

## The Mech 4791

### Chapter 4791 First Scouting Results

Scouting the upper levels was not a complicated affair. The Davutan guard forces possessed strong scanning and investigation tools as they needed to be able to detect threats in advance before they could attack the people under their protection.

Ves and various different people also carried tiny spy drones and other surveillance equipment as part of their standard loadouts. They passed on these useful gadgets to the soldiers that had been assigned to scout all of the different approaches to the upper levels.

This was a risky and dangerous mission. No one knew what they were facing and how many traps and defenses awaited them above. The scouts might have to pay for the information they gathered with their lives!

Nonetheless, the infantry troops wearing nothing but lighter armor did not even think about refusing their latest instructions. The colony of Davute hadn't existed all that long, but several years was enough for focused training programs to indoctrinate millions of mech pilots and other servicemen into loyal and dedicated patriots of the colonial state.

If there was one essential skill that every state mastered, it was the ability to brainwash lots of people into serving their new masters without too much thought!

Though Ves regarded this phenomenon in a cynical light, he also acknowledged that there was a noble element to it as well. People needed to become part of a greater community, and those who possessed the means to fight had a moral obligation to stand up for their weaker citizens.

Ves tried to foster the same sentiment in his clan as well, and he was largely happy with the results.

It was just that incidents such as his Uncle Ark's compulsive need to surrender to a state caused Ves to feel a lot more bitter about this sort of stuff than he should.

The Larkinson Clan had grown quickly in the past decade. Many people already likened it to a state, just one without a permanent territory.

Sadly, there were still a lot of gaps between the current state of the clan and a fully-fledged state. Just the lack of planets made it a lot harder for people to treat the Larkinson Clan as a sovereign state that was separate and unbound from any other states in the Red Ocean.

Ves frequently wondered whether he should take measures to intensify the indoctrination efforts of his clan. He was reluctant to increase their weight because he did not want to turn his own subordinates into mindless drones that could not properly think for themselves. He hated blind fanaticism the most!

Still, Ves couldn't deny there were cases where these traits could play a helpful role. Ves admired the way the handpicked scouts fearlessly left the recreation hall and moved in the direction of the upper floors.

"It will be a while before we hear from them again." General Verle stated. "This is especially the case when we do not want to expose too much of our details to the opposition. Communication will be a problem in this facility, especially when the ubiquitous transphasic stone material around us effectively blocks wireless communication across long distances."

Chief Minister Magdalena Larkinson frowned. "We shouldn't split up our forces too much if that is the case. I do not know how you feel about the scattered guard forces of the other groups, but I do not trust them to consistently obey our instructions or move at the right timing."

Ves also shared those concerns. "We have a lot of different soldiers, but their mixed allegiances and mixed ideas make it difficult to command them effectively. I am much more inclined to just form a single powerful assault force and just smash the enemy position with everything we have."

"That is not entirely wise." Major Durant shook his head. "We must attack from at least two separate directions in order to introduce an element of uncertainty and force our opposition to split its focus. We must keep our enemies guessing and never make them feel they have completely figured out our details."

The leaders with a military background continued to swap ideas and offer proposals. Ves put in a few words as well, but he found that it was not necessary for a layman like himself to lead the discussion anymore. Everyone gathered here were professionals who were good at their jobs.

There was not much they could talk about until the scouts returned. Much of the talks centered around the organization of their own troops and the combat roles of every individual unit.

More than half a minute passed by before the scouts flew back at their fastest speeds. Each of them did not hesitate to push their flight capabilities to the limit and expend as much energy as possible in order to share their findings as early as possible.

"Sir, we have found a large encampment along with several visible defensive installations in the main hallway leading to the upper floors!"

"The left side entrance is both mined and guarded by a combination of turrets and armored guards."

"The small rear entrance has been completely blocked by a wall that consists of metal debris that has roughly been welded together. It is at least several meters thick according to our scanners, but we do not know whether the opposing force has deployed any shield generators that are currently inactive."

The scouts brought a huge amount of useful information that Ves was unable to obtain during the time he had partial access to the alien control system.

What interested Ves and the others the most was not the defenses by themselves.

They instead wanted to know what sort of enemies had targeted the important delegates of Davute in the first place!

After spending so much time cut off from greater human society and the rest of their organizations, they were tired of being kept in the dark. The first-hand information collected by the scouts, who surprisingly managed to return in one piece, finally exposed the nature of their current adversaries!

