The Mech Touch

Chapter 7571 Conditional Loyalty

Ves had always wondered the meaning behind the existence of Chosen Envoys.

The System had included the ability to convert special individuals into so-called Chosen Envoys.

It seemed like a random addition, and one that was only tangentially related to the domain of Spiritual Ascension.

When Ves had chosen this upgrade track, much had changed. The Mech Designer System completely transformed the way it interacted with him and other users. It introduced fantastic facilities such as the Tree of Possibilities and the Workshop of Creation.

Ves understood all of the additions and improvements for the most part. Every new and improved service had a solid logical explanation for why it became available.

Chosen Envoys was a different story. The ability to create and host them fell under the jurisdiction of the Sacred Temple, which happened to be the highest and most ethereal facilities in the System Space.

While Ves had gotten a lot of use out of the unique and extremely precious ability to view and manipulate his own Divine Core in the Sacred Hearth, he often overlooked the larger and more expansive Chosen Courtyard.

This space was considerably larger but also emptier.

Perhaps Ves and the other users of the System were meant to fill it up with Chosen Envoys over time.

He was in no hurry to do so, largely because he largely remained confused about the purpose behind this particular expansion.

What was the point of Chosen Envoys?

Why would a mech designer and a creation cultivator that aspired to become a Star Designer possibly have need of these strange attendants?

Normally, mech designers could count on the protection of a state or a large organisation to fulfill their security needs.

Even if they eschewed such protection, the more successful ones should always be able to invest enough money and resources to build up a decent mech force.

Ves himself followed both paths at the moment.

He painstakingly recruited talented mech pilots and nurtured them when they grew under his care and employment.

He also began to mix with the big players who ultimately chose to send protectors of their own in order to safeguard their interests.

With so much comprehensive protection, the existence of Chosen Envoys seemed redundant.

Yet... now that he had finally deployed his first and only Chosen Envoy on an actual battlefield for the first time, Ves suddenly felt as if he had gained enlightenment.

He gained a glimpse of a truth, or perhaps a specific interpretation of it. Whatever the case, he no longer felt as confused about the existence and purpose of Chosen Envoys as before.

The first insight he gained from the manifestation of a Chosen Envoy was that Ves could feel that he firmly held the reins.

He commanded total obedience from the ghost of Imon Ingvar.

It was a magical feeling and one that Ves could not describe. It was not as absolute as his control over his various incarnations, but it was also not as feeble or delicate as his connections to his various masterworks.

Ves perceived the Chosen Envoy as a sentient drone that was firmly under his thrall.

He could instinctively feel he could issue any command without any restrictions.

While the Chosen Envoy could never fulfill every possible order, he would try to do so to the best of his limited abilities regardless of his wants or desires.

In fact, while Imon Ingvar had managed to recover a considerable part of his personality during the days he spent recovering inside the Chosen Courtyard, his ego still remained very weak.

The current version of Imon did not share much of a resemblance of his once glorious self.

This was very evident by the complete lack of extraordinary willpower.

The complete loss of his willpower cultivation was by far the most serious downside of his transformation into a Chosen Envoy.

Ves seriously doubted that there was any possibility for him to preserve the willpower of any strong expert pilot or ace pilot during the conversion process.

Because a Chosen Envoy had to be absolutely subordinate to a transcendent figure.

The phrase itself denoted their role and boundaries. They were individuals specially chosen to represent Ves or another user.

They could only serve one single individual at a time. This was an important observation. Chosen Envoys could never serve two or more masters.

Ves knew without any shadow of a doubt that he commanded Imon Ingvar's absolute obedience.

After all, he had been the one who had 'chosen' him to become his 'envoy'.

Therefore, uninvolved users such as Gloriana or Ketis could never issue orders to Imon Ingvar. The latter would simply ignore their commands.

Unless Ves explicitly instructed Imon Ingvar to accept the orders of other people, the reborn warrior would always remain impassive to the requests of others.

This was an incredible benefit.

In a universe filled with people whose motives and loyalties could change at any time for any reason, having an absolutely loyal subordinate and protector was incomparably precious.

Ves had experienced far too many betrayals and turnarounds to maintain faith in the absolute loyalty of others.

Everyone had a price.

Even the most honorable and loyal of high-ranking mech pilots could still appeal to higher values and principles to turn their backs on old friends and superiors.

While the latter most definitely had to contort their minds and wills in order to engineer such a special situation, Ves knew it could be done.

In fact, he suspected that the MTA and RA secretly taught and instructed expert pilots and ace pilots on how to rules lawyer their way out of inconvenient vows and promises shortly after their advancements.

It certainly explained how a certain number of saints gradually lost interest in serving their states and shifted their loyalties to groups that operated on a larger scope... such as the mechers.

In any case, Ves would be a fool to think that he could still command the likes of Saint Dise or Saint Rosa Orfan as if they were his dogs.

They became more valuable to him as they grew in power and capabilities, but they also gained more agency for those very same reasons!

This was a natural development, especially considering the mech pilot-focused culture propagated by the Big Two after the start of the Age of Mechs.

Ves constantly found himself forced into managing his relationships with powerful ace pilots who nominally served his clan.

The fact that he had resigned from his position as patriarch of the Larkinson Clan already made it a lot more difficult to maintain his authority over these strong-willed individuals.

He ultimately had to rely on a mix of gratitude and mutual interests to keep them roughly in line.

Even then, they could still disagree with him for any reason.

For example, Saint Davia Stark never joined the Larkinson Clan and made pains to remind everyone that she had merely agreed to serve as a retainer.

Saint General Ark Larkinson did not even bother to defer to Ves.

The stubborn uncle had no problem with taking advantage of the successes of his nephew, yet always insisted on leading the Larkinson Clan in a very different direction!

Ves felt rather lucky that he formed common ground with Saint Commander Casella Ingvar, who happened to be the current leader and matriarch of the Larkinson Clan.

Even then, the frighteningly smart and observant ace commander had already made it clear to Ves in her own subtle way that her loyalty was never unconditional.

She possessed her own wants and obsessions.

The reason why Ves could count on her continued loyalty for the time being was because he had managed to 'revive' her brother, though in a very flawed and incomplete fashion.

Even though Imon the Chosen Envoy still did not resemble his original living self in many different ways, Casella refused to admit the truth that her brother was fully lost!

So long as a shred of his soul still remained alive, she fully believed that she retained the hope of recovering him completely in the future!

Perhaps Ves or the Saint Commander could only gain the power to completely restore Imon Ingvar when they ascended into God Kings or beyond, but as long as the possibility existed, Casella would never lose hope!

Though Ves personally felt that Casella was deluding herself by betting on such an incredibly distant and low-probability prospect, he had no qualms about taking advantage of a grieving sister.

He needed Casella.

Her strength as an ace commander was incomparably precious. Her leadership position also granted him an indirect means of controlling his clan.

So long as she remained in charge, Ves also maintained his control in a sense.

Ves actually found it ironic that he was able to win over Casella's conditional loyalty due to the fact that he commanded the unconditional loyalty of her brother.

He actually felt a little guilty about exploiting their familiar relationship. Imon did not deserve to lose his ability to choose his own loyalties. Yet a Chosen Envoy could never become anything else. There was no way to revive whatever remained of his after his demise unless he assumed this particular form of existence.

Chapter 7572 Tangible and Intangible

Chosen Envoys were not weak.

Although they followed a completely different power system from other people, Chosen Envoys clearly weren't made to fight ordinary soldiers.

Ever since Imon Ingvar assumed his current form, he silently grew stronger while he resided at the Sacred Temple.

As an intangible life form, the present incarnation of Imon lacked a physical body.

No, that was not an entirely accurate description.

He had become a peculiar variation of a qi-based life form.

Ves was not unfamiliar with such entities. The design spirits that he had made or brought under his banner also carried this label.

However, there were big differences between intangible life forms.

Spirits such as Qilanxo, Vulcan and the Superior Mother were primarily anchored in the spiritual realm.

They possessed a very weak presence in the material realm.

Unless they had transcended into True Gods, the only way for them to interact with the material realm was through agents, idols or other material anchors.

Even if they had become powerful enough to manifest a formidable avatar into the material realm, the cost often exceeded any potential gains.

This was why even the more powerful ancestral spirits such as Gaia and the Superior Mother continued to exert their influence through proxies and vessels. They only needed to pay a fraction of the price to get stuff done.

Chosen Envoys were different.

At least in the case of Imon Ingvar, a Chosen Envoy was meant to fight or intercede on behalf of their patron.

That meant that the previous modus operandi was entirely unsuitable for Chosen Envoys. They needed to gain the capacity to take direct action when necessary.

Therefore, the first Chosen Envoy created with the help of the Mech Designer System not only retained a solid presence in the spiritual realm, but also had another foot in the material realm!

To be honest, Ves could not describe the exact state of Imon Ingvar at this time. He still retained his intangibility, but he apparently possessed the ability to inflict attack material targets and inflict real damage on them... somehow.

Of course, the glowing gigantic humanoid projection still lacked a sense of sharpness and lethality.

Even when Saint Commander Casella Ingvar had 'enthroned' her reborn brother with her willpower, the addition of true resonance did not necessarily make the Chosen Envoy ready for his debut performance.

"He's like a giant that is fresh off the conversion lab." The Dark Apostle commented. "As impressive as he is for being able to carry so much true resonance, what is he going to do with all of that power? Is he going to punch the Blackwater Summoner with his half-false, half-real fists?"

The giant leader's words clearly hinted at what was missing from this picture.

Gear!

More specifically, combat gear!

Imon in his form as the Chosen Envoy only wore an occult-like robe that befitted a warrior who experienced rebirth in a sense.

These robes were probably not even real per se. They only existed to grant the Chosen Envoy a healthy heap of modesty.

This was clearly not the optimal state for Imon Ingvar to fight against a powerful opponent.

The Blackwater Summoner or the other greater phase whale possessed far too many advantages. Their Saint Armors alone probably made them completely impervious to his attacks regardless of whether he could channel true resonance.

Willpower possessed the ability to distort reality, but it worked best when it already had a solid basis in reality.

As such, a Chosen Envoy fell far short of specialized expert mech or ace mech.

Imon did not integrate any resonating materials into his development.

As far as Ves was aware of, Imon kept himself busy all these months by relying on a combination of passive E energy absorption and active training.

One of the biggest losses that Imon had suffered upon his transformation into a Chosen Envoy was that he could no longer fight like his old self anymore.

He lacked the willpower and expert mech to replicate his old feats.

