The Mech Touch

Chapter 7581 Yearning for Humanity

"Are you truly... serious?" The Dark Apostle asked despite the fact that he could feel his original self's sincerity.

Blinky nodded with his feline head. "Yes. I have already considered this matter many times in the past, but I never dared to move forward on this issue. Your ultimatum did not change my mind. It has merely pushed me into action. When it comes down to it, our situation is not sustainable. We are too greedy and ambitious. We may share the same root, but we have our own goals and passions. It is only logical for us to seek physical separation from each other. The biggest issue with that is who is entitled to retain our current true body. After a lot of thought, it makes a lot more sense to entrust it to you. As you have said before, I am not a fighter. You can make much better use out of its superior physique."

The Dark Apostle genuinely did not expect for Ves to concede on this matter so quickly and decisively.

Even if his logic was sound, he still lost out immensely from this decision!

"If you are willing to abandon our current form and go your own way, how will you proceed? You still need a body of your own. Will you split your soul from me and transplant yourself into one of your humanoid constructs?"

Blinky shrugged. "I just made up my mind on this issue. I haven't thought too far ahead. My general plan should not be much different from your brief proposal. There should be a way to separate our Spiritualities from each other without incurring damage in the process. However, it will take time and effort to make that possible. You may have to wait for a couple of years before I can get it done. Right now, I have already created so many incarnations that my soul will suffer irreparable damage if I cut into it again. Once I advance to the rank of Master Mech Designer, my Spirituality will not only grow so much stronger, but heal much of the scars and other hidden wounds in the process. Once I have attained this state, it should be safer for the both of us to separate from each other."

Though the Dark Apostle immediately grew disappointed when he heard that he would not be able to gain a full monopoly on their current true body right away, he quickly smoothed his expression.

He could be patient. A couple of years was not a lot of time.

The giant leader knew how brilliant Ves was and how he was on the fast track to realizing his design philosophy.

The mech designer just needed to complete his initial set of 5 elemental Carmine mech designs.

"I can tolerate the wait." The Dark Apostle said as he tried to suppress his impatience as much as possible. "As long as you are sincerely working to promote yourself, I am willing to hold myself back and cooperate with you for the time being. That will no longer be the case if I sense that you are deliberately stalling your progress."

The Star Cat snorted. "Trust me, I want to become a Master more eagerly than you. You can definitely rest assured that I will maintain a brisk pace. As for my new corporeal form, I still want to be a human. Occupying a completely mechanical body is too alienating for me. I will only consider this option as a last resort."

He already constructed a number of high-quality mechanical avatars and spread them around for the express purpose of establishing his presence at distant locations.

For example, Aureus, which took the form of a golden version of Vulcan, remained stationed aboard the Spirit of Bentheim. This allowed him to initiate direct contact with Ketis and the other second-class members of the Larkinson Clan.

A more suitable mechanical vessel was Argent, a silver humanoid avatar that he had deposited inside the Astral Octagon.

He had already used it a number of times to correspond directly with his chief of staff Eliza Mo Ragadan and other senior officials of the Red Collective.

Ves favored Argent the most as he had designed it with elegance in mind. It was an excellent platform to engage in both art as well as E energy manipulation.

Then there was Aes, a bronze Vulcan mechanical avatar that he parked over at the Eternal Vulcan Empire.

In order to fit in with the Vulcanites, Ves had deliberately designed it with a brutal flair in mind.

Although he had hardly ever used this expensive gadget, it still gave him the option to talk directly to the Iron Emperor if the need arose.

Then there was Ferrum, but Ves automatically skipped it because it was a feline mechanical avatar. He already had enough of living like a cat through Veronica!

Though Ves did not find it unacceptable to occupy any of the first three magnificent constructions, one of the issues that bothered him the most was that they were all dwarven in shape and statute!

He had never designed them with this particular contingency in mind!

Even if Ves could modify his own mechanical shell and convert it into a more human form, he still felt that it was fundamentally wrong to repurpose these unique creations.

If Ves truly had no choice but to occupy a physical avatar, then he would likely spend a bit of time and effort to develop a full superdimensional humanoid shell.

A lot of time had passed since he personally created Aurus, Argent and Aes. Much of their tech and materials had already become dated in his opinion. He could create a much better product with his present knowledge and resources.

However, Ves yearned to occupy an organic human form so much that he was willing to consider much more dangerous or convoluted plans in order to satisfy his desires!

"How will you make a human body for yourself? How can you guarantee that you can transfer to it without any problems?"

"Transferring one's spirit from one organic body to another is not simple at all." Ves acknowledged the daunting complexity behind this task. "There is much I do not know about it. However, I doubt it is as simple as cloning a human body from my DNA and stuff. For one, my original human DNA no longer reflects my evolved self in the slightest. Any human body derived from it will probably explode or mutate beyond reason. As for cloning a body using our current DNA... that is even more unacceptable to me. I absolutely do not want to become a phase lord if I can help it. Besides, even if everything else works out somehow, an exact copy will just end up spawning a separate consciousness like you. I will go right back to square one. No. The best solution is to spawn a pure human body that has nothing to do with phasewater."

The Dark Apostle reacted with mild shock. "You... are willing to abandon everything that makes our current true body strong?"

"Without hesitation." Ves spoke with genuine conviction. "I never asked for this. The Red Ocean imposed all of this crap on me without bothering to obtain my consent. While I cannot deny that I have enjoyed the benefits of being strong enough to fight against other champions with my bare body, I would gladly relinquish it all if I can become a pure human again. I am a mech designer. I have no need for a giant's stature or exotic phasewater organs if I just want to design my mechs. Instead of fighting all of my battles in person, it is much more appropriate for me to leave this responsibility to others."

He would be lying to himself if he claimed that he would not miss his powerful true body.

However, Ves tried to remain focused on his overarching goals. None of them demanded that he possess the physique of a native god. He could already design fantastic mechs with a somewhat ordinary human body!

At most, he would miss the enhanced spatial senses and other small benefits unique to phase lords.

Missing out on them would make it more difficult for him to design transphasic and superdimensional mechs, but that was a price that he would gladly pay to restore the missing pieces of his humanity!

"Do you have a specific approach in mind?"

"Nothing too specific, but I do have a couple directions that I intend to investigate in further detail after our current ordeal is over. Do you remember the lesser Collie organ that we have obtained through a transaction in the past? Its ability is quite strange, but I still valued it because of its versatility. The phasewater organ can enable a phase lord to split a small amount of phasewater-infused biomass into a small-sized clone of himself. This clone can act as a remote avatar with a maximum range of around 17.2 AU. I figure with a bit of research and modification, we can transform this Collie organ into a solution that can produce an authentic human body that possesses the traits I desire while leaving out the stuff that I do not want."

It may be challenging for them to decipher and make proper use of the lesser Collie organ, but it may be the best hope for Ves and the Dark Apostle to achieve a clean and problem-free separation from each other!

They just needed to understand the phasewater organ just enough to alter some of its functions.

Chapter 7582 Low Bargaining Power

Ves had managed to come to an accord with the Dark Apostle.

He had made a promise to give up his claim on his own true body.

Suffice to say, he did not do so eagerly.

While he often felt ambivalent about the prowess of his phase lord constitution, he still appreciated its imposing physical might and its impressive spatial affinity.

Giving up such a fantastic body and migrating back to a purely human form represented a massive loss in strength and capabilities.

He would no longer feel as invincible as now. One of the greatest reassurances of possessing the body of a phase lord was that it made him immune to most forms of assassination.

Having been the target of those himself, Ves knew that he could absolutely not take this threat lightly. This was especially the case for a leader and innovator as successful and prominent as himself.

If he truly surrendered his true body to the Dark Apostle, then Ves would have to return to a state where his human vulnerability once again became a persistent weakness.

Good gear and strong escorts may help with blocking the vast majority of targeted attacks, but Ves knew from rich experience that such external aid could only help him so much.

A man prone to making enemies and causing trouble was bound to get his feet wet on occasion!

Given how often danger knocked on his doors, he shouldn't have conceded his true body so easily. Many humans would kill to obtain such a god-like physique. Not only was it strong and powerful enough to contend against mechs and even high-ranking mechs with good equipment, it also granted its bearer an unimaginably long biological lifespan!

The Red Ocean was filled with old fossils who had lived for hundreds of thousands if not millions of years.

Even if these ancient aliens had spent much of those years in hibernation and tended to develop utterly atrophied minds, the fact that they managed to live through the rise and fall of many civilizations was undoubtedly true!

This benefit alone was enough to move a huge amount of individuals!

Yet Ves did not count himself among them. To a man who had stepped on the path of Spiritual Ascension, he knew that there were far more ways to attain immortality than following this alien method.

He also did not fall into the trap that he could sit back and relax for a couple million years.

Red humanity faced far too many threats to guarantee its own survival! There was no telling if humans would still exist in this dwarf galaxy a century later.

Ves was especially in danger of getting hunted down by an extra-galactic God King after getting soul marked!

Due to this immense threat, Ves could not afford to distract himself too much with too many irrelevant activities.

To him, the pursuit of godhood by imitating the practices of the phase whale race became a detriment.

Even if Ves managed to become an ancient phase lord in record time, so what? He seriously doubted that such a powerful brute would be able to make any meaningful contributions in the fight to repel the Subjugation King!

God mechs had already proven multiple times that they could easily smack ancient phase whales around.

Once the former all received their superdimensional upgrades, this disparity would only grow wider.

It didn't even matter if the ancient phase whales all developed their own superdimensional gear. These smart and powerful aliens may be able to develop numerous phasewater organs that directly amplified the performance of their flashy weapons and raiments, but Ves doubted that they could come close to the reality-defying effects of a God Kingdom!