"That is not human technology." Ves authoritatively said. "The turrets, the mines, the defensive fortifications and so on are all alien without a doubt. I don't recognize the architecture and design style, though. They don't conform to the design rules of the nunsers, puelmers and all of the other usual suspects. Combined with the fact that the overall sophistication and material quality of their construction are not too high, I think we are facing a minor alien race at most."

Multiple people concurred with his assessment.

"Did we manage to obtain visuals of alien individuals?" Director Ranya Wodin asked.

"Understanding their biology can tell us much."

"Durant?"

The Davutan guard leader remained silent for a few seconds as he silently held an exchange with his scouts.

"The alien individuals have mostly hid behind their fortifications or deeper inside the upper floors. Only one of our scouts managed to obtain a glimpse of an armored alien soldier from a distance."

Alden Durant projected a still image in the air. A lot of people leaned closer in order to study the small figure that had just moved out from behind a defensive emplacement.

What immediately stood out was the figure's height. According to the collected data, the armored alien was 2.5 meters tall, which was significantly higher than the baseline human average!

The shape of the alien was clearly humanoid, but the proportions were all different. The torso was fat and round while the legs were fairly long. The arms were thick but comically short, so much so that the alien figures probably wouldn't be able to wield handheld weapons with great skills.

The alien race apparently made up for this deficiency by directly mounting weapons onto the armor. Two different energy weapon barrels extended from the arms. Ves could easily imagine them firing laser beams at any targets they pointed towards!

Although neither Ves nor the Larkinsons recognized these aliens by their distinctive shapes, Major Durant and a surprising number of his guard captains reacted as if they had recognized a nightmare from the past.

"You know." Ves confronted the Davutans. "You recognize these aliens."

"We... do." Major Durant admitted. "The design of their defensive installations are much different than before. The alien species that I am thinking about had a habit of applying art to all of their construction. I believe what happened to them has not only inflicted a great amount of trauma to their group, but also caused them to lose so much of their culture. They have likely made many changes to their society and how they operate, but their physiology still remains the same."

"Please do not keep us in suspense. Spit it out already." Ves impatiently asked.

A few Larkinsons had already managed to deduce the answer, though.

"Oh." Minister Shederin Purnesse uttered. "It appears you did not clean after yourselves thoroughly enough."

General Verle had a bitter expression on his face. "We are all suffering from the mistakes of the founders of this colony."

The highest ranking representative of the colonial state did not deny these accusations. He finally supplied everyone with the answer that they wanted to hear.

"The alien in the projected image is a member of the pescan race. The pescans are a weak species that has reluctantly become a member of the native galactic community, but never managed to expand their territory behind a single star system. Their civilization is fairly young and has advanced relatively slowly. They are generally peaceful but they used to fight against each other in

limited conflicts between different alien city states. None of that is valid anymore because humanity has driven them to extinction. At least, that was supposed to be the case."

The description sounded fairly odd to Ves at first, but he quickly managed to connect the dots.

"These pescans... used to be the original inhabitants of Davute, am I correct?"

Several Davutan officers nodded.

"That is correct, patriarch. I can personally recall the operations that we conducted upon arriving to this star system the first time. Several pioneers have already raided the native city states on Davute VII multiple times, but their society has largely remained intact. Our mech forces had to land in large numbers and wipe out the indigenous defending troops before we could cleanse the remainder of the pescans as a whole."

Ves groaned. "Were they strong?"

"No. Their technological innovation is not strong and much of their advancements are actually supplied by the nunsers. The reason why the pescans received such favor was because their small star nation has voluntarily agreed to become a protectorate of the nuser civilization. In exchange for supplying a fixed amount of resources and occasionally manpower, the pescans can continue to live under the guarantee of this powerful alien race. They never prepared a serious standing army that could fight against foreign invaders because they assumed the nunsers would prevent that from happening."

Obviously, the nunsers had been unable to make good on their promises. Their forces stationed in this corner of the Red Ocean had probably been steamrolled by the Big Two during the same time!

"If these pescans are so weak, then your mechs and troops should have cleaned them up without exception. How could you have missed this group?!"

Major Durant developed a possible theory that explained how these aliens managed to escape the purge.

"We did not spend much time on studying the indigenous alien society, as it was destined to get destroyed. We did note that our forces have never found any trace of an important pescan individual who the anthropologists have called Great Chief Jaharon."

"Who is this great chief, exactly?"

