and other surface modules!

However, compared to the damage that it could have inflicted if it had punched directly through the main hull plating, all of this minor damage was completely acceptable!

The only point of concern was that the sword fey could not handle the abuse. The ones that managed to deflect the slugs had incurred such a powerful blow that they had already become deformed. The way they flew through space also indicated that their internal components no longer worked as effectively as before.

"Failed again!"

"Will the aliens attempt to attack the Tortuous Scream for the third time? "

"They would be fools to do so. Nothing can get past Saint Dise."

"It is precisely because one of our powerful ace mechs is guarding our flagship that suggests that this ship is crucial to us. Aside from the Armitage, none of our other ships can come close enough to her in size."

The alien commanders must be facing a real dilemma. Should they double down and continue to strike at the flagship in the hopes of overcoming her resistance?

Or should they give up on winning the jackpot and strike at the lesser human starships instead?

A short moment later, the answer became clear.

The next strike did not come close to hitting the Tortuous Scream.

Instead, it followed a different trajectory entirely!

No powerful protector was positioned anywhere close enough to intercept the superdimensional round.

Not even the Saint Commander could do more than channel a bit more true resonance at the ship that was about to get hit.

Before anyone could blink their eyes, an RA combat carrier turned into a half-wreck!

The slug had punched straight through the center of her bow and almost ran through the entire length of her hull!

Seconds after the superdimensional slug exited from the aft, multiple secondary explosions quickly engulfed the poor vessel.

Many people looked horrified as they beheld the state of the ship.

Just a single attack had effectively rendered a modern first-class combat carrier dead!

The catastrophic kinetic blow had not only crushed many compartments and squished apart many hapless spacers, but also demolished sensitive components that just happened to be in the way such as power generators and propulsion systems.

Dangerous hazards such as wrecked power lines and leaking fuel pipes set off new explosions, causing the half-ruined hull to turn into a complete wreck.

Only a fraction of the mechers crewing the once-proud combat carrier managed to survive the catastrophic blow.

The surviving damage control teams attempted to stave off ruin, but they soon learned that none of their efforts could save their vessel from her doom.

There was just too much damage!

"Abandon ship! The Iksbar Gallant is unrecoverable!"

Escape pods and a few moderately intact shuttles spewed from the ruined hull. Far too few soldiers managed to make it off the wreck before a final explosion ultimately split the wreck in half.

"Our ship..."

The pressure on the soldiers serving on the remaining vessels intensified.

Although the combined fleet had made good progress so far, there was still a vast amount of distance from the orbital fortress that carried the formidable siege cannon.

Even the vanguard force comprising the Ascended Giants and a gaggle of mechs still needed at least several more minutes to threaten the orbital stronghold in question.

The Victrix, which not only led the vanguard but also granted it the protection of Casella's Command Field, shone brightly as she attempted to warp the space under her dominion to speed up their flight a little more.

"We won't make it in time!" Blinky scowled in frustration as he continued to hover alongside the Dark Apostle. "I don't care if any other ship gets struck, but if the aliens target the Tarrasque..."

His wife! His children!

For a moment, Ves selfishly considered whether he should request Saint Dise to reposition her ace mech in front of the Tarrasque instead.

That would completely expose the Tortuous Scream, giving the enemy an opportunity to heavily cripple the largest and strongest warship of the combined fleet.

Ves could not bring himself to issue such a selfish request.

Should he request the Poison Willows to enact their mission prematurely?

Doing so would set off the trap a lot earlier than planned. While the enemy would definitely get overwhelmed, the human forces were not yet in a position to capitalize on any weaknesses.

The fear was that the deathborn and the native aliens gained enough time to recover from the devastation and employ enough countermeasures to put up a bigger fight.

"Plans cannot keep up with so many changes."

They had come up with many contingency plans, but none of them anticipated that their enemies would have such a weapon at their disposal.

Just as Ves was about to voice his request, the Saint Commander communicated first.

"YOUR FAMILY IS SAFE." Casella directly conveyed to Ves and the Dark Apostle through her domain field. "I HAVE ORDERED THE TARRASQUE TO POSITION HERSELF RIGHT BEHIND THE TORTUOUS SCREAM. THE LATTER'S HULL IS SO LARGE THAT SHE CAN FULLY COVER THE FORMER'S SILHOUETTE. THE ARMITAGE, THE BABYLON EXCAVATOR AND OTHER IMPORTANT STARSHIPS ARE LINED UP FURTHER BEHIND AS WELL. TRUST IN DISE AND HER BATTLE PARTNER. THEY WILL NOT LET ANYTHING THROUGH."

Both Blinky and the Dark Apostle slumped their shoulders in relief.

This was a fairly clever solution!

As powerful as the enemy siege cannon might be, it was completely stationary.

Now that it had launched several strikes, it was not that difficult for the humans to follow their trajectory and gain a fairly accurate picture of the approximate position of the orbital fortress.

However, Ves immediately felt concerned again.

This solution only worked under one important condition.

"Lining up all of those hulls will only protect them against attacks coming from a single direction." He said. "If any of the other orbital fortresses have installed similar siege cannons, then they can form a crossfire. It is impossible for the First Sword Mark III to intercept multiple superdimensional strikes coming from multiple different directions at once. This danger will increase the closer we come to Hypeh-Tekas II."

Not just the Tortuous Scream, but all of the other ships lined up in her wake were incredibly vulnerable to any crossfire!

The Saint Commander did not immediately respond.

It ultimately took a dozen or so seconds for her to convey her next words.

"WE ARE STILL IN THE PROCESS OF GATHERING INTELLIGENCE. OUR BEST SCOUTS AND SENSOR SYSTEMS ARE DOING THEIR BEST TO EXAMINE THE PRESENCE OF SIEGE CANNONS ON THE OTHER ORBITAL FORTRESSES. THE DISTANCE IS STILL TOO GREAT FOR US TO OBTAIN SUFFICIENTLY HIGH-RESOLUTION SENSOR DATA THAT CAN CONFIRM OR DENY YOUR FEARS."

"What about the Dark Zephyr?! Reconnaissance is one of his specializations. Has Tusa managed to get close enough?!"

"THE DARK ZEPHYR... IS BEING IMPEDED."

"By what?"

"BY THE SHADOW OF THE DEATHBORN LEADER. I HAVE EXPRESSLY ORDERED TUSA NOT TO TAKE THE BAIT AND CONFRONT THE ENEMY DIRECTLY. DOING SO WHILE ISOLATED AND COMPLETELY SURROUNDED BY HOSTILE ENERGY FIELDS IS TOO RISKY."

"..."

If the powerful high-ranking deathborn leader was present on the battlefield, then he should be smart enough to prevent the humans from gathering crucial intelligence.

It made a lot of sense for this extra-galactic leader to go out of its way to block the Dark Zephyr Mark III!

This only deepened Ves' suspicions. The other orbital fortresses or the giant alien temple complex may hide other trump cards that the deathborn leader wished to keep a secret.

Could the combined fleet afford to let their alien adversaries control the battlefield to this extent?

Ves did not think so. He had a bad feeling about this situation.

The Star Cat firmed up his intangible body in determination.

"Casella. I think that we have completely fallen into our enemy's rhythm. We might not know what they are planning or what they have in reserve, but we can still recognize that we are dancing to their tune. This is not good at all. If you ask me, we should flip the board and stop playing by their rules."

Casella did not need any explanations to deduce what he meant by 'flipping the board'.

"AGREED." She straightforwardly responded, catching Ves off-guard. "I SHALL INSTRUCT THE POISON WILLOWS TO MOVE FORWARD AND PRIME THEIR FRUITS. THIS IS A GOOD TIME AS ANY TO WITNESS THE PERFORMANCE OF YOUR LATEST WORK."

The Terrang contingent received Casella's latest instructions. To their credit, they did not question their orders. The Poison Willow mechs began to separate themselves from their more conventional Woodsap mech brethren.

They continued to fly outwards until they closed in on the edge of the protective energy fields that had kept the dark miasma and the hostile deathborn at bay.

In order for these twisted biomechs to fulfill their purpose, they needed to abandon the safety of Casella's Command Field and engage the deathborn in hostile territory.

Nobody possessed the qualifications to accompany these dehydrated and weakened biomechs.

Perhaps it was for the best that their prematurely-aged pilots had lost a lot of emotions. Their apathetic mindsets prevented them from experiencing fear or casting doubt on their mission.

The absence of fear caused them to monotonously direct their biomechs to venture outside the protective bubble that had kept all of the hostility at bay.

The transition was immediate.

Pure hatred and animosity battered the Poison Willow mechs from all sides!

Their pilots immediately became assailed by otherworldly screams and soul-tearing howls!

The deathborn approached from multiple directions and immediately attempted to tear the intruders apart, starting from the shiny and impossibly attractive fruits!

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The Mech Touch

Saint Tusa Billingsley-Larkinson let out a grunt in frustration as he commanded his ace mech to evade a disturbingly sharp probing attack.

When the opposing force unveiled its powerful and impossibly accurate superdimensional siege cannon, he knew that someone had to go out and tear it down as quickly as possible.

Saint Davia Stark attempted to do so first.

Her Amaranto Mark III had dug inside one of the specially designed sniper bunkers built on the surface of the Tortuous Scream.

Having fully linked up with the systems of the orven battleship, the ace marksman mech was able to draw a lot of power while also gaining full access to the flagship's full processing power and smart AIs.

Combined with the purifying power of the light element and the Amaranto Mark III's other advantages, Saint Stark should have been able to strike back at the relatively static orbital fortress.

Yes when the magnificently bright ace mech finally spat out a bright purple energy beam, the pride-fueled attack persisted only for a few seconds before disappearing into nothing.

"..."

"HOW COULD YOU HAVE MISSED, STARK?" Tusa questioned at the time. "THAT ORBITAL FORTRESS MAY BE FAR AWAY, BUT ITS ORBITAL TRAJECTORY IS ABSOLUTELY STABLE. YOU HAVE ALREADY PROVEN EARLIER THAT YOU CAN OVERCOME THE DISTORTION GENERATED BY THE DARK MIASMA."

"MY AIM IS NOT AT FAULT." Davia Stark defended herself. "MY ATTACK SOMEHOW FAILED TO ARRIVE."

"HOW? DID IT GET INTERCEPTED?"

"UNCLEAR. THE DARK MIASMA IS MUCH STRONGER AND MORE CONCENTRATED CLOSER TO THE PLANET. THE INTERFERENCE GENERATED BY IT IS MUCH MORE SEVERE AS A CONSEQUENCE. AT WORST, LONG-RANGED SNIPING AND BOMBARDMENT IS COMPLETELY INEFFECTIVE."

The humans thought they had already figured out the characteristics of the dark miasma.

It turned out that they had only scratched the surface of this incredibly debilitating phenomenon.

Not only did it grant a huge amount of nourishment and concealment to the deathborn, but it hindered other forces in countless different ways.

The fact that the dark miasma neutralized the means of the combined fleet to such a severe degree heavily limited everyone's options!

Saint Commander Casella Ingvar most definitely paid attention to this interaction.