When it came down to it, Ves remained convinced that the strongest individual combat unit was a god mech.

It represented the best hope of defeating or killing the Subjugation King. None of the other freaks and would-be gods had much of a chance of doing the same.

Not even the emergence of Goliaths or high-ranking deathborn managed to change his long-standing belief in the superiority of god mechs.

To Ves, the best way to ensure his continued survival and that of his family was to do his utmost to improve the strength of mechs and especially god mechs.

That meant that he needed to become a Star Designer as quickly as possible!

Short of becoming a god pilot himself, the best way for him to make a substantial enough difference was to become a vaunted Star Designer and gain the qualifications to develop his own salvation.

Even if red humanity already enjoyed the services of a dozen or so highly-qualified Star Designers, that was far from enough in his opinion.

Compared to the previous state where a united human civilization enjoyed the services of a hundred Star Designers, the current state after the Great Severing already exposed many shortcomings due to losing access to way too much expertise.

The Red Ocean's mech industry desperately needed to nurture a new generation of Star Designers to accelerate the progression of mechs!

Compared to becoming a stronger brute, Ves vastly preferred to pursue power through his original ambition.

There was nothing wrong with winning battles by enabling others that were willing to fight on his behalf.

Perhaps there are many people that would never make such a sacrifice, but Ves never considered himself to be a fighter in the first place.

He ultimately valued his humanity more. He instinctively felt that giving up this massive burden and all of the responsibilities that came with it would ultimately help him progress further in his primary profession.

Unlike Ketis who insisted on becoming a so-called dual cultivator, Ves never really cared too much about becoming strong in other ways. He was much more willing to discard a powerful advantage if it was not an essential component to his dream.

The Dark Apostle naturally felt all of his counterpart's sincerity. He had no reason to doubt or question Ves at all because this kind of sincerity could not be faked.

While Ves technically could not make good on his promise until at least several more years had passed, the giant leader still had an unreasonably high confidence that he would definitely get what he wanted sooner or later.

Whether they would achieve separation through messing around with a lesser Collie organ or whatever did not matter. The specifics could be investigated at a later time.

What mattered the most at the moment was overcoming their current ordeal.

The Dark Apostle focused his attention on the Riot Mark III's predicament once more.

"Your sincerity has won me over. In order to encourage you to fulfill your promise, I will cooperate in any way I can. If you still want to, I can move forward and distract the deathborn lord."

The injured Ascended Giant did not make this offer lightly, but he felt the need to prove himself worthy of Ves' generosity.

For once in their lives, both occupants of the same true body had formed a genuine bond of trust between each other!

"That will not be necessary." Blinky shook his head. "We shouldn't take any needless risks. Since I have already made a concession, I might as well do it again. Remain stationary and let me reach out to the Riot Mark III."

The condition of the ace spearman mech had worsened due to the unforeseen delay. Ves truly did not think he could afford to waste too much time with nonsense, so he tried to send a message that sounded as direct as possible.

"Prophet's Bane! I know that you can hear this transmission! Do not pretend to be feral and unintelligible. You should be intelligent and rational enough to comprehend human speech. Let me be straight with you. I want you to set aside your hostility towards Rosa

Orfan, let her regain full control over your mech and help her defeat all of the enemies in her way."

"..."

Ves naturally did not receive a response, but he was not finished.

"I am not asking you to comply for free. As long as you agree with my demands, I am willing to accommodate any reasonable demand. While I am not willing to let you devour Saint Orfan's soul and take over the Riot completely, I can still agree to other requests. For example, do you want to spend more time where you retain sole control over the Riot? Do you want to obtain a small-scale avatar that will enable you to interact with society more easily? I am even willing to build a small army of D-mechs that solely answer to you. Each of these boons can directly or indirectly help you gain advantage in your struggle for dominance."

He felt bad for Saint Orfan for making such suggestions, but what could he do? If she was strong enough to resist the mental attacks of her current opponent, his bargaining power wouldn't have been reduced to this point!

Though the Riot Mark III did not show any immediate reactions to his enticement, Ves could still feel a shift in mood from the rogue machine.

He successfully managed to arouse the Middle Demon's interest.

Chapter 7583 Demonic Ultimatum

The demon responded.

Not with words. Not with sound. Only feelings and impressions.

Ves was already accustomed with this non-verbal method of communication. He parsed the demon's surprisingly clean and noiseless message with near-native speed and fluency.

Blinky's feline expression immediately drooped.

"Are you serious? I am asking you to accept a boon that is highly beneficial to you. I am willing to do this even knowing that it will directly put Saint Orfan at a disadvantage. Yet instead of choosing any of the obvious options, you are asking for this of all things?!"

"..."

The demon did not convey much in reaction. It merely emphasized its determination.

The Prophet's Bane was not joking. This was not a decision that he made on a whim.

Ves felt even more disturbed by that. He could have dismissed a careless demand if it was merely the product of madness. Yet the Middle Demon had displayed enough rationality that such an excuse could not be made.

"I cannot accede to your request. It violates the fundamental principles of human civilization." Ves pushed back. "I will never permit the brutal practice of sacrificing the lives of human beings just to sate your perverted bloodlust. If you truly insist on harvesting the lives of sentient beings, I can agree to sacrifice the lives of captured alien soldiers. Their souls may possess different flavors, but they are just as 'nutritious' as human ones, if not more due to their participation in the Red War."

The Riot Mark III conveyed a strong feeling of rejection in response to his words!

The demon acknowledged Ves' words, but that was all. He still insisted on human sacrifice!

Ves felt increasingly more upset with the direction of this negotiation. "You are doing this to hurt us, aren't you? You want to take revenge against me for bringing you into existence, only to lead a life of pain and suffering. It is not enough for us to feed you with the lives of sentient beings. You want us to become complicit in this foul deed. You want to stain my hands with human blood until I become just as dark and corrupted as yourself."

"..."

The Middle Demon did not bother to reject this accusation. He conveyed a strong pulse of pleasure and anticipation! That was a clear sign that Ves was right on the mark!

Damn.

The Prophet's Bane was a vindictive bastard. What was worse was that he also happened to be fairly intelligent.

The combination between these two traits produced a monster that knew exactly how to strike back at his captor where it hurt the most!

Ves had been prepared to make quite a few concessions, even ones that directly set back Saint Orfan's chances of winning her perpetual struggle against her own demon.

Yet when given an opportunity to gain a direct advantage against his current prey, the Prophet's Bane did not grasp it, but instead sought to target an entirely different individual!

The mech designer quickly weighed the proposal. The lack of time made it difficult to mull over it for too long. Ves needed to hurry up and make up his mind within a minute or less.

The noble and more human side of him insisted on rejecting this ridiculous demand. He could never allow a demon to dictate terms to his owner and controller. Giving ground at this junction would not only put Ves in a lot of trouble, but also change his relationship with the D-mech in an undesirable direction.

Yet the urgency of the current situation pushed him to disregard the ethical problems and acquiesce to the demand. Who cared about morality when survival was at stake? The early invasion of the deathborn race posed such a great threat to red humanity and all other life in the Red Ocean that lesser principles had to give way to greater priorities!

As Ves felt torn between these two mindsets, he ultimately bowed down to the altar of necessity.

Although a high-ranking mech pilot would never betray his own principles like this, Ves was not a saint.

He was a mech designer.

He was a man who had grasped enough power to become the youngest tier 2 galactic citizen of red humanity.

He knew enough about how the people at the top of the hierarchy operated that he had learned a fundamental truth.

Almost no one who operated at that level kept their hands clean.

Each of them had broken the rules more than once in their rise to power. Even the noble and honorable god pilots had defied their superiors or rules at least once, or else they would never have been able to break all of the shackles that held them back from attaining godhood!

That said, people should never take this decision lightly. For every successful tier 1 galactic citizen who broke the rules, there were countless aspirants who made the wrong judgment and faltered in their climb to power!

Ves feared that if he agreed to the D-mech's outrageous demand, he was far more likely to belong to the second category rather than the first.

Yet... his sense of obligation and duty to his own race and civilization did not permit him to shy away from foul but ultimately necessary decisions.

He still chose to spend a number of seconds on proposing alternatives, only to get shot down time and time again.

"...Fine." Ves said as if he had just spit out a foul morsel. "Your request will be difficult to meet, but I will promise you I will do my best to satisfy your... bloody appetite. The quota

that you have set is excessive. I cannot possibly deliver hundreds of human beings to the slaughter on a daily basis. The bloodshed is too much and the logistics will be problematic. It will invite too much backlash from my own clan and other do-gooders."

Ves did his best to haggle a less bloody agreement. He had to work hard and make use of all of his charm and experience just to persuade the Prophet's Bane to accept a more modest proposal!

Fortunately, the Middle Demon may be smart, but he was not an excellent negotiator. He partially fell sway to Ves rhythm and lowered his demand until he suddenly woke up and refused to budge any further.

Blinky's translucent fur had grown darker and less luminous regardless. Agreeing to any form of human sacrifice added a stain to his soul.

Though he had engaged in numerous initiatives that had led to the loss of many human lives, the context was entirely different.

Encouraging mech pilots to take risks might cause them to suffer greater casualties, but also produced more heroes and legends.

He was well aware that Helena had committed grave acts against human souls in order to satisfy Ves' demands for Minor Demons and Middle Demons. He could only console himself that he was making use of a much more abundant resource in the old galaxy. Besides, he had long absolved himself of all responsibility for the fate of original humanity.

In any case, only red humanity recognized his status and authority as a tier 2 galactic citizen.

No one who resided in the Milky Way Galaxy was willing to grant him such a status, let alone permit him to have a real voice in the highest halls of power.