"He was the leader of the largest city state of the pescan star nation." Durant answered. "To be more precise, his city state occupied the best geographic position on this planet. Our mech forces have invested more effort into defeating its protectors, breaking open its defenses and destroying every trace of the pescan civilization. We wanted to claim this site for ourselves and prepare it for the construction of our first and most important settlement in the Red Ocean. The only remnant of the indigenous people that we have decided to retain was the name of Jaharon's former city state, which we have inherited in order to symbolize humanity's conquest over an important alien holding."

"You are talking about... Davute." Ves flatly stated.

Major Durant nodded. "The word means 'center' in the language of the pescans. Our leaders thought well of that and decided to keep it since our troops already called it Davute during our extensive cleansing operation."

## Chapter 4792 The Sins Of The Past

The truth had finally been revealed!

The identity of the adversaries finally became clear to everyone!

It turned out that the assailants who had taken advantage of the initial chaos that had erupted in the Government District turned out to be the original occupants of Davute VII!

The pescans used to be one of the many alien species that added to the biodiversity of the Red Ocean.

Before the time humanity invaded the Red Ocean at large, the pescans were small and insignificant players in the dwarf galaxy. Confined to a single star system and having developed their civilization too late to become a serious contender at the highest level, the pescans did not follow the path of the humans and tried to fight and cheat their way to power.

Instead, the pescans who generally weren't that greedy or ambitious calmly decided to accept their status as small fry and submitted to the first powerful alien civilization that was willing to accept their offer of fealty.

The nunsers eventually absorbed the pescans in the greater nunsers civilization.

By becoming a protectorate, the pescans abdicated their sovereignty to their bigger alien brother. This meant that they were denied the right to set their foreign policy, wage war against rival alien star nations, make widespread changes to their planet, settle on other planets on a large scale and more.

It was also due to this reason that the pescans failed to pose a serious threat against the extragalactic invaders who coveted their planet and took it for themselves!

"The coalition formed by the Clive Consortium, the Dogen Collective, the Serenitas Foundation and other founding organizations did not encounter any significant setbacks during the brief campaign to conquer and cleanse Davute VII." Major Durant narrated to the gathered crowd. "The protectorate maintained a small garrison of nunsers warships and ground troops, but the former only consisted of a small sub-capital ship while the latter were too few in number to make a difference. The Shotgun Shogun, the Koi Riser and our other ace mechs eliminated all of the forces that could inflict greater than nominal damage to our colonization efforts. After that, our regular mech divisions and auxiliary divisions were tasked with cleaning up the rats."

The major still stored a number of archival footage in his cranial implant. He projected them through his combat armor, giving the people present a close view of what this conquest entailed.

Tall aliens with strangely-shaped humanoid bodies panicked and screamed as the beautiful painted structures around them collapsed on top of each other.

A few enthusiastic striker mechs even decided to initiate the alien vermin extermination operation early and gleefully started to spray their flames into the structures where hundreds if not thousands of pescan civilians were trying to shelter from the brutality displayed by the humans!

The deaths of all of their friends and family seemed to spur on the native defenders even further, but an intent to fight could not compensate for the incredible disparity in technological and material strength!

Weak and ineffective tanks and airplanes futilely tried to halt the indomitable advance of human mechs, only to get melted, crushed or cut apart as the primary combat platforms of the human race demonstrated the technological might of the Milky Way!

What Ves interested the most was when the invasion of the indigenous city state of Davute pressed towards the center of the city.

Small battalions of elite alien tanks and other combat vehicles managed to block the advance of the murderous mechs for the time being. These powerful vehicles were clad with transphasic alloys and were equipped with transphasic weapons!

Some of them were obviously built by more powerful alien civilizations for export to weaker races such as the pescans!

These elite alien battalions defended the center of the city state to the death. This was where the largest and most opulent alien palaces had been built.

Ves could already guess where this location corresponded to in the present day.

"You guys... built the Government District on top of the ruins of a native alien city center?" He asked. "Not just a normal city state, but the largest on the planet?"

He may not be a superstitious person by nature, but even he would think twice about founding the capital city of a colony and eventually an entire colonial state on the most sacred and honored location of the previous occupants of the planets might be a little daft!

Major Durant and several other 'veterans' of this conquest lowered their heads. They were all elites of the founding groups of the colony of Davute and personally fought on the streets of the alien city.

"When we stepped foot on this planet, we received instructions to wipe out all forms of alien life and destroy everything they have built." He said. "Despite the fact that Davute is a port system, it is not a particularly valued location to the indigenous aliens. The advanced races here have always utilized warp drives for superluminal travel, so they are not bound by the rules and constraints of Milky Way-style FTL drives. This star system used to be a galactic backwater, so it was impossible for the pescans to have anything worthwhile for us to covet. They did not even possess much phasewater as they surrender what little they can harvest to the nunsers as tribute."

