

Tech System 761

Chapter 761 Announcement of the Participants

By the third week, the construction of the Colosseum was finally completed, and the remainder of the week was devoted entirely to testing to ensure everything met the necessary standards. Both sides pushed every available system to its limits, stress-testing the arena's components, shielding, and environmental controls.

This wasn't just about verifying functionality; it was also a matter of trust—or the lack thereof. Both sides were highly suspicious of one another, meticulously scanning for any hidden backdoors or subtle sabotage. No one wanted to risk the possibility of a sudden disadvantage due to an exploit or unseen manipulation. Both sides scrutinized every circuit, magic circle, and protocol, working tirelessly to confirm that nothing had been tampered with and that the arena was truly neutral ground.

While the systems were being tested, Liasas met once again with the negotiator to finalize and deliver the list of contenders, a requirement that had to be fulfilled before the construction period ended.

"The list of participants from the Conclave's side has been completed and is as follows," Liasas began.

"For the Xor'Vaks, it will be Princess Seraphina. For the Valthorins, Vaxerion. The representative of Zelvora will be Xylor. The Trinarians have chosen Zynarel, and for the Symmetra, it will be Liyora. The Erythians will not send an individual but will deploy their sentient weapon, NO: 70. From the Galvinith, Yzara will enter the arena, and the Shadari have selected Zyran. The Elara will be represented by Vaelthar, and the Feryn have sent Lunaris. The Yrral Coalition has opted to field Mecha 765, with its weapons limited to those meeting the established rules..."

Liasas continued listing the names of the remaining contenders from the other four civilizations. With each name spoken, the members of the Conclave in leadership positions—those with access to intelligence about these individuals—could feel the blood draining from their faces. A sinking realization settled in as the enormity of the situation became clear: each of these contenders was among the top one hundred strongest in their respective civilizations and, at the moment, the most powerful individuals available in the sector.

The implication was unavoidable—no one on the Conclave's side was holding back. This was an all-in strategy. The upcoming fight would not be a contest but a brutal demonstration, a one-sided massacre in the making. Many leaders who didn't decide to fight and had selected the basic agreement suddenly found themselves losing any desire to even witness the battle.

The citizens of the Empire, unfamiliar with the strength or reputation of the names just mentioned, were nonetheless aware that their opponents would field their strongest contenders. The names listed were likely to be the most formidable warriors available.

Attention quickly shifted back to the negotiator, as both sides eagerly anticipated the announcement of their representatives. Reactions varied: some displayed keen interest, others scoffed in mockery, while a few appeared bored or indifferent.

Liasas, too, was among those waiting with bated breath for the opposing side to begin naming their fighters, her curiosity piqued about who they would choose to compete.

“From the Terran Empire, there will be only one participant,” the negotiator announced. Liasas's expression shifted to one of surprise, but the negotiator pressed on, unfazed. “I, Emperor Aron Michael, will be the sole contender,” he declared, gesturing to himself with a confident nod.

To say that both sides were surprised by his declaration would be an understatement of monumental proportions. Liasas was particularly taken aback, realizing that not only was the Terran Empire sending a single participant to face the strongest individuals from each civilization, but that the participant was none other than the emperor himself—Aron Michael, the very leader with whom she had been negotiating throughout this entire ordeal.

This revelation suddenly pieced together the puzzle she had been trying to solve. From the outset, Aron had made every decision independently, without consulting anyone else, no matter the demands from the other side. It all clicked: only a leader with absolute power could afford to act so decisively, especially one with dominion over the entire government.

Meanwhile, the citizens of the Empire reacted with a mix of emotions. They were shocked to learn that their emperor would face off against individuals whose true powers were still unknown to them. Despite the assurances of his strength, many felt a gnawing worry. If Aron were to fall in battle, the empire he held together might plunge into chaos, a prospect that frightened everyone—supporters and dissenters alike—who had finally begun to enjoy life free from the constant fear of survival.

The reactions of the chosen fighters on the Conclave's side were as diverse as their backgrounds, each reflecting their unique personalities. Some were eager to face off against the emperor, their minds already racing with visions of victory and glory. Others felt a simmering anger, perceiving the single combatant as an affront that belittled their capabilities; they longed to make the Terran Empire regret its decision by exacting revenge on their leader and dismantling the empire in the process.

Among them, the Vlathorins and Xor'Vaks exhibited a different mindset. They were not just excited but elated at the prospect of battling the emperor of the opposing side. For the Vlathorins, defeating Aron Michael would mean regaining their lost honor, a chance to prove their worth in the eyes of their peers. Meanwhile, the Xor'Vaks saw this confrontation as an opportunity to punish those who had dared to speak their leaders' names in vain, an act they would not forget easily.

“Are you sure about that?” Liasas asked, her tone now more respectful than before.

“As far as I remember, the agreement allowed for such situations,” he replied calmly, his demeanor unchanged despite his theoretically higher position.

“What happens if you lose in the first fight and are unable to continue?” Liasas asked, regaining her composure. It was a question on many minds, as the fight agreement

lacked a clause for breaks, apart from the twenty-minute intermissions to check for structural issues in the Colosseum.

“Should I lose a fight by accepting defeat or die before the next match, you will be considered to have won all subsequent fights,” he answered, demonstrating that he had already contemplated this scenario.

“Understood. We accept your participation, and you have until the end of the construction period to add more fighters,” she stated respectfully.

“Thank you,” he replied, standing up and making his way back to his ship, which immediately set course for the Colosseum, where he intended to inspect the completed structure.

Liasas remained silent, simply watching his ship as it moved away. With the construction of the Colosseum now complete and the participants officially announced, everyone was permitted to explore the arena and familiarize themselves with the surroundings during the testing period. The tests conducted posed no interference with the Colosseum’s operations, allowing participants to assess the layout and prepare for the upcoming matches.

Chapter 762 The First Fight

As time marched forward, the long-awaited day finally arrived. For many viewers across the Conclave, the anticipation was mixed with confusion and curiosity. The empire had not altered its decision—Emperor Aron Michael remained their sole representative. Despite the risks, they had not added additional contenders as a contingency, even in the event of his defeat or incapacitation during the many matches he will have to participate.

This bold choice stirred countless reactions. Some saw it as arrogance, others as unwavering confidence, while a few viewed it as sheer madness. The stakes couldn’t be higher, and the emperor’s lone participation left no room for error. All eyes were now focused on the Colosseum, waiting to see if this risky strategy would result in triumph—or disaster.

Outside the shimmering shields of the Colosseum, massive ships from each contending civilization hovered in position, their hulls gleaming under the light of distant stars. Each vessel carried within it a champion, a chosen warrior representing their civilization, waiting for their moment to descend into the arena. Only these challengers and essential personnel were granted proximity to the Colosseum to prevent any chance of a problem from occurring.

The rules were clear—only those actively participating in a match were allowed to enter the arena at any given time. This restriction was not just a formality but a precaution to avoid unnecessary casualties in what promised to be a brutal contest.

{The first contenders, please enter the Colosseum,} the referee AI announced, her voice echoing through the arena and the ships. Entrusted with full authority over every aspect of the Colosseum, she ensured impartiality, as neither side was willing to cede control to the other.

Two ships passed smoothly through the Colosseum’s shields, gliding to their designated landing zones, spaced several kilometers apart. The moment both sides disembarked, the ships were immediately ordered to exit the arena, a strict protocol agreed upon to ensure there were no outside

influences during the fight. Without hesitation, the vessels departed, leaving behind only the combatants and the anticipation of the battle to come.