She did not waste much time on issuing a new set of orders.

"STARK, CONSERVE YOUR RESOURCES. REMAIN ON STANDBY AND ONLY STRIKE AT APPROACHING ENEMIES. LEAVE THE COUNTERATTACK TO OTHER UNITS."

"I STILL HAVE A TRICK UP MY SLEEVE." Stark retorted.

"I KNOW, BUT THE ENEMY ORBITAL STATION IS NOT THE RIGHT TARGET FOR YOUR DEATH SEEKER. BESIDES, ITS CONSUMPTION IS TOO GREAT. YOUR FIREPOWER MUST REMAIN AVAILABLE FOR THE ENTIRE DURATION OF THIS ENGAGEMENT."

Saint Stark struggled to accept this instruction.

It took several seconds before she eventually relaxed her shoulders.

She still possessed enough discipline and self-control to set aside her pride and stubbornness.

She understood the Saint Commander's rationale. This was a large battlefield and there were plenty of enemies lurking inside the dark miasma. Her time would come eventually. There was no need to waste so much energy just to achieve so little in return.

"I SHALL COMPLY."

"TUSA." Casella addressed the fastest mech pilot in the combined fleet. "YOU KNOW WHAT TO DO. APPROACH THE ORBITAL FORTRESS AND DO WHAT YOU CAN. IF THE OPPORTUNITY ARISES, SABOTAGE OR DESTROY THE SIEGE CANNON. IF THAT IS NOT

POSSIBLE, THEN STAY CLOSE AND CONTINUE TO MAINTAIN CONSTANT OBSERVATION."

"GOT IT, COMMANDER."

Tusa did not experience fear, but he could not help but to raise his guard to the maximum as soon as his Dark Zephyr Mark III separated from the main force and ventured off into the dark miasma by himself.

While his ace mech felt at home in the shadows, the oppressive darkness and all of the deathborn slamming into his Saint Kingdom constantly reminded him that he and his battle partner did not belong in this space.

There was no way for the Dark Zephyr to hide his presence and trajectory.

The deathborn race had already proven that it possessed an incredible decree of awareness of what passed through the dark miasma.

In contrast, the Dark Zephyr's state-of-the-art compact sensor suite failed to pierce through the churning dark fog around him. Resonance empowerment only mildly improved the results. The ace light skirmisher still remained depressingly near-sighted.

Tusa was not accustomed to going in blind like this. His evasion relied heavily on gathering data from the surrounding environment. The more his ace mech was able to register, the more confidently he could make the right movements at the right time.

The exaggerated contraction of his effective sensor range meant that the enemy could prepare all kinds of attacks without his knowing!

This also compressed his reaction time to an uncomfortably small margin. Just like how the combined fleet was almost unable to defend itself against the superdimensional siege cannon, the Dark Zephyr Mark III might not even have enough time to dodge a surprise attack!

All of this should have made Saint Tusa feel as if he was out of his element.

While this was indeed the case, he did not feel as discomfited as he should.

It only took less than a minute for him to press down his unease.

A grin started to appear on his face.

His heart beat faster, not because he was afraid, but because he grew excited!

The reason why his mentality underwent such a drastic shift was because he realized the benefits of fighting in this hostile environment.

He was no longer fighting under usual conditions. The advantages that he had relied upon to stay several steps ahead of his adversaries no longer applied this time.

Instead, he had to endure several debilitating handicaps, from suffering a severe degree of information asymmetry to not being able to receive as much remote support as before.

He and his battle partner could only rely on themselves to solve any immediate threats.

Nothing further out seemed to matter anymore. Neither the combined fleet or the distant orbital fortresses could exert much of an influence on his ace mech.

The only enemies that he truly needed to guard against were those that managed to sneak close to him. Tusa truly did not know what to expect, but he guessed that his adversaries would never allow his Dark Zephyr to roam free.

After several minutes of solitary flight, his intuition vaguely picked up signs of latent danger.

Though the dark miasma had shown little changes aside from becoming denser and more oppressive, Tusa's placed an immense amount of trust in his battle-honed intuition.

"Ha!"

At a seemingly random moment, the Dark Zephyr Mark III abruptly boosted to the side!

The ace light skirmisher did so not a moment too soon, because the position that he used to occupy had suddenly suffered a series of attacks!

The Dark Zephyr's sensor systems were only able to detect the thrust of four dark tentacles!

Tusa's eyes widened as he noticed the unusual nature of these strange extremities.

As a veteran champion of the Larkinson Clan, he was no stranger to aliens and their love for tentacles.

Yet these ones appeared much more threatening than the tentacles he witnessed in past engagements!

For one, these giant tentacles were all wrapped with concentrated death energy.

It was as if the tentacles purposefully attracted the negative energies.

This not only empowered their strikes with the power of death, but also caused limbs to blend in a lot better within the dark miasma!

Without the benefit of his intuition, Saint Tusa strongly doubted that he would have been able to react in time.

This was not all. What truly spooked Tusa was that the tentacles were all tipped with a familiar alloy.

The shine and coloration closely matched that of Saint Piercers and Saint Armors!

The claw-shaped tips looked as if they had been expressly designed to clamp down and dig through the armor of high-ranking mechs.

A superdimensional weapon's ability to neutralize true resonance made it especially deadly against expert mechs and ace mechs that lacked superdimensional armor.

Unfortunately for Saint Tusa, his Dark Zephyr Mark III just so happened to lack this protection!

The ace pilot cursed in his heart. The only true superdimensional ace mechs in the combined fleet were the Riot Mark III and the First Sword Mark III.

Aside from that, no other ace mech had been updated to the latest and most luxurious standards!

Tusa found this to be especially frustrating when all of the Ascended Giants were equipped with full superdimensional raiments.

Even if they were made of mid-grade superdimensional alloys, that was still better than the Dark Zephyr's own 'outdated' transphasic archemetal plating!

What made the ace light skirmisher's situation even more precarious was that his armor layers were much thinner than any other high-ranking machine.

Tusa knew without a shred of doubt that if those darkness-infused tentacles managed to strike his battle partner even once, there was no way to avoid crippling damage!

The safety margin of his archemech was simply too feeble in the face of this acute threat!

As the Dark Zephyr Mark III continued to fly almost blindly through space, Tusa kept his senses and willpower sharp.

His Saint Kingdom continued to maintain a high degree of awareness of the surrounding dark miasma, but its effectiveness remained limited.

Its range had shrunk by a considerable degree. Tusa had little choice in the matter. The larger the radius, the more he had to fight against the hostile environment. His willpower

would bottom out within a quarter hour if he forcefully tried to double the radius of his domain field!

Yet Tusa still did not wipe the smirk off his face.

"COME AGAIN."

The hidden enemy powerhouse obliged.

Less than a dozen seconds later, four tentacles erupted from the side and sought to stab the Dark Zephyr Mark III from several different directions!

Each of the superdimensional-tipped tentacles cleverly sought to block several escape routes, making it a lot more dangerous for Tusa to evade in a random direction!

Yet somehow, Tusa made the correct choice. Without fully realizing where the enemy intended to strike, the ace pilot spontaneously chose to move in one of the few directions that enabled his machine to slip through the gaps!

Chapter 7563 A Massive Eruption

The Dark Zephyr Mark III entered into a temporary stalemate with his unseen enemy.

The ace light skirmisher had repeatedly evaded the lethal superdimensional-tipped tentacles of the presumed deathborn leader.

It was one thing for Tusa to rely on his skill, experience, intuition and other factors to make the right decisions time and time again.

Yet he visibly improved his response over time!

When the Dark Zephyr Mark III had transitioned from mere movement into dancing, the ace light skirmisher seemed to mock his incapable adversary!

Tusa actually thought that his ace mech's increasingly provocative movements would have enraged the deathborn leader to the point of revealing other means.

Unfortunately, the unseen enemy was too smart and rational to fall for this trap.

The deathborn leader had instead decided to cease its unproductive attacks and chosen to back off, but not entirely.

Tusa's eyes remained sharp as he could vaguely sense that his current enemy had never truly departed from the vicinity.

Instead, this formidable adversary had chosen to circle around the Dark Zephyr Mark III.

Neither side appeared ready to make any drastic moves.

Though Saint Tusa deeply wanted to bypass this threatening opponent and approach the orbital fortress that carried the superdimensional siege cannon, he saw no hope of doing so at this time.

The only contribution he could make was to keep this unknown alien powerhouse occupied!

Just as the deathborn leader sought to impede the Dark Zephyr Mark III, the ace light skirmisher also effectively kept the enemy in place!

It was hard for him to determine whether maintaining their current state benefited one side more than the other.

Tusa personally judged that it was absolutely vital to keep this frighteningly powerful alien away from the combined fleet.

After all, the First Sword Mark III was currently busy with defending the most crucial human vessels from the threat posed by the superdimensional siege cannon. She could not engage in a duel against this alien leader while still fulfilling her current assignment!

As such, the Dark Zephyr Mark III continued to circle around while remaining on guard.

The ace mech did not completely maintain a static position.

Tusa could feel his immediate opponent gradually shifting into different directions.

The Dark Zephyr Mark III followed the enemy's movements while making sure not to get too close.

This went on and on to the point that it reminded Tusa of a dance.

Though the dance did not follow any clear patterns, Tusa still imagined that he had found a mutual rhythm with his alien 'dance partner'.

During this ambivalent ritual, Tusa constantly began to learn more about his adversary.

Though he had never verbally communicated with his alien adversary, he somewhat began to develop a clearer and more defined impression of his enemy by reading the enemy's moves.

This was a more subtle form of intelligence gathering.

Saint Tusa prided himself for his eyesight and his ability to read his enemies.

This standoff granted him a better understanding of the deathborn leader.

They were drastically different in nature. They held very little common ground and it was doubtful whether they could understand each other's language.

Yet despite all of these barriers, Tusa felt he was constantly learning more about the temperament of his current dance partner.

At the same time, he imagined that his adversary felt similar. Tusa could not stop himself from exposing different pieces of information.

Though he did not consider himself to be a particularly private individual, Tusa still did not want this new enemy to develop a thorough understanding of himself and his ace mech.

Perhaps he needed to make this dance more interesting.

The Larkinson ace pilot tried to come up with ideas. He was not in a hurry to make a move. So long as his enemy remained passive, he was still doing his duty.

He thought he would have more time to come up with a plan.

Yet just when he thought this stalemate would drag on without excitement, the surrounding space suddenly experienced a drastic shift!

Tusa widened his eyes as he witnessed the surrounding dark miasma getting displaced by a rapidly-expanding wave of extremely abundant life energy!

He immediately recalled the gambit that Ves and his fellow mech designers had prepared.

"THEY DEPLOYED THE NEW BIOMECHS ALREADY?!"

This was too soon!

Something severe must have happened outside of the Dark Zephyr Mark III for the Saint Commander to choose to detonate this particular payload in advance!

The Saint Kingdom surrounding the ace light skirmisher flared brighter as Tusa forcibly channeled all of his willpower into keeping the eruption of life energies at bay.

He could vaguely sense that not only was the dark miasma being displaced by a huge amount of positive energies, but the deathborn had also been driven mad as well!