Many people nodded. They could already see from the footage that the pescan forces truly couldn't keep up with the human invaders.

Even the elite transphasic vehicles that the local aliens built at great cost over multiple generations ultimately succumbed against the superior firepower and flexibility of the mechs brought by the eager colonists.

The invaders did not even bother to deploy their high-ranking mechs against these transphasic vehicles!

This was an incredible show of force and one that proved that pioneers at this early phase of the opening of the Red Ocean could still compete against the indigenous aliens without relying on phasewater technology.

"So you and your fellow soldiers invaded the palaces built in the center of the city state of Davute in order to capture or kill its highest leaders, correct?"

"That is so. We have managed to hunt down and neutralize many high-ranking native officials. I imagine that we only captured them in order to interrogate them for information about this planet."

Ketis snorted when she heard this. "Well, your interrogators obviously didn't do a good job, because they failed to obtain any news about a pocket space hiding in the middle of this former alien city state!"

"Believe me, miss, I am resentful of our intelligence officers as well. They have not only failed to obtain the necessary information, but never followed up on the fact that Great Chief Jaharon has gone missing all of this time."

General Verle crossed his arms. "It is not the fault of your intelligence department. I imagine that a secret as controversial as an ancient pocket space that has long been abandoned is a core secret that is only mastered by the leaders and the inner circle of this alien city state. Think about it. If more individuals learn about a pocket space that has immense strategic value, the nunsers will learn about it soon enough. Do you think these tyrannical alien cows will continue to allow the planet to be occupied by the weak and inconsequential pescans?"

Even though it appeared that the phase whales had lived so long and traveled so widely that they opened up pocket spaces in every star system, in truth they were not that common.

The quantity of pocket spaces in the entire Red Ocean was definitely great, but many of them had either been abandoned like this prison facility or already occupied by other strong races.

This made Davute so valuable!

Whether the nunsers wanted to repurpose this pocket space into a top secret experimental lab or a hidden military base, it was more than worthwhile to dissolve the protectorate and get rid of the pescans in order to claim it for themselves!

"I must say that your coalition has made an excellent and fortuitous choice in the selection of your first colony." Minister Shederin Purnesse calmly remarked. "As long as this unpleasantry has passed and as long as the MTA disdains to lay claim to it themselves, this pocket space will fall under the control of your colonial state. This will provide great benefits to Davute."

Many people's eyes lit up after they heard this! They all knew this was correct! If the nunsers were greedy enough to fight for a pocket space, then the humans were no different!

Davute would be able to gain a significant advantage if it could control the entry and exit of personnel, vehicles and cargo.

In the context of the upcoming war against Karlach, the pocket space that was located so close to the Skyline Palace could be treated as both a core secret development center and elite military base!

Compared to setting up laboratories or bases that were situated in remote locations or exposed sites on more populated planets, it was a lot more secure and convenient to place them right in the heart of the Government District where security was the highest and where numerous ace mechs were often close at hand to respond to any incidents.

In fact, the best way to ensure near-total security and confidentiality was to make sure to station at least one active ace mech at the only portal in and out of the pocket space!

Ves grew a little depressed after making this realization. He knew that no matter how much damage Davute and President Yenames Clive ultimately incurred by letting an attack the heart of the colonial state, the government would ultimately harvest a huge amount of profit from obtaining a precious pocket space!

Karlach would become so green with envy and desire that the rival colonial state would definitely step up its offensives as well!

This was serious business. The two port systems shared many similarities, but if outsiders learned that Davute had a pocket space and the other destinations did not, they would be far more inclined to take their business to the former because it was more 'special'!

People were strange like that. Pocket spaces were part of the latest trends that drove many pioneers and colonists crazy. A few folk even regarded them as a sign of good luck or an omen for prosperity.

"We can consider all of these matters in the future." General Verle said as he wanted to bring this session back on topic. "We must first formulate a plan that will allow us to escape."

"You are correct."

The group of officers and dignitaries began to hold more substantive talks. With the first-hand intelligence gathered by the scouts along with the known information in the possession of the veterans of the Davute Campaign, they quickly hashed out a relatively simple but reliable plan.

Although the battle plan relied on far too many assumptions for his liking, Ves liked it. He even provided his input so that he could add a special stratagem that could only be performed with the help of one of his clan's unique advantages.