Since that was the case, original humanity may as well be no different from human-shaped guinea pigs in his eyes!

They were human enough to serve as excellent test subjects, but lacked the reasons to force him to feel responsible for their lives and wellbeing!

If only he could use their souls to sate the Prophet's Bane need for suffering.

Unfortunately, the Middle Demon's specifications made that impossible.

Perhaps he had already thought about this potential solution and made sure to shut it down.

If Ves truly agreed to the D-mech's demand, then he would essentially have to bring a bunch of humans before the Riot Mark III and permit the machine to slay the victims through physical violence!

The slaughter could not be done through more humane means. The cruelty and bloodshed was the point. The demon would not feel satisfied with clinical executions.

Fortunately, the Prophet's Bane was not entirely unreasonable. He had made no demands on the morality or the innocence of the human sacrifices.

With his status and power, it should be trivially easy for Ves or the Larkinson Clan to acquire large batches of human traitors or serious criminals.

They did not have to be Larkinsons or first-class citizens for that matter. Ves knew very well that there were billions of worthless third-raters who lived in the cracks of human space.

Even if it had been years since he last interacted directly with these scum, it should still be easy to round up thousands of pirates, murderers and other low lives in a relatively short amount of time.

The quantity was never the problem. It was the principle of the matter that held him back.

But only for a moment.

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

Chapter 7584 Differences in Outcomes

The deal had been struck.

Ves had compromised his own principles in order to gain the compliance of a D-mech.

For a moment, a part of him hated his own work. He personally wrought this terrible and demonic engine of destruction into existence. Without his input and decisions, the Prophet's Bane would have never gained enough leverage to torment his own maker!

However, a different side of Ves held a different attitude towards the orange-striped machine.

The pure mech designer and creator within himself felt inordinately proud at the fact he birthed a mech that transcended any boundaries that held virtually every other machine back!

Ves felt like a parent who just witnessed his own child surpass his father and rise to greatness in his own preferred way!

In totality, Ves felt bitter about the outcome of the negotiation, but that was all. He did not feel as upset as he should.

His pride and satisfaction at witnessing one of his greatest creations grow beyond his expectations did not permit him to feel shame!

As Ves tried to reconcile his turbulent feelings, his other self did not hold back his concern.

"I may not be a mech designer, but even I can recognize a trap. I think this demon is playing the long game. I do not see how he can obtain much power from such a paltry amount of human sacrifice. I think this entire bargain is meant to target you directly. He wants to corrupt you and erode your bottom line by making you complicit in its evil."

Blinky's expression remained impassive.

"I have not overlooked your angle. Your speculation may very well be correct. That changes nothing. I can bear the consequences. The mission comes first. I need the Riot Mark III at its best. Agreeing to this devil's bargain is not the most optimal solution, but it is certainly the most expedient one. That is enough in my book."

"Your standards have deteriorated."

"I'm just tired. Let us witness the coming show."

The transaction involved reciprocity.

If the Middle Demon wanted to play games, then he most definitely needed to demonstrate sincerity.

At this moment, the Riot Mark III stopped in place.

The powerful ace mech no longer chased after the devious deathborn lord, nor attempted to harm itself.

It simply coasted in space while maintaining a static posture.

It was as if the mech had pressed the pause button.

This lull dragged on for so many seconds that the deathborn lord had become puzzled.

The alien creature had not suspended its efforts to disturb Rosa Orfan's mind. It consistently performed spells that previously had a solid effect on the ace pilot's fragile mental balance.

Yet now, those very same techniques sank into the Riot Mark III like a stone sinking into a lake.

As time passed on, a gradual shift started to occur.

The Riot Mark III's many signs of instability... began to fade.

The mech's limbs no longer twitched in an uncontrollable and irregular fashion.

The physical mutations on her exterior such as her unnecessary spikes and overly sharp angles began to smooth out, making it seem as if the ace mech became subjected to a form of purification.

Yet the greatest sign that its condition was turning to the better was the substantial shift of its Saint Kingdom!

As the most direct and visible manifestation of an ace pilot's willpower and conviction, the Saint Kingdom often served as the most direct and visible sign of a hero's strength.

The domain field changed in ways that Ves had never witnessed from the Riot ever since he had upgraded it to its current version.

The roiling, turbulent waves that caused the Saint Kingdom to resemble an ocean in the middle of a raging thunderstorm smoothed out entirely.

The radius of the Saint Kingdom did not expand, but began to shrink.

It did not grow smaller on an even basis.

It instead started to condense into a very distinct shape.

As the domain field rose in concentration, its exterior boundaries gradually began to resemble a vaguely humanoid form!

The Prophet's Bane!

Just as Ves was currently manifesting himself outside of the Dark Apostle's true body by utilizing Blinky as a vessel, the Middle Demon performed a similar feat with the Saint Kingdom as its chosen medium!

As the Prophet's Bane increasingly extended its formidable presence in the material realm, the Riot Mark III's entire aura began to change.

Previously, it had always made a volatile impression. Compared to the other impeccably-designed ace mechs of the Larkinson Clan, the Riot Mark III could easily be mistaken for a botched work due to its ever-present activities!

Yet now, all of those irregular signs had disappeared, making it seem as if Saint Orfan had finally vanquished over her own inner demon!

At least, that would have been the case if not for the sight of her demon-shaped Saint Kingdom.

When the changes finally began to plateau, the Riot Mark III looked as if it had undergone a minor rebirth.

The powerful ace mech still retained its general appearance and proportions, but its aura and threat profile had undergone a drastic shift!

Observing from a distance, Ves intuitively felt that the Riot Mark III's overall energy level had increased by an order of magnitude at the very least!

"Resonance strength." Ves requested.

The Dark Apostle stated the number produced by the resonance meter built into the Superdimensional Giant Regalia.

"Before you struck your deal with the demon, the resonance meter measured around 150 to 250 laveres. The line in the graph fluctuated wildly depending on who was in control of the machine. It is different now. The line has shot straight upward and has stabilized at around 430 laveres. Not only has the number doubled, but the line has also become completely flat. The resonance meter can't detect any sign of wavering or instability."

The information confirmed Ves' speculations.

"This is the true power of a D-mech." He spoke with genuine emotion in his voice. "Normal ace mechs are measured by the synergy produced between man and machine. The Riot on the other hand involves a more complicated relationship between three powerful participants. Before, the Riot only fought at a fraction of its potential because two of them actively fought against each other. Now that they have not only set aside their internal war, but actively begun to cooperate with each other, it is no surprise that my work has become so strong all of a sudden."

The increase in resonance strength far surpassed his earlier expectations.

A jump from 250 laveres to 430 laveres may seem like the Riot Mark III had almost doubled in strength, but the reality was far different, as confirmed by his own subjective observations.

This was because the lavere scale was not linear!

In reality, Saint Rosa Orfan had suddenly approached the strength of a senior ace pilot!

Even if she did not yet officially meet the definition of one, Ves believed with all of his heart that she had already reached that level of strength even if he disregarded the advantages brought by her remarkable superdimensional mech!

This was because Saint Rosa Orfan was not fighting by herself, but alongside a powerful Middle Demon who possessed his own separate combat system!

Now, the pair of unlikely allies were about to unleash their combined strength for the first time ever.

The deathborn lord served as an adequate test dummy, though the mysterious alien entity did not understand his new role at this time.

Of course, he was not stupid. He witnessed the drastic changes right in front of him and saw how all of his mental attacks failed to produce any meaningful results.

The alien withdrew from his offensive posture and began to show genuine caution for the first time. He actively created more distance between himself and his prey in order to give him more buffer time.

Not that it helped all that much.

As soon as Saint Rosa Orfan adapted to the new status quo, she focused her full attention on the alien adversary.

"I... AM NO LONGER YOUR VICTIM. WE... SHALL CRUSH YOU LIKE AN ANT."

The Riot Mark III blitzed forward.

Her powerful flight system already provided the mech with a formidable amount of thrust power, but now that Saint Orfan's effective resonance strength had multiplied, its performance had undergone a qualitative leap!

That was not all!

The Prophet's Bane assisted as well. The demon-shaped Saint Kingdom directly acted on the flying machine. Mysterious techniques that depended on unknown principles shrouded the exterior with a dark red mist. The mech frame started to shake under their influence, but its forward acceleration immediately multiplied by a third!

The ace spearman mech blazed forward at such an unexpected pace that the deathborn lord was completely caught off-guard!

The alien powerhouse did not foolishly try to target the ace pilot's mind again, but instead generated a composite energy barrier in front of his stolen body.

A relatively underpowered spatial barrier formed around the reanimated true body. Its deteriorated flesh and phasewater organs struggled to produce and maintain this defense, but it was enough to serve as a basis for a second form of defense.

The deathborn lord channeled the power within himself and threaded it throughout the spatial barrier as if he was weaving a cloth.

A surprisingly complex and intricate pattern formed that immediately reminded Ves of a spell array!

Although the deathborn lord did not output a huge amount of energy, his utilization of the existing quantity was quite exquisite!

He was clearly a master who learned how to wield energy like a precise instrument!

The strange defensive measure only had a short time to take effect, but the defensive measure already appeared a lot more solid than before!

Space warped even further while strange energies augmented the local fabric of reality with new and exotic properties.

Yet in front of the current Riot Mark III, even this form of defense proved useless!

The wicked and fully resonance-empowered tier 3 Destroyer spear punched through this augmented barrier while encountering resistance that lasted so briefly that it might as well not exist!

The only effective result produced by this defensive barrier was that it triggered a blast of destructive energies from the Destroyer spear that briefly obscured half of the deathborn lord!