The first match was a showdown between the Emperor of Terra and the fifteenth-ranked fighter from the Conclave: a representative of the Venora.

The Venora were a race renowned—and despised—for their uncanny ability to adapt through rapid analysis. Their strength lies in their capacity to quickly assess a situation and evolve their strategies in real time, making them one of the most challenging and frustrating opponents to confront. With every second that passed, their effectiveness only grew, turning even small encounters into complex battles. This adaptability earned them a reputation as a civilization that no one wanted to engage lightly.

The Venora contender stood as he watched his ship leave, his entire frame encased in sleek military gear. A massive gun rested heavily in his hands, while knives were embedded at various points across his armor, each placed strategically to ensure quick access. His plan was clear: buy as much time as possible to analyze his opponent, relying on the hallmark Venoran adaptability. However, he was walking into the unknown—Aron, the Emperor of Terra, was a complete enigma to the Conclave, making him the worst kind of adversary for a Venoran, whose strength relied on data and familiarity.

The Venora's unfortunate position as the first challenger wasn't by choice. Their rank as the lowest of the remaining civilizations meant they were left with no option but to go first, an unenviable position against an opponent they knew nothing about.

On the other side of the Colosseum, Aron seemed unbothered by the looming fight. Dressed in armor, a sword strapped to his hip, and a gun slung across his back, the emperor looked more like someone preparing for a casual workout than a life-or-death duel. He performed a few stretches and light jumps, as if he were a substitute player warming up on the sidelines, showing no signs of tension or nervousness.

While the two fighters engaged in their own forms of preparation, a massive hologram materialized between them, her sheer size making her visible to both sides.

{I'm sure you've already reviewed the rules, so there's no need for me to repeat them. The moment any of you break them, the fight will stop, and the other side will be declared the winner without deliberation.}

Her voice echoed throughout the arena, firm and unwavering.

{Do not test me. The sensors blanketing the Colosseum allow me to see everything—and when I say everything, I mean it.}

She paused briefly to let the warning sink in before continuing.

{You have five minutes to complete your preparations. Use this time wisely.}

And with that, the hologram vanished, leaving both combatants in their final moments of readiness.

The broadcast shifted to showcase the final moments of each contender's preparation.

The Venora fighter was hard at work, knowing full well that every second mattered. He powered up his energy weapon, a massive magic-engineered firearm, as regulations only permitted him to activate it during the preparation phase.

At the same time, he deployed several reconnaissance drones, positioning them as an early warning system and first line of defense. These drones would give him critical moments to react when Aron inevitably advanced or did something unexpected.

The Venora's weapon was no ordinary firearm. Created by the Feryn, masters of magical engineering, it was a coveted tool used by races that lacked inherent magic but desired its power. Its destructive capability was equivalent to that of a small nuclear grenade, a type of weapon banned from the event.

However, the weapon's primary drawback was the long charging time required between shots as it gathered mana—time the Venora fighter knew he had to buy at any cost.

On the other side of the Colosseum, Aron's preparation was almost nonexistent. He calmly removed the gun from his back and held it in his hands, making no further moves—no deployment of drones, no warming up of equipment. He simply stood there, relaxed, as if waiting for a signal.

As the five-minute preparation period ended, the referee AI's voice echoed through the arena.

{You may begin.}

The Venora fighter wasted no time. With survival instincts kicking in, he dashed in the opposite direction of Aron, attempting to put as much distance between them as possible. Distance was his only hope—time to analyze his enemy and charge his weapon for a decisive attack. Within seconds, he had covered over a kilometer, relying on his speed and drones to maintain a safe gap.

Meanwhile, the broadcast feed switched to Aron. The viewers saw him raise his gun, casually aiming it toward the retreating Venora fighter. Without any sign of urgency or double-checking his aim, Aron calmly pulled the trigger. A single shot rang out, sending a small, unassuming bullet hurtling through the air.

The moment the bullet was fired, the feed from Aron's camera was abruptly disrupted. A flash of brilliant light overloaded the sensors, cutting off the visual feed, followed immediately by a deafening shockwave that rippled through the arena.

The broadcast frantically shifted to another angle, trying to capture what had just happened. When the cameras refocused, they revealed a towering mushroom cloud billowing in the distance—the unmistakable aftermath of immense destruction.

Everyone watching it was stunned to silence, and the only sound that followed was the calm voice of the referee AI.

{Match over. Winner: Terran Empire, Aron Michael.}

Chapter 763 Warm-Up

"I hope at least the body survived," Aron muttered, eyes locked on the slowly dissipating mushroom cloud.

As he said that, the gun he still held began to crack, fractures spreading like a web over its surface. A second later, the entire weapon crumbled in his grip, the pieces disintegrating into fine dust that

blew away in the wind. Aron glanced at his now-empty hands, his expression briefly turning into a frown before vanishing as quickly as it appeared.

"It seems I overloaded it with more mana than it could handle," he mused quietly to himself.

The weapon had been a specially crafted magic gun—an attempt to allow him to use magic in conventional forms, much like his wife did. His own magic abilities were limited to rune-based applications, and he had wanted to avoid relying on them for this fight. The gun's intricate design had combined several magic cycles into a single, complex magic circle: a fire cycle to create destructive energy, a compression cycle to concentrate it, a flight cycle for propulsion, and a friction reduction cycle to minimize resistance. The result was a bullet whose power scaled directly with the amount of mana infused. Unfortunately, it seemed the amount he poured in was too much for the weapon to endure.

Brushing the lingering dust off his hands with a casual clap, Aron looked unbothered, as if the weapon's destruction had been nothing more than a minor inconvenience. He activated the flight system embedded in his armor, hovering off the ground with ease, and flew toward the center of the dissipating cloud.

It didn't take long for him to reach the site where the Venora fighter had been moments before. The aftermath was grim. Although the Venora's armor had held up remarkably well under the blast, shielding parts of the body from complete vaporization, it had ultimately failed to save its occupant. All that remained inside the scorched armor was what could only be described as burned paste—barely recognizable as anything once living.

Aron hovered silently for a moment, inspecting the remnants. Though the Venora's fighters had the ability for both their bodies and minds to adapt to the situation, it was clear that no amount of adaptation would have saved the fighter from a strike that potent.

Not wasting much time thinking about it he started collecting remnants of the Venora fighter's corpse and gear, the Colosseum's automated systems whirled to life, sweeping away debris and resetting the battlefield for the next encounter.

Suddenly, the referee AI's voice echoed through the arena:

{The Venora civilization has lodged a formal contest, alleging suspicious use of a banned weapon by the Terran Empire's fighter. The situation is now under review.}

Aron halted, lifting his gaze toward the AI's holographic projection with a deep frown. The protest was no surprise—he knew that defeat in this contest meant significant losses for the Venora civilization. Still, starting with such accusations right after the first battle was an ominous sign.

Not a great start for this agreement, he thought grimly, crossing his arms.

The AI, indifferent to his reaction, generated a colossal holographic screen in the center of the arena, replaying the match from start to finish. The footage, captured from multiple sensor arrays, was now displayed in slow motion and through a transparent spectrum that made every object semi-see-through. It gave the audience a comprehensive 3D reconstruction, revealing the internal workings of every piece of equipment.

The camera zoomed in on the magic gun Aron had used. Its intricate magic cycles—scrambled by design to protect proprietary technology—were displayed in detail. The feed showed mana being

channeled into the gun, compressed, and propelled forward in a lightning-fast shot. The bullet reached the Venora fighter in under two seconds, resulting in the massive explosion.