"Are you certain your assets are up to the task?" Major Durant looked skeptical. "What you are proposing is not a light matter. We may be able to gain control over the enemy camp with much greater ease if this gambit of yours succeeds, but our opponents should not be too incompetent. When Great Chief Jaharon retreated to this pocket space, he brought along his best men and equipment."

Ves smirked. "The best equipment that the pescans had available at the time, you mean. I am pretty confident that the technological disparity between our two sides has remained just as great if not greater."

"There are still great consequences if you are wrong, patriarch."

"You do not need to remind me. We will bear the risks. Don't worry. It will work. This is not the first time we pulled this off. All of this is routine business to our clan."

#### Chapter 4793 Assault Plan

"Our latest scouting attempts have reported that the pescan enclave holds a population of at least 2000 individuals, of which a disproportionately high number are highly trained soldiers. They have access to some of the best weapons and tech that their alien civilization has produced. The proportion of transphasic weapons and equipment is disproportionately high."

All of this sounded fairly bad. Even if the pescan civilization had never been that strong to begin with, the tech accessible to the hand-chosen elites of Great Chief Jaharon must be quite impressive!

Not only that, but the indigenous aliens that blocked the kidnapped humans from returning to normal space also possessed a notable numbers advantage.

Even if their civilians were not professional soldiers, they could sure as hell mount a casual suit of armor and start blasting at the humans with their arm cannons!

This was compounded by a notable defensive advantage. It was always a bad idea to attack an entrenched enemy that could rely on turrets and solid walls to blunt any assaults.

However, none of the humans allowed these factors to deter them from committing to an attack.

Every single human looked down on the pescans. They were called natives or indigenous for a reason. Quantity alone could not make up for the difference in quality.

Only the defenses concerned the leaders a little more. The detailed scouting data revealed a number of potent turrets and other defensive emplacements that needed to be eliminated first before they inflicted a large amount of casualties against the attacking humans!

General Verle tapped his finger on a map that highlighted several threatening turrets and thick walls.

"Major Durant, you should direct your heavy weapon specialists to destroy these fortifications right at the start. Their threat against an infantry force without the support of mechs is too great, especially in this limiting terrain where we can only proceed in one direction."

The guard officer of the colonial state did not disagree with Verle's suggestion. "We should have enough missiles to destroy the defenses that are in the open at the moment, but doing so will deplete our stockpile. This will leave us with much less missiles to hurl against tanks and other possible vehicles that are too well-armored to defeat by relying on the damage output of firearms."

"Do you have any better ideas?"

"We could lay a siege." Alden Durant proposed. "Our missiles are finite under the current circumstances, but it is much easier for us to keep supplying energy to support the operation of our two laser cannons. We can sit back and creep up to the pescan defensive lines step by step."

General Verle shook his head. "We do not have the time to lay a siege. Our adversaries have too many advantages. With the sheer amount of troops and assets at their disposal, they can absorb the punishment and prepare a more devastating counterattack. It would be ruinous if they somehow manage to surround our positions."

"The laser cannons are line-of-sight weapons. If we want them to fire at the deadly alien turrets, we will have to cart them out and expose them to return fire. The chances that they will get destroyed is too high since there is no meaningful cover inside the hallways that lead up to the upper levels." Ves noted.

The terrain was too unfavorable to the attacking side. The prison complex's hallways and corridors were all straight and flat, giving no opportunity for any escaped prisoners to hide behind cover.

General Verle made an alternate suggestion. "We can employ the missile launchers instead. The advantage of using them is that we do not require a direct line of sight to fire them. We can program their flight trajectories and targeting priorities in advance before firing them in quick succession. If we do so quickly enough, we can catch the pescans off-guard and overwhelm them with fire and

fury. This is also the right time to launch a blitz attack. We must strive to overrun the initial defense lines before the native alien remnants are able to recover from the shock."

The general of the Larkinson Army had always favored the shock and awe approach. It fit with the clan's great embrace of psychological warfare as its principal mech warfare doctrine.

The only issue with this strategy was that the current circumstances were much different from what General Verle was accustomed to! The rules governing infantry combat were much different than the ones related to mechs!

Major Durant may have the lower rank, but he was a true infantryman. His insights in this field were much greater than anyone else in this gathering.

"While I agree that a shock and awe approach can catch the defenders off-guard, I have fought against the pescans before. The more they are cornered, the more desperately they will fight back. We can clearly surmise that this pocket space is their final refuge and stronghold. Not only will they defend it to their death, but they will likely have many assets in reserve. Expending our missiles at the first line of defense may give us an early advantage, but I am afraid we will be losing out in terms of strategic depth. Our troopers also are not as tough and persistent as mechs. Once we conquer the first floor occupied by our adversaries, we should take a moment to rest and secure our gains before we consider pushing further."