These mindless beings eagerly devoured the free-floating vitality, only to grow sick and become forcibly drained by the poisonous seeds that they had inadvertently swallowed.

The weakest deathborn could not sustain this dramatic consumption. They perished quietly or exploded violently, releasing large amounts of life energy that the deathborn previously tried to digest.

The slightly stronger ones among them managed to keep themselves together, but only for a limited amount of time.

This was because they found it extraordinarily difficult to restrain their instincts.

They deeply wanted to devour their fellow deathborn brethren!

There was absolutely no sense of kinship or common development among these savage and primitive deathborn.

The shift in behavior was widespread!

Even though an observant individual could deduce that the life energies were extremely problematic, the bottom feeders of the deathborn race could not see or think so much!

Their entire reality only existed a few dozen meters around them at best. When they saw so much attractive energies floating right beside them, how could they not reach out and attempt to take a bite?

Whether they bit into free-floating E energy or tore into the intangible bodies of their fellow brethren, the deathborn completely failed to keep themselves in check!

The changes happened so suddenly that Tusa was not the only one caught off guard.

His 'dance partner' completely forgot about their mutual game and became completely paralyzed by the unprecedented changes happening in every direction!

More deathborn succumbed to their hunger and instincts, and more deathborn got torn apart due to these reasons!

So much of their essence got converted into life energy that almost nothing remained of the surrounding dark miasma!

The oppressive darkness had disappeared a lot faster than anyone could have imagined, only to make way for a different kind of oppression.

This time, the sudden saturation of positive energies completely changed the mood in this corner of space!

The Dark Zephyr could not control himself and began to absorb the surrounding energies.

At first, the living mech behaved as if he was drowning in a gigantic tub of pure tonic, yet seconds later, the ace mech quickly began to experience a form of sickness that forced him to suspend his current activity.

"THIS VITALITY IS POISONOUS."

Fortunately, whatever trap buried in the free-floating life energies failed to affect the living mechs as severely as their intended prey.

While the Dark Zephyr and other living mechs could not defuse the poison at a fast rate, they at least weren't susceptible to their most dangerous effects!

This caused them to experience a growing sense of frustration. Their spiritual foundations deeply desired to absorb these energies. They could benefit enormously from all of this potency. Yet because the energies were riddled with dangers, they could only stand aside and let it all flow away!

Saint Tusa did not feel too upset or regretful about this. "YOU KNOW ABOUT THE PLAN, PARTNER. NONE OF THESE ENERGIES BELONG TO US IN THE FIRST PLACE. THE ONLY GROWTH THAT MATTERS IS THE ONE THAT WE HAVE EARNED THROUGH OUR OWN EFFORTS."

Not every living mech or mech pilot was able to maintain such a sober mindset, but Saint Tusa held no illusions about the truth of power.

Instead of letting himself get distracted by imagining what he could do if his ace mech absorbed all of these energies, Tusa became a lot more interested in his dance partner's reaction.

The exponential explosion of vitality had temporarily stripped away the dark miasma that the enemy used as its home ground.

While the overabundance of life energies generated a different form of oppression and interference, the Dark Zephyr Mark III at least managed to gain a clearer overview of his surroundings than before!

Amidst all of the churning flows of life, the corpus of the presumed deathborn leader finally became visible.

He, or it, looked more monstrous than Tusa expected.

A thin but highly concentrated layer of negative energies still clung to the exterior of the body of a dead and incomplete body of a greater phase whale.

Though Tusa was able to ascertain that this formidable 'native god' was definitely dead, the strong concentration of death energy invigorated it with an unnatural form of life or unlife.

This could only be a form of Messier 87 style necromancy.

The heavily injured and half-rotted body appeared as if it had been composing midway until it had turned into an unholy vessel for a blasphemously powerful existence.

Tusa had heard the theory that the deathborn leader was a powerful True God that projected himself into a distant vessel in order to meddle in the affairs of the Red Ocean.

Right now, he became almost convinced that this theory was accurate!

The clear view along with the alien's own reaction towards the drastic shift in environment all revealed clues that supported this particular theory!

Though Tusa was not able to observe any direct and conclusive evidence that could definitively shut this debate, the odd behavior and reactions of his dance partner all pointed in this direction!

The only oddity was that the alien leader did not make any move to restrain the deathborn under its dominion from devouring all of the poisonous life energies.

Was it because the changes happened too quickly?

Or was it because the foreign True God simply did not care?

Tusa did not think his side had managed to cripple the other side with this gambit.

Even though it looked as if it had done exactly what Ves and the others intended, the continued threat posed by this alien powerhouse had not diminished all that much!

In fact, it looked as if the deathborn leader became intrigued by the sudden changes more than anything.

The more nonchalant this key enemy behaved, the more Saint Tusa started to grow apprehensive.

The Dark Zephyr Mark III began to circle around the stationary leader.

The ace mech did not attempt to get any closer. He merely hovered close enough to keep this silent enemy under observation.

"WHAT ARE YOU DOING?" Tusa wondered.

Thank you for reading my work. If you wish to support The Mech Touch, please vote with your golden tickets!

Chapter 7564 Excess Growth

Venerable Tusa grew slightly more strained over time.

The dark miasma had disappeared too quickly.

A greenish mist had taken its place. Abundant life energy had filled the void and began to exert its own form of pressure.

Both people and living mechs yearned to absorb this nurturing form of energy, but doing so came with significant danger!

Tusa could not detect the invisible seeds of poison, but he could vaguely sense the latent threat posed by all of the surrounding energies.

Even his ace mech did not dare to ingest too much at once.

As a living mech, the Dark Zephyr Mark III derived a lot of benefits from life energy, especially when it came in a more universal and unclaimed form.

However, the need to filter out the poisonous seeds that made these energies so deadly significantly impaired his efficiency.

If not for this impediment, the Dark Zephyr Mark III may have been able to swallow enough life energy to trigger a sublimation!

Although the living mech still did his utmost to take advantage of the current situation, the Dark Zephyr had not forgotten about the current threat.

So far, the deathborn leader had been acting surprisingly calm.

The removal of the dark miasma and the mass extinction of his deathborn subordinates had not caused much of a reaction from the enemy powerhouse.

Even though his macabre form had lost its concealment and became a lot more visible, the alien seemed to care little about the Dark Zephyr's obvious observations.

Tusa had a bad feeling about this lengthy period of inaction.

He felt he should be more proactive and take the initiative to attack his former dance partner.

On the other hand, doing so might trigger something prematurely and cause the enemy's threat level to skyrocket.

Without sufficient intelligence on what he was dealing with, Tusa opted to play it safe and do... nothing.

The lack of action unnerved him. It felt wrong to leave his current adversary alone, yet what else could he do?

The enemy was way too powerful to be left unattended!

Just as Tusa thought about contacting the Saint Commander for further instructions, the enemy finally made a move.

The possessed greater phase whale did not display any aggression.

Instead, the gigantic carcass began to exude more power.

It was as if this monstrosity was asserting its dominion over the surrounding space!

The death energies that it had managed to retain gradually began to multiply and grow in volume by devouring the dense amounts of life energy in the vicinity!

The deathborn leader... was actually converting life into death!

Tusa's eyes widened as he witnessed this feat.

It shouldn't be too much of a surprise that the alien leader was able to perform this conversion, but what truly shocked Tusa was that the enemy did so without suffering any apparent backlash!

Nothing happened that suggested that the poisonous seeds took effect.

The alien leader did not suffer from the same affliction that had drained the lives of its subordinates!

"HOW?"

The deathborn leader did not deign to issue a response. Instead, it was occupied with its own efforts. A few seconds had already passed and already a veritable cloud of darkness and death had sprung up around its large form!

Compared to the previously-ubiquitous dark miasma, this new cloud of darkness manifested in a slightly different fashion.

It was much darker and more concentrated. Under the will of this foreign alien entity, the dark fog suddenly turned into a vortex that absorbed huge quantities of life energy!

This was an alarming change!

Somehow, the deathborn leader completely managed to neutralize the threat posed by all of the poisonous seeds!

The powerful intangible alien entity's aura grew stronger at a very concerning rate!

Tusa knew he had to report his development right away.

"CASELLA!"

"I AM AWARE."

"WE NEED TO STOP HIM BEFORE HE GROWS ANY STRONGER!"

"I DO NOT DISAGREE, TUSA, BUT OUR HANDS ARE CURRENTLY FULL."

"HUH?"

"ACCIDENTS HAVE OCCURRED. OUR WOODSAP MECHS... ARE LOSING CONTROL. I AM TRYING TO RESTRAIN THEM AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE, BUT..."

Tusa previously paid no attention to other units. Much of it was because the dark miasma prevented him from keeping track of their progress.

Now that the dark fog had almost entirely disappeared from the battlefield, the Dark Zephyr Mark III was much better able to peer through the green mist.

It soon became clear what Casella meant.

The Woodsap mechs had drunk deeply from the vitality all around them. The life energies converted from the lives of so many deathborn served as a highly nutritious tonic to them, while the poisonous seeds did not affect them all that much.

The biomechs not only replenished their prior consumption, but also began to become stronger in many different ways!

Certain Woodsap mechs such as the iconic Rosenstorm began to bloom with life. The latter's roses grew larger, redder and more alluring. They gained greater extraordinary traits, though their effects remained unclear.

Their pilots also benefited enormously from the infusion of life energies. The elven mech pilots among them were especially delighted to gain access to so many resources!

Even though they had been warned not to recklessly absorb these life energies, they could not resist the urge to do so. Fortunately, each of them chose to absorb the abundant tonics after it had already been filtered by their bonded partners in advance.

The Woodsap Pact formed between pilot and machine happened to serve as a perfect channel for this operation!

The pilot might die as grievously as the deathborn if he attempted to absorb the life energy directly, but by using his specialized biomachine as a medium, he was able to take advantage of the latter's strengths!

Multiple mech pilots grew rapidly in strength, so much so that they could barely keep themselves under control!

The humans among them were doing relatively fine so far. Their relatively unexceptional talent and physiques meant that they were inherently not as efficient at absorbing this power than other, more suitable beings.

The story was considerably different for the elven contingent among the test pilots!

As post-humans who had been endowed by their creator with inherently high affinities for life and other related phenomena, their ability to absorb and digest life energy was so much greater!

These elves therefore faced a relatively unique problem, and that was that they consciously had to restrain themselves lest they go too far.

The Second Elf especially felt the urge to shout out and transform into a greater version of himself!

Yet for all of the temptations of power, he knew that doing so was not in his best interest!

"Take advantage of this situation, but do not get lost in it! If we absorb too much life energy, we will evolve into foundation builders. Qi cultivators may be proficient in wielding this kind of power, but that is not what we aspire towards becoming. The true path of godhood for us is the one that leads us to transcending into a god pilot! Only this path allows us to realize our full potential! Once you are close to reaching your limit, do not absorb anything further! If you still insist on doing so regardless of the risks, then do your best to channel the excess energies into your companion spirit or your living mech."

That was good advice. A Woodsap mech pilot was never alone. As elites, they had all been granted their respective companion spirit fruits. This essentially gave them a free vessel that they could freely shape into intangible qi cultivators!