By the time the 'dust' had cleared, a triumphant ace mech floated before an impaled opponent!

An imposing demon loomed over his defenseless prey! His claws had already reached inside the deathborn lord's ethereal form, pinning the true enemy in place while at the same time beginning to siphon its energy!

The deathborn lord failed to block or evade the Riot Mark III's unprecedented powerful attack!

The difference in outcomes was massive!

Everyone had previously witnessed Saint Orfan struggle against a tricky and resourceful alien opponent.

Yet that same alien adversity had suddenly turned into a fish on a chopping block in front of the same ace pilot!

"I understand now... why you insisted on making a deal with that demon." The Dark Apostle said with amazement in his voice. "I do not think anyone will take your D-mechs lightly anymore after this battle."

Chapter 7585 A Concerned Woman

A mother shook with concern as she observed the unfolding battle from the relative safety of the Tarrasque's design lab.

She and her fellow Larkinson mech designers could do little to assist the battle from this location.

That was why a number of bolder and more daring mech designers had volunteered to work as mech technicians down at the hangar bay.

The crews over there certainly needed all of the help they could get. As the battle dragged down, more and more first-class mechs limped back to their mothership. The fact that they could still fly back under their own power meant that they still had value on the battlefield, but their extensive battle damage made it difficult to bring them up to a reasonable condition.

Mech technicians possessed enough book learning hands-on experience to apply quick and crude fixes, but their lack of understanding limited their possibilities.

Having actual mech designers by their side allowed them to tap into a much deeper and broader well of knowledge. The hastily repaired mechs that launched into battle once again displayed considerably better results due to the implementation of more elegant and effective solutions.

Gloriana did not join the handful of colleagues who decided to get their hands dirty.

Her design philosophy fundamentally clashed with this kind of work.

To be honest, she also looked down on this kind of manual labor.

The story might be different if she was called upon to repair her own beautiful works such as the Amaranto Mark III or the Minerva Mark II.

Neither of these excellent archemechs had need of her services, though. The ace mechs might not have gained a crushing advantage on the battlefield, but they were far from helpless, especially when controlled by their amazing pilots.

Then there was the Riot, or more specifically, its Mark III iteration.

This was the only personal work that she was readily willing to disown.

She had grown disgusted by what Ves had done with the masterwork ace mech. The final design was already much closer to perfection than the Riot had ever reached. Why would her husband be so willing to taint it with a malevolent presence?

Unfortunately, her objections fell on deaf ears. Ves pushed through with his harebrained idea and produced one of the most perplexing living mechs that she had ever seen!

Gloriana wanted to tear her hair out more than once whenever she saw the Riot Mark III behave out of line.

Considering its incredibly problematic mutations and unpredictable outbursts, that happened far too many times.

The continued presence of this diabolical machine frequently reminded her of how ugly mechs could become if they were shaped by the wrong hands.

Gloriana tried her best to tolerate the existence of the Riot Mark III. She had been patient with much of her husband's inexplicable suggestions and ideas. Yet asking her to embrace this horrible work was a step too far in her opinion.

Though she admittedly held very affection for the previous iterations of the Riot, she was still willing to take pride in her contributions to their design.

This time was different.

The ace mech's pathetic performance in front of a single extra-galactic alien lord practically cemented her condemnation of this incredibly flawed machine.

Whatever Ves intended to wrought with this D-mech had clearly failed in the most ridiculous way!

Ace mechs were supposed to be one of the most resilient combat units when they fought against mind masters, yet the inverse applied when it came to the Riot Mark III!

If that was not a glaring flaw, then Gloriana would eat her masterwork certificates!

She became so frustrated by her former work's pathetic performance that she opened a private communication channel and issued the same demand once again!

"Mr. Armalon! Battlefield command is not my expertise, but even I can plainly see that our casualties are mounting. We have already lost over half of our combat forces, and what intact mechs and warships are already worn down. Even our capital ships, few as they are, have sustained considerable damage. Let us put our beliefs in human supremacy aside for a moment and acknowledge the naked truth. We did not bring enough forces to conduct a proper assault on this fortified planet. We should have recognized this fact as soon as the enemy phase leaders trounced our Ascended Giants. Without their physical prowess, the enemy defensive emplacements that they promised to destroy still remain intact. Our conventional forces may be strong, but they lack the numbers to clear so many orbital facilities."

She was very much right in that. The Red Cabal had invested a considerable amount of forces and assets to fortify Hypeh-Tekas II. The four main orbital fortresses served as the anchors for a string of orbital defenses as well as numerous different mobile units.

The battle centered around the combined fleet and the orbital defensive network was not one-sided by any means, but neither side had any hope of achieving a clean or lopsided victory.

At this stage, the question of whether the combined fleet would be able to come out on top depended heavily on whether the Saint Commander was willing to sustain massive losses to see this battle through to the end!

Rather than letting these stubborn and blind soldiers lead all of the precious clansmen and starships of the Premier Fleet to ruin, Gloriana was much more willing to seek external assistance.

The projection of Jovy Armalon made an exasperated expression. "You have already made your point in previous discussions. I do not think you are wrong, but there is more at stake than the preservation of our forces. Rest assured that the leaders above our heads have been brought up to date on our progress. They are prepared to act, but they are also willing to wait and see whether we can resolve this battle by ourselves. The cost of sending reinforcements across so many light-years is high even for the Red Two. More importantly, Ves has already spoken. He has earned the right to preside over this matter. He is the tier 2 galactic citizen in our midst. Your galactic citizenship does not even come close."

Gloriana grinded her teeth in frustration. As much as she believed she was no worse than Ves in terms of design capabilities, she could not help but admit that he was far more savvy and successful in terms of political maneuvering and popularity building.

With the help of the System, Ves had not only become very proficient at innovation, but capitalizing on his works!

She could not hope to copy this model due to the very limited scope of her own output. The female mech designer very much recognized that it was hopeless for her to win over

the masses. The only way she could catch up to her husband in terms of influence was to get involved in the design of many different high-ranking mechs, not just the ones that belonged to the Larkinson Clan.

However, it was very difficult for her to get accepted into third-party design teams. Their core personnel consisted of trusty insiders. Whenever they needed outside expertise, they only made contact with trusted consultants that they already knew for many years.

Gloriana could not just approach any random design team and occupy the same role.

Her impressively fast rise to the rank of Senior Mech Designer only proved her competence. It did not prove her trustworthiness.

The fact that the overwhelming majority of her works consisted of Larkinson mechs did not help her case either. She lacked an extensive track record of external collaborations. Other parties were even less willing to bring her in and expose her to a mountain of sensitive and classified information!

Though Gloriana intended to address this personal shortcoming, she required much more time in order to build up the desired reputation. She could not work as quickly as Ves, especially since she essentially had to start from scratch!

For this reason, the female mech designer had little choice but to accept Jovy's argument.

"Ves may hold the highest authority in our fleet, but his judgment can still be flawed." She argued instead. "His ego insists on doing everything in person if he can help it. He would rather take on additional risks and suffer excessive losses than admit he needs outside help. His desire for glory and greed for spoils can occasionally blind him to the chance of facing utter ruination. Let us play it safe. Call in reinforcements. Our clan can supply all of the superdimensional matter that is necessary to square your debts. Our lives are at stake. My children's lives are in danger. I already regret saying too little about his idea of invading this star system. We should have taken a detour when we failed to collect any meaningful intelligence about the threats hiding inside the dark miasma."

Unfortunately for Gloriana, Jovy's projected expression displayed no sympathy.

"No. Your words are not enough to sway our minds. We will stay our course. Besides, be a little more patient. I believe that Ves has not entirely exhausted his so-called bag of tricks. If we are truly outmatched, I do not think that he will fight this battle to the bitter end."

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

Chapter 7586 Unleashed Monster

Gloriana tried to employ several different angles to persuade Jovy to override Ves' arrogant decision, to no avail.

The fundamental truth was that she lacked authority and recognition.

Situations like these made her regret all of the opportunities that she could have taken to raise her public profile.

Though she had already begun to mingle with third-party mech designers when it came to initiatives such as deciphering archetech, they were too limited in scope to affect the bigger picture.

She was not like Ves who could effortlessly pull out an invention as universally desirable as Carmine mechs to command the attention of every red human!

Even now that she had finally become a user of the unfathomably deep Mech Designer System, she saw no immediate route to leveraging its many options to replicate her husband's meteoric rise.

She felt rather disappointed in herself about this failure.

Ketis managed to do a lot better despite the fact that she was still a mere Journeyman Mech Designer!

Depending on her status as a swordmaster and the holder of the mythical Heavensword, Ketis shamelessly made use of the Dimension Observatory to become known as the only person who could create a portal to the Blue Dimension!

Nowadays, many more people had Ketis' name on their lips than that of Gloriana.

Who could blame them, really?

The former granted red humanity access to superdimensional matter, while the latter was only known for being the spouse of a high-tier galactic citizen!

Though she had always been aware of the rising disparity between herself and the other woman, she never felt the consequences of this quite as much as today!

Gloriana made the determination to work on this shortcoming as soon as she returned to civilization!

She could not tolerate this state of affairs!

"Understood." She squeezed through her teeth. "I shall refrain from offering more suggestions. It is clear that I lack the qualifications to intervene in the ongoing operation."

Jovy's expression softened in response. "I do not fault you for your concern. It is well known that your husband has a far higher risk tolerance than practically anyone in our profession. That said, do not forget that you agreed to accompany him on this campaign. You even brought your children as well, which is a particularly bold and inspiring choice. If we manage to survive this ordeal, their growth will doubtlessly benefit from the unique perspective they have gained from witnessing the combat around them. From a parent's perspective, that is a gift that is arguably just as valuable as any treasure that we can salvage from this battlefield."