This did not sit well with Ves. He did not need to possess Ylvaine's foresight to know that the pescans were up to no good!

Ever since the entire facility rumbled the last time, he began to have the premonition that he really did not want to be here in a few hours.

"We cannot surrender the initiative to the enemy. We must push as far as we can go." Ves urged everyone.

The talks continued for another 15 or so minutes. The focus of the meeting rested on persuading Major Durant to overcome his cautious and more restrained mindset and continue to push forward until they reached the top of the prison facility.

Such a struggle would inevitably lead to greater casualties and losses. Not only would the Davutan guard forces sacrifice more men as a result, but the safety of the VIPs which he was charged to protect would also become compromised!

"Our greatest priority is to protect our charges." Major Durant spoke. "I am only agreeing to an initial assault in order to preempt any possible attack from the pescans. So long as we are attacking their positions, they will not have any thoughts about attacking the leading figures of our colonial state. I am not optimistic about pushing our assault any further than that. I believe it is enough to inflict a serious blow. Our government will not stand by and should definitely find a way to mount a rescue attempt."

Faced with the man's obstinacy, Ves had little choice but to let his own elite honor guards bear a lot more pressure.

"My personal troopers shall lead the charge." Ves spoke to the Davutan guard forces. "They will continue to press forward as their armor can take the damage. All we ask from you is to follow in

their wake, provide covering fire and keep their rear secure. Combined with the gambit that we have proposed earlier, we should have a good chance of breaking through all of our opposition."

Given how much the Larkinsons wanted to commit to a full attack and were willing to bear the greatest risk, Major Durant finally assented to this proposal.

"We will see how well the pescan defenders are able to absorb our attacks. If we judge that we are not at risk of overextending, then we shall back up your elite guards." Major Durant eventually spoke.

Ves smiled. "That is all we ask of you. It is best if we can all eliminate the threat posed by the pescans as soon as possible."

All of the soldiers prepared to attack now that their superiors settled on a battle plan.

The general layout of the plan was quite simple.

The Larkinson honor guards along with a large proportion of troops from both the Davutan security forces and the private guards of the other groups would commence the assault on the main entrance to the upper floors.

The corridors here were the widest, which meant that the attacking troops would have more room to maneuver. They also became a lot less vulnerable to getting bottlenecked.

A much smaller force of Davutan soldiers and third party guard forces would commence a flanking attack from a different direction.

The job of this flanking force was not to press deep, but to distract the pescan defenders and draw enemy resources away from the main entrance.

Only a small batch of irregular soldiers and assets were left to attack from a third and much more obscure direction.

Though not many people expected much from this group, Ves had high hopes in this gambit. This was one of the wildcards that could potentially throw the defenders into disarray, but it was not the only trick he had up his sleeve.

As the soldiers all prepared to set off, the noncombatants would be following them from a distance.

It was not a good idea to let them dwell in the lower floors. Not only would they be too far away for the soldiers to turn back and offer support against a possible surprise attack, but if the portal somehow opened up at any point, then that would be a great opportunity to escort the VIPs to safety quickly.

A lot of people who had never stepped onto the field of battle understandably exhibited a lot of fear and concern about this matter. There were a lot of timid CEOs and executives who thought it was better to stay on the opposite side of the prison facility when the shooting commenced.

Ves did not care for what they thought. He was already happy if these useless people stayed out of his way. They might even be right about keeping as much distance from the pescans as possible.

The Larkinsons did not follow suit, of course. Each of them had already been accustomed to following their mech legions into battle from a distance that would scare a lot of people to death.

No matter what, even the least combative clansmen gained a lot of bravery through these repeated exposures!

Even Gloriana resigned herself to this decision.

"You can do what you want as long as you guarantee my safety and the safety of our children." She said in a tired voice.

Ves smiled at her as he bent down and gently patted Marvaine's body. "Don't worry. Our kids are the best protected among our group. Their shield generators are unsurpassed. You can trust in the quality of the products vouched by the MTA. I even think that it may be better if we bring our children forward a bit. This is a priceless opportunity for them to become exposed to real combat up close with their own eyes. The benefits that this will provide them will help them throughout their later years."

Gloriana couldn't believe what she heard from her husband!