His present incarnation had nothing to do with mechs. He may have gained the power to fight while remaining 'naked', but he had lost the most precious traits that allowed high-ranking mech pilots to dominate the battlefield.

Yet just because he manifested in this state did not mean he had to remain this way.

Blinky turned to the Victrix hovering close at hand.

The majestic green-and-golden owl continued to serve her purpose by acting as a living relay for Casella's Command Field.

Yet that was only several major purposes for the Victrix. The Ultimate Module and living fey was not this large for nothing!

Upon receiving a silent command from Ves, the glowing Imon Ingvar immediately turned and flew towards the Victrix!

Soon, his intangible form disappeared inside the beautiful metallic owl, causing it to glow brighter while also falling under the control of not one, but two Ingvars!

At this moment, Casella readily handed the reins of control to the entity that she treated as her brother.

She actually wished to give Imon a better opportunity to fight by letting him control the Minerva Mark II directly!

After all, a former high-tier expert pilot would be able to exert his strength a lot better through a humanoid mech rather than an avian construct.

However, this was absolutely stupid. A command mech should never fight in the trenches. Casella's life was also far too precious to risk in such a manner.

It was a pity that Ves had not prepared a more suitable vessel for his Chosen Envoy. They could only make do with using the Victrix as a stopgap solution.

Perhaps it was possible to merge Imon with a Woodsap mech or other ordinary machine, but they were far too weak and fragile to endure the rigors of high-level combat.

As for other ace mechs, that was even more unthinkable.

The overbearing willpower of other saints would never tolerate the interference of a stranger!

Besides, those ace pilots were already strong enough on their own. Imon's addition brought no meaningful value.

In the end, the best way for Ves' first and only Chosen Envoy to exercise his might was through his sister's Ultimate Module.

Though the Victrix did not look all that different, Imon's entry had caused the Victrix's aura to skyrocket.

The main weakness of an ace commander was the inability to concentrate her willpower into a singular medium.

They had deliberately sacrificed this capability in order to spread their willpower far and wide.

Yet for the Saint Commander, Imon's appearance had broken the rules!

Though Casella took special care to continue to maintain the basic operation of her Command Field, her desire to bestow her brother with all of the willpower she could muster inevitably weakened her Commandeered and Enfeoffed subjects.

Omega Threshers that previously managed to carve their way through alien warship hulls found that their firepower had decreased in potency.

Though the drop in lethality was not severe, the mech pilot still managed to notice the differences. Their jobs had become a lot harder than before!

The same applied to other mechs, warships and naval personnel.

The importance of her brother vastly exceeded every other soldier and officer in the combined fleet!

How could she possibly remain diligent when Imon was about to risk his new 'life' on the battlefield for the first time?

Casella therefore left the remaining subjects within her domain field to their own devices. She not only withdrew a considerable amount of power from them, but also pulled back her active guidance.

Even if she was able to split her attention and multi-task to an inhuman degree, her interests had become so skewed that she readily shifted the majority of her focus onto her brother alone!

The Victrix effectively became a carrier of two extraordinary soldiers.

At first, the metallic owl moved a bit erratically.

Imon was not used to controlling such a 'mech'. He never had an opportunity to practice with it, which in hindsight was a major shortcoming.

However, the Chosen Envoy had not lost all of the strengths and qualities as a high-tier expert pilot.

Just like piloting a new and unfamiliar mech, Imon Ingvar rapidly became accustomed to controlling the Ultimate Module's various systems.

The flight systems embedded in the wings performed smoothly. The limbs moved more regularly and with deliberate control. The sharp transphasic claws clenched and unclenched as if they were waiting to grip onto their prey.

Throughout this acclimation process, the main enemies had yet to resume their fighting.

The surviving greater and lesser phase leaders of the Red Cabal utilized the present interruption to their advantage. They performed triage on the phase lords that suffered grievous injuries but still managed to cling to life. They also took stock of their hardware and tried to patch up the holes as best as possible.

The Ascended Giants engaged in similar activities. They had lost much of the confidence they held before. This was because they had suffered greater fatalities. Their inability to gain the upper hand had shamed them, but not to the point of surrender.

The Fiery Axe and her fellow giants still retained a lot of fighting spirit. They wanted to wash away their shame by claiming the lives of the alien phase lords!

Given the current results, they had little objection to relying on outside reinforcements in the form of this 'Chosen Envoy'.

The giants could be very flexible when their lives were on the line. What was the point of feeling proud when they were at risk of losing almost all of their giants just to achieve a pyrrhic victory against these giants?

It was much better to rely on their leader's confounding tricks to gain a decisive advantage and achieve victory through overwhelming strength!

When Imon and the Victrix were about ready to fight, the Blackwater Summoner issued a contemptuous response.

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

"IS THIS THE EXTENT OF YOUR RELIANCE? SUMMONING A GHOST OF A DEAD WARRIOR AND PUTTING HIM INSIDE A METAL SHELL WILL NOT SAVE YOU FROM MY BLACKWATER. MY NEW DEATHBORN ALLIES ARE MUCH MORE FORMIDABLE THAN YOUR INFERIOR COPY. THIS AVIAN SHELL WILL STRUGGLE TO PIERCE MY SAINT ARMOR."

The Blackwater Summoner may have a point. The Victrix was not yet superdimensional, just like the Minerva Mark II herself.

Her true resonance and other properties might allow her to punch through superdimensional armor, but only with great effort.

Ves already had a solution for that, though.

"Buddy, hand over the Murder Knife Mark III." He instructed his alter ego.

The Dark Apostle hesitated for a few seconds, but ultimately complied.

He withdrew the experimental D-arm from its sheath and tossed it over to the metallic owl.

The Victrix easily caught the hilt with both of her claws.

Though the manner in which the non-humanoid construct wielded the superdimensional knife looked awkward, the possessed command fey had just remedied her greatest shortcoming!

The Blackwater Summoner could not afford to look down on this composite existence anymore!

Chapter 7573 The Self-Consuming Weapon

The battle resumed!

The sudden entry of Imon Ingvar onto the field had momentarily taken many combatants by surprise, but only briefly.

Their enemies still existed and they could still be killed at any time.

The combined fleet had made considerable progress in closing in on the orbital fortresses.

In response, the allied aliens entrenched in the Hypeh-Tekas System had brought out all of their defenders.

Both old and new alien foes confronted the humans led by the Larkinson Clan!

Ace pilots such as Saint Tusa Billingsley-Larkinson and Saint Davia Stark desperately sought to take out the most acute threats, but the deathborn mobilized their core forces in response!

Though the latter had temporarily lost the benefit of dark miasma, higher-ranked deathborn still managed to preserve millions of subordinates by keeping a very tight grip on their instincts.

It was hard for the deathborn to resist the urge to absorb all of the abundant life energies in the environment.

However, the quantity of their more rational and intelligent officers was higher than expected!

The drastic changes on the battlefield had forced them out of the shadows.

Hundreds of pockets of space that were occupied by disciplined deathborn appeared all around the combined fleet.

Each of them was led by at least one deathborn officer, though many formations contained over a dozen of them based on crude energy readings.

A small proportion of these high-ranking deathborn possessed greater strength than others.

They did not look or behave like mere sergeants or captains.

These deathborn demonstrated genuine intelligence, judgment as well as raw power.

They not only kept much more low-ranking deathborn under their thrall than others, but also possessed the ability to combine their strengths or draw power from them in order to cast potent spells!

Yet what truly forced the humans to take these 'lord-type' deathborn seriously was the fact that each of them possessed the body of a lesser phase lord!

The extra-galactic lords did not seem too bothered with the terrible or incomplete state of their organic vessels.

Through their unholy workings, the rotting true bodies of long-dead alien gods still retained a lot of potency!

The deathborn lords were not only able to cast spells and leverage their own racial abilities, but also leverage the physical might and spatial abilities of their phase lord vessels!

The appearance of these new and organized foes kept every human mech and warship occupied.

During this important period, the Saint Commander's latest distraction presented even greater difficulties to the human soldiers that were forced to make up for the shortfall!

None of them could spare any forces or attention on reinforcing the Ascended Giants at this time!

The Dark Apostle and his fellow human phase lords had little choice but to rely on themselves to defeat the phase leaders of the Red Cabal.

If not for Ves' latest move, the clash between human and alien phase leaders would have unfolded into a bitter and painful for the former!

The Blackwater Summoner alone presented a nearly insurmountable threat. All of the 'blackwater' swirling around his armored form behaved like a living flood. It flowed wherever it needed to be and corroded anything that got into contact with the liquid substance!

Ves and the Dark Apostle had no easy way to overcome such an insanely strong weapon and barrier!

However, that might change now that Ves' Chosen Envoy was prepared to intervene.

The possessed Victrix radiated concentrated power.

For the first time in a long while, both Ingvar siblings had come together and combined their respective strengths in a single vessel!

The glowing metallic owl gripped the Murder Knife Mark III tightly with its claws. Though the hold did not look too reliable, the Ingvars nonetheless deemed it sufficient for their purposes!

"Go." Ves commanded his Chosen Envoy. "Kill the Blackwater Summoner. Stay alive. Do not let the blackwater touch the Victrix. Make full use of the lethality of the Murder Knife. I will do my best to support you from the side."

Nobody knew how strong this amalgamation had become, but Ves did not think that this was enough to secure a victory.

The Dark Apostle began to move forward alongside the Victrix.

The latter accelerated faster and reached the most the greater phase whale first!

The Blackwater Summoner chose to confront the Chosen Envoy by himself. He remained confident enough in his strength and the power of his Blackwater Organ!

"#%&#@$%."

"YOUR TRICKS WILL ONLY DELAY THE INEVITABLE. MY BLACKWATER IS UNSTOPPABLE. NONE OF YOU SHALL REMAIN WHOLE."

The curtains of blackwater flowed under his direct command.

They split into several different streams.

Some of them turned into makeshift shields that blocked many different attack angles.

Others transformed into spears that sprung forth with considerable speed and momentum!

Yet as these blackwater spears closed in, the Victrix nimbly adjusted the angle of her wings, causing her to propel in different directions!

The metallic owl deftly managed to evade every blackwater spear.

Imon and Casella had both combined their judgment to determine the most optimal timing and directions!

The Blackwater Summoner was caught off-guard by the Victrix's successful approach, but he still had plenty of blackwater left to issue another response.

The greater phase whale opened up a cavity in the front of his Saint Armor yet again and spat out a modest jet of blackwater.

This stream did not stay concentrated, but quickly split up into 20 diverging needles!

This time, the cone of blackwater needles covered every potential evasion route. The Victrix had come too close to move away from the danger zone in time!