Aside from that, their Woodsap mechs could derive constant nourishment from the extremely abundant supply of life energy.

Their thresholds were set much higher than their weaker and far more fragile human counterparts. Even if it appeared that their comprehensive growth began to plateau due to diminishing returns, These Woodsap mechs had grown at least several times stronger in almost every important parameter!

If the changes to the normal Woodsap mechs was astonishing enough, then the complete transformation of the Poison Willow mechs truly shook everyone's expectations.

They had previously sacrificed almost all of their life and vitality to grow their fruits.

Now that their payloads had done their jobs, the fruitless biomechs freely absorbed all of the life energy released by the self-destruction deathborn.

Much like the regular Woodsap mechs, the Poison Willows experienced no danger when absorbing this abundant power.

Out of all of the living mechs in existence, none of them were more capable in neutralizing the threat posed by the poisoned seeds than the Poison Willows themselves!

Each of the thirty sacrificial biomechs experienced a dramatic transformation.

Their wooden frames regained their youth and moisture. They had lost their dry and feeble appearances. Any cracks and other marks of damage soon disappeared as their organic frames healed every blemish.

Soon enough, the Poison Willows appeared just as healthy as the regular Woodsap mechs, with only their long and fruitless branches marking them as variants.

Yet their growth did not cease at this point.

The Poison Willows continued to absorb life energy at a stupendous rate. They behaved like starving refugees who had just gained access to an endless supply of sustenance.

They couldn't help themselves!

The biomechs and their bonded pilots gorged themselves on the life energy without limit.

Energy vortices appeared around each of their wooden frames as they removed every limiter they could just so that they could absorb all of the life energy faster!

"Sir, are these biomechs supposed to absorb so much energy?"

"I do not know the answer, but my guess is no."

Several Terran officers including the Second Elf became frightened by this reckless display.

Caracalla Shuku had not exchanged too much information with Ves, but he distinctly remembered that the latter warned not to fall into excess.

Absorbing too much life energy at once could produce unforeseen consequences!

According to the creator of Woodsap mechs, every living mech possessed a growth limit or sorts. Any growth beyond this boundary could potentially generate more harm and good, though Ves could not provide any details.

"To be honest, I cannot predict the consequences of excess growth and absorption, but I can pretty much guess it will take on an ugly form." Ves told the Second Elf at the time. "You need to keep your men and mechs in check. Do not let them become drunk with life energy. If the plan works as intended, then this will be a free opportunity for all of your Woodsap mechs to gain several decades worth of growth in an instant. Be happy with all of that progress, but do not succumb to greed. Any further artificial elevation will distort your living mechs beyond recognition. Make sure you and your men never cross this line."

"What if... they cannot control themselves?"

Ves smirked in response. "I have already accounted for this possibility. I have installed numerous safeguards in the Poison Willows. They are subjected to both software and hardware locks that automatically kick in when they are close to reaching their probable limitations."

"How reliable are these measures?"

"No safeguard is absolute." Ves admitted. "My living mechs are more prone to defying their programming and other restrictions. It is an inherent part of their nature. The ability to grow means overcoming their limitations. If that growth is not directed properly, then they may very well break boundaries that they should have never touched in the first place. If that happens..."

The mech designer did not finish his words, but the Second Elf dearly wished that was the case.

Because what was happening clearly matched the nightmare scenario of unrestrained growth!

The Poison Willows began to show further morphological changes.

Yet this time, they did not appear as benign as before.

They had already reached perfect health, so all of the excess vitality went on to produce more biomass.

Every Poison Willow started to grow in size and stature. Even without access to the so-called Gaia Trees, the biomechs converted huge amounts of life energy into additional TE Wood!

While growing larger was not necessarily a bad development, the problem was that this growth occurred completely without any guiding hand!

This meant that the expansion in mass and volume was very uneven.

For example, one Poison Willow grew a disproportionately large and bloated right leg!

Another started to become surrounded by hundreds of increasingly thick and longer branches!

What was even more frightening was that this uncontrolled growth did not stop at the biomechs themselves.

Their pilots also became subjected to this phenomenon!

Use arrow keys (or A / D) to PREV/NEXT chapter

Chapter 7565 The Blackwater Summoner

Not many people noticed what was happening at first.

Those that did manage to catch sight of the transformation of the Poison Willows thought that this was a benign event.

After all, the Poison Willows and their bonded pilots suffered greatly. They had sacrificed too much in order to grow their precious poisoned fruits. To see them regain their life and vitality should be regarded as an honest reward for services rendered.

Yet the problem was that their physical restoration did not end at this point.

Even after the weird biomechs regained their moisture and restored their many cracks and atrophied parts, the Poison Willows continued to absorb large amounts of life energy.

It was as if their limits did not exist anymore!

In the face of such enormous temptation, none of the Poison Willows obeyed their instructions.

Despite the fact that Ves had installed plenty of safeguards meant to prevent this exact situation, the living mechs simply outgrew these chains by relying on brute force!

The pressure of growth was too great to be contained!

Each and every Poison Willow had become so drunk with power that their greed could not be stopped anymore.

These crazy machines no longer listened to any orders. Neither the voices of the Saint Commander nor the Second Elf registered to them anymore.

"These machines have gone rogue! All 30 of them are no longer listening to orders! They have even cut off their connections to our command net!"

That last part had to be a conscious decision on their part. There were multiple ways to cut off their data connections to the central net that assisted with command and control, but the Poison Willows most likely cut them off proactively in order to block the shutdown commands.

"What is the state of their pilots?! Are they still alive?!"

Nobody could answer this question. Not even Ves, who was observing this ongoing disaster from afar, could offer much insight.

He deeply wanted to approach one of the Poison Willows that he had modified in person and see what went wrong.

However, he was not in control of his true body at the moment.

The Dark Apostle and his troop of Ascended Giants had no interest in investigating a bunch of malfunctioning Poison Willow mechs.

This was because the native gods had finally made an appearance!

In order to prevent the Ascended Giants from approaching one of the orbital fortresses and wreck the superdimensional siege cannon, a host of well-equipped alien phase whales and phase lords had finally emerged to block the way!

The Dark Apostle and the Fiery Axe both stopped in their tracks as they observed the forces directly arrayed against their group.

Two greater phase whales.

Ten lesser phase lords.

A complete native alien warfleet.

Though none of them possessed any obvious presence or enhancement from the deathborn race, they still constituted a serious threat.

This was especially when Ves could clearly ascertain that all of the enemy champions were equipped with full sets of Saint Piercers and Saint Armors!

While the properties of alien-grade superdimensional armor sat between the human versions of medium-grade and high-grade superdimensional armor, the differences did not matter too much in a direct confrontation.

A strong thrust from a Saint Piercer arm could punch through hull-grade superdimensional armor with relative ease!

As for the tougher and denser armor-grade superdimensional armor that the Dark Apostle happened to enjoy, the increase in protection might be able to save the giant leader from a few fatal blows, but it would definitely incur a growing number of dents and holes with every incoming strike!

Compared to the phase leaders standing in the way, the remaining alien phasefighters and warships did not pose that much of a threat.

But only under certain conditions.

Their firepower was virtually useless so long as the Ascended Giants maintained intact superdimensional raiments.

However, once the enemy phase leaders managed to wear out a few parts and create gaps, the alien assets could easily exacerbate the situation by launching mass attacks onto any exposed flesh!

No giant could withstand concentrated firepower from a powerful fleet for long.

There were already Flesh Choppers who looked forward to bypassing the enemy champions in order to tear apart the enemy mechs and warships.

Though the Ascended Giants did not have anyone that could match the strength of a greater phase lord, they still outnumbered their alien counterparts by two-to-one. It shouldn't be too difficult to divert a few giants for extermination duty.

Yet the aliens already anticipated this possible response. They were no fools. They adopted similar tactics used to cope with high-ranking mechs and spread out their units as much as possible.

Any giants trying to wipe them out would have to waste a lot of time on traveling back and forth!

All of this put the giants in a dilemma of sorts. Should they concentrate all of their efforts on killing the enemy phase leaders?

Doing so would expose them to a huge amount of sustained firepower, which could gradually inflict a huge amount of damage if left alone!

Sending out their fastest giants to hunt down the biggest and most threatening warships may be able to ease the pressure, but that may also leave them short-handed in their attempts to defeat the most powerful aliens.

What the Dark Apostle hated the most was that neither option allowed them to get any closer to the orbital fortress and shut down the superdimensional siege cannon once and for all! The enemy would never allow any straggler to sneak away on their watch!

The two sides therefore confronted each other in silence, heedless of everything else.

Neither side could afford to take their attention away from their immediate adversaries.

This was why Ves could not spare as much attention as he wished on the ongoing mutations of the Poison Willows.

As much as he felt bad about this malignant event, he had no immediate solution in mind. A part of him had already written off the lives of the Poison Willows and their Terran pilots.

The test pilots knew the risks and still agreed to participate in this experiment anyway. This was their duty. They all knew that a deadly outcome could never be ruled out. It may be sad to see each of them suffering from out-of-control mutations, but the rest could do nothing aside from honoring their sacrifice.

Instead of wasting his time on this lost cause, Ves much preferred to help the Dark Apostle overcome his most immediate adversaries.

The two sides continued their silent standoff.

It was not until one of the greater phase whales fully clad in dark and ominous Saint Armor flew forward that the two sides finally began to communicate.

His superdimensional raiment, which clearly contained many features derived from human technology, transmitted an open signal to the giants.

"#$&@#&@."

"I AM THE BLACKWATER SUMMONER. I AM THE SON AND HEIR OF THE TIDE CALLER, THE GOD YOU HUMANS HAVE SLAIN. I AM THE DEFENDER OF THE RED OCEAN. THE RED CABAL HAS HONORED ME AND MY FELLOW GODS THE HOLY RIGHT TO BEAR THE BONES OF ELDER GODS. I HAVE MADE A PROMISE TO ERADICATE THE ENTIRE RACE THAT IS RESPONSIBLE FOR SLAYING MY DIVINE FATHER. NOW I STAND BEFORE YOU, THE THIEVES WHO HAVE STOLEN THE SECRET OF GODHOOD FROM US. I REFUSE TO

ACKNOWLEDGE YOU AS GODS! YOU ARE DEMONS WHO ARE JUST AS FOUL AND EVIL AS YOUR FALSE GODS!"

The native aliens had a very dim view of human high-ranking mech pilots.

The Red Cabal especially hated it that god pilots took up the mantle of divinity!

Even getting beaten black and blue by every god mech in a direct confrontation was not as bad as contesting the very notion of godhood!

To the entire class of phase whales and phase lords in the Red Ocean, their claim to godhood had always formed the most solid basis of power.

Therefore, the arrival of humans and their distinctly different notions of what constituted a 'god' represented nothing less than an existential threat to their entire legitimacy and power base!

The Dark Apostle flew forward in response to the Blackwater Summoner's 'friendly' greeting.