The mother felt turbulent about this observation. Her desire to prepare her younger daughter and son to the harsh reality of the Red Ocean had led her to make a decision that seemed extremely foolish in hindsight.

If she could turn back time and stand in front of Ves on the moment they decided whether to bring their children along, she would have definitely insisted on putting them back in a safe and risk-free Terran school!

No amount of practical learning was worth the loss of even a single baby!

Unfortunately, it was too late for her to do this. The only thing she could do was persuade her husband to cut short the campaign and turn back to friendly space as soon as possible.

"If we manage to get through this battle, I hope that we shall cease our foolish pursuit of glory and withdraw from alien space. Given the losses that we have already sustained, we should be in no position to conduct further offensives."

Jovy responded with a curt nod. "You are partially correct in your assessment. Technically, as long as we still manage to preserve enough ace mechs and Ascended Giants, we can still raid smaller alien strongholds along the way. The vast majority of our losses consist of standard units, though we have also lost a considerable number of powerful giants. However, as long as we maintain a strong core, we still have room for maneuver, though our margin of safety has diminished considerably. Whether we shall continue to go forward or head back depends on the judgment of the Saint Commander and your husband."

Great. Even after enduring such a costly battle, the RA representative still thought that the combined fleet was provoking more enemies!

Gloriana absolutely could not abide by this madness! She needed to reach Ves as soon as he returned from the battlefield and give him a piece of his mind! This foolish adventure had already dragged on long enough!

It was at this time a sudden mutation occurred in the field.

Both Gloriana and Jovy had vaguely kept their eye on the expansive battlespace. They noted that Ves, or rather his giant persona, had moved closer to the Riot Mark III, but they did not think that the injured human phase lord could risk getting too close.

The two mech designers had long concluded that the Riot Mark III had turned into a liability at this time!

If the Dark Apostle rashly approached, he might get assaulted by a maddened ace mech who wielded an exceptionally dangerous tier 3 Destroyer spear!

Perhaps the giant leader might have been able to hold the dangerous Riot back under normal circumstances, but the enormous gaps in the Superdimensional Giant Regalia made him vulnerable to direct hits!

Of all of the ways that Ves and the Dark Apostle intended to resolve this crisis, nobody expected for Ves to negotiate a deal in order to gain the contained demon's compliance!

Gloriana watched on with disbelief and perplexity as the Riot Mark III completely shed its image as a rogue machine and morphed into a highly synchronized engine of destruction!

The skyrocketing numbers produced by the resonance meters failed to fully quantify the massive jump in combat effectiveness.

Forces that ordinarily wasted their energy by perpetually fighting against each other had agreed to a temporary armistice for the time in months.

Now, the Riot Mark III channeled those very same forces towards an external enemy!

The resulting outcome was inevitable.

There was no way that a mysterious alien enemy who excelled in mental manipulation but was very lacking in martial might could offer meaningful resistance!

This was especially the case when the possessed lesser phase lord did not enjoy the protection of Saint Armor!

The tier 3 Destroyer spear had already unleashed its most explosive outburst when colliding against a composite energy barrier.

Yet that did not mean that its lethality was fully expended at that point.

The reason why the Riot Mark III did not pull out its polearm in order to launch another strike was because it was completely unnecessary.

Merely by keeping the tip of the destructive weapon buried inside the reanimated flesh, the phase lord carcass became subjected to a continuous form of ruination.

Nothing changed from the outside at first. The frequent discharges of ruinous energies affected the internal organs at first. All of the vulnerable phasewater organs and other viscera broke down at an unstoppable pace.

The deathborn lord that possessed this lesser phase lord corpse did not surrender to this treatment.

He tried his best to mobilize whatever strength and abilities he had left to dislodge his physical vessel from this compromising condition.

The extra-galactic invader failed!

All of the facets of the Riot Mark III that ordinarily worked against each other had found common cause this time!

The ace mech demonstrated unnatural strength and precision. It kept its Destroyer spear buried inside the enemy. The machine continually adjusted its flight and force exertion to prevent any changes.

The machine also mobilized its resonating exotics to augment and amplify the destructive potential of its main weapon!

The greater the damage output, the faster they could get rid of this adversary!

Saint Rosa Orfan did her best to not only control her unusually obedient D-mech, but also channel all of her unburdened willpower into suppressing and damaging her opponent.

The complicated nature of the deathborn lord meant that purely physical or intangible attacks did not cut it. The ace pilot had to inflict both at the same time in order to maintain the upper hand!

The Prophet's Bane provided enormous help with that. He not only made the D-mech completely obedient to the ace pilot, but also acted directly through the shaped Saint Kingdom!

His grand manifestation directly struck the deathborn lord's own manifestation.

This not only suppressed the true enemy from casting his annoying spell, but also prevented him from abandoning his current vessel and running away!

The Prophet's Bane immediately confirmed one of the Larkinson Clan's suspicions about the nature of this alien entity.

The deathborn lord did not descend upon the Red Ocean 'in person'. Through means unknown to red humanity, this alien powerhouse somehow managed to project a fraction of his power and consciousness across extra-galactic distances!

"HOW QUAINT." Saint Rosa Orfan observed.

She already transmitted her findings back to the Tarrasque.

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Chapter 7587 Beginning of the End

The Riot Mark III did not just defeat the deathborn lord.

It demolished the enemy that formerly incapacitated the unstable machine.

On a physical level, the ace spearman mech's potent weapon continually eroded the phase lord carcass from within.

All manner of phasewater-reinforced tissue broke down and disintegrated at a rapid pace.

On an ethereal level, the Prophet's Bane directly caught the deathborn lord's manifestation and proceeded to devour his prize on the spot!

The latter truly mattered. As an intangible life form, the alien leader figure could always hop into another body if he had lost his previous one. The only way to eliminate this kind enemy on a more permanent basis was to target them directly.

The sight of this devouring process horrified Gloriana and many other observers.

It looked as if the triumphant demon had fished out a soul and decided to eat his prize raw on the spot!

The deathborn lord tried everything he could in order to escape, but the Middle Demon's hold was too strong, especially now that he was able to leverage the full power of the Riot Mark III's Saint Kingdom!

The fabric of reality itself warped around them in order to ensure that the prey could not escape!

Though the deathborn lord did not display or express any strong emotions such as shock, fear or indignation, the entity most definitely suffered from his current treatment!

The ghostly figure leaked deadly energies that splashed completely harmlessly in open space.

If the entire site was surrounded by Dark Miasma, then perhaps he might have been able to call upon backup or at least an abundant reservoir of power.

Though enough time had passed for the glut of positive energies to dwindle, much of the battlefield still remained miasma-free, if only for the time being.

The effective suppression and lack of immediate urgency prompted the demon to take his time.

He savoured his 'meal'. This was one of his first major feeding sessions since he had assumed this particular state of existence. He spontaneously conducted an improvised ritual that sped up his devouring rate and increased the effectiveness of his assimilation attempt.

It was not enough for him to kill this powerful enemy. He wanted to harvest all of the traits, essence, memories and techniques of this foreign invader!

That was easier said than done. Despite holding the upper hand, the Prophet's Bane could only gnaw and devour the most superficial parts of his adversary's powerful soul.

He was merely devouring concentrated death energy. What enabled it to function as the avatar of an entirely different galaxy involved laws and mechanics that fell well outside the scope of anyone in this star system!

Suffice to say, the Prophet's Bane grew frustrated and resentful that all he got to devour was the ethereal realm's equivalent to a puppet!

The demon's mounting anger caused his devouring process to speed up! However, his eating manners had been thrown out of the window. The demon no longer maintained any restraint and brutally sought to devour or dissipate the energy matrix that made up the current manifestation!

By the time he was done, the distant deathborn lord had lost his only anchor to the Red Ocean.

The demon meanwhile digested whatever energies he could handle at this current time.

As a being that belonged to the negative energy side of reality, death energy did not pose a fatal threat to his existence.

That did not mean he enjoyed his meal. Demons may be familiar with the phenomenon of death, but they did not embody it to the same level as the deathborn race.

Therefore, the Prophet's Bane not only wasted much of this energy's potential, but also felt reluctant to assimilate too much of this nefarious influence.

Devouring too much death energy without any thought or structure would only cause him to deviate from his nature as a demon and transform into another deathborn. Maybe.

That must never happen!

For this reason, the Prophet's Bane deliberately restrained his absorption and only sought to strengthen himself to the point where he could better understand and resist future deathborn opponents.

The real prize was the knowledge and techniques mastered by the peculiar alien mind manipulator.

Although the intangible puppet was not the 'main body' of the deathborn lord, the latter's activities still left behind numerous remnants and imprints.

All of this was valuable to the Prophet's Bane. As long as he spent enough time to analyze the clues and deduce their logic, he may be able to replicate some of the deathborn lord's spells one day!

The thought of mastering a technique that could effectively confuse his stubborn ace pilot's mind filled the demon with glee!

The Prophet's Bane let out a soundless cackle even as his manifestation returned to the Riot Mark III like an obedient servant.

Saint Orfan's unbreakable bond with the demonic entity had given her a pretty good idea of what her 'partner' had done.

She was not pleased. Anything that strengthened the Middle Demon always came at the expense of herself.

Saint Orfan even had the displeasure of witnessing the foul demon directly strike a bargain with Ves!

A part of her felt betrayed by the mech designer who developed the Riot in the first place. She was already struggling to contain the Demon, and now he effectively agreed to feed human lives to this evil being!

Whatever the Prophet's Bane intentions, any persistent feeding would definitely increase his growth rate, making it much more likely for him to completely overpower her soul in the future!