"IMON!" Casella urgently shouted!

Her true resonance tried to empower her brother and the Victrix even more than before, but the Saint Commander had already reached a limit. There was no way for her to empower the vessel even further!

Yet under the control of a former high-tier expert pilot, the Victrix bizarrely began to spin along her length!

Multiple blackwater needles should have struck her resonance-empowered exterior, yet ultimately missed by a few centimeters in most cases!

What an amazing display of control and agility!

Yet despite the best effort of the Ingvar siblings, the Victrix could not evade two of the blackwater needles without getting hit by more.

Yet just as these two jets of highly dangerous liquid was able to damage the precious but relatively fragile Ultimate Module, the Victrix had already spun around in a way that enabled her to block the blackwater needles with her borrowed weapon!

The superdimensional D-arm shook and roared with otherworldly agony as the blade made contact with the blackwater needles.

Unfortunately, the Murder Knife proved vulnerable to the unreasonable properties of blackwater. Holes and scars appeared on the surface of the blade.

Fortunately, the scope of the damage remained modest.

The Murder Knife Mark III was not only forged out of the scarcest and most precious weapon-grade superdimensional alloy, but had also been scaled at 3x!

Though the superdimensional weapon may appear like a normal knife when wielded by an Ascended Giant as large as the Dark Apostle, it looked more like a full-sized sword when held by the Victrix!

After slightly compromising the integrity of the Murder Knife, the Victrix had successfully swept close enough to bypass the remaining curtains of blackwater and strike the greater phase lord at the flank!

When the blade of the Murder Knife touched the exterior of the Saint Armor, the formidable D-arm suddenly generated a devastating eruption!

The Blackwater Summoner reared back in pain and surprise as the blast not only tore through the layers of alien-grade superdimensional alloy, but also shredded a large chunk of his flesh!

While the overall damage was not that great relative to the size of his true body, the greater phase whale still felt disturbed how a grazing hit from a single blade produced such a disproportionate result.

Even Casella and Imon had been caught off-guard by this unexpectedly strong reaction. They had only intended to cut an opening in the Saint Armor. They never expected to be able to inflict a considerable injury right away!

However, as the Victrix rapidly circled around in order to launch subsequent attacks, the Ingvar siblings quickly discovered that the exaggerated performance came with a costly price.

The blade of the Murder Knife had incurred additional damage!

Though it did not look obvious on the surface, its wielders could clearly feel that its internal structure had weakened to a small extent.

Numerous cracks as well as small holes had appeared inside the blade!

As the Victrix continued to replicate her earlier feat and generate several new holes in the Blackwater Summoner's Saint Armor, the weapon responsible for prying open this superdimensional shell gradually lost more and more integrity.

The experimental D-arm was falling apart with every use!

The only person who understood what was going on was Ves.

He knew exactly why the Murder Knife self-destructed with every explosive contact.

In his prior experiments, he accidentally discovered a way to bridge the divide between superdimensional weapons with Destroyer weapons.

He had made many amazing discoveries, some of which were so massive that he did not dare to share them with others, especially the Terrans!

What mattered the most right now was that he had made use of his incredible findings to integrate a minute amount of Destroyer particles into the Murder Knife.

The integration of what he casually called the Super-Destroyer System had a very dramatic effect on the lethality of the Murder Knife.

This was because the latest modification effectively blended the properties of destruction with the properties of space!

Even though Ves still considered the implementation to be crude and very much incomplete, he had little complaints about the effectiveness.

The biggest problem was that the price was too great!

Each activation of the Super-Destroyer System cannibalized a small amount of superdimensional matter!

This could not be avoided. Ves found no other way to fuel this highly destructive reaction at this time.

Perhaps he could refine the Super-Destroyer System in the future so that it could be fueled with phasewater instead, but now he had no choice but to allow the weapon to eat itself apart in order to reach a whole new level of potency!

Inwardly, Ves groaned with every activation of the new system. He might not feel much sentiment towards this experimental platform, but its material composition still included a hefty proportion of weapon-grade superdimensional matter!

The very thought of using this top-end strategic material as a consumable resource sounded like blasphemy in his ears!

He could not help but transmit a reminder to the Saint Commander to ration the use of the Murder Knife.

"Once this weapon is used up, it will be difficult if not impossible to replenish or replace it in the short term."

Given these conditions, Casella and Imon did not dare to recklessly squander the weapon's durability.

They had to finish this fight and inflict a decisive blow onto the Blackwater Summoner before the Murder Knife fell apart to the point of becoming useless!

Chapter 7574 Major Injuries

Given the limited endurance of the Murder Knife Mark III, the Dark Apostle and the Chosen Envoy had no choice but to team up in order to defeat the Blackwater Summoner!

Though the Dark Apostle was not accustomed to fighting in coordination with an ally, he did not experience as much frustration as he appeared.

This was because of the support of his other self.

While the Dark Apostle needed to direct the vast majority of his attention on his opponent, Ves acted more of a bystander.

Of course, it would be a falsehood to claim that he did nothing throughout this battle.

Since he possessed the form of Blinky, he had quietly manipulated the Blinkyverse in order to support several different initiatives at the same time.

For example, the internal universe quietly absorbed the abundant life energies in the surrounding environment. There was no reason for Ves to let all of this free energy go to waste. The injection of lots of low-quality life energy would definitely stimulate the growth of the Blinkyverse in a positive direction!

As for the hidden poison hiding within, Ves had little concerns about them. He had created the Poison Willow variant. He already figured out several ways to filter out the poisonous seeds. It just demanded a considerable amount of time, effort or resources depending on the approach.

However, Ves actually felt inclined to keep the poisonous seeds intact. He grew curious about what sort of life might evolve in the Blinkyverse if life remained inseparable from the mechanism that had already wiped out almost all of the deathborn around Hypeh-Tekas II.

Anyway, these were considerations for the future.

At this moment, Ves also leveraged the Blinkyverse in other ways. Aside from tapping into its impressive reserves of processing power, he also began to draw out specific varieties of E energy in order to support the fight.

For example, in order to interfere with the operation of blackwater, Ves gained the bright idea to draw out earth E energy and shape it into the most solid block possible before throwing it in the way!

Though his initial experiments produced almost no reaction, later ones began to show actual results.

The Blackwater Summoner, who had long maintained absolute confidence in the invincibility and inviolability of his blackwater, reacted with great surprise!

The dark and mysterious jets of fortified phasewater no longer flowed completely according to his will anymore.

Though he still exerted strong control over the blackwater, its flows occasionally experienced unexpected hiccups.

In some instances, the blackwater experienced an unexpected slowdown, causing them to arrive at a specific coordinate half a second later than expected.

In other instances, the blackwater vortices that spiraled into place as floating defenses suffered unexpected interruptions, causing them to deform or even expose momentary gaps!

These flaws may appear minor and inconsequential, but they were extremely precious vulnerabilities on a battle of this level!

Both the Saint Commander and the Chosen Envoy were sharp and skilled enough to take advantage of these tiny openings!

"R#&@#&!"

"WHAT IS THIS!? IMPOSSIBLE! THIS IS BLASMPHEMY! MY BLACKWATER IS DIVINE! IT IS IMPOSSIBLE FOR HUMANS TO PROFANE MY POWER!"

Blinky scoffed at this arrogant declaration. "While I don't know what makes blackwater special, it is still a variation of phasewater, which in turn is a variation of water. This means that it should still be subject to all of the associations related to the water E element. One of the most basic rules that we have ascertained is that earth obstructs water. Not even a 'god' as powerful as you can eradicate this fundamental relation. I might not have the power to dam up your blackwater entirely, but I only need to put up a few obstacles to hinder your control."

This successful experiment had a considerable impact on the progression of this duel!

Although the Blackwater Summoner still fought almost just as effectively as before, his confidence had taken a massive hit!

He never expected anyone to be able to deconstruct his trump card to the point of being able to mess with it at a relatively low cost!

Ves was still limited by the annoyingly small aperture of the Blinkyverse. If he wanted to, he would have wanted to mobilize a lot more earth E energy, even to the point of destabilizing the foundation of the internal universe!

Oh well. At least his current actions posed no danger to the Blinkyverse.

He continued his efforts to hinder the Blackwater Summoner.

He did his best to coordinate his actions with the attack runs of the Dark Apostle and the Victrix.

The two had already fought long enough alongside each other to develop a tacit cooperation between each other.

The Dark Apostle proved himself to be a skilled but relatively inexperienced warrior. He had voluntarily assumed the role of the anvil. He tried to get into the face of the greater phase whale as much as possible!

The more the Blackwater Summoner remained focused on the Dark Apostle, the less attention he could spare for the much more dangerous threat!

Though the alien phase whale was certainly clever enough to figure out this scheme, it was not that easy for him to turn towards the true threat.

For one, the Dark Apostle could still inflict a lot of damage!

Ves might not have applied the experimental Super-Destroyer System into this prized D-arm, but the Withering Sting was still a genuine weapon-grade superdimensional weapon!

With the help of the Victrix, the Dark Apostle already managed to get past the blackwater and plunge the tip of his extraordinary weapon into the Saint Armor of his opponent.

The alien-grade superdimensional alloy offered far too little resistance!

If not for its relatively abundant thickness, the spear attacks would have plunged much deeper into the Blackwater Summoner's flesh!

Even so, just the shallow wounds inflicted a disproportionate amount of damage and distress to the formidable alien god.

The true danger of the Withering Sting did not lie in its superdimensional edge, but its withering properties!

Each touch of the weapon left behind malevolent energies that actively sapped the life out of the surrounding alien tissue.

Parts of the flesh underneath the Saint Armor began to grow dry and weak. Though these patches of diseased and dying flesh remained small in proportion to the Blackwater Summoner's true body, they still became a persistent annoyance.

"Do you feel it, phase whale?" The Dark Apostle confidently grinned even as his Superdimensional Giant Regalia got splashed by a touch of blackwater. "Your blackwater cannot shield you anymore. Each time you let me stab you with my spear, another portion of your flesh shall wither."

His taunting words further diminished the Blackwater Summoner's mood.

As old as he may be, it had been a long time that others defied him in such an open and brazen manner!

His personality demanded him to retaliate with immediate effect to punish the Dark Apostle for his insolence, but doing so would only play into the latter's intentions!

This became evident when the Victrix took advantage of the Blackwater Summoner's momentary bout of frustration.

The metallic owl nimbly flew past the blackwater jets and pools before plunging the damaged Murder Knife into an open cavity that had already been affected by an earlier attack!