"I am the dark apostle, the polemarchos of the phase lord department of the red collective. Perhaps that is too complicated for you, so let me identify myself in a different way. I am the leader of the ascended giants. We are the new gods of the red ocean. you and your ilk are outdated as far as i am concerned. We have come into being to replace you and take over everything that you have claimed for yourself. your phasewater, your heritage, your worshipers, your lands and everything else shall become ours in the future. submit to me and I may spare your life. defy me and I shall slaughter you with my spear."

Those were fighting words!

The Dark Apostle was itching for a fight. He did not want to waste too much time on talking!

The Mech Touch

The enemy greater phase lord could not tolerate the Dark Apostle's insulting challenge!

The Blackwater Summoner lost interest in gloating. Though he possessed an overinflated ego like any other phase whale, even he could not reign in his anger!

Neither side exchanged any further words. They straightforwardly threw themselves into combat!

It soon became clear that both sides underestimated each other's combat prowess.

The Ascended Giants were far inferior in terms of body cultivation, but their uniform mid-grade superdimensional gear combined with their superior numbers not only enabled them to resist every spatial attack and disturbance, but also gave them the initiative in this bout!

The two squads fought in coordination with each other.

While both units possessed the benefit of hull-grade superdimensional raiments, the Ur-Titans enjoyed a considerably higher concentration of core materials in their armor composition. The thickness of their armor plating covering their vital body parts was also thicker.

This meant that their fault tolerance was considerably greater!

The Ur-Titans could afford to take greater risks. This led them to charging straight towards their alien counterparts!

They fought with the determination to chop down the alien phase leaders with their superdimensional halberds, though that was not their highest goal.

The Dark Apostle dispatched the elite giant soldiers first with the aim of tying down as many alien phase whales and phase lords as possible.

The relatively high mobility and freedom of movement of any phase leader always made it difficult to kill them entirely.

Since the start of the Red War, many arrogant native gods had met early ends after they had foolishly tried to make a stand.

After suffering so many defeats, even the most dim-witted phase lord eventually learned not to take their prodigious strength and size for granted. They had become a lot more cautious and relied much more heavily on their mobility to come and go where they pleased.

Therefore, slowing or pinning them down was the first step towards defeating this blocking force!

Even if wiping them all out could not be accomplished in a short amount of time, tying them down at least prevented them from threatening other friendly units!

"Hahahaha!" The Dark Apostle laughed as he charged right alongside the Ur-Titans! "I have been waiting for this for so long! No more delays! No more pussyfooting around! Now I can finally have a taste of true combat!"

The leader of the Phase Lord Department demonstrated the valor of a leader who had earned his position through bravery and strength.

His Superdimensional Giant Regalia resisted every attack salvo launched by the enemy gun batteries with relative ease. The armor-grade superdimensional plating provided rock-solid protection against even the heavier variety of conventional enemy firepower!

The only attacks from the supporting enemy fleet that the Dark Apostle needed to take seriously were the heavy missile salvos.

The Ascended Giant's Locos organ keenly detected the presence of superdimensional matter inside a handful of the warheads.

These missiles posed a serious threat!

Ves already implemented a countermeasure before the Dark Apostle could make a move.

Though Blinky only existed as an incorporeal life form, Ves had deliberately designed the Superdimensional Giant Regalia to receive signals produced by the spiritual computers installed inside the Blinkyverse.

Leveraging the formidable amount of processing power of all of those primitive E-processors, the rapid-fire weapon modules installed on the surface of the raiment began to spit transphasic hyper laser beams at a rapid frequency!

Although the interference on the battlefield made it a little more difficult to accurately target every threatening warhead, the relatively short distance kept this factor within a controllable range.

None of the superdimensional missiles managed to survive long enough to breach the armor of the Ascended Giants!

Although the giants did not possess enough intercepting fire to shoot down the remaining transphasic missiles, their lackluster explosions barely inflicted any visible damage.

"Those warships need to be culled." Ves warned his alter ego. "Their primary and secondary gun batteries might not pose a direct threat, but they are constantly interfering with our movements. Their missile launchers are especially concerning. We do not know how many superdimensional missiles they can still launch. Taking them out sooner rather than later will leave us with fewer distractions in this fight."

The Dark Apostle frowned behind his helmet. His attention was already locked onto the Blackwater Summoner. He had very little interest in addressing other nearby threats.

"What do you want?"

"Time is of the essence. You should use up your sacrificial javelins early. The enemy battleships are all lacking in agility. You are close enough that you can nail them all with a great amount of confidence."

The suggestion did not sit well with the giant leader. "I already reserved them for the phase whales. It sounds like a waste to use up all of my superdimensional javelins to take out a bunch of weak and fragile capital ships. Let me remind you that we agreed that I am in charge whenever we are engaged in battle. I am a fighter, while you are just a builder. Know your place."

Of course, the enemy battleships were only weak and fragile in comparison to a well-equipped Ascended Giant like the Dark Apostle.

Almost any other human unit would surely struggle to defeat such a formidable collection of high-quality alien warships!

Ves grew irritated at his alter ego's stubbornness. "Just do it! The enemy phase leaders are strong, but they can become a lot more threatening if they enjoy the full support of a modern alien combat fleet! As long as you take out the battleships, the remaining enemy units do not pose a substantial threat anymore. You don't need to divert as many Flesh Choppers to crush them one by one."

The Flesh Choppers possessed worse defenses but better mobility than the Ur-Titans. This made the axe-wielding giants ideal for flanking and extermination duties.

The original plan called for splitting the Flesh Choppers in two. One of the groups needed to cut the alien fleet down to size while the other group had to support the Ur-Titans.

The Dark Apostle felt a little uneasy about this split because he did not truly know whether he assigned enough giants to confront the enemy phase leaders.

Even if his men had numbers on their side, the enemy phase whales and phase lords all possessed the best phasewater organs that the Red Cabal could provide!

The disparity in phasewater organs was not small. The Phase Lord Department may have conducted a lot of research, but its grasp on this subject was still very much shallow and incomplete.

The Red Cabal in contrast possessed an extremely profound infrastructure around the development and production of high-quality phasewater organs!

Even if most offensive phasewater organs failed against superdimensional defenses, there were still plenty of defensive and auxiliary phasewater organs that still worked just as well as before!

This became evident right away when all of the enemy phase whales and phase lords flew across space at a considerably faster rate than their giant counterparts!

The Dark Apostle and his men were only able to prevent a complete defeat by relying on the boosters and thrusters installed in their more sophisticated raiments.

Unfortunately, lack of capacity meant that their endurance was sorely lacking! They could only keep this up for several minutes before their fuel and energy reserves reached critical levels.

This was one of the reasons why the Dark Apostle rejected Ves' proposal.

The enemy battleships may pose a legitimate threat, but slowing down the enemy champions was much more important!

The giant leader ignored Ves' nagging and began to withdraw one of the sacrificial javelins from the holster mounted on his armored back.

The Dark Apostle held the spear with unnatural skill and stability.

With the help of the Sacrificial Spear Throwing Method, he effortlessly began to channel an excess quantity of E energy inside the specially-designed javelin.

Compared to transphasic speartips, its superdimensional tip was able to hold even more E energy before it neared its breaking point!

It was too bad that Ves had not converted any of the sacrificial javelins into D-arms.

While that could amplify their damage potential, it also made the weapons a lot more unruly.

Ves and the Dark Apostle could not handle too many D-arms at once. They already needed to divert enough attention to keep the Withering Sting in line.

No matter. D-arm or not, the superdimensional tips alone ensured that the sacrificial javelins would definitely be able to inflict harm!

As the javelin glowed with power and menace, the Dark Apostle set his sights straight onto the Blackwater Summoner.

Somehow, the enemy greater phase whale became aware that he was being targeted. The enemy abruptly accelerated his flight and began to perform more elaborate evasive maneuvers.

While the Dark Apostle found it a lot more challenging to correct his aim, there was only so much an armored phase whale could dance across the void of space!

The distance between the two was also relatively close. The giant leader became filled with confidence as he gradually gained a better grasp on the Blackwater Summoner's evasion pattern.

"Huah!"

When the Dark Apostle deemed the time was right, he instantly flung the javelin forward with the help of the integrated atlatl mechanism!

His technique was impeccable. The superdimensional projectile followed a straight trajectory that was bound to pierce through the Blackwater Summoner's raiment and impale his fleshy true body before detonating inside!

Yet just as the highly unstable javelin could touch the greater phase whale, the Blackwater Summoner cunningly blinked out of the way!

"Damn!"

The sacrificial javelin hit nothing but empty space and continued to fly into the distance.

After traversing a considerable distance, its unstable structure finally could not hold out any longer.

Chapter 7567 Giant Clash

Several more alien battleships met their end at the hand of the Dark Apostle's sacrificial javelins.

These powerful spears almost contained just as much destructive power as a full-powered attack from the Amaranto Mark III.

Of course, that was only a rough comparison.

What made ace mechs so powerful was never the quantity of energy, but its quality.

Willpower was one of the most unreasonable forces in existence, and when wielded by an extraordinary warrior who possessed skills that had been pushed far beyond the mortal limit, attacks launched by ace mechs could easily trump the Dark Apostle's own efforts.

However, replicability was also important.

Ace pilots were far too rare. It took an unimaginable amount of time, effort and sacrifice for a population to produce a saint.

As for the sacrificial javelins, Ves could make them with ease with any decent materials. He only made the current ones out of mid-grade superdimensional alloy because he could afford the expenditure.

The usage requirements were also a lot less restrictive. Any practitioner who had become proficient in the Sacrificial Spear Throwing Method could charge and throw the weapons with great effect!

If Ves did have so many projects and obligations taking up his time, he would have been willing to produce dozens more sacrificial javelins and handed them out to his fellow giants to increase their lethality!

Alas, the Dark Apostle only carried half-a-dozen of them in this sortie.

Now, each of them had unerringly pierced through the fat and lumbering hulls of the battleships that had been providing support to the native gods.

The explosions were certainly spectacular, but the Dark Apostle inwardly felt regretful that he couldn't have used them to blow up a few phase leaders.

Still, the destruction of so many enemy capital ships still eased the pressure on the Ascended Giants.

Their formidable firepower had disappeared. The giants gained more breathing room as the suppressive effect of the remaining enemy assets was nowhere near as great.

The remaining hulls did not carry as many superdimensional missiles. The point defenses mounted on the raiments of the Dark Apostle and other giants easily intercepted the most threatening warheads well in advance.

The phase leaders of both sides knew that they ultimately had to rely on themselves to decide the outcome of this battle!

Although they could still call on reinforcements, neither side showed any desire to call for additional assistance.

Their pride and ego did not allow for this behavior!

They wanted to resolve the conflict between human giants and alien phase leaders by themselves.

Only the purest and most direct collisions of strength could determine which side deserved to be crowned as the gods of the Red Ocean!

In order to win this unspoken divinity war, the phase leaders hailing from the Red Cabal did not continue to kite the slower and clumsier giants for long.

Although it felt nice to humiliate the gigantic humanoids for possessing inferior mobility, the phase whales and phase lords had to expend a considerable amount of energy to maintain their lead.