After a brief pause, the AI delivered its verdict:

{No evidence of the use of a banned weapon has been found. The initial decision holds.}

The holographic display dissolved, and the AI reappeared before Aron, its expressionless figure addressing him directly:

{Would you like to use your break period, or shall we proceed to the next fight?}

Without missing a beat, Aron gave a slight shrug and responded with calm determination. "The faster I deal with this, the better—so, please."

The AI gave a brief nod of acknowledgment before making the arena's shields ripple open.

{As you wish. May the next contender enter.}

As the ship carrying the next fighter entered, a separate container followed along a different path, gliding smoothly through the arena's shield. The container continued its course toward Aron, landing with a metallic thud in front of him. With a soft hiss, it unlocked and opened, revealing an array of weapons identical to the one he had used in his previous fight.

Aron placed the collected materials and organic remains into the container, then reached inside to select the same model of gun. As soon as he was done, the container shut itself with a mechanical snap and ascended, leaving the arena just as the ship carrying the next challenger did.

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{Match over. Winner: Terran Empire, Aron Michael.}

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The same announcement echoed after each contender from a different civilization entered the arena to face Aron. Despite having the opportunity to study his strategy, Aron remained consistent with the same fighting style he had used against the first opponent. Each successive fighter tried to devise a countermeasure to avoid being eliminated within seconds—but all failed spectacularly.

Aron adapted effortlessly, increasing the mana input for each subsequent shot. The second, third, and fourth challengers met the same fate, with the fourth fighter suffering the most devastating blow yet—a bullet explosion four times more powerful than the one that annihilated the Venora contender.

To say the Conclave viewers were surprised would be an understatement, as many sat with their jaws slack in disbelief. The fights had been so brief that their total duration, even when combined, didn't surpass a minute—shorter than the preparation periods themselves. The empire's contender was undeniably powerful, showcasing overwhelming force in every bout.

However, despite the impressive victories, not a single spectator entertained the idea that the Terran Empire would triumph overall. The power Aron displayed was unexpected, but the real challenge still lay ahead. The remaining eleven civilizations represented the top ten in the Conclave, and they were in a different league entirely. While these advanced civilizations occasionally sold their

technologies to others, their most sophisticated weapons remained exclusively in their hands, tailored perfectly to the unique physiology and skills of their respective races. These race-specific weapons gave their wielders an edge no outsider could hope to match.

The warm-up was over—now, the real battle was about to begin.

Chapter 764 The Start of the Hunt

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Aron stared at the massive explosion he had created, the remnants of his latest attack churning in a mushroom cloud. But rather than savoring the apparent victory, he muttered, "It worked four times. I should be happy with that," his gaze locked on the shifting scene ahead.

Before him, the mushroom cloud split in two, rapidly dissipating under immense air pressure, revealing the figure at its core. A winged fighter emerged from the chaos, unscathed and brimming with power. Though the massive wings hovered behind the warrior, they weren't physically connected, adding an eerie quality to the figure's presence. The armor encasing him shimmered in perfect synchronization with the ethereal wings, both sharing the same dark, metallic hue.

Without hesitation, the Feryn fighter shot forward, moving with such speed that it would only take him a few seconds to close the distance to Aron, clearly intending to finish the fight swiftly.

Aron clapped his hands, brushing away the last remnants of the disintegrated gun, and watched the oncoming fighter with sharp focus. “Time to get serious,” he murmured, his tone calm but purposeful.

As the Feryn warrior closed in, Aron began hovering effortlessly, and within moments, he launched himself forward, flying headlong to meet his opponent in midair.

The Feryn fighter didn't flinch as Aron surged toward him. In a fluid motion, the hovering wings behind the warrior adjusted, releasing two massive, laser-like blasts. The energy bolts streaked through the air at impossible speeds, far too fast for Aron to dodge.

The force of the impact not only halted Aron mid-flight but also sent him hurtling backward at an uncontrollable velocity. He tumbled through the air like a ragdoll before slamming into the ground, skimming and bouncing along the surface like a skipping stone on water, each impact tearing up the terrain beneath him.

The spectators watched in stunned silence as the Terran fighter was thrown back for kilometers, ricocheting off the ground multiple times before finally coming to a halt. Dust clouds trailed behind his path, marking each violent bounce.

The sight of Aron being flung across the arena was a dramatic shift from his previous one-shot victories, leaving the audience divided in their reactions. For those who had been rooting for his opponents, there was a palpable sense of anticipation—hoping that this sudden setback would mean the end of his dominance and either he dies or be injured heavily enough that he wouldn't be able to recover in time to deliver another decisive blow.

On the other hand, citizens of the Terran Empire watched with growing anxiety. Aron's previous victories had been swift and absolute, but now, seeing him brought down so harshly raised a different kind of fear. They knew the stakes; if Aron couldn't get back up and turn the tide, it wasn't

just this fight that would be lost. With the number of remaining battles, a defeat here would mean the empire risked losing the overall contest by default.

Despite the viewers' silence, the Feryn fighter didn't relent. He shot forward in the direction Aron had been hurled, unleashing a relentless barrage of attacks to ensure the emperor was either killed or forced to surrender. The sheer volume of energy blasts was so overwhelming that Aron's figure became completely obscured from the audience's view, hidden within the relentless storm of explosions and laser fire.

In the eyes of the viewers, the fight appeared to be over, with many assuming that Aron was already dead. The Feryn fighter seemed to share the same belief, halting his relentless assault after more than a minute to cool his wings. He stood still, waiting for the dust to clear and for the AI referee to announce his victory.

However, as thirty seconds passed, the dust showed no signs of dissipating, and the anticipated announcement never came. While a few sharp-minded spectators noticed the absence of the verdict, most were still captivated by the sheer brutality of the assault they had just witnessed, stunned by the merciless onslaught that had unfolded before them.

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{Sir, wake up.} Nova's urgent voice echoed in Aron's mind, jolting him awake from his momentary unconsciousness.

His eyes shot open, only for him to shut them again as searing light flooded his vision, the remnants of the relentless barrage from the Feryn fighter still raining down upon him. The attack, which would have killed most combatants, had been thwarted only by his shield—one that stayed active as long as he didn't deactivate it manually or deplete his mana reserves, even in a state of unconsciousness.

"Did I just... faint?" Aron asked, bewildered. It was a rare occurrence—something he hadn't experienced in real life since acquiring his system. He seemed almost detached, ignoring the ongoing bombardment, holding a casual conversation with Nova while operating with near-peak mental clarity, thanks to his heightened perception.

{Yes, sir, but I had to induce it for a moment,} Nova explained calmly. {Your brain was at risk of suffering from a perception lock due to the dissonance between what your senses were processing and how your body was reacting in such chaotic conditions.}

Aron exhaled sharply, quickly grasping the situation. A perception lock—being trapped in a state where your body couldn't keep up with your mind—could have left him helpless, if not permanently impaired for other people had they been in the same situation. It made sense why Nova had taken such a drastic measure.

Perception without movement was manageable, as only the brain had to keep up. But the moment physical actions were introduced, the brain's ability to coordinate became strained. Too much acceleration created a "ping lag" effect: Aron's brain might initiate a movement, but his body would only respond several seconds later according to his enhanced perception. Worse still, the actions would be erratic, with no real way to control or sync them smoothly.