This time, the Murder Knife plunged deeper into the fat but already damaged flesh of the greater phase whale.

The large alien entity roared in serious pain as the destructive spatial blast unleashed by this strike actually managed to wound his peripheral phasewater organs this time!

Much of the Blackwater Summoner's internal volume consisted of solid flesh and bone.

However, every phase whale tried to stuff as many phasewater organs inside their true bodies as possible.

These artificially engineered organs formed the basis of a phase leader's strength and status.

Compared to phase lords derived from other alien species, phase whales could generally accommodate more phasewater organs due to their non-humanoid body shapes.

This was normally a key advantage to this species, but this time the Blackwater Summoner more than usual because his phasewater organs had already become vulnerable!

The alien leader became fought more recklessly in response. He no longer obsessed over performing a neat display and began to swing his blackwater around like a massive club instead of an elegant rapier!

"Damnit!" Ves cursed. "I can't obstruct his blackwater as effectively as before. He has dropped all pretenses of finesse in favor of relying on brute force. His blackwater has become much more resistant to interference!"

The blackwater flows became larger, broader and rougher. They no longer made fancy spirals or elegant turns. They also did not split up as much as before.

While this created a lot more openings, the blackwater jets had also become a lot more dangerous!

The Victrix was still able to move around these rough and dangerous rivers of blackwater, but the Dark Apostle experienced greater difficulties!

The giant leader overcame his fears and bravely tried to launch attacks in order to force the alien leader to pay attention to him. This cost the Dark Apostle greatly when he found himself unable to fully evade a broad jet of blackwater!

A larger quantity of blackwater spilled across the armored portions of his left arm and shoulder!

The high-grade superdimensional alloy immediately weakened to the point of forming holes!

What was worse than the loss of so much precious materials was that liters of blackwater managed to get through and splash onto the Ascended Giant's vulnerable shoulder!

"AHHH! IT HURTS!"

The smart metal fabric covering the limb succumbed without any resistance! Vulnerable flesh seemed to dissolve as the black liquid bit in deep! Even the bones closest to this limb had started to degrade!

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

Chapter 7575 Divergence of Courage

The Dark Apostle suffered a major wound in the latest exchange of blows!

His superdimensional raiment gained a giant hole, leaving him completely open to follow-up attacks!

If that was not bad enough, a considerable amount of blackwater had melted through his shoulder, causing him to effectively lose strength in left arm!

The Dark Apostle, and by extension Ves, had become crippled!

This was a serious injury to a phase lord. Ves did not even know for certain whether it was even possible to make a full restoration. He already blamed his other self for being so reckless and self-sacrificing in battle!

"You idiot! You didn't have to take so many risks! You are not piloting a mech! A machine can easily lose an entire limb without serious consequences as long as there is enough money and materials to reconstruct the broken parts. The same cannot be said for our true bodies!"

Ves grew both alarmed and afraid!

He became alarmed when he saw his own body suffer serious damage for the first time since the start of this battle!

He had invested so much strategic resources into constructing the Superdimensional Giant Regalia precisely because he wanted to shield his true body from harm.

This was not supposed to happen!

He also started to experience genuine fear for his life. This was because he realized that the Dark Apostle possessed a fundamentally different attitude towards combat and risk-taking than himself.

While Ves did not consider himself a coward, he saw no shame in retreating when the conditions on the battlefield became too adverse. He never considered himself to be a warrior. That also meant that he never felt obligated to follow the rules of honorable combat.

The Dark Apostle had a different mindset. Perhaps he was born from Ves' unmet longing to be a soldier or warrior from the Larkinson Family. The Ascended Giant held himself to the standards of the champions of the human race, who overwhelmingly consisted of high-ranking mech pilots who were much more willing to go to extremes in order to trigger their breakthroughs!

It did not matter that the Dark Apostle was not a willpower cultivator. He became thoroughly infected by the notion that a true warrior and champion had to be willing to risk his very life in order to attain victory!

"Damnit!"

This was a fundamental contradiction between the two personalities!

Normally, Ves did not mind it if others possessed such admirable courage.

The premise to that was that if the soldier in question did not recklessly put his true body at risk!

Ves should have held a serious conversation with the Dark Apostle on this subject. This kind of behavior was absolutely unacceptable as far as he was concerned!

Unfortunately, they had neglected to hold such a talk, so Ves had no choice but to witness the Dark Apostle use and abuse their shared true body as if it was a disposable punching bag!

Wait.

Perhaps Ves may not be as powerless as he thought.

His Chosen Envoy must have registered his sudden spike in fear and his rapidly growing desire to extract his true body from this predicament.

At the same time, the Saint Commander could not have missed the ramifications of allowing the true pillar of the Larkinson Clan to perish on the battlefield at this time.

The Victrix glowed brighter as both of the Ingvar siblings no longer held anything back and invested all of their willpower and effort into their next attack run!

The metallic owl seemed to turn into a burning orange sun right before she crashed into the vulnerable flank of the Blackwater Summoner!

The Ingvar siblings did not waste the fantastic opening created by the Dark Apostle's sacrificial play and thrust the Murder Knife Mark III deeper into the already-damaged and exposed flesh of the greater phase whale!

As the Blackwater Summoner reared back in pain yet again, the suffering alien leader had already begun to mobilize multiple jets of blackwater to repel the source of the latest attack.

Normally, the Victrix would have pulled out the Murder Knife Mark III and beat a retreat before she got struck by a counterattack.

Both Casella and Imon chose a different approach this time!

They formed a silent consensus to end this confrontation as soon as possible. The longer it dragged on, the greater the chance that their leader and patron would suffer unimaginable consequences!

As such, they forcibly overloaded the Super-Destroyer System, causing the Destroyer particles to recklessly convert as much weapon-grade superdimensional matter as possible!

At the same time, the Minor Demon inhabiting the weapon went absolutely berserk!

The combination of these factors and more caused the tattered Murder Knife to exceed a limit.

It erupted!

Though the scale of the explosion was limited, the damage it inflicted was not light!

Not only did it annihilate several of the closest phasewater organs, it also propelled dozens of small but incredibly sharp weapon shards in every direction!

Given that the blast happened inside the greater phase whale's body, at least a dozen more phasewater organs suffered severe cuts and injuries!

This time, the Blackwater Summoner experienced true agony!

"$#&@!"

"MY BLACKWATER ORGAN!"

The greater phase whale briefly lost control over all of his blackwater, causing the liquid to spread and melt anything it touched, including its wielder's own raiment and flesh!

When the Victrix hastily pulled out of its wounded prey, it looked as if it had just survived a calamity.

At least one of the weapon shards had torn straight through one of the Victrix's gorgeous wings. This destroyed several small thrusters as well as other related maneuvering systems. Her mobility had taken a substantial hit as a consequence.

If that was not bad enough, a small quantity of blackwater had raked across her back.

The regular transphasic armor plating offered absolutely no resistance to this high-level substance!

Numerous components buried underneath the helpless armor plating melted directly when they came into contact with the blackwater. Though none of the parts were

particularly vital to the functioning of the command fey, they still reduced her performance in multiple different ways.

All in all, the threat posed by the Victrix had dropped by a massive degree!

Not only had she lost her most lethal weapon, she also could not fight as swiftly and fluently as before.

This was a terrible development as far as Ves was concerned.

Just as he and the Dark Apostle readied themselves up for a brutal second round, their adversaries actually made a surprising decision.

"...%@$&#%!"

"...RETREAT! WE ARE NOT MEANT TO PERISH ON THIS DAY. I HAVE ALREADY OBTAINED WHAT I NEEDED FROM OUR NEW ALLIES. LET THEM DRAG THESE HUMAN INVADERS INTO DARKNESS."

The Blackwater Summoner managed to regain partial control over his blackwater. He opened his enormous maw and sucked much of this dangerous substance back into his own true body!

At the same time, the other greater phase whale that had been tangling with the Fiery Axe and a couple of other Ascended Giants had disengaged from his own fight and returned to the side of his superior!

Just four surviving lesser phase lords managed to pull back as well and converge with the two greater phase whales.

The sudden disengagement infuriated the Ascended Giants!

They had suffered grievously in the fight. More than half-a-dozen of their number had already paid with their lives, while many more suffered various injuries.

They had sacrificed too much to allow their enemies to cut their losses and run!

"Stop."

However, when their polemarchos raised his intact arm and issued a command, the surviving Ur-Titans and Flesh Choppers reluctantly halted their pursuit.

Were they just going to float around and watch as their hated foes make a clean retreat?!

"Why?!" The Fiery Axe asked as her rage screamed at her to disregard her superior's orders!

The Dark Apostle felt almost just as indignant as the strategos, but he did not lose his cool. He still managed to maintain the awareness of a leader, if only barely.

Besides, Ves had been constantly whining to him about not letting their shared true body go to ruin!

"We are no longer in a condition to win." The giant leader bluntly answered. "Look at me. Look at yourselves. Your superdimensional raiments are halfway towards falling apart. Your true bodies are bleeding out precious phasewater."

"So what? Our enemies are doing no better!"

"Resuming the fight will only cause us to achieve a hollow victory! What is the point of winning a fight when only two or three of us remain standing in the end? Let it go, Fiery Axe. This is already the best result that we can attain. We must prioritize strategy over pride. The former will enable our race to thrive and survive the dangerous years ahead. The latter will only get us killed at a rapid rate. There is no future for our race if we constantly provoke powerful enemies and suffer massive losses after every fight. Be smart!"

Though the Fiery Axe and the other giants still remained pumped with energy, their leader's words still managed to penetrate through their thick skulls.

Ultimately, their reverence towards their polemarchos and the logic of his arguments gradually managed to cool their fighting intent.

Now that they had sobered up, they understood that they could truly lose their lives for limited gains if they foolishly persisted in seeing this fight to the end!

"Clean up the battlefield. Prioritize on saving our wounded and dying comrades. Salvage the bodies and equipment of our dead enemies if you can. The fact that we can scavenge all of this stuff is proof that we have ultimately won this fight."

That was enough to soothe their damaged egos.

The native gods of the Red Cabal had indeed made massive concessions by withdrawing first!

Not only had they left behind the carcasses of numerous lesser phase lords and their remaining intact phasewater organs, they also left behind their corresponding Saint Piercers and Saint Armors!

Ves did not look down on all of this discarded superdimensional gear. The performance of their alloys might not be the best, but they were not terrible either. He could think of many uses of these materials once he had broken down the alien gear!

As for other spoils, Ves and the Dark Apostle stared at the many drops of blackwater that their source had been forced to leave behind.