If they truly wanted to prove their superiority over these human copycats, then they needed to do so in the most direct and straightforward way possible!

The phase whales and phase lords no longer remained elusive. They simultaneously turned around and charged straight at the armored giants with their Saint Piercers at the ready!

"$&#&@$!"

"SLAUGHTER THESE HUMAN INFIDELS!"

The Ur-Titans and Flesh Choppers conveyed just as much eagerness as their alien counterparts.

"Sweep these outdated fossils into the trashbin of history!"

Gigantic entities from both sides almost collided against each other!

Their massive bodies granted them prodigious strength and weight, but their ability to shift their momentum did not keep up quite as well.

One Ur-Titan collided directly against a similarly-armored orven phase lord!

Since both of their raiments consisted of superdimensional alloys, their special properties partially cancelled each other out. This meant that the armor of both warriors actually received massive dents!

As more giants and phase lords came into contact with each other, they quickly discovered that their vaunted raiments enjoyed no particular protection against the direct attacks of their opponents!

While their raiments still offered fantastic protection against regular transphasic attacks and spatial abilities, the Saint Piercers in the hands of the native gods and the mid-grade superdimensional weapons in the hands of the giants both possessed the capability to effectively pierce through superdimensional armor!

Of course, the superdimensional halberd wielded by an Ur-Titan could not cut through the raiment of a lesser phase lord like a hot knife through butter. A typical slashing attack usually dug a deep groove that did not usually penetrate all the way through.

The resistance of the armor plating had not disappeared entirely. It merely dropped down to the performance of ordinary transphasic armor as was typical before the start of the Age of Dawn.

This actually doused the enthusiasm of both sides.

Perhaps they already understood on an intellectual level that the superdimensional armaments of their opponents could overcome their supposedly superior protection with

ease, but now that it posed a direct threat to their lives, they couldn't help but rein in their aggression to an extent.

Several careless giants and phase lords already suffered armor breaches!

The tears and puncture marks on their raiments had already begun to leak phasewater-laced blood.

Though the exact performance of the superdimensional weapons and raiments differed on many different levels, hardly any of the warriors noticed. The champions on both sides pretty much assumed they fought on a roughly equal level.

What truly distinguished the strong from the weak were other factors. Skill, phasewater organs, combat experience, specific racial advantages and teamwork all distinguished the two groups.

The alien phase leaders possessed a strong edge in phasewater organs and combat experience.

Their Kelsis organs, Locos organs, Maracos organs, Marigal organs and so on were far superior from the equivalent organs implanted inside the Ascended Giants.

These were the shabby native gods that had been driven to risk their lives at the frontlines of the Red War like high-level cannon fodder.

Each of the lesser phase lords pledged their allegiance to the Blackwater Summoner.

As the core dependents of a greater phase whale, these native gods earned the privilege to carry higher-end customized versions of many common phasewater organs.

This qualitative edge manifested in many different ways. Their spatial senses were sharper. Their true bodies were denser and more resilient. Their mobility was superior. All of these strengths allowed them to occupy more favorable positions and endure more attacks.

Their advanced age also granted them a wealth of combat experience. Even though these native gods only spent a fraction of their time on fighting, having lived for thousands if not tens of thousands of years still caused them to accumulate a wealth of fighting skills and battlefield proficiency.

The Ur-Titans and the Flesh Choppers initially fell into a disadvantage because of these differences. They admittedly underestimated their opponents and suffered more than a few hits on their raiments as a consequence.

However, these former elite human soldiers quickly adapted to the enemy rhythm and adjusted their tactics.

The Ur-Titans pressed harder and fought with greater aggression. They took greater risks and received more wounds as a consequence.

Each time a Saint Piercer sank into their true bodies, the human giants suffered a great amount of pain!

However, the Ur-Titans never relented because of this. Each of them had proven themselves to be the most resilient among the Ascended Giants. Taking hits and accumulating injuries was practically their job description!

Their sacrifice was not in vain. Due to the constant aggression from the Ur-Titans, the lesser phase lords found themselves unable to direct enough attention to the Flesh Choppers who assaulted them from the sides and rear!

The superdimensional axes wielded by the Flesh Choppers often found clever angles to chop at the Saint Armors of their adversaries.

Though not every strike actually managed to land, each solid axe strike often frightened the alien phase lord in question.

Some phase lords got ganged up by three giants at once. The latter not only possessed the advantage of numbers, but already developed more teamwork than their alien counterparts could ever match!

It couldn't be helped. As much as the alien phase lords performed individually better, they spent thousands of years assuming the identity as native gods.

Even if they had chosen to bow their heads to the Red Cabal and become subservient to the phase whale race, they still possessed their own pride!

The concept of teamwork was still foreign to them. Their lack of coordination made it difficult for them to back each other up and employ sophisticated tactics like their human counterparts.

Through the deliberate efforts of the Ur-Titans and Flesh Choppers, the human phase lords gradually managed to push their alien rivals away from each other!

The more the alien phase lords spread apart, the more difficult it became for them to combine forces!

If this pattern persisted for several more minutes, then the lesser phase lords were bound to get chopped into pieces!

Yet the problem was that the lesser phase lords did not come alone.

Two greater phase whales accompanied them as well.

The Blackwater Summoner became fully engaged in a duel against the Dark Apostle. The two fought at such a high level that no one else dared to interference!

The other greater phase whale only endured a brief amount of harassment from the Fiery Axe before managing to shake the madwoman off his tail!

This granted the greater phase whale an opening to crash through the other bouts and interrupt the beating session!

"Damn, this whale is too big, tough and fat! We can't have a proper fight if he continues to flop around!"

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Chapter 7568 Ur-Titans Never Retreat

The fight between the two groups of gigantic beings turned red-hot!

Given how recklessly they fought against each other and how lethal their weapons had become, the first fatalities occurred fairly quickly!

One Ur-Titan had overestimated himself and suffered a deep stab wound as a consequence. His superdimensional halberd may be large and wicked, but it was not fast enough to block or deflect every incoming strike from the enemy phase lord's Saint Piercer.

The orven phase lord that he had been trying to pin down also happened to be remarkably more skilled with wielding polearms than the average native god!

"#$&#&#@."

"BEFORE MY ASCENSION TO GODHOOD, I SERVED AS A PALACE GUARD OF ONE OF THE MOST DEVOUT PRIESTS OF MY RACE. I HAD TO DEFEAT MANY RIVALS TO EARN MY PLACE AMONG THE CHOSEN FEW. ONCE I HAVE ATTAINED MY GODHOOD, I HAVE NEVER NEGLECTED MY FIGHTING SKILLS. YOU DO NOT KNOW HOW USEFUL IT IS TO BE ABLE TO INTIMIDATE MY RIVAL GODS WITH MY PROWESS WITH THE SPEAR. NOW THAT I AM ARMED WITH A WEAPON MADE TO PENETRATE SAINTS AND OTHER HUMAN MONSTERS, I SHALL CARVE MY NAME INTO EVERY HERETIC'S HEART!"

The orven phase lord in question did not fight with aggression and ordinary skill alone.

He fought like a true warrior, one who had dedicated at least half of his life to the art of combat.

His fighting style very much resembled that of a gladiator. He possessed a great amount of awareness of the chaos around him and did not hesitate to use the lumbering bodies of both enemies and allies as momentary cover.

More than that, the way he flourished and spun his Saint Piercer arms at random times made it difficult and confusing to predict his intent.

He fought elusively most of the time, but occasionally flipped a switch and threw all caution to the wind!

The tip of his Saint Piercer arrived so suddenly and with so much momentum that the Ur-Titan who had locked onto this lesser phase lord failed to block each and every strike.

More than a few members of the Ur-Titan Phalanx deeply wished that their polemarchos had issued thick and sturdy superdimensional shields as their standard loadouts!

Even if such a defensive tool would get torn to shreds in a matter of minutes, that still could have bought them a lot of time and given them more opportunities to counterattack!

As it was, the Ur-Titan mostly had to rely on himself and his raiment to block the sharp and penetrating strikes.

Fortunately, he was no slouch when it came to hand-to-hand combat. The Phase Lord Department had carefully screened the best possible fighters among the population of red humanity for its most costly giant transformation procedure.

Although the Ur-Titan did not treat the halberd as his primary or even his favorite weapon, he still knew his way around with polearms.

He not only used the shaft to deflect the incoming Saint Piercer jabs, but also attempted to use the complicated halberd head to hook the enemy weapon and leave the orven phase lord wide open to counterattacks!

Unfortunately, the orven phase lord was too skilled and knowledgeable when it came to combating humanoid adversaries. Combined with his height and strength advantage, the alien god maintained a very solid grip on his polearm. He never allowed his Saint Piercer to get dragged out of the way!

Instead, it was the Ur-Titan who had to fear loss of control. The halberd opened up more options to attack the enemy and manipulate the flow of battle. Its heavy halberd head also served as a liability that made the weapon more unwieldy and slowed every motion down.

Although the differences between the two fighters was not too great, even minor disparities could have an outsized influence in a clash between two skilled combatants!

That was how the Ur-Titan suffered several stabs to his chest while his opponent only suffered a few light tears to their own Saint Armors.

After the enemy Saint Piercer expertly threaded around the giant halberd and sunk deeper into the Ascended Giant's chest, thereby damaging vulnerable muscles as well as spilling even more phasewater-infused blood, the Ur-Titan truly felt the threat of death looming over his head!

"Where is my backup?!"

"Coming!"

Although the Ascended Giants outnumbered the enemy phase leaders, this did not always mean that they could gang up on each other all of the time.

The fight had become too chaotic and dynamic for such an approach. The alien native gods would not foolishly stay in place and allow them to get surrounded or flanked without resistance. Even if their teamwork was not as good as that of the giants, they still lent a hand to each other every now and then to keep their colleagues alive!

As such, one of the Flesh Choppers suffered a short delay and only managed to get close later. When he finally arrived to strike at the orven phase lord from the side, the latter did not hesitate to concentrate his power and perform an instant ability!

The native god blinked away!

Though he only appeared a few kilometers away, that was already enough distance to spoil the attempted flanking attack!

"This again! Do not let this alien teleport! Can't you get any closer?"

"I am trying, but his Saint Piercer is too good at keeping me at bay!"

"Then you need to overcome your fear!"

The Ur-Titan and Flesh Chopper approached for round two.

This time, the former fought even more recklessly than before. Now that he knew that the enemy could blink away, it became imperative to minimize the distance to allow for his space suppressor and other interfering measures to work more effectively.

The superdimensional halberd and Saint Piercer collided many times.

These exchanges got interrupted whenever the Flesh Chopper attempted an attack run.

The faster and more agile giant flew in and sought to attack the orven phase lord when his Saint Piercer was momentarily locked into place, yet the attacks he delivered never completely succeeded!

The orven phase lord often managed to accelerate his own body with the help of a powerful phasewater organ. While the displacement was fairly small, this abrupt acceleration could happen at any time!

Time and time again, the tricky enemy abruptly moved to the side or to the rear without any warning!

The enemy always knew exactly when and where to dodge. The closest the Flesh Chopper came to hacking the enemy's Saint Piercer was when his axe grazed the surface of the Saint Armor for a fraction of a second.