This was why every imperial soldier trained to find the "sweet spot" of perception acceleration—balancing heightened awareness with enough control to coordinate physical actions seamlessly. Each individual's threshold varied, and Aron's was the highest. Even so, there were limits.

But even with this sweet spot of perception acceleration, Aron found it wasn't fast enough to react to the incoming laser bullet.

Listening to Nova's explanation, he asked, "Can we adjust the perception to operate dynamically? Keep it fast when I'm just floating or activating runes, and lower it when I want to move my body?"

{It's possible, but I'll need direct access to your continuously updating brain data. This way, I can make adjustments without waiting for your commands, which would waste precious time. However, your brain will require prolonged rest after this to avoid any long-term side effects,} Nova replied after a moment of calculations.

"We'll have plenty of time for that later, so let's do it," Aron said, his gaze focused on the shield he had augmented with light-filtering properties, watching the lasers continue to rain down, even as he maintained his highest perception acceleration.

{Yes, sir.} Nova responded before attempting to access Aron's brain data. As expected, this triggered the system permission screen, prompting Aron to approve or deny her request. He immediately granted permission.

"No holding back," he declared, fully aware that the longer he used the dynamic perception acceleration, the longer he would need to rest afterward. He had decided to go all in from now on, aiming to finish the remaining fights as quickly as possible within a believable range. He didn't want to reveal his full capabilities just yet; doing so would allow others to prepare against him and potentially devise ways to eliminate him. Which, despite looking almost impossible, was a possibility nonetheless.

After saying that, he stood up from the ground where he had been lying. With Nova's direct coordination, his perception acceleration was adjusted in real time, either sped up or slowed down without any microsecond lag. He planned to use the dust still covering him to finish this fight as quickly as possible.

He stood still for a moment as a flight rune manifested and integrated into the shield that had conformed to his body shape. The instant it was activated, he vanished at such incredible speed that a mirror image of him remained in his previous location, as if he hadn't moved at all. With that, he had begun his hunt.

Chapter 765 The Hunted

The moment Aron disappeared from the cloud of dust and smoke, he appeared on the Feryn fighter's right side. Without hesitation, he seized the fighter's wrist, twisting his body to slip behind him. In a fluid motion, Aron forced the captured arm upward until it locked at the shoulder, then pulled back sharply, tearing ligaments and dislocating the joint.

Before the Feryn fighter could react to the pain, Aron's left arm snaked around his neck, securing a chokehold, while a swift kick to the back of the fighter's right knee brought him crashing to the

ground. He then tightened the chokehold with unrelenting force while simultaneously pulling on the dislocated arm, further constricting the fighter's windpipe and compressing his carotid artery. The restricted blood flow to the brain caused the Feryn fighter to slump unconscious within moments, the fight brought to unexpected reversal.

CRASH!!!!

The only sound heard was the Feryn fighter slamming into the ground, unconscious and unable to control his suit or the enormous wings that collapsed beside him.

The entire sequence had unfolded in just a second, an almost imperceptible blur of movement. Nova had adjusted Aron's perception thousands of times during the fight, synchronizing each shift perfectly. She exploited micro-moments when his actions were already in motion, accelerating them further to grant Aron extra time to think, anticipate, and gauge the fighter's reactions. Each adjustment allowed Aron to seamlessly counter any potential threat, ensuring that every move landed with precision and finality.

"Do I have to kill him to be declared the winner?" Aron asked, his voice slicing through the suffocating silence that filled the arena and the homes of countless spectators. Moments ago, some had been celebrating victory, while others mourned what they thought was defeat. Now, with the fight flipped on its head in under a second, no one dared to breathe.

{Unless he surrenders verbally, the only remaining path to victory is through his death,} the AI referee answered without materialising.

"Got it," Aron muttered, without hesitation or flair. He dropped altitude in a sharp descent, wasting no time on theatrics or grand gestures that could cost him later. Problems always arose from unnecessary drama.

Following his landing, he swiftly drew his sword, channeling mana through it until the blade shimmered with deadly energy. With one smooth, practiced motion, he slashed the Feryn fighter's throat. The crushed armor around his neck—still partially constricting from the earlier chokehold—offered no resistance. Blood spilled, ending the fight in a cold, efficient instant.

There was no fanfare, no hesitation—just the cold reality of the battlefield.

{Match over. Winner: Terran Empire, Aron Michael.}

The AI referee declared the end of the fight without hesitation. The moment the Feryn fighter was decapitated, the outcome was sealed—advanced as they were, none of these civilizations had yet achieved survival without a head.

Aron wasted no time after the announcement, immediately striding over to retrieve the fighter's severed head. The precision and urgency in his actions suggested a purpose beyond mere theatrics, though what exactly drove him remained unknown to the audience as the referee quickly switched to the replay, leaving the crowd to ponder the mystery.

The slow-motion replay laid bare the brutal efficiency of the battle. It highlighted just how helpless the Feryn fighter had been—fainting before he could even mount a defense. What stood out most was the sheer force Aron exhibited. He had executed a chokehold through the magically reinforced armor, deforming it with nothing but his hands. The realization sent ripples through both the

spectators and fighters alike; the armor was designed to withstand immense force, yet Aron had crushed it with unsettling ease.

When the cameras returned to the arena, Aron was already done collecting his war spoils. Standing amidst the blood and dust, he raised his voice with a cold tone.

"Next fighter. Now."

There was no celebration, no pause—just an unyielding demand for the next opponent, leaving everyone with the unsettling impression that Aron was only just getting started.

The moment the announcement echoed through the arena, Elara's fighter sprang into action. Despite his outward calm, he was anything but relaxed; the unexpected loss of his Feryn counterpart weighed heavily on him. Like all his predecessors, he knew he had to make the most of this preparation period.

23:06

One by one, spells began to materialize around him, each shimmering with potent energy. Anyone familiar with the Elara fighters understood that allowing them time to prepare was one of the gravest mistakes an opponent could make. This time, he had a full five minutes to set his strategy.

{May the next contender enter,} the AI announced promptly, and the shield parted to allow the next fighter inside. This time, no weapon container arrived for Aron—he still gripped the sword that had ended the Feryn fighter's life, its blade now glowing with a golden radiance, pulsing softly as if resonating with the mana it had absorbed. Aron stood still, his expression cold and unreadable, ready to meet whoever came next.

The next fighter did not arrive aboard a ship but descended gracefully from the opened shield, where his vessel had dropped him off. It was Elara's fighter—belonging to the same race as the one responsible for starting all of this, Xalthar. Many had seemingly forgotten about Xalthar, if not for the critical clause stating that, should the Conclave secure a majority victory, he would be returned. However, judging by the situation in the arena, it was clear that achieving that outcome would be anything but easy as the empire was on a winning streak and was dangerously close to achieving the minimum requirement for the majority win.

{As usual, you have five minutes to complete your preparations,} the AI announced.

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As he worked, he was enveloped in layers of protective gear, enhanced by advanced technologies. Though they harbored resentment toward the Feryn for corrupting the sanctity of mana, the dire circumstances left little room for such feelings. Thus, he activated more than three shields from different civilization's devices, determined to survive whatever assaults the Terran Empire might unleash.

As he focused on his preparations, the camera shifted to Aron, who was slowly raising his sword vertically above his head. With his eyes closed, he held that stance as if he were practicing rather than preparing for an actual fight. However, the mana swirling in the air around him told a very different story.