The former wanted to capture as many samples as possible in order to figure out the secrets behind this mysterious substance.

The Dark Apostle wanted his other self to research this mutated form of phasewater just so that they could develop an actual defense against this new threat!

"How can we safely collect this blackwater?"

"I don't know. Give me a minute to figure out this problem."

Chapter 7576 Deathborn Lords

The Battle of Hypeh-Tekas II had entered a new stage.

The brawl between the two groups of phase leaders had ended on an inconclusive note.

Both sides suffered severe damage. The Ascended Giants had entered the battlefield with more men, but suffered greater losses as a result.

It couldn't be helped. As strong as the Dark Apostle and the Fiery Axe had become, neither of them were a match against properly equipped and prepared greater phase whales.

The Blackwater Summoner had especially demonstrated the strength and dignity of a core member of the Red Cabal!

Given how much damage blackwater could have wrought on the Ascended Giants or other human forces, Ves already considered this outcome to be a slight victory.

They had prevented the powerful representatives of the Red Cabal from making a greater impact on the battlefield!

Unfortunately, the Ascended Giants paid a steep price for this thin victory.

The Dark Apostle frowned as he beheld the surrounding space. Splotches of blackwater, phasewater-infused blood and debris floated in every direction.

Chunks of torn superdimensional armor plating and starship debris made flight through this region a bit more hazardous than before.

The surviving giants sifted through the moderately-sized debris field.

Each of them showed various signs of fatigue.

The fighting had not lasted long, but the pressure of survival had been so great that they had expended huge amounts of energy over a span of just 20 or so minutes!

After so much exertion, the Ascended Giants had already become a half-spent force.

Perhaps the ones that had suffered fewer injuries could still contribute to the ongoing battle in other ways, but they were no longer in a shape to confront enemies at the same level.

The enemy phase leaders made great use of their Saint Piercers and superior phasewater organs to exact their pound of flesh from their human counterparts!

This clash had most certainly opened Ves and the Dark Apostle's eyes on the potential of phase leaders.

The Phase Lord Department had made great strides by investing in superior technology and equipment.

However, the native aliens and more specifically the Red Cabal were not savages who could always be trusted to neglect technological development.

Arrogant as they may be, forward-thinking phase whales such as the Blackwater Summoner fully recognized the value and necessity of superior technology.

The sophistication of his customized Saint Armor did not fall too far behind in comparison to his own Superdimensional Giant Regalia!

While there were many differences, Ves still grew distressed by the fact that the overall performance gap was not as great as he desired.

If the Red Cabal had access to superior grades of superdimensional matter, then the outcome of this bout would have been a lot less favorable!

"This is a disappointment." The Dark Apostle commented as he continued to supervise the cleanup of the battlefield.

He winced in pain as the rapid-sealing solution had formed a temporary cast on his heavily injured left shoulder.

He still hadn't regained movement in his arm, though he supposed he should feel grateful that the blackwater hadn't managed to sever the limb entirely.

While he could endure the pain, he felt more upset about his failure to defeat the Blackwater Summoner.

If he had put up a better fight, then he could have secured a more decisive victory!

At the very least, he could have taken revenge for all of the casualties suffered by his men.

"We acquitted ourselves well as far as I am concerned." Ves soothed his other self even as he examined the small samples of blackwater that they managed to secure in a gravitic trap. "Sure, we may have outnumbered our opponents, but those 2 greater phase whales are no joke. Neutralizing this threat early without committing greater assets is a good exchange. I am sure that the Saint Commander can rest a little easier now that we have taken these powerful pieces off the board."

The mention of the Saint Commander caused the Dark Apostle to throw a glance at the damaged Victrix.

The metallic owl had clearly seen better days. It no longer exuded as much light and presence as before.

Ves had already withdrawn his Chosen Envoy. There was no reason to let Imon Ingvar linger in realspace for any longer than necessary. His ego and personality were still deficient. Letting him remain in contact with his sister would probably do more harm than good.

Casella did not object to this decision.

As much as she missed her brother, she knew more than anyone else that the current iteration of Imon was still very much... incomplete, not to mention his other flaws.

"Sir." The Fiery Axe flew up to the Dark Apostle while holding half the corpse of a nunser phase lord. "We've grabbed what we can. There are still pieces of superdimensional gear that have flown too far for us to retrieve, but we should leave that to the other retrieval parties. I suggest we retreat."

The Dark Apostle nodded. "Very well. Lead the way."

As the Ascended Giants made their way back to the combined fleet, the Victrix no longer stuck around anymore.

There were other locations that still needed her assistance!

Though the metallic owl had sustained severe damage in the fight against the Blackwater Summoner, the Saint Commander evidently judged that she could still play a useful role.

As Ves and the Dark Apostle both directed their attention across the broad expanse of space around them, they certainly understood why Casella made this risky choice.

The eruption of so many deathborn and the release of so much life energy had temporarily changed the rules of the battlefield.

The hostile environment had disappeared, at least for as long as this pocket of positive energies lasted.

That did not necessarily mean that Alexa's gambit had banished the dark miasma forever.

The source of this malevolent influence still existed elsewhere in the Hypeh-Tekas System.

Enough time had passed for the high concentration of life energy to deplete. Too much of it had dispersed into the surroundings. Like a drop of wine falling into a lake, the spark of life had no chance of surviving in a chamber of darkness.

The dark miasma was making a comeback. Already, the zone of positive energies had not only grown several times weaker, but also shrunk in radius.

Ves estimated that the pocket of safety would disappear entirely within a quarter of an hour.

"Too short!"

All of this meant that the combined fleet had to wrap up this battle and do its best to complete the most crucial objectives before it was too late!

Ves glanced at the massive dark stone temple complex built on the surface of the graveyard planet.

The explosion of life energy and the spread of poisonous seeds had temporarily suppressed its activity, but how long would that last?

Once the dark miasma returned, the operators of this temple would be free to resume the production of newborn deathborn!

Why had the temple not yet come under assault?

Ves swept his gaze across the battlefield and obtained the answer.

Every other asset had become occupied.

The Dark Zephyr Mark III, the Amaranto Mark III and the First Sword Mark III all became locked into combat by a handful of very troublesome high-ranking deathborn.

Each of them happened to possess the body of a phase lord or phase whale. That alone did not necessarily make them dangerous. The rotting carcasses should have been easy prey to superdimensional ace mechs, especially since they lacked any corresponding equipment.

However, their mysterious abilities and other bizarre traits somehow allowed them to fight some of the most powerful units of red humanity to a standstill!

Ves only had time to catch glimpses of these deathborn champions in combat, but he immediately grew impressed by the sophistication of their combat methods.

The deathborn leaders fought as real qi cultivators!

Even when they were forced to fight in an adverse environment, these deathborn relied on the residual abilities of their stolen true bodies to stay on the move while casting all sorts of strange spells to frustrate their opponents.

The apparent leader of the deathborn in this star system fought the most impressively. As a suspected True God projection, the deathborn leader actually figured out a way to neutralize the poisonous seeds embedded in the life energy!

This allowed him to absorb the positive energies at a slow but concerning rate and generate a cloud of dark miasma around himself!

This localized reversal immediately granted this formidable alien entity an advantage. Combined with the strength of his phase whale vessel, the deathborn leader had firmly gained the upper hand!

The Dark Zephyr Mark III no longer had any space or opportunity to launch any attacks. The living ace light skirmisher was forced to invest all of his attention on evasion and occasionally defense.

Waves of spiralling darkness engulfed half of the archemech frame!

The Dark Zephyr had tried his best to evade this thrust, but moving in any other direction would only lead him to fall into a more dangerous trap!

Though the ace mech quickly managed to pull himself out of the wave of darkness less than a second later, a part of his torso and limb armor had already been subjected to a weakening effect!

This was not the first time the Dark Zephyr Mark III suffered unavoidable damage. Multiple essential and nonessential sections already bore the marks of damage.

Much of it looked as if they had been aged for several hundred years. Other pieces of plating looked as if they had been punched with a sledgehammer or cut by a surgical scalp.

In contrast, the much larger and more ominous-looking possessed whale did not look as if he had endured any wounds past his existing ones!

Ves understood that this disparity in results was already the best possible outcome for their side.

Out of all of the ace mechs in the combined fleet, few could limit their damage as well as the fastest and most elusive among the living machines!

Saint Tusa Billingsley-Larkinson had already made an excellent contribution by tying down this formidable adversary.

Unfortunately, the situation with the other ace mechs was not much better.

The deathborn leaders confronting them were not as strong, but they had numbers on their side!

The First Sword Mark III had to fend off three possessed phase lords at the same time!

While each of them were quite manageable if they fought by themselves, their teamwork and synergy were surprisingly good!

Not only did they fight as if they had known each other for decades if not centuries, they also knew how to combine their spells to produce much more powerful effects!

While the First Sword Mark III was still able to brush aside most adverse effects, the first true superdimensional ace mech in existence had still been caught by surprise as a few effects managed to overcome the resistance of her Saint Kingdom and superdimensional shell and inflict direct damage to her internals!

"These deathborn clearly possessed an extremely vast pedigree for combat." Ves critically remarked. "They have fought against enemies with incredibly powerful energy fields and stupendously strong physical defenses in their lengthy past. Their civilization has already invested a lot of time and effort into developing specialized solutions that can counter those defenses."

Although the effects did not appear to be too strong, the First Sword Mark III had no easy way to defend against these strange methods!

Saint Dise found herself forced to avoid close contact, because each time her ace mech came close, her machine became a lot more prone to these bizarre attacks!

The ace pilot was therefore forced to fight outside of her comfort zone. She constantly had to pilot her First Sword away from her enemies while performing high-consumption power moves with her Decapitator.

Fortunately, her sword formation provided her with another means of attack. They were much less prone to the strange attacks. Even if they ended up disabled, it was no big deal as they were built to be semi-disposable from the start.

The sword fey managed to make plenty of cuts to the undead true bodies possessed by the high-ranking deathborn!

This turned what should have been a one-sided hunt into a more indecisive contest of attrition.

Without reinforcements, nobody could say which side would succumb first!

Ves shifted his gaze towards the ace mech that should have provided fire support to the First Sword Mark III.

Saint Davia Stark most definitely would have wanted to intervene, but she happened to be in need of assistance herself!

The Amaranto Mark III could no longer snipe her opponents from a distance at her leisure. This was because she was forced to flee from a pair of stubborn and relentless deathborn lords!

These ones looked to be in worse condition than their colleagues. Their phase lord carcasses were smaller and less complete. Their abilities also seem weaker and less advanced.