As Rosa Orfan's anger towards Ves continued to rise towards a boiling point, she mentally gritted her teeth and chose to focus on her actual missions instead.

This was not the time to punish Ves for his apparent betrayal!

Rosa wanted to do nothing more than to beat him up and prove to him that he was utterly wrong to give up on her so soon!

Yet the demon treated Ves as a business partner rather than enemy at this time, which meant that if she insisted on taking revenge, her own D-mech would fight against her will again!

Nobody could afford to waste so much time! The combined fleet and its many disparate elements still needed rescuing.

The Saint Commander already transmitted a basic route to the Riot Mark III that showed how she could best intervene on the battlefield.

The Riot had to follow a winding course in order to relieve the Amaranto Mark III and potentially the Dark Zephyr Mark III if the distance was not too far.

Once the D-mech successfully killed or repelled the other powerful deathborn leaders, the Riot and any liberated ace mech must descend to a lower orbit in order to wreck the remaining operational strongholds of the orbital defense network.

This would free up the remnants of the combined fleet, which included the mostly-intact Tortuous Scream and other notable warships.

Their primary and secondary gun batteries could play a vital role in softening up or breaching the planetary defenses that the aliens had built on the surface of Hypeh-Tekas II!

Only then would the Riot Mark III and other available ace mechs be able to approach the mysterious deathborn temple that likely housed the center of the monstrous spell array responsible for converting lots of corpses into deathborn!

"...WASTE OF TIME."

Saint Orfan managed to regain enough rationality and clarity to understand the logic behind this methodical plan.

That did not stop her from discarding the file and forgetting about following any of the Saint Commander's instructions.

Her permanent tormentor happened to be of the same mind on this issue.

"NO MORE DELAYS. NO MORE PROCRASTINATING. LET US END THIS ONCE AND FOR ALL!"

The Riot Mark III turned away from the broken and eroded remains of a long-dead lesser phase lord and flew directly down towards the black and ominous planetary temple complex!

"Rosa! Stop! You are being too reckless! We still do not know what awaits us down on the surface!"

The maddened ace pilot completely ignored Casella's useless pleas.

She wanted to enjoy the remainder of this temporary moment of peace and tranquility by doing what she did best: charging forward and wrecking stuff!

Her current truce with the Prophet's Bane was bound to end sooner or later. She at least wanted this to happen on a pleasant note, and nothing excited her more than to wield all of her liberated power against a large and formidable target!

"Rosa! Slow down! Be careful!"

Against the Dark Apostle's better wishes, Ves insisted on shadowing the Riot Mark III. Who knew whether the dangerous machine suffered from its own hubris and needed rescue.

Even if the giant leader had lost a considerable proportion of his strength, he was still large enough to be able to drag an ace mech out of trouble.

"I am not sure whether I can drag an ace mech as heavy as the Riot Mark III out of the gravity well of a planet." The polemarchos said. "This machine is supposed to be a lot denser than other machines, right? It is both an archemech and a superdimensional mech."

Blinky slowly nodded. "It is true that those factors may complicate any possible rescue attempts, but my expectations are not high. If necessary, we can leave behind most of the mech frame and make it out with the cockpit and the tier 3 Destroyer spear. We absolutely cannot afford to lose either. The rest... is dispensible."

It hurt a lot to make this concession. The Riot Mark III's mech frame contained plenty of armor-grade superdimensional alloys! This was the good stuff and could not be replenished quickly.

If Ves was forced to rebuild the Riot Mark III after the loss of most of its superdimensional parts, then he could only resort to repurposing alien-grade superdimensional matter extracted from all of the salvaged Saint Piercers and Saint Armors.

That would ultimately put the Riot Mark III on a weaker footing than before.

This was why Ves still hoped that Saint Orfan would be able to succeed!

As time passed by, the Riot Mark III hardly encountered any resistance. The powerful machine attracted plenty of attention, but much if not all of the other remaining alien combatants were already entangled with other human units.

This moment of peace did not last.

When the Riot Mark III truly approached the surface of the corrupted planet, the temple complex seemingly came to life.

Dark energies directly extracted from the slaughter of millions of human and other sentient beings began to power up strange defenses that possessed a distinctly alien character!

Chapter 7588 The Hostile Temple Complex

The temple complex.

It defied description.

Even looking at it made Ves feel sick to his intangible stomach.

It was made out of crudely carved black stones. The lack of precision and refinement in the construction should have made the temple look primitive and shabby.

While those descriptions definitely applied, the sum of all parts still possessed an unholy majesty that Ves was not able to process.

He felt as if he was looking at a solidified ritual. Each component, each angle and each shape possessed a hidden meaning. They were all pieces that formed a mysterious puzzle that could not be explained.

Ves lacked the understanding, perception and insight to interpret the complete picture.

He was far from the only one who suffered from this affliction. Everyone remained blind to the full meaning of this massive alien planetary complex.

However, just because he couldn't uncover all of its secrets did not mean he failed to understand its importance.

Two very different groups of aliens put up a hefty fight just to prevent the combined fleet from coming close!

Although the phase leaders from the Red Collective lacked the resolve to fight to the death, the fact that they suffered so many casualties just to stall the advance of the Ascended Giants still said much about the importance of this alien stronghold.

Ves had come here to do a job. He refused to leave this star system without completing a major accomplishment.

All of the soldiers who participated in the current campaign would have died in vain otherwise.

Right now, the Riot Mark III presented the best and practically only hope of vindicating his decisions.

While he felt awfully annoyed that Saint Rosa Orfan charged directly forward rather than obey the Saint Commander's arrangement, a part of him felt so tired of all of the fighting that he sympathized with her impulsive decision.

The battle needed to come to an end before more complications arose.

Having circumvented all of the enemies in orbit that could hinder the Riot Mark III's advance, the only opposition left that still had a chance of repelling the ace mech was the temple complex itself.

It would have been naive to believe that the mist-shrouded facilities lacked defenses.

Though it did not appear to be manned by native aliens or other beings for that matter, it possessed plenty of 'automated' defenses.

Ominous green crystals began to glow before launching ragged bolts of soul-searing energy!

Their effectiveness on the Riot Mark III was mixed. Their individual power might not be impressive, but there were so many green crystals that hundreds of them flew towards the incoming ace mech!

The green energy bolts stung the Prophet's Bane who manifested himself through the Saint Kingdom.

However, they quickly dissipated into nothing after striking the exterior of the Riot Mark III's superdimensional armor system.

Other defensive measures proved slightly more effective against material defenses. Arcane gun turrets that worked according to completely different principles from conventional human technology summoned random deathborn before forcibly infusing them into jagged stone projectiles.

These rocks which appeared to be made out of the same material as the temple complex launched forward without any apparent force exertion!

In one moment, they floated in place.

In the next moment, they gained a huge amount of momentum that caused them to rocket forward at speeds that could match weaker gauss rifles!

These deathborn-infused rock projectiles weakened considerably when they passed through the Riot Mark III's Saint Kingdom, but possessed just enough resistance against the reality-defying effects that they still managed to impact the Riot Mark III's armor plating with plenty of force!

Of course, the ace spearman mech was built to take much heavier beating than this. One rock projectile inflicted practically no damage.

There was not just one rock launcher, though. There were hundreds of them. Many of them were spread across a complex that stretched for over a hundred kilometers in every direction!

In fact, given the amount of space the temple complex occupied, the aliens could have built a lot more mysterious weapon emplacements!

When Ves began to look at the alien complex from a different perspective, he could pick up faint clues among all of the bizarre black pyramids and towers.

He felt he was looking at the skeleton of a huge multi-functional spell array. Its core must be the component that converted living sacrifices into useful energies or other resources.

The most important output was fresh deathborn, but that was hardly its only function.

It could do a lot of other stuff as well, such as channeling power into weapons or generating some sort of interference effects that obfuscated many details.

All of this gave Ves the impression that this was only the beginning. The deathborn only managed to erect an initial foothold for the time being. Once their numbers had expanded and once they acquired more resources, he had no doubt that these extra-galactic aliens intended to expand and upgrade the current temple complex!

Ves vaguely observed gaps and low-density areas that looked prime for expansion. He believed that this temple complex was actually semi-modular in nature. It was designed from the ground up to accommodate modular upgrades and additions over time.

This looked like a very practical way to initiate an invasion into a far-flung location!

While the current temple complex was probably built with the intention of repelling a sizable warfleet, the problem was that the only attacker so far consisted of a single ace mech, one that effectively reached the power of a senior ace mech at that!

The Riot Mark III quickly adjusted to all of the intercepting attacks.

It flatly ignored the weakest attacks and interference effects. The Saint Kingdom crushed the weakest effects while the rest bounced off the superdimensional ace mech's armor like they were nothing.

The more serious and exotic attacks might not have the potential to crush the Riot Mark III in an instant, but they could still drain the ace mech's resources on hit.

Saint Orfan had no patience to allow her machine to get hit so much. She began to put greater effort into evasion. Her superhuman skill combined with the augmented thrust power of the D-mech's resonance-empowered flight system allowed her to evade the vast majority of incoming fire!

The hit rate of all of the static defenses dropped by at least 80 percent on average!

Though the Riot Mark III could have evaded even more attacks if it truly wanted to, the stress on the ace mech's internal systems would have been too great. It was not worth the tradeoff.

Still, Saint Orfan grew satisfied with the current results. Her Riot Mark III's nimbleness still could not match that of the Dark Zephyr Mark III, but her machine still managed to perform much better than an

Anyone expected!

In the face of the apparent unstoppability of the Riot Mark III, the temple complex faltered.