The two giants grew more and more frustrated. They tried to call for backup, but the assistance of other nearby giants failed to create any better outcomes.

All the while, the Ur-Titan kept suffering the brunt of the enemy's attacks and counterattacks.

The giant's superdimensional raiment became increasingly more damaged and exposed far too much injured flesh.

This created opportunities for enemy support units to exacerbate the wounds!

Enemy phasefighter squadrons boldly made attack passes that precisely concentrated their attacks at the gaps in the superdimensional armor!

Even if these miniscule attacks did not substantially worsen the injuries further, the pain and distraction alone affected the wounded Ur-Titan's combat rhythm!

The incoming firepower from the surviving enemy warships was worse. Transphasic energy beams and kinetic projectiles slammed against the Ur-Titans in entire volleys.

Even if most of the incoming attacks sprayed uselessly against the intact portions of the superdimensional raiments, many more attacks went on to damage the wounded and vulnerable flesh underneath!

The pain became magnified, and the wounds became a lot more serious!

The damage did not necessarily reach any deeper into the Ur-Titan's body, but they most definitely expanded in other directions, thereby debilitating the human phase lord in many different ways.

It only took half a minute for the Ur-Titan to suffer greatly from all of these mundane attacks.

The Saint Piercer had already torn away the spatial shield that entities like them relied upon to resist the vast majority of conventional attacks.

While the flesh of a typical lesser phase lord was still very able to resist mundane firepower, transphasic attacks at this quantity and scale still posed a lethal threat!

As the Ur-Titan's body became slower and less responsive due to the bleeding and injuries, he knew that the only way to prevent his demise was to disengage and retreat to the Armitage.

However, he never considered this option in any serious capacity.

He was an Ascended Giant!

His fellow giants were still fighting for their lives and honor!

As his blood rushed uncontrollably into his head, he let go of his restraint and went completely wild!

"UR-TITANS NEVER RETREAT!" He majestically roared!

The wounded giant squeezed more speed out of his true body and battered raiment, not hesitating to overload whatever he controlled.

The orven phase lord became surprised by this outburst, but that did not stop him from holding his Saint Piercer like a lance and initiating a countercharge!

Due to the alien opponent's decision, the two gigantic beings collided straight against each other!

"Ur-Titans... never fail their mission..."

The Ur-Titan spat blood as he spoke those words.

All of his strength drained from his rapidly deteriorating true body. More phasewater-infused blood than ever poured out of the gapingly large wound on his chest and back.

This time, the enemy Saint Piercer had punched straight through his giant-sized heart while also damaging a few nearby phasewater organs along the way!

Ascended Giant or not, a human lesser phase lord at this weak stage still could not get rid of this weak point.

The orderly circulation of phasewater throughout the bloodstream of a phase lord served as the root of their transcendent existence.

They could not live without blood and phasewater.

As a consequence, their transformation into phase lords often centered around the complete metamorphosis of their heart organs.

No matter the species, any organ that possessed blood circulation functions underwent the most thorough and complete strengthening. They not only became incomprehensibly strong, but also gained other functions in order to facilitate the continuous distribution of phasewater throughout a massive true body.

As such, when the heart of the Ur-Titan sustained so much damage that it reached an unrecoverable state, the life of that giant became forfeit!

It was already a small miracle that he managed to speak a few words!

"No!"

The nearby Flesh Chopper felt as if he personally failed for letting his fellow giant perish in front of his eyes!

The giant practically went berserk and sped up his attack!

The good news was that the orven phase lord had paid a steep price to land his killing blow.

The Ur-Titans superdimensional halberd managed to pierce straight through the alien's Saint Armor.

Though the halberd tip and blades failed to pierce through an organ as important as the heart, it still managed to cut many blood vessels, damage multiple phasewater organs while also cutting a piece of the spine!

These heavy wounds may not be entirely fatal to a phase lord, but they momentarily kept the pained alien god in place, long enough for an axe to chop through his neck!

The Flesh Chopper beheaded the orven phase lord, thereby securing vengeance for his fallen comrade!

"Damn!"

The powerful warrior felt no pride for securing this kill. He had failed. The enemy had taken away the life of a precious giant.

What was worse was that this was but the first of multiple fatalities among the giants.

More Ur-Titans suffered and died as they tried their best to hold back the surprisingly strong and skilled alien lesser phase lords.

Combined with the devastating interference of one of the greater phase whales, almost half-a-dozen Ur-Titans had sacrificed their lives!

In exchange, only three enemy phase lords had fallen so far.

The giants felt ashamed at this kill ratio!

They had always considered themselves to be superior to their alien counterparts, but the results they achieved so far fell far too short of their expectations!

"Are we not strong enough?"

The Mech Touch

The fight between the Ascended Giants and the alien phase lords continued to descend into a spiral of mutual destruction.

Ur-Titans and Flesh Choppers hacked apart the raiments and body parts of their gigantic alien foes.

The enemy phase lords thrust their Saint Piercers through the superdimensional armor and straight into the vital organs of their human counterparts.

Phasewater-infused blood spilled from both sides in such enormous quantities that it could easily fuel the birth of several new phase lords!

Unfortunately, no one had any chance of collecting the precious fluids. The battlefield was too intense and the interference from many different factors made it extremely hazardous to collect the spilled phasewater.

As for the growing amount of orphaned superdimensional weapons and armor, both sides tacitly ignored it all for the time being.

Anyone who dared to scavenge the spoils before the battle had ended would definitely suffer the wrath of the opposing side!

The battle had reached a red-hot stage. The champions and soldiers from both sides could not afford to divert their attention to priorities that did not involve beating their adversaries.

In the minds of the Ascended Giants and phase leaders, the ones who would ultimately get to claim all of the precious superdimensional spoils would be the side that managed to repel their opponents from this location.

Both sides still happened to maintain enough confidence that they would be the ones to gain superiority on this field!

Yet as time dragged on, the momentum shifted in the favor of the representatives of the Red Cabal.

While the Ascended Giants managed to kill and wound plenty of lesser phase lords, they suffered slightly more casualties in return!

What was worse was that the Fiery Axe and her fellow giants had not only failed to kill one of the two greater phase whales, but also struggled to constrain this formidable alien powerhouse!

Even if the second greater phase whale was not as outstanding as the Blackwater Summoner, his size, speed, strength, judgment and phasewater organs all placed him substantially ahead of the giants.

This qualitative difference may have been diminished due to the need to maintain a small-enough scale to wrap himself in superdimensional armor, but that did not change the fact that his phasewater concentration was much higher!

Such differences mattered, especially in confrontations against other phase lords!

"We can't hold this big whale back!" The Fiery Axe had no choice but to admit her failure. "He's too fast and strong! Our attacks hardly inflict any damage even if we manage to get past his Saint Armor!"

Though the greater phase whale's large and expansive raiment bore a growing number of marks and tears, the fat aquatic body underneath remained largely hale and healthy!

Modest cuts failed to do more than scratch the surface of the thick phase whale's physique. The majestic alien creature's own biology inherently provided a great amount of resistance to such attacks.

Only deeper strikes could pose a serious threat against a genuine phase whale, but the native god in question would never give the Ascended Giants any easy openings!

Until the giants managed to land a serious enough blow against this greater phase whale, the alien gods firmly grasped the upper hand!

This made the duel between the Dark Apostle and the Blackwater Summoner a lot more important.

The leaders of their respective forces demonstrated a capacity for combat that far exceeded their subordinates.

As long as one of them managed to vanquish their direct opponent, they could easily help their surviving subordinates clean up the remaining enemies!

The Dark Apostle clearly understood this reality, so he had been setting out to kill or at the very least repel the Blackwater Summoner from the beginning.

Unfortunately, beating this formidable greater phase whale was easier said than done!

The Blackwater Summoner clearly knew what he was doing. He also happened to possess the strongest comprehensive performance out of all of the giants and phase leaders on this battlefield.

His speed was fast, though his agility was inferior due to his greater mass and density. That said, his true body was considerably larger and heavier, enabling him to resist even more attacks than the other greater phase whale!

Though his combat experience was lacking, he demonstrated excellent familiarity and control over his high-quality phasewater organs.

He consistently evaded the Dark Apostle's spear strikes or deflected them with the help of his armor-plated tentacles.

Yes, tentacles.

This appeared to be a standard solution for phase whales who wanted to add extra appendages to their bodies.

If phase whales wanted to manipulate tools like humanoid creatures, the most versatile way for them to do so was to grow or implant tentacles across their bodies.

The tentacles of the Blackwater Summoner happened to be very threatening, as the greater phase whale had installed sharp, triangular blades onto each of their tips!

The length of each tentacle was considerable. This transformed the Blackwater Summoner into a surprisingly effective melee duelist. Though his skill in utilizing them was not top-notch, he had so many sharpened tentacles at his disposal that haphazardly thrashing them around already made it virtually impossible for the Dark Apostle to stave off injuries!

Even if he was the only phase leader on this battlefield who wore a genuine armor-grade superdimensional raiment, the tentacles converted into customized Saint Piercers had already scratched and dug into the high-grade armor plating quite a bit!

The Dark Apostle constantly had to pull back and adjust his combat tactics in the face of such a large and deadly opponent.

This was nothing like the phase lords that red humanity had fought and defeated with ease in the past.

The Red Cabal clearly paid close attention to the Red War and fully respected the rapidly-improving forces of the human invaders.

The Blackwater Summoner did not let his pride and arrogance get in the way of learning from the humans!

Not only had he completely abandoned the outdated mode of combat that revolved completely around fully unfolding one's true body, but he also invested in the development and production of a very human-style raiment that just happened to be fitted for a phase whale!

Ves in particular felt alarmed about this observation.

He vastly preferred it when the alien leaders and soldiers were still full of themselves. Their immense pride in their primitive alien technology and customs made them a lot easier to defeat. Their self–defeating attitudes was a very big reason why the outnumbered red humans were able to stall the native aliens for so long!

Yet as the Red War continued to exact a disproportionately greater toll on the major alien races, even the fossils in charge of the Red Cabal had no choice but to admit that their human opponents were better at waging war!

For these arrogant alien gods to set aside their pride and earnestly learn from the humans was difficult, but incredibly rewarding!

Just the raiment worn by the Blackwater Summoner alone made it a lot more difficult for the Dark Apostle to land any solid attacks!

"Damnit, Ves! You are the mech designer here! Have you spotted any weak points on the enemy's raiment? This damn whale-sized Saint Armor and its many tentacles keep getting in the way!"

Blinky shook his head. "I am sorry, but there are no glaring weak points that stand out. I can already tell that a human Senior or Master Mech Designer contributed greatly to the development of this raiment. The traitor has not only managed to draw out much of the potential of alien-grade superdimensional matter, but did not hesitate to employ ingenious or expensive solutions to plug all of the obvious weak points."

"Tch! Those cosmopolitan scum!"

The Dark Apostle charged forward yet again. With the Withering Sting in hand, the powerful D-arm yearned to spill alien blood and corrupt that majestic whale-like true body!