That did not matter to them, though. The pair of deathborn lords clearly understood their mission well. They only had to keep the Amaranto Mark III busy enough to prevent her from launching any high-powered shots!

"What about my precious Riot, then?"

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

Chapter 7577 Exploiting Vulnerabilities

The condition of Ves' favorite ace mech did not look optimistic.

In truth, its current state was so absurd that Ves immediately grew enraged once he understood the D-mech's actual predicament!

Only a single high-ranking deathborn lord had been assigned to block the Riot Mark III.

Normally, the Destroyer spear-wielding ace mech should have been able to outfight this extra-galactic adversary in a straightforward clash, but the problem was that this adversary did not play by the same rules!

Instead of challenging a superdimensional ace mech head-on, the possessed phase lord avoided a confrontation where he would be forced to rely on his weaknesses to block the ace mech's strengths.

The enemy instead chose to do the opposite!

Although his hard power was unquestionably inferior to what Ves considered the strongest junior ace mech of all of red humanity, his true basis of strength rested on his completely foreign and unfathomable knowledge!

Somehow, the deathborn lord saw beneath the surface of the ace mech and recognized the obvious vulnerabilities of the Riot Mark III's control nexus.

The alien cultivator did not hesitate to weave a grand spell that acted directly onto Saint Rosa Orfan's psyche!

Normally, such mental attacks should have no effect on a powerful high-ranking mech pilot.

Willpower cultivators were practically made to resist such attacks!

Yet as powerful as she may be, Rosa Orfan was an atypical example of an ace pilot.

Unlike her many peers, Saint Orfan had only been able to break through when she was on the verge of losing control of her own soul!

Even now, the Middle Demon still occupied the majority of her spirituality, leaving her with only a cramped portion that she was still able to defend with the help of her extraordinary willpower.

This lingering condition left her with lasting problems.

For one, she permanently lost control of her human body. It remained partially fused to her piloting seat to this day!

The greater problem was her inability to restrain herself and her D-mech. The adversarial relationship between Saint Orfan and the Prophet's Bane generated constant tension and uncertainty. Uncontrolled outbursts had become an unhappy reality for the Riot Mark III.

Ves regularly kept track of Saint Orfan's mental state and progression.

The information he collected up to this point indicated that the constant struggle for control and survival continually stimulated the growth of Rosa Orfan's resonance strength.

Ves had managed to achieve at least one of the goals for turning the Riot Mark III into a dangerous D-mech.

The ace spearman mech had become the embodiment of the idea that adversity fueled growth!

However, Saint Orfan could never rest completely. Ever since her life had become intertwined with that of the Prophet's Bane, the latter never fell too far behind.

The Middle Demon's possession of the Riot Mark III and its direct connection with the ace pilot meant that the nefarious existence received lots of spiritual feedback with every passing day.

It had formed a parasitic relationship with its human host.

Saint Orfan may be growing at a faster rate than most of her peers, but all of that progress meant little if her demonic counterpart continually leeched off her accelerated progress!

This had become an unsolvable dilemma for the poor ace pilot.

During her more lucid moments, Rosa Orfan expressed an undying hatred against the demon and wanted to do nothing more than to break through first so that she could snuff out the Prophet's Bane herself!

However, there were also times when she felt apprehensive towards the notion that if she grew stronger, the demon would always follow suit.

She had thought more than once on whether she should cease her progression and allow herself to stagnate.

Unacceptable.

The ace pilot only considered the idea for a few seconds before promptly discarding it. There was no way she would give up her struggle and bury her head in the sand! Doing so would only give the demon an opportunity to grow stronger by itself, thereby leaving her even more vulnerable to reprisals!

For this reason, Saint Orfan always sought to stimulate and accelerate her growth whenever possible.

She keenly recognized that she must always preserve this tenuous balance.

Every deployment turned into a risk. The Riot Mark III's hostile nature constantly needed to be leashed and restrained. Even then, the D-mech occasionally lashed out at nearby friendlies or threatened to inflict other forms of harm towards fellow humans!

Only a tenuous balance existed between functional control and pandemonium!

Unfortunately for Ves, the situation related to the Riot Mark III had begun to lean towards the latter than the former!

"RRRHHHAAAAARRGHHH!" The Riot Mark III chaotically broadcasted over an open channel!

The voice sounded nothing like that of Rosa Orfan. It did not even sound particularly feminine either. The vaguely male voice uttered a scream that was affected by so much distortion that it sounded as if an FTL drive was in pain!

Those fighting relatively close visibly winced or leaned away in pain. The human units made sure to move further away so that they would not be at risk of getting eliminated by their own side!

Even so, the responses did nothing to help the struggling ace pilot from suffering an attack that directly targeted his psyche!

Each time the deathborn lord repeated his mysterious spell, the Prophet's Bane gained a modest but very important boost of strength, allowing it to temporarily wrench control from its hated human partner!

Those times did not last too long, but they were quite devastating!

For example, one of the most egregious moments was when the Riot Mark III fell under the control of its Middle Demon for the fourth time.

This time, the rogue D-mech did not randomly lash out against distant friendly units.

It had instead attempted to poke its multi-layered superdimensional frame's body with its own Destroyer spear!

The consequences of doing so would have been catastrophic!

It was only due to the Prophet's Bane reluctance and the intervention of other parties that the Riot Mark III's outbursts lasted as short as before.

Even so, it would only take a single act of manipulation to unravel this convoluted restraint.

This was exactly what the deathborn lord had done!

This alien menace had overcome the formidable resistance of Rosa Orfan's flawed willpower and managed to tamper with Saint Orfan and her demonic counterpart's relationship!

Through a variety of methods, the deathborn lord cleverly fed the Middle Demon's ego while simultaneously smashing Saint Orfan's basis of confidence!

The deathborn lord's earlier manipulations had created multiple cracks in the ace pilot's armor.

The enemy's latter mental attacks ruthlessly exploited these vulnerabilities and practically forced the ace pilot to vacate control over her own machine!

The Riot Mark III no longer pursued the deathborn lord as hard as before.

Instead, the D-mech deliberately reined in its aggression and maintained a more leisurely pace!

The chase had turned into a farce!

The Prophet's Bane correctly recognized that the enemy of red humanity was not necessarily its own adversary.

Their goals happened to align in part in this instance!

The deathborn lord wanted the human ace pilot to lose control of her own machine, and the Middle Demon was glad to see this happen!

The latter actively took advantage of the new openings and resolutely focused on expanding its gains.

If it was able to gain 100 percent of Saint Orfan's damaged soul, then the Prophet's Bane would become the definite winner of their ongoing struggle for dominance!

When Ves observed the Riot Mark III's unstable condition and realized what was happening, he practically felt sick to his stomach!

"Snap out of it, Orfan! You are an ace pilot! Your will is forged through the flames of war. Nothing should be able to damage your confidence and affect your sense of self! Remember who you are! Remember what you are fighting for! Do not let these alien bastards desecrate your machine!"

The mech designer's words elicited a small reaction from the ace pilot.

Saint Orfan managed to regain a bit of her confidence and conviction. She temporarily managed to regain control over her machine, which caused it to fly faster!

Her goal was to beat up the deathborn lord before the latter could cast another confounding spell!

Yet the possessed phase lord merely turned around and waved a limb towards the Riot Mark III.

A spiraling wave of darkness ejected from the undead phase lord's appendage and accurately struck the ace spearman mech head-on!

Even though Saint Orfan tried to disperse this ominous energy spiral with the help of her high-tier Destroyer spear, the weapon's destructive spearhead only managed to disperse half of the incoming attack!

Rosa Orfan's soul became affected by another mental shock. The Prophet's Bane pounced at the exact right time and managed to obtain effective control of the Riot Mark III once more!

"How is this possible?!"

These high-ranking deathborn managed to produce far too many surprises today. Their methods were not only sophisticated, but also a lot more effective than vVes or anyone else had anticipated!

"This is bad." The Dark Apostle commented. "If Saint Orfan cannot get her act together, the assault against the enemy orbital defenses will falter."

The absence of high-level support increased the burden on the remainder of the combined fleet.

At this time, the main formation had already become locked in combat with the enemy orbital fortresses and their guard forces.

Numerous human warships had already been felled, with many more bearing signs of serious battle damage.

Hundreds of mechs had fallen as their lack of numbers made it a lot more difficult for them to hold the line.

Chapter 7578 Costly Backup Option

"Ves." A familiar voice called over a private communication channel.

"What is it?" The Dark Apostle responded with a tinge of annoyance in his voice.

"What is it?" Ves repeated in order to prevent the speaker from addressing the wrong individual.

"The battle is not progressing as ideally as we wished." Jovy Armalon continued to speak. "Despite the best efforts of your Saint Commander and your giants, this newfound alien coalition has proven its mettle. We have suffered significant casualties and we are only going to lose more men and assets as this engagement drags on. What is worse is that the dark miasma will come back eventually. Time is not on our side."

"I know." Ves hissed in return. "I am trying to figure out a solution."

"That is good to hear, because we have already formed one ourselves. Remember one of the contingency plans we have discussed in our past meetings. During the period when your initial has successfully repelled the dark miasma, I directly reported to my superiors. They are considerably alarmed at what our enemies, both new and old, are doing in the Hypeh-Tekas System. I have already received their emergency resolution. They are willing to pay a steep price in order to bail us out. However, it is going to cost you as well."

Blinky's feline expression darkened when he heard that. Ves knew exactly what Jovy Armalon had in mind.

The forces of the Bluejay Fleet and the Premier Fleet were indeed in a very bad spot. They had already committed all of their assets, only to fight their alien opponents to a standstill at best.

They had practically no spare capacity left to strengthen their offensive and destroy the alien temple that they had identified as the core of an extremely powerful planetary-scale spell array.

The destruction of this central facility was crucial. It was not only the source of all deathborn in this star system, but also served as the apparent headquarters and staging ground for the invaders of the nearby supermassive galaxy.

In fact, destroying it entirely was not the most ideal decision. They needed to send in mechs to raid the facilities and collect every scrap of useful intelligence and samples as possible. Red humanity needed to understand this latest emerging threat, as this would be hardly the last encounter with the mysterious deathborn race.

They could accomplish all of this with ease if they successfully managed to bring over backup from the Red Association and possibly the Red Fleet.

Yet...

The only way to do so was to activate the altered and upgraded Greater Beyonder Gate in Bridgehead One.

Doing so would undoubtedly involve a transaction with the selfish and profiteering Cybernetic Empire.