Multiple weapon emplacements fell silent, either because their attacks could only tickle the powerful machine or because other structures blocked their line of sight.

There were not enough defenses to repel the descending ace mech.

There was a price to building and operating all of these defenses. The main purpose of the temple complex was not to act as a defensive stronghold. It instead served as a nexus for all of the deathborn operations in this dwarf galaxy.

Ves felt a little more comfortable after coming to this conclusion.

The combined fleet may have paid much to get this far, but they still managed to catch the aliens early enough.

If the humans came any later, then the native aliens and the deathborn would have made it at least ten times more difficult to assault this site!

The Dark Apostle stopped at a certain height above the surface.

Unlike the fearless Riot, the giant leader possessed much more apprehension about flying lower.

That would put him squarely in range of all of those nasty exotic gun emplacements!

An ace mech might have been able to endure all of those attacks, but neither Ves nor the Dark Apostle believed they possessed the same level of resilience, especially in their current state!

There was not much they could do up here. They awkwardly floated in a lower orbit while continually peering down at the temple complex.

While a haze of mist and fuzziness still obscured much of the lower levels of the temple complex, the Riot Mark III ongoing descent began to provide progressively clearer sensor readings!

Ves and the Dark Apostle requested a direct data feed from the D-mech.

The latter surprisingly complied!

This gave the pair a much better view of the actual state of the temple complex.

More details immediately became evident. Among the most unpleasant ones were the pits filled with rotting corpses and the channels that collected and redirected the blood taken from several dozen different species.

All of these terrible facilities did not exist to satisfy the deathborn's hunger for cruelty or desire to inflict suffering.

They all formed important pieces of one or multiple different rituals or rather subrituals.

The presence of increasingly more distinguishable carved symbols and alien decorations massively amplified the ritualistic atmosphere of this unholy complex. Ves could vaguely feel the abundant flows of negative E energies.

"Death... torment... coercion..."

Those who died in this unholy site did not get to enjoy a peaceful transition.

The rituals immediately captured the souls of all of the sacrificed beings and processed them in many different ways depending on the needs of the deathborn race!

Right now, the temple complex had completely ceased the production of new deathborn.

These weak and feeble cannon fodder posed almost zero threat against a D-mech of this caliber!

The problem was that the other defensive measures failed to impede the Riot Mark III in the slightest.

At most, they inflicted some level of attrition on the ace mech, but not enough to exhaust the machine and its vengeful pilot!

The facility could not rely on weak and dispersed measures to repel such a singularly powerful unit.

It had to concentrate all of its available power and unleash a singularly potent strike in order to have a chance of defeating this ace mech!

That was exactly what the temple complex did. A central outcropping of massive battleship-sized stones began to unfold like a flower.

This sluggish maneuver gradually unveiled the largest green crystal that Ves had ever seen!

Chapter 7589 The Decisive Strike

From the moment the giant crystal located in the approximate center of the temple complex became visible, multiple observers became stunned by the sight.

This was absolutely not an ordinary object!

It possessed a strong aura. It made Ves and other people feel as if it was an incredibly powerful reactor core. Given its astoundingly high energy concentration, it should not be surprising if it acted as the center power source for the massive temple complex!

The giant green crystal should never have been exposed in the open.

The huge black steles that previously kept it protected and out of sight no longer performed their primary duty.

The fact that the temple complex retracted this protective cover indicated that it was about to engage in a very dangerous and desperate act!

This quickly became evident when a small ball of nausea-inducing light formed just above the crown of this gigantic energy jewel.

Although it started out small, its energy density was already ludicrous!

When it started to grow in size, its concentration did not drop in the slightest, which meant that this highly threatening energy projectile was rapidly becoming more powerful!

"Be careful, Saint Orfan!" Ves warned despite knowing that his words were likely redundant. "Do not underestimate this planetary installation! Much of its properties remain unknown, but its peak energy level alone likely exceeds the defensive capacity of your mech. Don't be reckless!"

The smart play would be to create more distance and evade this super strike. As long as the gigantic energy crystal discharged its output in vain, the Riot Mark III would be free to devastate the temple complex.

Ves had a lot of confidence in the Riot's ability to evade this blow. The ace spearman mech may not be as elusive as the Dark Zephyr, but its inherent properties made it much more difficult to predict its movements!

However, Saint Orfan and her demonic 'partner' had no patience for these games. Both of them wanted to end this ordeal as quickly as possible.

Instead of moving away from the incredibly dangerous charging superweapon, the Riot Mark III instead chose to descend at an even greater speed!

Saint Orfan had thrown all caution to the wind!

This made it considerably more difficult for her ace mech to evade any eventual super strike!

"What are you doing?! Your ace mech is completely exposed! Its speed isn't enough to reach the surface or any meaningful cover before the crystal has charged up an attack that is powerful enough to breach all of its defenses! Do not overestimate the Riot's capabilities!"

Even if Saint Orfan's willpower had temporarily been boosted to the point the Riot reached the threshold of a senior ace mech, the resonance amplification was not enough to withstand an attack of this magnitude!

"You are facing the alien equivalent of a masterwork installation! Even if this temple complex does not work according to the same principles of a fortress-type superweapon such as the Obsidian Orb, it can still pose a very real danger to your machine! Just because your mech is superdimensional does not mean it is invincible. Any defense can be overcome by relying on excessive brute force!"

Ves had not even gone into the strange and exotic properties that the gigantic green crystal most definitely imparted into its upcoming attack!

He couldn't determine with absolute certainty what sort of oddities a victim suffered when struck by such a strike.

Perhaps it might empower the demon while at the same time weakening the ace pilot.

Perhaps it might drag Saint Orfan's soul straight out of her ace mech, causing her to lose her physical anchor and all of its essential protection!

Perhaps the entire Riot was about to become subjected to an overpowering beam of death that caused everything to decay!

Whatever the case, Ves did not think there was any possibility that the attack would bring anything good!

Saint Orfan might not have thought so much, but regardless of the incessant warnings issued by her intuition, she recklessly chose to face this lethal threat head-on!

It soon became clear what she intended to rely upon to solve this latest crisis.

Her ace mech no longer held its tier 3 Destroyer spear like a lance, but instead began to switch its grip and hold it above its head like a javelin.

The Riot Mark III adopted a spear-throwing stance!

"What?!"

Throwing a Destroyer weapon was a reckless move!

Although it was not unheard of, Terran expert mechs and ace mechs had occasionally done this in the past.

The results were very much mixed. Destroyer weapons were designed almost exclusively with melee combat in mind. The inherent volatility of Destroyer particles made it impossible to suppress their destructive tendencies once they left the range of an ace mech's Saint Kingdom.

In other words, throwing the weapon would cause much of its energies to go to waste!

What was worse was that the weapon would lose a large portion of its resonance empowerment.

Certain high-ranking mechs and mech pilots were better at increasing the permanence of resonance empowerment, but Rosa Orfan did not enjoy any strong advantages in this area.

The tier 3 Destroyer spear would definitely grow weaker and lose multiple advantages once it flew away from its wielder!

Ves did not think that Rosa Orfan was ignorant of the consequences. That was why he found her decision to be baffling!

There was not enough time to persuade her to change her mind.

Though Ves had imparted the teachings of Sacrificial Spear Throwing Method to the unstable ace pilot, Rosa Orfan thankfully did not channel this costly technique this time.

The Destroyer spear was not designed with this capacity in mind. Trying to perform this method anyway would probably result in nothing, but there is a small chance that a catastrophic outcome might occur!

Ves had already destroyed one precious weapon in the form of the Murder Knife Mark III.

He did not want to see the Riot Mark III squander her own quasi-relic weapon!

Even if a tier 3 Destroyer weapon was not unique, its scarcity and difficulty of reproduction probably made it costly for the Larkinson Clan to procure another copy!

"HATRED SHALL DRIVE MY SPEAR."

After spending a few seconds on locking its aim, the Riot Mark III decisively hurled its tier 3 Destroyer spear directly towards the gigantic crystal!

Surprisingly enough, as soon as the dark polearm left the ace mech's Saint Kingdom, it did not lose as much resonance empowerment as Ves expected.

Saint Orfan or her cooperative demon had imparted a special quality in the weapon that somehow increased the stickiness of the ace pilot's willpower.

Even as this particularly special quality rapidly weakened over time, the tier 3 Destroyer spear descended at such a fast pace that it was bound to strike its target before the losses became too serious!

It was as if a beam of extermination descended from the heavens to punish the unforgivable desecration of life.

A ray of pure destruction and hatred followed a straight trajectory and cut through all of the confounding mist and energies in its path!

Invisible energy shields and black crystal projectiles attempted to impede or redirect the Riot's transcendent fury, but these measures proved too feeble for the task.

By the time the descending Destroyer spear approached the gigantic green crystal, it barely managed to bypass the increasingly more massive energy accumulation before directly driving its destructive tip into its intended target!

For a brief moment, the entire space around the barren and cursed planet seemed to pause.

In the next moment, an explosion unlike anything else Ves had witnessed today engulfed the center of the deathborn temple complex!

A massive and uncontrolled outburst of mixed energies spread out from the center of the ominous facility and engulfed everything within a dozen or so kilometers!

The massive black steles that previously shielded the giant green crystal either faced total obliteration or broke into millions of pieces that immediately sprayed outward!

The forces unleashed by this cataclysmic detonation was so great that it only generated an earthquake that spread out across much of the hemisphere, but also blew back the Riot for a time!

The Dark Apostle braced himself and only experienced moderate discomfort. His altitude remained high enough that his superdimensional raiment offered sufficient protection, especially when he turned his damaged side away from the explosion.

As the blast completely wiped out the center of the temple complex, its outlying districts did not fare much better.