His eyes remained closed until the AI's voice cut through the tension: {You may begin.}

In an instant, Aron opened his eyes and swung his sword down with tremendous force.

FWOOOOOOM!

Chapter 766 Elara's Fighter I

Anyone watching the fight from the Terran Empire who was familiar with anime couldn't shake the feeling of déjà vu, certain they had seen their emperor replicate a moment straight out of those iconic animes.

Though Aron's downward swing radiated immense power behind its graceful motion, there was seemingly nothing in front of him to strike. Yet, that was irrelevant. By the time the motion was complete, a golden, crescent-shaped wave of energy materialized, surging toward the unsuspecting Elara fighter.

Mid-flight and focused on transporting his spells toward Aron for an attack, the Elara fighter remained unaware of the incoming assault. He placed full trust in his layered shields to withstand any counter from the emperor—unaware that something far beyond ordinary resistance was now heading his way.

Just as he was mere meters above the ground, what began as a faint tingling sensation rapidly intensified into a wave of goosebumps. A chilling realization washed over him—he had been caught entirely off guard by the sheer speed of the golden crescent hurtling toward him.

In that fleeting moment, every instinct screamed at him to react, but the attack was already upon him, faster than he could channel any defensive spells or maneuver his flight path. His shields, though formidable, were about to meet a force unlike anything he had anticipated.

'The shields will hold, right?' The Elara fighter tried to reassure himself, but the words felt hollow.

'Fuck no, look at the size of that thing,' he answered his own thought in a flash of panic. 'That thing looks like it carries more mana than the reserves of a sage-level fighter.'

The realization struck hard, and with it, clarity. This wasn't just an attack—it was a death sentence.

'I can't dodge it fully,' he admitted, his body twisting and jerking mid-flight in desperate evasive maneuvers. His mind raced, now operating at a pace he didn't even think was possible, fueled by pure survival instinct and hormones. Every thought was colored by fear and duty: 'I can't die like this. Not like some helpless fool caught off guard.'

If he failed here like that, the repercussions would be devastating. His civilization's pride in their magic capabilities and their belief in being the mana's chosen ones would be ridiculed by the rest of

the Conclave. The promised rewards would fall into enemy hands, and worse, his family—his children, wife, and future descendants—would carry the shame of his failure. He couldn't let that happen.

His mind screamed for a solution, every hormone in his body surging to push his thoughts into overdrive. And just as the golden crescent neared, only meters away, he saw it—his only way out. A risky, borderline insane move, but the odds of survival were higher than doing nothing.

“Now. Do it now, or you're dead.”

Without hesitation, he committed. There was no time to reconsider. The glowing arc was nearly upon him, and every fraction of a second counted. If this worked, he'd live. If not... well, at least he would have tried.

He activated one of his pre-cast spells without hesitation—a powerful explosion spell that had been absorbing ambient mana since the beginning of his preparation. It was filled to the brim, ready to unleash a devastating blast.

BOOOOOOOM!

The explosion detonated instantly, sending shockwaves rippling outward, slamming into his shields, and forcefully propelling him out of the path of the incoming golden slash. The timing was razor-thin, the slash arriving just microseconds behind the explosion.

SLASH!!!!!!!!!!

The crescent-shaped attack sliced through the aftermath of the explosion, barely slowed by the blast. Its size had diminished slightly, but its deadly momentum remained unchecked, continuing its journey until the mana sustaining it finally depleted.

At normal speed, it seemed as if the explosion and the slash reached the Elara fighter simultaneously, creating a chaotic blur of action. But viewed in slow motion, the sequence revealed much more.

The instant the fighter triggered his explosive spell, sending shockwaves that pushed him aside, the golden crescent slash was already slicing through his first shield—gliding through it like a hot knife through butter. By the time the shockwave pushed him out of the path, the slash had already started to penetrate his defenses. The explosion had merely saved him by the narrowest of margins, just moments before he would have been caught in its devastating arc.

A few hundred meters away, a man could be seen rising from the ground, appearing as if he were in the process of rebooting his system. “ARGHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHH!” he screamed, his voice echoing in agony as he realized that half of his arm was missing—not in a horizontal manner, but sliced vertically, leaving behind a mangled remnant that only served as a painful reminder of his injury.

Though he considered himself quite tolerant of pain, the addition of mana into the equation transformed his perception entirely. If anyone had a microscope and looked closely at the severed area of his arm, they would see remnants of mana from the slash infiltrating his body, engaging in a fierce battle against his own cells. The mana was advancing rapidly, indicating that, despite his efforts to mitigate damage, he was still receiving some of it.

In a desperate bid to reduce the pain, he realized the source of his suffering. SLASH. Without wasting another moment, he swiftly severed the remaining part of his arm cleanly at the shoulder, hoping to halt the advancing mana before it could do any further damage.

The conviction that had once filled his face began to waver, teetering on the edge of sheer horror as he watched the hand he had severed being consumed and decaying at an alarming rate. Goosebumps crawled across his body, a visceral reminder of the fate that awaited him had he not acted with urgency and determination.

His resolve shattered further when he realized that all of his carefully prepared spells had dissipated as a consequence of activating one of them. The explosion had destabilized the others within its effective range, leaving him not only devoid of his five minutes of preparation but also reduced to a one-handed mage. To make matters worse, one of his shields had been sliced through by the crescent slash, while the second was at half integrity due to the blast he had triggered to save himself. Now, he was left with only one and a half shields to fend off the impending attacks from the terrifying emperor before him.

“The detour was merely temporary; I’m still in the fight,” he thought to himself, trying to cast aside the fear that threatened to overwhelm him. He focused on gathering his thoughts, attempting to rally his spirits against the formidable opponent before him. But just as he felt he was regaining his composure, a voice sliced through his concentration, shattering the fragile progress he had made in those fleeting seconds.

“Are you willing to surrender?”

Chapter 767 Elara's Fighter II

A momentary silence of surprise flickered across the Elara fighter's face as he paused, caught in a fleeting internal debate over whether he had truly heard the voice or if it was merely a figment of his fear-stricken mind.

But his doubts were swiftly dispelled when the imposing figure of his opponent materialized just about fifty meters in front of him. The realization hit him hard: this was no hallucination. Aron had actually dared to pose the question, choosing not to exploit the distraction caused by the fighter's pain and his own efforts to motivate himself.

“What do you mean by that?” the Elara fighter asked, trying to buy himself time to recuperate and heal some of his injuries while formulating a new strategy. It was like hitting seven birds with one stone, but it all hinged on whether his opponent would indulge him and answer his questions.

Aron, seemingly unfazed by the fighter's plight, replied, “Do you know the losses I incurred from the defeat of the four fighters and the death of the Feryn?” The Elara fighter stared at him in disbelief, momentarily stunned, as if questioning whether he had truly heard Aron correctly. Rather than celebrating this unexpected opportunity, he remained dumbfounded, failing to recognize that the Terran Emperor was granting him time to recover.

Ignoring the fighter’s shocked expression, Aron continued, “They were valuable research materials that could have advanced our understanding of alien life forms.”

“If you wanted the bodies for research, why did you blow up the first four fighters consecutively, despite knowing the risk that would pose after the second one?”

Kalthar, the Elara fighter, inquired. Had it not been for the armor covering his skin—a skin with racial ability that served as a live telegrapher of emotions for the Elara race—Aron would have witnessed a swirling display of colors reflecting the tumultuous feelings surging within Kalthar. In that moment, the fighter was grappling with a multitude of emotions that he could scarcely articulate if asked.