The Polymath's relationship with her former peers and fellow tier 1 galactic citizens was complicated, but no one believed she would allow anyone to use the powerful gate in her possession for free!

Since any rescue attempt would definitely benefit Ves and the Larkinsons, he had no doubt that the Red Two would insist on demanding a huge repayment from their clan!

This was why Ves did not immediately approve of Jovy's proposal.

While the Larkinson Clan was most definitely able to pay off the costs of a possible rescue attempt, Ves was unwilling to bear such a heavy debt.

The Larkinsons would take a hit to their prestige and find themselves more beholden to their rescuers.

The best and fastest way to clear up so much debt was to surrender a hefty amount of mid and high-grade superdimensional matter.

Yet that would impose a lot of delays in Ves and Gloriana's ambitious plan to transform all of their present and near-future ace mechs of their clan into superdimensional machines!

In short, the clan's attempt to grow into a powerful and sovereign organization in the Red Ocean would definitely be set back by at least a decade if not more!

"There is one more point of concern." Jovy spoke up again. "As you know, once the dark miasma engulfs our fleet entirely once again, we will lose our access to the galactic net once again. It will become much harder to coordinate our actions with our headquarters. If we want to call in backup, then it is best to do so now when conditions are still favorable. Nobody knows whether we will be able to guide the Greater Beyonder Gate into opening an interdimensional gateway to the right coordinates."

He was right. The RA liaison's words added more urgency to the situation.

Ves truly couldn't make up his mind on this matter.

"Casella, what is your opinion?" He asked the Saint Commander on another channel.

"Our forces have been pushed to their limits, but the same can be said for our enemies." The Saint Commander responded. "I have already identified a divergence of goals between the two alien groups. The Blackwater Summoner and his clique have already lost their motivation to fight. They have already recalled multiple warships and are preparing to evacuate from the battlefield entirely. That said, they are clearly leaving behind much of their cannon fodder in order to bleed us as much as possible. These alien soldiers will most likely become demoralized by the cowardly actions of their supposed gods, but they will still obey their orders to the end. The deathborn are much more committed to stand

and fight, but are mostly biding their time. Once the dark miasma has been fully restored, they will no doubt bear all of their fangs."

"I see." Ves hummed. "This means that our combined opposition is at their weakest point at the moment. If we want to achieve a breakthrough in this battle, it is best to do so now. It will be too late when the dark miasma has returned in full."

"Send us over!" The Dark Apostle requested in a firm but pained voice. "My giants and I are not in the best shape, but we can still bash in more aliens."

"No!" Ves strongly objected.

"Ves is right." Casella responded. "You are already a spent force. Your defenses are shot and your exhaustion is clearly evident. If the enemy has any surprises at the temple, then you will likely lose most of your men. Your own life will hang in the balance, and that is absolutely unacceptable as far as I am concerned. Recognize your own reality. Your fight is already over."

As much as the Dark Apostle wanted to object to that description, a part of him feared that he might truly get done if he recklessly insisted on going on the attack again.

"So what can we do?"

"Our mundane forces are already fully committed." Casella stated. "Multiple warships can still launch strategic weapons, but we believe the aliens still possess sufficient orthodox and unorthodox defensive measures to intercept the warheads. Besides, not everyone will agree to escalate this conflict to such a level."

Ves was broadly aware that notable vessels such as the Tarrasque and the Babylon Excavator secretly carried weapons of mass destruction.

He might not know their exact quantity and properties, but they definitely existed in order to deal with exceptional problems where holding back was a sin.

Was this one such situation where they could justify the use of some of the cruelest weapons in red humanity's arsenal?

Ves did not dare to answer this question.

He would much prefer to win this battle in a manner that would provoke their enemies from employing weapons of mass destruction at an apocalyptic scale!

Ves considered their options.

Calling for backup would be the easy way out. While success was not guaranteed, the enemy would no longer be a threat once lots of reinforcements arrived from afar.

However, Ves still felt unwilling to prematurely end his Nemesis Campaign with such an ugly decision.

A stubborn streak inside of him insisted on ending this fight on his terms rather than that of others!

Ves directed his attention to the faltering Riot Mark III once again.

Casella knew what he was doing.

"Freeing up the Riot Mark III will restore the spearhead that can plunge straight at our opposition's weak point. Out of all of the ace mechs at our disposal, I can think of no better choice to crash our enemy's meticulous arrangements. However, the premise to all of this is that Saint Rosa Orfan successfully regains control over her own rebellious machine. Can you help with that, Ves?"

That was a heavy demand. Ves stared at the farcical struggle between the Riot Mark III and its deathborn lord tormentor.

"I can try." He reluctantly said. "But not from afar. I need to get closer."

The Dark Apostle tightened his grip on the Withering Sting. "I still have an intact arm left."

"It is not wise to go alone. Take us as well. We will shield you with our bodies if we must." The Fiery Axe unquestionably offered her support.

Blinky shook his head. "No. The Dark Apostle and I shall go alone. You guys are all laden with loot and injured comrades. Bringing them back is a greater priority. Besides, this deathborn lord is one of the worst kinds of opponents that you can face. He clearly specializes in mental attacks. If he is strong enough to overcome the extraordinary willpower of Saint Orfan, he will find it even easier to exploit your vulnerable psyches. Do not deny this truth. Ascended Giants may be strong in body, but their minds and spiritualities are not as developed."

"We all have our companion spirits." The strategos of the Flesh Choppers retorted. "Isn't that supposed to compensate for this weakness?"

"You are not wrong, but they are too young and underdeveloped to provide the level of resistance that is necessary. Trust in my judgment. You and your fellow giants are simply not ready to fight this asymmetrical battle. Leave this burden to me. I am much better equipped to resolve this problem."

While the Ascended Giants felt even more ashamed for their weaknesses, they could not deny his logic. They reluctantly separated from their polemarchos and headed back to the Armitage under the protection and supervision of the Victrix.

The Dark Apostle flew towards the beleaguered Riot Mark III without any escort. This made him feel vulnerable.

"Are you sure you can do it, Ves?"

"As I have said, I don't know. I have an idea, though. Let us see whether it will work."

He had been mulling over some of the flaws and shortcomings of Saint Orfan and her bonded machine.

The fundamental problem was that the D-mech had turned from an ally into an enemy of its pilot.

The Prophet's Bane had more reasons to side with the deathborn lord than his own 'partner'!

Since that was the case, the easiest solution was to forge a temporary peace between the pilot and machine!

The Mech Touch

Time was running out.

With every passing second, another human mech or warship might collapse.

The battle could not drag on for too long. The combined fleet ultimately lacked the numbers and depth to persist too long in this hostile star system. They had all underestimated the quantity and the methods of their alien opposition.

As the only tier 2 galactic citizen in the combined fleet, Ves had no way to avoid responsibility for this unfolding debacle.

Even if he did not make every key decision in person, he still assented to the invasion of the Hypeh-Tekas System despite the lack of intelligence.

The battle started due to his initiative, so he felt the obligation to end it with his own hands.

As the Dark Apostle flew closer to the Riot Mark III, he slowed down his flight for fear of getting caught in the ongoing clash.

The Riot Mark III fought like a drunken lout. Its Saint Kingdom wobbled like a chaotic bubble. The Tier 3 Destroyer spear in its hands jabbed in every direction but rarely came close to hitting the enemy.

What a shameful display!

The complete lack of discipline and control turned the Riot Mark III into the polar opposite of the First Sword Mark III.

Ves couldn't find a greater contrast between the two superdimensional ace mechs. What made this contrast even worse was that the source of this divergence had nothing to do with their technology or their battle damage.

It had everything to do with their controllers.

Even now, Rosa Orfan visibly struggled to keep the Riot Mark III on target. She constantly wrestled for control and occasionally managed to gain dominance long enough to make a few hasty attack runs on the deathborn lord.

Unfortunately, the constant mental attacks by the latter caused her to relinquish control to the Prophet's Bane, who had no interest at all in fighting the extra-galactic alien!

Instead, the Middle Demon sought to strengthen its current hold on the machine by damaging some of its components, especially the cockpit!

Ves actually felt relieved that this was not so easy to do. The Riot Mark III was a genuine superdimensional ace mech. He and his wife had adapted so much tech and high-grade materials into her design for the express purpose of enduring punishing attacks. The implementation of archetech and other advanced technological paradigms increased its fault tolerance to the highest level that Ves had ever worked with up to this point!

He could think of no machine that he had touched in person that was tougher and more enduring than the current iteration of the Riot. This included other remarkable products such as the Bastion, the First Sword Mark III and even the incredibly imposing Dominion of Man!

Perhaps the famous dreadnought may be a much greater engine of destruction in absolute terms, but when it came to the ability to resist damage per cubic meter, the Riot Mark III absolutely excelled in this parameter!

Ves believed that he wouldn't be able to produce a mech that could beat the Riot Mark III in terms of toughness and tenacity than when he finally delivered the promised superdimensional ace mech for Saint Jannzi Larkinson.

Even so, that did not mean he felt pleased at seeing the Riot Mark III randomly bashing its own head with its fist or the shaft of its spear.

The worst instances consisted of the few times when the Riot Mark III reversed its grip on its spear and attempted to plunge the tip of its Destroyer spear straight into its chest!

Ves couldn't thank himself enough that he had yet to apply superdimensional technology to this old but dangerous weapon.

As proven by his experimental Murder Knife Mark III, his newly-developed Super-Destroyer System could absolutely shred superdimensional armor plating as if they were made out of dense but relatively ordinary metal!

So far, the Riot Mark III's thick and multi-layered chest plating bore half-a-dozen shallow puncture marks.

The armor-grade superdimensional alloys resisted the high-tier Destroyer weapon fairly well, especially when the ace mech was unable to muster too much physical power to harm its own mech frame.

Even so, the repeated kinetic blows along with the ancillary outbursts produced by the Destroyer particles steadily weakened the integrity of the upper armor layer. As long as the Riot Mark III persisted in this self-destructive act, the Middle Demon would definitely be able to stab its spear through the cockpit sooner or later!

Ves could not allow this to come to pass.

The Prophet's Bane likely did not dare to kill Rosa Orfan's vestigial human body entirely for fear of losing its hold onto the ace pilot's soul.

However, he did not need to kill his prey entirely to devour her soul.

Perhaps inflicting light to moderate injuries to her old human body was enough to weaken her defenses to the point where the demon could overwhelm her faltering resistance!

"Stop!" Ves conveyed to the Riot Mark III through a data transmission as well as a spiritual broadcast. "Riot, listen to your maker!"

Naturally, the rogue ace mech completely disregarded his words. It did not even show any acknowledgement of receiving his message.