"ARE YOU CRAZY?! THEY ARE CHILDREN, YES! THEY SHOULDN'T BE EXPOSED TO ANY BLOOD UNTIL THEY ARE WELL INTO THEIR ADULT YEARS! THEIR IMMATURE MINDS CANNOT PROCESS THE TRAUMA OF WITNESSING SUCH UGLY SIGHTS!"

"Our children aren't normal, honey." Ves patiently replied. "We have tested them in various ways and learned that they are much much smarter and more resilient than other designer babies at their age brackets. If we want them to become successful, then we don't need to do anything extra. However, if we want them to excel in their respective fields, they need more than a lot of smarts. They need to develop a stronger mentality, and they can only do so when they go out of their comfort zone. This will be good for them, and I do not think they are too young. If the brutality becomes too much, then you can take our youngest away, is that good enough for you, Gloriana?"

"THAT IS HARDLY ANY BETTER!"

Chapter 4794 My Little Skull

Surprisingly enough, their children did not sit back and let their parents hash out their differences. They had become completely enamored by their father's suggestion!

"I wanna see, mama!" Andraste insisted. "No, I wanna fight!"

"I want to stay with papa." Marvaine said. "If papa can withstand this danger, then so can I!"

"A qualified leader must not show timidity." Aurelia finally voiced her opinion.

It took a lot of arguing, but Ves finally managed to get his wife to agree to bring his children close enough to allow them to experience the brutality of combat at a closer distance.

Of course, they would still remain well in the rear where the aliens shouldn't be able to attack their positions. Ves may be crazy, but he wasn't stupid.

What was important was that Ves wanted his children to stay close to him as he served as the center of a mobile command post.

It just so happened that his Unending Regalia possessed the most powerful communication system.

Even without a dedicated command and communication backpack module, the high-quality miniaturized communication modules built into his combat armor exceeded the specifications of comparable communication systems in the possession of dedicated communication operatives.

It was due to this strong advantage that General Verle and Major Durant decided to stick close to Ves and make use of his communication systems.

Once everyone completed their preparations, the majority of the trapped humans started to move in the direction of the upper floors.

A few hundred civilians chose to stay behind. Major Durant had also allocated a number of armored and unarmored guards to protect them against any aliens that somehow circled around and sought to destroy this vulnerable group.

The rest marched onwards and steadily moved towards the floors occupied by the pescan race.

A lot of people held mixed feelings about this. They would have decided to stay behind like the rest of the risk averse civilians if not for the encouragement from the Larkinsons.

Although the Larkinson Clan had a reputation for being foolhardy and reckless, it also had an unquestionable record of success and victory.

Many Davutans had enough faith in the Larkinsons that they chose to follow these daring people. In any case, out of all of the people among them, only the Larkinsons possessed an abundant amount of experience in dealing with alien threats!

As Ves accompanied the command group that was still busy with analyzing new data and adjusting the battle plan, he also entered into a brief discussion with Ketis about her role in the upcoming fight.

"Are you sure you are up to the task of attacking the enemy's rear?" Ves asked with notable concern. "As a swordmaster, your role in this upcoming fight is comparable to that of an expert mech. You can do a lot of good by raising our morale as you demonstrate your combat prowess and lead our forces from the front."

Ketis shook her head as she continually wiped the blade of her borrowed sword with a polishing cloth. "That is not how Swordmaidens prefer to fight. We can do much more damage with our swords if we attack our opponents from an angle they are not prepared to defend against. I would much rather join up with Lucky and disrupt the pescans from the rear. Besides, I don't have to worry about accidentally getting shot in the back over there. If I take part in the frontal assault, then the combination of a relatively confining tunnel and hundreds of infantry soldiers will make it far too likely that I will get caught in the crossfire."

"...Maybe you have a point."

"Besides, I am not needed at the front. You have plenty of other ways to raise morale, and your honor guards are already strong enough by themselves. This will be your show, Ves. Let me have mine."

She may be one of the bravest members of the Larkinson Clan, but even she did not fancy getting caught in the middle of a firefight. Her concerns were exacerbated by her decision to opt out of borrowing a suit of combat armor from the honor guards.

If she had said yes to this offer, then she would probably be a lot less reticent about jumping into the middle of all of the chaos!

"Fine." Ves said. "I will trust you to do what is best for yourself and for the rest of us. Don't feel too pressured about having to destroy all of the opposition you come across. It is already good enough that you are able to sabotage the pescan's defenses and other installations. Make sure to coordinate with Lucky."

"Meow..."

The cat did not look enthused about receiving another dangerous combat assignment. Lucky knew better than to refuse, though. This was why he reluctantly jumped out of Andraste's arms and started to hover behind Ketis' shoulders.