“What is your name? Since we’re having a conversation, I need to know how to address you,” Aron replied, deflecting Kalthar's earlier question.

The Elara fighter, paused, surprised by the unexpected query. “Weird question to ask in the current situation, but my name is Kalthar,” he said, deciding that the strength of his opponent warranted the revelation of his name.

“Are you related to Xalthar?” Aron asked, his eyebrows raised in mock surprise at the similarity between their names, with only a single letter differentiating them.

“No, we are not related in the least,” Kalthar replied, his tone tinged with irritation. Despite his efforts to mask his displeasure at the comparison to that foolish man, it was evident to anyone with keen ears.

“Anyway,” Aron continued, unfazed by Kalthar’s tone, “to answer your question: they died because they couldn't withstand a certain threshold that would have made them interesting enough for research, which was only met with the opponent before you. However, I had to end it quickly to prevent further complications. And as you know, due to the rules the referee later forced me to eliminate him to conclude the fight.

For research purposes, you are more valuable alive than dead. That’s why I’m offering you the chance to surrender—something the fighter before you didn’t have because he was incapacitated.” he paused for a moment before he asked for the second time “Are you willing to surrender?” bringing their brief discussion to a sudden halt.

Another moment of silence hung in the air as Kalthar appeared deep in thought, weighing the offer before him.

But before long, his answer came in the form of a sudden BOOM—an explosion of a spell he had conjured, launched at Aron with lightning speed, taking advantage of their close proximity to unleash the attack in less than a second.

Without pausing, Kalthar unleashed one spell after another, determined to deny Aron even a moment to think or raise his sword for a counterattack. He aimed to prevent Aron from launching another devastating strike like the first one, which he assumed would require significant recharge and preparation time. Instead, Kalthar sought to force Aron into a defensive position, relying on his sword to parry the relentless barrage of attacks.

As he cast his spells, several hovered around him, actively absorbing ambient mana from the atmosphere to amplify their power for optimal use at the right moment. For more than thirty seconds, this pattern continued.

With each passing second, Kalthar's confidence surged, stabilizing his mentality and accelerating his casting speed even further. He could see a glimmer of hope in winning the fight as he kept the pressure on, noticing that Aron was being pushed back under the relentless assault.

As Kalthar ramped up his attacks, he began to time them strategically to exploit the openings created when Aron had to parry. Each spell was aimed at the opposite side of where Aron's sword would end up after blocking the previous attack, forcing him into rapid movements that wore him down. Kalthar noticed the slight decrease in Aron's speed; while minor, it was just enough to give him the opportunity he needed.

Seizing the moment, Kalthar launched a spell toward Aron's right, where his sword was held. This forced Aron to parry upward, giving Kalthar the chance to follow up with one of the three spells that had been gathering mana from the atmosphere. This time, he aimed not for the farthest target but directly at Aron's wrist, intending to knock the sword from his grasp.

Aron reacted swiftly, lowering his wrist just in time for the spell to explode against the sword. He expertly redirected the force of the blast away from his body, but before he could fully recover from this initial explosion, Kalthar unleashed the second spell that had been absorbing ambient mana. With Aron still focused on the remnants of the first attack, his reaction to this second explosion was delayed. The blast sent both the sword and Aron himself flying in opposite directions.

“DIE!!” Kalthar screamed, seizing the moment as he activated the third spell—the one that had absorbed the most ambient mana from the atmosphere. He poured every ounce of his remaining mana into it, knowing this was his best chance to turn the tide of the battle.

The air crackled with energy, and a series of sharp, rapid sounds pierced the atmosphere—ZTSTTSTSTS—each one signaling the impending storm of destruction. For those who could compute the signals, it was clear that this would be a lightning attack of unprecedented intensity. The heat generated upon impact would reach temperatures between 30,000 and 50,000 degrees Celsius, making it five times hotter than the surface of the sun.

With Aron still reeling from the previous explosions and separated from his weapon, Kalthar's attack unleashed a blinding flash of light that illuminated the battlefield, marking the culmination of his desperate bid for victory. The force of the lightning bolt surged forward, carrying with it the promise of devastation.

Just as the attack began its furious journey toward him, Aron finally landed on the ground after executing a flawless flip in mid-air, ensuring he would touch down on his feet. As he regained his balance, his eyes locked onto the impending lightning bolt, now mere moments away from impact. The sheer intensity of the energy crackling in the air made the hairs on the back of his neck stand on end.

He immediately extended his left hand forward, fingers pointed at the lightning, mimicking a gunslinger aiming his weapon. At the same time, his right hand mirrored the gesture, racing toward

his left hand, which was now drawing in the electrifying energy. Just as his right hand reached his left, lighting finally reached his left-hand fingers.

Aron using his two right-hand fingers began to trace the lightning through his left hand and across his chest, channeling its raw power. He then immediately pointed his right hand back at Kalthar, with a final gesture, he redirected the lightning back at Kalthar, which at the moment looked to be at least ten times more potent than it was originally.

The bolt streaked through the air with blinding speed, its crackling energy illuminating the battlefield. It pierced through Kalthar's armor as if it were made of paper, creating a gruesome hole in his lower abdomen.

Before Kalthar could even show a reaction to the turn of events, he slowly started falling face-first to the ground.

{Match over. Winner: Terran Empire, Aron Michael.}

Chapter 768 The Show

Humans have a peculiar way of finding enjoyment, often thriving most when there's an underlying risk or consequence looming. Students savor movies the night before an exam, and workers indulge in social media during office hours. It's as if the risk of something going wrong heightens the pleasure of the moment. In the same vein, the citizens of the empire, despite the immense pressure and high stakes of the situation, were experiencing an unparalleled mix of stress and excitement, making this fight the most exhilarating spectacle they'd ever witnessed.

But within the vast sea of viewers, there was a small subsection that could be said to be experiencing double the enjoyment of everyone else—the anime enthusiasts. To them, what they were witnessing was nothing short of a live-action anime, complete with dramatic showdowns, intense power-ups, and awe-inspiring moves. Except, this time, the stakes were real. It was as if they had been transported into their favorite show, watching an overpowered protagonist dominate the arena, only with the outcomes directly impacting their world.

Aron's final move against the Elara fighter was the last straw for that select group of anime fans. They realized that the emperor himself was relishing the fight, even under such intense circumstances. His recreation of moves from animes and cartoons showed not just his power but also his playful engagement with the battle.

With six victories already under their belt, they were just two wins away from securing a majority—ensuring they wouldn't have to join the Conclave. However, the remaining matches still carried weight, as they would determine the specifics of the individual contracts and what the empire stood to gain from the ordeal.

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Aron, as usual, walked over to Kalthar's corpse, collecting whatever equipment remained and packing it into the container sent for retrieval.

{You just gave conspiracy theorists very convincing evidence of their suspicions,} Nova teased, as Aron made his way to pick up his sword, lying quite a distance away.

Aron wanted to laugh at her comment but kept his composure, settling for an internal chuckle. He had a part to play after all. Instead, he responded calmly, "To the Terran Empire citizens, it might

seem that way, but the same can't be said for the Conclave members and their civilizations. Everything I do here will be noted, shaping their perception of what my people are capable of. It's important to show diverse abilities to make them even more cautious about us."

{But why the overkill? You could've finished him with less damage by just redirecting the attack as it was. Why make it ten times stronger?} she asked, genuinely curious. Though Nova had access to his neural data, it was currently being handled by a separate instance of hers that was isolated to prevent any delays.