"Rosa, can you hear me? Please tell me you can register my words!"

"..."

The Riot Mark III did not transmit anything back, causing Ves to drop his mood even further.

Blinky turned to his other self.

"Don't look at me, Ves. I have already come as close as I dare. I truly do not want to get any closer."

"The Riot Mark III is not fully in control of either partner. The probability of getting attacked is low, especially when there is no benefit in doing so for the Prophet's Bane. The only risk that we have to face is getting attacked by the deathborn lord. We should be able to endure its physical attacks for the most part. Our Superdimensional Giant Regalia is still intact on its other side. The true danger is the mental attacks. I am reasonably confident that we can endure them. If we can distract the deathborn lord into targeting us, we will buy more time for Rosa Orfan to regain control and launch effective counterattacks."

The Dark Apostle grimaced underneath his damaged helmet. "No. I won't allow it. I don't think the Saint Commander and others will be happy to see you risk both of our lives in such a stupid manner. Let's go with your original plan. I liked it a lot better when you planned to bargain with the demon."

That plan... was not an ideal option.

Its success rate was probably not low, but the price may be intolerable.

Ves wanted to avoid it as much as he wanted to avoid calling for help from the Red Two.

Did he have a choice, though?

Ves urged his other self to move closer, but the boisterous giant continued to shake his head!

"Aren't giants like you supposed to be fearless? Why have you turned into a scaredy cat all of a sudden!"

"Pff! I am being smart for once! Haven't you complained to me countless times that I often let my emotions get the better of me? Why do you not applaud me now that I am actually being rational for once?! Do not judge me as if I am an ordinary giant. You are completely right in that this 'deathborn lord' or whatever excels in defeating those whole mental defenses are not strong. In other words, it specializes in targeting my greatest weakness."

"That only applies to ordinary giants! What makes you different is that you have me! I am your mental shield!"

"I DO NOT TRUST YOU!" The Dark Apostle admitted!

"...What?"

"You cannot lie to yourself, Ves." The giant leader slightly calmed down. "We share the same true body. I know what is on your mind. You only enjoy the illusion of privacy because I do not understand technological knowledge that you have mastered. That does not mean I am unable to read your simpler thoughts. You think of me as an intruder. You do not celebrate my birth. You hate it that your own flesh and blood has spawned a

separate personality under the instigation of the 'heavenly authority' of the Red Ocean. If you ever have a chance to get rid of me without suffering severe consequences in return, I have no doubt that you will pounce on it. Do not lie to me, Ves. All of this is true, correct?"

"..."

The Dark Apostle scoffed. "I thought so. Let me expose another secret. You are secretly hoping that the deathborn lord's mental attacks will hammer me into pieces while conveniently letting you off easily. The situation might not unfold this way if the two of us are more intertwined than we thought, but if it does... then you will effectively be able to 'kill' me by making use of a borrowed knife. In your mind, the deathborn lord is not necessarily your enemy. You are just like the Prophet's Bane in this regard."

"..."

The Ascended Giant's painfully accurate accusations hit Ves so hard that he had become momentarily speechless.

This was hardly the first time he received accusations, but this time was different!

Usually, Ves was able to make use of his glib Devil Tongue to blabber his way into innocence.

That definitely wouldn't work this time because the Dark Apostle knew him far too well!

The two shared the same true body and could read each other's thoughts at any time! Ves could not keep a secret from his other self.

Therefore, Ves absolutely could not deny that he had entertained multiple schemes to get rid of the unwanted resident of his own true body. He did not feel particularly guilty about this either. He could not deny his loathing for the Dark Apostle. Anyone in his position would feel the same.

Even so, it was one thing to think about murdering your other personality, it was another thing for the latter to confront him directly about his intentions!

The Dark Apostle had directly torn away the delusion that they could protect their own selfish and nefarious thoughts from each other!

If you find any errors (non-standard content, ads redirect, broken links, etc..), Please let us know so we can fix it as soon as possible.

Chapter 7580 Right of Possession

Blinky froze in shock.

Ves made a belated realization.

He intended to solve the conflict between Rosa Orfan and the Prophet's Bane. Even if it was far too difficult to find a permanent resolution, he should at least be able to cobble together a compromise that would let them set aside their differences for a short amount of time.

Yet before he could intervene and negotiate a temporary settlement, he was suddenly confronted by a rebellion from the current controller of his true body!

Ves found it ironic that he was confronted by the same kind of problem, only this time it affected him directly.

Now that he thought about it, his issue with the Dark Apostle was far too similar to the ongoing conflict between Saint Orfan and her hostile D-mech.

In both cases, two separate individuals were forced to share the same vessel. No matter whether it was metallic or organic in construction, the fundamental problem was essentially the same.

None of the four individuals could accept their current state of dual occupancy!

Saint Orfan's situation was a little better. Her strong willpower normally put her slightly ahead of her adversary, allowing her to remain in charge of the Riot Mark III most of the time.

If not for the fact that she was fighting against a completely alien qi cultivator who happened to specialize in mental attacks, the Prophet's Bane would never be able to gain the upper hand during this battle!

As for Ves, he had forged an uneven compromise with the Dark Apostle.

Neither of them found their current agreement to be acceptable.

Ves was the original owner of his true body.

Why should he be forced to relinquish control over it at all?

He had already been generous enough to offer usage rights during the times when he was normally asleep or when he was engaged in battle!

Yet the fact that Ves effectively hogged the majority of the available quotas had long dissatisfied the Dark Apostle!

The personality spawned from the evolving true body had long resented the unfair distribution agreement. He had only recently come into existence and was filled with the wonder and curiosity of a newborn life form.

How could the Ascended Giant possibly enjoy his state of life when he was only able to gain control when Ves was already done with his daily work and chores?

The Dark Apostle was done with tolerating this uneven distribution!

This was why despite all of the risks and dangers of causing trouble at this critical moment, he no longer hesitated to defy Ves' intention!

He knew that he had chosen the worst moment to act defiant from the mech designer's perspective!

Only this way would the Ascended Giant be able to maximize his leverage and gain more favorable concessions!

In this situation where every second mattered, the last thing Ves wanted to do was to waste a lot of time on trying to fix the unresolved body ownership issue with his other self.

Since both of them were still technically two sides of the same coin, both sides generally understood each other's thoughts and calculations.

Ves knew that the Dark Apostle would absolutely be willing to take a stand even if it ended up sinking all of their chances of obtaining victory on this battlefield.

After all, compared to Ves who had lived for over 4 decades and built an entire clan out of his own two hands, the Dark Apostle did not have much of an attachment to his original self's empire.

The giant leader hardly possessed any love or appreciation for the Larkinson Clan. He also cared little for Ves' many friends, allies and associates across human-occupied space.

The Dark Apostle only truly cared about the Phase Lord Department of the Red Collective. The latter was his personal empire and the true foundation of his power base.

Even if it was currently riddled with lots of human meddlers, that did not change the fact that its core was still made up of hundreds of Ascended Giants!

Race still mattered.

Humans only cared about humans to the point where they weren't even willing to treat dwarves with the same level of respect.

Giants had even less reason to measure weak and puny humans as if they were standing at the same height. All of their biological instincts screamed that tiny beings should be treated as ants.

If they weren't former humans themselves who knew quite well how powerful human civilization had become, the Ascended Giants would have long declared complete independence from their former race!

In any case, just because the Dark Apostle understood the disparity between humans and giants a lot better than his peers did not mean he had discarded his biases entirely!

His pride as an Ascended Giant was practically hard-coded in his personality!

He could never bring himself to admit that the giant race was equal or inferior to the human race!

At most, he could only persuade himself that the Ascended Giants only suffered a temporary disadvantage because they had only come into existence for a short amount of time.

Just like how humanity during the Age of Stars still needed to get its bearings and complete its initial technological accumulation, the Dark Apostle strongly believed that he and his fellow giants merely had to bow their heads for a couple decades before they could completely take off like a rocket!

Blinky grimaced while shaking his head.

Ves found this notion to be utterly unrealistic. The giants enjoyed none of the advantages that humanity possessed during that historic period. Only fools like the giants themselves would believe that they would be able to reign over the Red Ocean in the new age!

Yet unrealistic or not, the Dark Apostle would never budge from this stance. As long as that remained the case, he would never give up on his bottom line! That was an act that only a member of a minor race would engage in. The giants already comprised a major race, just like humans themselves!

Knowing this, Ves knew that if he wanted to achieve a quick resolution, he only had two ways to go forward.

Option one was to tear up their 'peace agreement' and suppress the Dark Apostle by force!

Option two was to give up and essentially give the Dark Apostle what he wanted.

Ves briefly contemplated the first option, but quickly discarded it from his mind.

He had no idea how such a conflict would unfold.

Ves did not have the confidence to be able to kill or eject the Dark Apostle from their shared true body.

He may possess a lot of esoteric knowledge, techniques and abilities, but he did not excel in this kind of combat. He was far too afraid of harming himself just as much as his intended target!

All of the uncertainties involved with going to war with oneself prompted Ves to embrace the second option.

Although it also sounded unpalatable, Ves at least hoped that the Dark Apostle would not be too greedy.

"I know what you want." He said.

"Do you truly know what I want?" The Dark Apostle smiled sardonically underneath his helmet. "Say it, then. Do not play any games. If you are truly sincere, then demonstrate it to me right now."

Blinky let out a sigh. "I know... you want complete possession of our true body. I have long objected to your demand because it was originally mine to begin with. However, I understand our current sharing arrangement cannot be sustained in the long term. I haven't fully realized this until now, but we will never fully be able to get along and leave in peace as long as we do not remain in full control over our corporeal form. We are like two tigers sharing the same mountain. Our pride and egos alone will never allow us to maintain this awkward state for long."

"Hmmm... good enough. I agree with your words. What is important is what you are willing to do next. It is easy to describe the problem. It is much harder to do something about it. As far as I am concerned, I will never give up my claim of ownership."

"You are talking about something that was mine long before you obtained a claim to begin with." Ves retorted. "Also, just because you gained a somewhat legitimate claim does not mean that my own claim is invalidated. I am the original. You are the interloper."

"I do not care about your history or your personal opinions." The giant scoffed. "This true body is mine. It belongs to me. Only I can fully utilize its muscles and phasewater organs. I am a far better fighter than you could ever become. Now, are we going to waste more time arguing, or are we going to skip to the stage where you acknowledge my right of possession?"

"...fine."

"What? Can you repeat that? I didn't catch your latest words."

"I said fine! You can have it, okay?!"