Yet before the giant leader could succeed in his charge attack, the tentacled greater phase whale responded by opening a modest cavity on his raiment before spurting a jet of black liquid from his maw!

Controlled by the Blackwater Summoner, the spurt of dangerous liquid took on a life of its own. It rapidly flattened into a pancake shape and formed a makeshift shield!

The Dark Apostle forcibly aborted his charge. He had to expend a great amount of effort and energy to evade the temporary shield.

However, the liquid shield did not remain static, but actively sought out the giant leader!

The tip of the Withering Sting ultimately grazed the obstacle, causing a small amount of blackwater to coat the surface.

The superdimensional alloy that got into direct contact with the blackwater immediately started to release heat and particles!

The blackwater acted like an extremely potent form of acid. Its corrosive properties vastly exceeded that of regular phasewater! Some unknown property not only caused it to turn pitch black, but also eat through one of the most resilient forms of superdimensional alloy with a surprisingly degree of ease!

"What is this blackwater stuff!" The Dark Apostle bewilderingly asked. "How can something as stupid as this eat into a weapon that is made out of the toughest material in the Red Ocean?!"

Blinky coughed in response. "Technically speaking, the alloy formula does not make use of pure weapon-grade superdimensional matter, but instead blends it with a variety of exotics and hypers. The latter two introduce a lot of necessary and helpful attributes, but their inclusion also reduces the absolute toughness and resilience of the material. My theory about the blackwater is that this substance is able to work so effectively by degrading the weaker materials in the alloy."

In truth, he was not quite certain. He needed to perform detailed tests to be sure, but absent any hard data, this was the explanation that made the most sense at the moment.

Whatever the case, the Blackwater Summoner showed why he had earned this name by repeatedly spitting out foul and dangerous blackwater that continued to damage the exposed portions of the Superdimensional Giant Regalia and the Withering Sting.

7570

The Mech Touch

The Dark Apostle found it difficult to admit it, but he could not deny the truth.

He could not defeat the Blackwater Summoner.

If the greater phase lord fought with his true body alone, then the giant leader might have a chance of turning the battle around.

This was because a strong body and excellent phasewater organs alone could not guarantee victory.

The Dark Apostle could still rely on the excellent protection of his Superdimensional Giant Regalia and the deadliness of his Withering Sting to grind down his opponent over time.

Yet the Blackwater Summoner did not fight like the phase whales and phase lords of old. This was a leader who kept up with the times and equipped himself with a Saint Armor that was fully customized for his race!

This Saint Armor not only provided a solid layer of protection, but also made his many tentacles a lot more deadly!

The combination of excellent innate strength and powerful advantages granted by his high-quality equipment effectively turned him into one of the deadlier greater phase lords that the Larkinsons had ever encountered on the battlefield.

Let alone the Dark Apostle, even the Larkinson ace mechs would struggle to gain an advantage against this troublesome opponent.

The alien leader's characteristic blackwater became more and more voluminous on the battlefield.

The greater phase lord evidently possessed such a large resource inside his true body that he could still spit out more of this extremely dangerous substance!

"What is this stuff?!" The Dark Apostle frustratingly asked as he desperately evaded a stream of blackwater that had taken on the shape of a spear! "This blackwater is all wrong! It feels like a perverted version of phasewater!"

Although it possessed many similarities to phasewater, the powerful alien god had clearly altered it in a very deep or profound manner. It felt as if the Blackwater Summoner had corrupted it or contaminated it with a very corrosive form of power.

While Ves and the Dark Apostle were not unfamiliar with dark and corrupting influences, whatever caused the blackwater to become so lethal and deathly against superdimensional alloys remained unclear!

Evidently, the Red Cabal still possessed many powerful secrets and methods of their own!

The Blackwater Summoner seemed to relish in the confusion of his adversaries. The alien practically grinned underneath his large Saint Armor.

"#$&#@&#@@&@."

"NO ONE CAN RESIST MY TORRENT. I AM THE STRONGEST AND MOST ACCOMPLISHED SONS OF THE TIDE CALLER. YOU CANNOT IMAGINE HOW MANY YEARS I HAVE SPENT ON RESEARCHING AND DEVELOPING MY UNIQUE BLACKWATER ORGAN. BEFORE I COMPLETED IT, I WAS MERELY AN ORDINARY GOD. AFTER I HAVE IMPLANTED IT IN MY BODY, I BECAME ONE OF THE MOST OUTSTANDING AMONG THE GODS OF MY GENERATION. THIS IS WHAT I DESERVE, BECAUSE MY BLACKWATER ORGAN IS GROWN FROM THE HOLY FLESH OF MY GREAT FATHER."

"What?!"

"What?!"

Blinky almost spat out a glob of E energy after he heard the enemy's boast.

If the Blackwater Summoner did not speak any falsehoods, then the unreasonable power of his most cherished 'Blackwater Organ' was basically due to the fact that it was derived from the extraordinary tissue of an ancient phase whale!

"That... that's cheating!" Ves accused! "Phase whales are supposed to build up their strength through independent research and verification. Using the flesh of a True God-level phase whale is like stealing the homework of your superior. I wouldn't be surprised if an ancient phase whale is able to create a substance as dangerous as blackwater, but it is absolutely beyond the capabilities of a lesser or greater phase whale. No wonder it is able to corrode superdimensional alloys so easily!"

The Blackwater Summoner broke the rules that governed his race. Phase whales were normally solitary beings. Their familial ties were quite weak. While their reproduction remained murky, their long lifespans meant that they had very little reason to care about their offspring.

Phase whales generally measured each other's worth by looking at the size of their bodies and the quality of their phasewater organs.

Those that thrived among their strange society were often those who possessed the strongest research capabilities. Only the best among them were able to invent new, powerful and unique phasewater organs.

Ves did not possess a thorough understanding of phase whale society, but he believed that many phase whales definitely looked down on what the Blackwater Summoner had done.

"I thought that you were a prominent member of the Red Cabal." He conveyed his suspicion. "However, I no longer believe in that anymore. From what I can gather, you are anything but welcome among your peers. The death of the Tide Caller has caused you to lose your stronger backer. The providence of your blackwater organ is taboo. You have not earned this power. Your former friends and allies must have pushed you out of their circle as a consequence. That is why you are here in this awful star system where you are constantly doing the dirty work of converting corpses of other species into filthy deathborn."

The Blackwater Summoner paused in his flight for a moment.

His armored form began to shake in rage!

"#&%$*&%@!"

"BLASPHEMER! HOW DARE YOU QUESTION MY ACCOMPLISHMENTS! MY BLACKWATER ORGAN IS SO STRONG THAT IT HAS EVOKED JEALOUSLY FROM MY SHORT-MINDED PEERS. THEY DID NOT CAST ME OUT. I LEFT THEIR ON MY OWN ACCORD! THEY ARE TOO SHORT-SIGHTED TO ACKNOWLEDGE MY BRILLIANCE! AS FOR THE DEATHBORN, THEY HAVE BECOME MY NEW FRIENDS. AS REVOLTING AS THESE VISITORS FROM AFAR MAY BE, THEIR POWER IS FAR BEYOND YOUR FEEBLE COMPREHENSION. MY FELLOW PHASE WHALES MAY DESPISE THEM UTTERLY, BUT I AM DIFFERENT!"

While Ves would like to hear more, the Blackwater Summoner no longer spent his time on rambling but instead began to intensify his offensive!

The large amounts of blackwater flowing through space began to resemble black inkstrokes.

They flew nimbly around the Blackwater Summoner and took on many different shapes.

Though the alien's control over this powerful substance gradually turned sluggish as their quantity rose, the sheer amount of it simply made it far too difficult to circumvent its corrosive threat!

No matter how creatively the Dark Apostle moved to attack, he could not find an angle where he could thrust his Withering Sting without touching a blackwater screen.

At the same time, the Blackwater Summoner still had plenty of dark substance to spare for attacks. He created many spears, swords and other shapes before launching them at his humanoid opponent.

The sheer quantity of blackwater constructs frequently forced the giant leader to abandon his attacks and focus completely on evasion!

If not for the fact that the Blackwater Summoner could not let his precious substance move too far away from his true body, the Dark Apostle would have gotten struck a lot more severely by this time!

Even so, the frequent contacts had already burned several concerning holes into his superdimensional raiment.

The Dark Apostle really did not want to allow anything more than a couple of black drops to touch his true body!

This was why he no longer bothered to cling to his pride as an Ascended Giant and readily asked his alter ego for help!

"Are you going to help already, Ves?! My body is going to melt from all of the blackwater quite soon if you don't intervene!"

"I am just about to... now!"

Ves had never seriously completed this operation at this scale. He did not fully know what to expect, but he hoped the outcome would not be too shabby.

The sudden manifestation of E energy spooked the Blackwater Summoner to the point where he made a temporary retreat.

Wary of a trap or other nasty surprise, the giant enemy leader maintained a respectful distance from whatever was happening.

Though the initial shape looked vague, the manifestation soon gained definition with every passing second.

Yet as soon as the humanoid shape gained enough clarity, his appearance immediately generated a short lull in the ongoing battle.

Multiple people who paid attention to this all-important duel grew shocked as they recognized the face of this new entrant.

"Is that... Venerable Imong Ingvar!?"

"What?! The Saint Commander's sister? Isn't he supposed to be dead!?"

"Maybe... death is not an obstacle for the inventor of Carmine mechs."

Almost nobody understood what Ves had just manifested from his System Space.

This was the first time that he had seriously deployed his Chosen Envoy on an actual battlefield.

For many days, the reincarnated spirit of Imon Ingvar kept languishing inside the Sacred Temple atop the mountain.

It couldn't be helped.

When Ves initially obtained this so-called Chosen Envoy, Imon had degenerated into a very weak entity.

He had lost so much strength that he would struggle to defeat a mouse, let alone a lesser phase lord!

However, that was in the past.

Though the Chosen Envoy still had to spend a lot of time to develop the true potential of his second lease on life, he had already experienced enough growth to make himself useful in battle, if only barely!

The Blackwater Summoner's wariness gradually faded as he took stock of this intangible existence.

The alien clearly possessed the ability to discern the strength of this large but mostly transparent ghost.

"#%$&#$."

"IS THIS WHAT YOU RELY ON TO DEFEAT ME? HOW INSULTING. THIS HUMAN GHOST OF YOURS LACKS THE BLESSED FLESH AND BLOOD OF OUR KIND. HE IS DEVOID OF THE 'MECH' AND 'WILLPOWER' THAT MAKES YOUR FALSE GODS SO DIFFICULT TO DEFEAT. HE ALSO DOES NOT HAVE THE DARK POWER THAT HAS EARNED THE DEATHBORN THE RESPECT THEY DESERVE. HE HAS NOTHING."

Blinky interpreted the alien leader's words for a moment before responding with a grin.

"You are not wrong, but you are not entirely correct either. This is just his initial form. Witness his true value!"

At this moment, the Victrix swooped closer before stopping right above the giant apparition of Imon Ingvar!

The Command Field spread by the living command fey of the Minerva Mark II shook with excitement as the will of Saint Casella Ingvar directly descended onto the Chosen Envoy!