"I need them to believe that I panicked and lost control, which is why the return attack was so much more powerful," Aron explained as he bent down to retrieve his sword. Sitting cross-legged, he placed the blade vertically across his knees and closed his eyes.

He felt a quiet sense of pride over the execution of his plan. The idea to reflect the lightning attack back at Kalthar wasn't something he had meticulously plotted out ahead of time. It formed in that critical moment as the lightning approached. Aron had created a dual-layered shield that absorbed the attack, using his own mana to overwrite Kalthar's, and amplified the power by tenfold before sending it back—all in less than a second.

As his conversation with Nova continued, the referee AI materialized in front of him.

{Would you like to use your break period, or shall we proceed to the next fight?} the AI asked.

Following the referee AI's question, both the Imperial and Conclave citizens, along with the other fighters, listened intently. Aron's response would reveal his condition after the intense fight, and everyone was eager to see if he would push forward or take the time to recover.

"I would like to use my break period," Aron answered, his face serious. Without another word, he closed his eyes once again, visibly absorbing mana—a sight only those experienced in mana manipulation could fully understand.

{We will be taking a twenty-minute break before the next fight,} the referee AI announced, her voice echoing through the Colosseum. She then disappeared, though the protective shields around the arena and access points remained sealed. A massive timer appeared in the sky, counting down the minutes until the next bout.

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The Conclave viewers, upon seeing Aron request a break, collectively released a sigh of relief. Finally, he was showing signs of fatigue, a change from his earlier demeanor of confidently dispatching fighters and moving directly to the next without any rest. For many, this was a significant moment—Aron, who had previously appeared unstoppable, was now beginning to show a crack in his seemingly invincible facade.

Some of the viewers from the remaining civilizations couldn't help but wonder if the pressure they were experiencing was also weighing on their fighters. Concerns about whether this intense atmosphere would affect their fighters' mental state loomed large in their minds. The psychological strain of facing an opponent like Aron, who had shown such overwhelming power, was undeniable.

However, for many, those concerns now seemed somewhat less significant. Aron, the Terran Emperor, was finally showing signs of physical fatigue. His earlier aura of invincibility had begun to waver, and the visible signs of stress from the situation had given the other civilizations a glimmer of hope.

However, the actual fighters from these civilizations were far from worried; they were confident in their impending victories. The Valthorin fighter believed his prowess was unmatched, while the Xor'Vaks fighter didn't even entertain the thought of defeat. The Zelvora remained assured, thinking that those who were physically strong often lacked the mental fortitude to match it. The Trinarian fighter was convinced that no one was safe from his spatial abilities, especially after witnessing the empire's black hole bomb in action. The Symmetra were equally confident, trusting that their advanced weaponry would be more than sufficient to handle a supposedly weary Aron.

The Erythians, having engineered a fighter capable of standing up to even the Xor'Vaks royal, felt no apprehension. The Galvinites shared this confidence, as their unique symbiosis had earned them a place among the top ten civilizations. Meanwhile, the Shadari, being the only ones whose weapons were proven to be unstoppable by the empire, were equally unconcerned.

The only slight hesitation came from the Yrral Coalition, which was more accustomed to large-scale warfare than individual combat.

However, that worry was minimal; their mecha was a testament to their ingenuity, created specifically to address their vulnerabilities. In essence, none of the remaining top ten civilizations felt threatened by the prospect of losing to Aron. Their confidence was palpable, and they were ready to face him head-on in the arena.

Chapter 769 Mecha 765

After twenty minutes of Aron sitting quietly, giving the impression of recollecting himself, his rest was finally interrupted by the referee AI's announcement: {May the next contender enter.} The shield was lifted once again, signaling the start of the next battle.

This time, however, it wasn't a ship that entered but a massive humanoid mecha, plummeting from the sky without any sign of propulsion to soften its descent.

BOOOOOOM!!

The mecha slammed into the ground with full force, relying solely on its two legs to absorb the impact. The harshness of the landing sent up a massive cloud of dust, completely shrouding it from the view of the watching audience.

Shortly after, mechanical sounds echoed from within the dust cloud, which was now dispersing thanks to the air currents created by the machine. The figure of the massive mecha was slowly revealed, rising from the crouched position it had taken to absorb the force of its fall.

It was the Yrral Coalition's contender: Mecha 765, controlled by their best pilot.

As the mecha fully stood up, it revealed its immense stature—a towering fifty meters tall. Strapped to its back was a colossal greatsword. Its overall frame appeared proportional to its size, except for its biceps and thighs, which were almost triple the expected size, giving it a strange, imbalanced appearance. The arms and legs beneath these exaggerated parts were normally sized, making the thick limbs seem even more unusual against the backdrop of the otherwise proportional body.

Many who saw the mecha couldn't help but wonder why the Yrral Coalition had chosen to field such a massive machine. It was well known that the larger a mecha, the more energy it required to move, often making it slower and less efficient—a questionable investment, to say the least. Yet, the fact that this colossal machine was sent into an individual fight implied the Coalition's confidence in its abilities. The spectators were filled with curiosity, eager to witness what capabilities it would display in combat.

As usual, the referee AI remained indifferent to the crowd's thoughts, staying focused on her duties. She proceeded with the necessary protocol, announcing, {You have five minutes to complete your preparations.}

As soon as the referee's announcement was made, the massive mecha sprang into action. The oversized biceps and thighs detached from its body, revealing that they were merely external attachments. These parts flew off in four directions, ascending several kilometers into the air, each maintaining an equal distance from the mecha as they hovered in place.

Meanwhile, the rest of the mecha began emitting a low hum, signaling that its systems were coming online. Different sections of the machine began to glow in various colors, pulsing at irregular intervals. With each passing second, the intervals shortened as the colors synchronized. By the time four minutes and thirty seconds had passed, the mecha was glowing uniformly, its entire frame illuminated in a brilliant, synchronized light. Many watching understood this to mean that the mecha had fully integrated its systems and was now primed for combat.

These preparatory steps had to be completed within the Colosseum due to the engagement rules that both sides had agreed upon beforehand. This ensured fairness by preventing any fighter from entering fully prepared, as some weapons—though extremely powerful—required more time to warm up and load. Everything had to be activated within the Colosseum itself.

As soon as the mecha's systems reached full synchronization, its right hand moved with purpose, gripping the handle of the massive great sword on its back. Now, fully armed and ready, it stood poised, awaiting the signal to begin the match, which was just seconds away.

{You may begin.}

As soon as the announcement was made, the mecha's hand, which had been gripping the great sword, swiftly pulled it from its back and pointed it in Aron's direction. At first glance, it appeared like a traditional challenge, as if the mecha was simply posturing with its weapon. But those assumptions were quickly shattered.

The cutting edges of the great sword parted, revealing a hidden cannon embedded in the center of the blade. Almost instantly, a deep, resonating thrum filled the air, building for only a second before an explosive pulse of energy erupted from the cannon. A massive, searing energy blast shot forth, racing toward Aron.

The attack moved with such velocity that it crossed the entire distance between them in mere seconds, scorching the ground as it went. The heat emanating from the blast's residual energy left no doubt—it was packed with devastating power, with the speed leaving Aron no time to dodge.

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“They’re not holding back at all,” Aron muttered as he swung his sword down in a swift arc, precisely cutting through the massive energy blast hurtling toward him. His timing was impeccable, using the sheer speed and force of the attack to his advantage, slicing it cleanly in half.