Towers collapsed. Entire walls and superstructures cracked into multiple pieces. The formation of entirely new hills and valleys completely disordered the alien architecture.

Nothing had escaped the devastation! Even the most peripheral structures became skewed!

Whatever foul rituals or qi formations powered the various functions of the temple complex, the scale of the disaster turned out to be so great that none of them functioned anymore!

Perhaps a small number of subunits still maintained partial operation for whatever reason, but the total loss of the temple's only central power source gradually caused the remaining facilities to fall into eternal slumber!

"..."

Ves and everyone else who paid attention to this development became speechless for a time.

They had not expected for Saint Orfan's impulsive attack to be so effective!

The Riot Mark III had never been designed with ranged combat in mind, but that did not mean it was helpless against distant adversaries.

While Ves lost some of his concerns about the survival of this precious D-mech, he still remained worried about the state of the tier 3 Destroyer spear.

He would definitely feel a lot of pain if it had shattered into countless pieces or got vaporized in its entirety!

As the dust slowly began to settle in the center of the collapsed temple complex, the aftermath became increasingly more clear.

The good news was that the gigantic green crystal had completely disappeared.

Not a single remnant of this strategic supernode remained in place. Not even the base of the crystal or its supporting structures were left.

Though Ves regretted the lost opportunity to salvage anything significant from this unique alien relic, he would rather see it disappear entirely than allow it to release a single devastating strike.

"Where the hell is the spear?" His other self asked as his eyes darted back and forth.

They did not catch sight of anything that looked like the tier 3 Destroyer spear. Whether it was still intact or broken into pieces, nobody knew, but Ves grew increasingly more distressed when he failed to determine its location!

"Oh, come on..."

As Ves continued to expand his search radius in a desperate attempt to avoid the worst conclusion, the Riot Mark III suddenly raised the arm that previously threw its spear.

The precious and nearly irreplaceable tier 3 Destroyer spear had somehow returned into the D-mech's grasp!

"WHAT?! HOW?!"

"That's impossible!"

Chapter 7590 Tentative Conclusion

The exhausting Battle of Hypeh-Tekas II had come to an end.

Sure, combat still raged across the orbit of the alien-occupied planet, but the outcome of this engagement had already been set.

The native aliens suffered massive losses, much of them strategic in nature.

The orbital defense network was ruined. It held out longer than expected and inflicted way more damage to the combined fleet than any human wished, but once the remnants

of the native alien soldiers knew they had failed, enemy resistance collapsed like falling dominoes.

There was nothing more for the minions of the Red Cabal left to defend. The mysterious planetary temple complex was the key objective on both sides. The entire battle essentially revolved around this singularly important site.

The Red Ocean aliens apparently needed to defend it in order to facilitate their nascent aliens with the Messier 87 aliens.

This very much became evident when the humans what had happened after the temple complex became utterly ruined by the Riot Mark III.

"The deathborn... have disappeared!"

"They are no longer crowding around the edges of the Minerva's Saint Kingdom anymore!"

"The remaining deathborn lords are gone! They all abandoned their physical vessels and withdrew at a speed too fast for us to intercept!"

"What?!"

That last part took everyone by surprise. The Larkinsons and other soldiers had developed quite a grudge against the deathborn and their high-ranked leaders.

In order to defend the Red Ocean against the foul and undesirable influence of these extra-galactic invaders, it became vital to squash their projected manifestations!

Their cowardly and desperate flight prevented the humans from finishing this job!

This upset a lot of people, particularly the ones who tangled directly against them such as Saint Tusa Billingsley-Larkinson and Saint Davia Stark.

They had been harried by these exotic adversaries for a long time without being able to gain the upper hand. The current victory tasted like ashes in their mouth due to their inability to achieve any personal successes.

"The deathborn have suffered a serious blow today." Saint Commander Casella Ingvar concluded based on her own observations. "We have destroyed a major engine of reproduction. It couldn't have been easy for either groups of aliens to construct that enormous temple complex. The massive green crystal alone was a priceless treasure that should be extremely difficult and costly to reproduce. It was a strategic asset that could have been responsible for overwhelming the entire Terran frontlines with trillions of deathborn. It would have been more ideal for us to capture it intact, but its total ruination has led to a much swifter end of hostilities."

Casella based her thoughts on a number of vague and uncertain assumptions.

It was very clear that the temple complex and its mysterious power source boosted the deathborn in multiple ways.

However, much of it remained undefined.

The best guess that Ves and others could make was that it not only served as a reproduction center, but also functioned as a signal node that was powerful enough to allow weaker deathborn who currently resided in M87 to project their consciousness all the way into this dwarf galaxy!

This explained the rapid collapse and loss of organization among all of the controlled deathborn armies.

Their deathborn officers did not disappear right after the destruction of the temple complex, but they became noticeably less active.

The temple complex also shared a strong relation with the dark miasma.

While it was unfortunate that this negative influence remained active due to the fact that it was generated by an entirely different source, everyone close by somehow felt that it had lost some of its teeth.

Much of its interference effects remained just as strong as before, but many soldiers reported that they no longer felt threatened by this debilitating energy field.

Part of this response could be explained by simple acclimation. Compared to the early days, everyone had gradually grown familiar with the properties of the dark miasma. A known source of danger was ultimately much less scary than an unfamiliar source.

Experience also mattered. Many soldiers faced life-threatening situations earlier that tested their grit and courage in many ways. Those who survived this ordeal had proven their strength and resilience. Even the most brittle among them experienced some form of mental growth.

While everyone took this odd change as a good development, it was not as conclusive as everyone desired.

Ves knew without attending any post-battle briefing that any plans to assault the second strategic site in the Hypeh-Tekas System could no longer be pursued.

The combined fleet suffered too many losses.

Perhaps they still had enough strength to topple whatever defenders the native aliens and the M87 aliens had posted close to the center of the star system, but who knew whether this was truly the case.

The continued existence of the dark miasma generator meant that any form of long-range observation remained ineffective!

Sending scouts when the human forces had already lost so many mechs and starships sounded foolish as well.

After all of this fighting and after inflicting so much damage onto their enemies, the humans still suffered from information asymmetry.

In other words, the aliens effectively remained in control of the rest of the star system!

If the forces of red humanity wanted to change that, then they needed to bring in lots of reinforcements, but that was not realistic.

The destruction of the temple complex and the withdrawal of all remaining enemies had lessened the urgency of the situation.

There was no compelling reason for the Red Two to pay a huge price to the Cybernetic Empire to instantly transmit reinforcements across interstellar distances.

Perhaps an argument could be made to activate the transformed greater beyonder gate once or twice in order to secure an intact giant green crystal, but the Riot had personally eliminated this possibility.

Other strategic alien treasures and assets may still exist at the dark miasma generator, but nobody knew for certain. The mechers and the fleeters most definitely did not want to make a move based on guesswork alone.

In truth, a part of Ves hoped to drag additional forces into this whirlpool. This would make it a lot easier for the remnants of the combined fleet to return to human-occupied space in safety.

Invading a restricted star system, destroying a mysterious temple complex belonging to an entirely new group of aliens and partially ruining the arrangements of the Blackwater Summoner most definitely painted a larger target on their backs!

There was no way the regional native alien forces could afford to ignore the combined fleet anymore!

The death of multiple phase lords and the loss of so many other combat assets had also weakened the forces under the Saint Commander's leadership.

The human forces had also exposed pretty much all of their trump cards. It became a lot easier for the Red Cabal to gather enough scattered alien warfleets to confidently overwhelm the Premier Fleet and Bluejay Fleet!

Now that they all faced intense alien retaliation, persisting in the Nemesis Campaign sounded no different from committing suicide!

Casella had already begun to plan their withdrawal strategy.

The human forces had gone fairly deep behind enemy lines.

Getting out should be a lot faster than getting in so long as they refrained from wasting any further time on raiding alien depots and troop concentrations.

However, they could not afford to follow a straight or predictable route, or else they would make it easier for the Red Cabal to succeed in their interception attempt!

One of the factors that affected the success rate of this extraction happened to spark a contentious debate.

As Ves and the Dark Apostle still puzzled how the Riot Mark III managed to retrieve the tier 3 Destroyer spear after it launched its final attack, they received an incoming transmission from the Saint Commander.

"We need to decide how long we should linger in this star system and how much we should burden our surviving hulls with spoils." She explained. "One of the few highlights of this battle is that we have retained control over the battlefield. There are many opportunities to collect highly valuable spoils. Our salvage teams have already begun to retrieve pieces of superdimensional alloys. The less injured and exhausted giants have offered their assistance in cutting out the most valuable and intact phasewater organs from the deceased alien phase lords. All of these spoils alone will occupy a large amount of available capacity, especially now that we have less starships to spare."

The combined fleet could not carry as much stuff as before. Fortunately, most of the lost hulls tended to be on the smaller size. The larger vessels such as the heavy cruisers and the two capital ships still remained operational... for the most part.

That did not mean they could fit an endless amount of stuff. They needed to be thoughtful about what exactly they should bring back to friendly space.

"Rare and particularly powerful phasewater organs should be close to the top of the priority list." Ves decided. "The Phase Lord Department needs to collect more unique samples to expand and diversify its range of human-adapted equivalents. The Ascended Giants have made serious sacrifices today. They deserved to be rewarded. As for superdimensional debris, try to collect whatever you can. Both the hull-grade stuff used by our giants and the alien-grade stuff used by our enemies are valuable enough to be

retrieved. We absolutely cannot let this stuff fall into the hands of the Red Cabal if we can help it. If there is not enough space in our hulls, then try to bolt them onto the surface of our starships. This should be a quick and easy way to bring them home."