However, Aron didn't stop there. Splitting the blast wouldn't change its direction, and he would have been hit by two separate attacks instead. With precise control, he followed his sword strike by conjuring a triangular mana shield behind the blade. The shield caught the divided energy blobs and redirected them, sending the two halves spiraling off in two different directions.

His remark stemmed from the realization of just how much mana he had to pour into the shield to successfully deflect the powerful blasts, a testament to the sheer force behind the mecha's attack.

B000M!

A split second later, twin explosions erupted behind Aron. He didn't even bother to turn around, standing calmly as the shockwave from the blast rippled through the air, causing his clothes and hair to flutter dramatically in the wind.

The camera angle shifted, moving from the emperor, who seemed to be playing it cool by not looking at the explosions, to the aftermath of the devastation. Nearly every viewer watching felt a chill run down their spine. The two craters left behind were nothing short of terrifying. The sand and rocks within them had been superheated to the point of turning into glass, shimmering like giant telescope lenses.

The lenses acted as a stark reminder of the power behind the mecha's attack—and the devastating consequences Aron had narrowly avoided. Without his swift reaction and countermeasure, the result could have been catastrophic.

"I need that weapon and the mecha to study it," Aron said, his gaze fixed on the aftermath as Nova displayed the carnage in his brain. The potential of the weapon's destructive power made him realize how beneficial it could be for enhancing the empire's own technology.

{Won't we gain the knowledge of it anyway if you win?} Nova asked.

“If we have a physical weapon to study, it will make our research much easier since we can understand their design philosophy and how their knowledge shaped its creation,” he explained.

{Wouldn't that force us to follow a certain direction they took, potentially causing us to overlook something they missed?} Nova countered.

Aron nodded, acknowledging her concern. “We can circumvent that by having different teams. One will work with the prototype to draw insights directly, while the other focuses solely on the theoretical knowledge. This way, we can compare their findings and explore different avenues without being too constrained.”

His strategy was clear, but it also limited his options in combat. He needed to minimize damage to the mecha and its systems to preserve the valuable data within.

“Let’s try to end this as quickly as possible with as little damage as we can,” Aron concluded, gripping his sword in reverse, vanishing from his place the moment the camera returned to him.

Chapter 770 How?

As Aron closed in on the mecha, his rapid advance didn’t go unnoticed. The mecha raised its left hand, palm open, and aimed directly at him. In an instant, it unleashed a rapid barrage of energy bullets, each one packed with concentrated power. The Yrral Coalition had specifically chosen energy-based weaponry for this battle due to its compact design and limitless output potential compared to conventional weapons. Energy rounds allowed for sustained, high-intensity firing without the need for cumbersome ammunition—a perfect fit for a short, high-stakes duel like this.

The mecha's palm unleashed such a rapid stream of energy bullets that it nearly formed a continuous, blazing line, weaving in a zigzag as the mecha adjusted its aim to follow Aron’s swift, evasive movements.

Aron skillfully parried and dodged each round, making it look almost effortless despite the barrage. Once he closed half the distance without taking a single hit, the mecha abruptly ceased its assault, calculating that firing on someone as agile as Aron would only waste energy.

The mecha’s thunderous steps echoed through the Colosseum, each one accelerating with a force that belied its massive frame. BAM, BAM—each stride quicker than the last until, astonishingly, it closed the remaining distance in just three seconds.

With both hands gripping the great sword, it swung in a deadly arc, its blade hurtling toward the precise point where it calculated Aron’s neck would be, aiming to cleave him in two and bring the fight to an abrupt, decisive end.

As the sword descended, the mecha pilot tracked every millisecond through her data overlay, calculating Aron’s speed and trajectory in real time. Noticing that Aron had accelerated and would dodge the initial strike, she swiftly adjusted the weapon’s parameters. Jets of flame burst from the sword’s opposite edge, doubling its speed to intercept Aron’s increased momentum.

Aron, seeing the sudden acceleration, reacted with split-second precision. Just meters from his neck, he leaned back, sliding smoothly across the ground. He raised his sword in reverse above his face, eyes fixed skyward, as a cascade of sparks erupted from the intense friction between the two metals. The massive great sword, nearly four times his length, blazed past with mere inches to spare.

Just as Aron started to feel a momentary relief, believing the danger had passed, he found himself inches away from another swing aimed directly at him—from the very direction the great sword had flown after he dodged it. Reacting instantly, he adjusted his sword, still holding it in a reverse grip and pointing it downward to create a slim line of defense.

CLANG! The sound reverberated as the massive sword struck his, sending him hurtling backward through the air, trailing along the trajectory of the blow. As he soared, Aron turned his head to assess what had struck him, baffled by how the weapon could have reversed with such force and speed without him noticing.

That's when he noticed: only one of the great sword's cutting edges was embedded in the ground. It had been cleverly ejected, a maneuver intended to exploit his lapse in attention, catching him off guard with a surprise follow-up attack.

As Aron landed, a fresh volley of energy bullets was already closing in on him. Swiftly, he parried a few before sidestepping out of the bullet stream. Then, activating his flight ability, he dashed toward the mecha with incredible speed, making it appear as though he was simply sprinting. Along the way, he passed the half of the great sword still embedded in the ground, vibrating as it attempted to free itself and rejoin its counterpart to reform the complete weapon.

Just then, he encountered a massive energy bullet nearly half the size of the original energy blob he had split at the start of the fight. Without hesitation, he sliced through it, splitting the bullet cleanly in two. Aron deftly redirected one of the halves toward the embedded sword, where it seared through the metal, melting it entirely and rendering it unusable for the remainder of the battle.

As Aron closed in on the mecha, it swung at him with the now-halved great sword. With a swift dodge, he easily evaded the blade, which lacked the speed boost provided by its missing half. Reaching one of the mecha's massive legs, he punched it with his sword held in reverse, the blade slicing into the side where his fist couldn't reach.

A loud *CRSHHHGOUSB* echoed as Aron skidded to a halt, using his legs to absorb the momentum, leaving parts of the mecha's left leg trailing behind him. The machine wobbled, its frame struggling to balance on one leg. Unable to stay upright, it crashed down to one knee, fighting to avoid a complete collapse.

The pilot was stunned, realizing that her mecha's shield—meant to withstand such assaults—had been overloaded by Aron's punch, taking an entire leg along with it. How could one blow, even from a powerful opponent, have bypassed the protective field and caused such catastrophic damage?

Her shock was short-lived, however, as she saw Aron approaching again, his intent unmistakable. He was aiming to finish the fight by eliminating her directly. In a desperate move, she drove the half-sword into the ground, using it as leverage to haul the massive machine upright. The maneuver was sudden and precise, leaving viewers gasping in amazement as the mecha rose, defying its earlier vulnerability.

Initially, the spectators believed the mecha was merely trying to protect itself. That assumption shattered when they witnessed Aron suddenly dodging to avoid a shard of the half-great sword that shot toward him like a skewer, narrowly missing its target. The piece then reattached itself to the now-complete great sword, replacing the melted portion that had been embedded in the ground.

In the midst of the chaos, the mecha removed the destroyed components, ejecting the remnants of its broken leg. A new leg swiftly assembled from the trailing pieces that had followed the shard of the great sword aimed at Aron. Now fully operational again, the colossal machine loomed ominously, its towering silhouette casting a long shadow over Aron, who had halted at a safe distance.

The atmosphere in the Colosseum crackled with tension as spectators held their breath, captivated by the rapid change of the situation.