The swordmaster's lips bloomed into an eager and bloodthirsty smile. "It is great you have my back once again, Lucky. It will be just like old times. It has been too many years since we last slayed a monster together. I still remember the time when we fought against a cultist monstrosity."

"Meow meow meow!"

Lucky recalled that battle as well. He had managed to munch through a lot of Unending alloy at the time!

Andraste, who had always looked up to Ketis, dashed forward and started to beg for stories.

"Tell me what happened! Who did you fight? How many enemies did you kill? What did Lucky do, exactly?"

Ves chuckled as Andraste badgered Ketis into retelling this battle that had taken place a long time ago. Back then, the clan still utilized third-class mechs, and expert mechs remained a distant luxury at the time.

The Nyxian Gap Campaign may have been one of the bloodiest periods for the clan, but it also fueled its early rise and made it possible for the Golden Skull Alliance to earn enough MTA merits to obtain passage to the Red Ocean!

As they continued to move forward, Ves began to occupy himself with charging David's skull with different variations of spiritual energy.

He continued to contact his design spirits and persuaded them to inject more and more portions of their spiritual energy into the skull of a primordial human.

A lot of people including Gloriana found it disturbing that Ves was openly 'playing' with a glowing skull.

It made him look like a pirate warlord who was just about to throw the lives of his men away in order to plunder the final remaining heritage of the previous rulers of this planet!

Ves did not care about their opinions. He was above their concerns. He knew that as long as he maintained a strong and confident posture, the others would continue to follow his lead.

After all, out of everyone stuck in this prison facility, only Ves looked as if he knew what he was doing!

"Papa?" Aurelia walked up to his side as she held Clixie in her arms. "What is that? It feels so funny."

Her father grinned indulgently at her. He even waved the skull closer to his girl so that she could get a good look and feel of the spiritually charged object.

"I can't tell you much about it, but right now it has become a vessel of my power. I can do a lot of neat tricks with it, but the premise is that I have enough energy on hand to support my actions. Nothing comes for free. Since there is enough time, I am using it to inject as much energy into it as possible. That way, I can slowly expend it like a battery and produce many different effects as a result."

His firstborn daughter was approaching her teenage years. Though her spirituality was still relatively weak, it had already started to show signs of rapid growth, just as puberty was ready to accelerate the growth of her body.

Her sensitivity towards spiritual energy was not low. Aurelia almost couldn't resist sending out Mana so that her companion spirit could investigate the magical skull up close, but she restrained herself from revealing this capability in public.

"Can I touch it, papa?"

"I'm not sure." Ves hesitated. "It can be dangerous. I am also sure that your mother doesn't approve of you touching random human skulls."

Fortunately for him, Gloriana was currently focusing her attention on Marvaine. He was much younger than the other children and didn't fully understand all of the implications of what was taking place. There was a limit to his rapid mental development.

Aurelia didn't give up, though. She widened her eyes and started to act much cuter than before!

"Can I hold it, please?"

"...Oh, alright. Be careful with it, though. It is rather heavy and big for a child of your size. Don't drop it. I don't want to add a dent in the skullcap."

He was exaggerating, of course. The bone composition of a primordial human was comparable to that of organic mech armor!

"Miaow~"

Aurelia whispered to Clixie for a moment before she put down the furry cat.

Clixie didn't mind this and easily kept pace as she also developed a lot of curiosity towards the skull that contained the spiritual energies of a dozen or so design spirits!

As Ves cautiously passed David's skull into his little girl's hands, he paid close attention whether any unanticipated reactions would occur.

Fortunately, his daughter did not receive any physical or spiritual harm. It was like touching a P-stone. As long as the vessel properly contained all of the spiritual energy, nobody around it would get affected.

"Ohhhh..."

Aurelia was able to experience the special and distinct qualities of the skull in a much more direct fashion!

Mana became more active as well. The tiny persian kitten began to exude a small glow that largely resembled that of Lufa. This helped to shield the girl against her exposure to so many different attributed energies.

This was also one of the reasons why Ves was confident his daughter could hold the skull without any problems.

"What do you feel, Aurelia?"

"This skull... is so powerful." She said with awe in her voice. "It is... so warm."

Ves narrowed his eyes when he heard this. Her reactions sounded a little bit odd.

"Do you feel it is warm like it is a part of our family?"

She tentatively nodded. "It is like meeting distant kin. Is this our ancestor, papa?"

He didn't know how to respond to that. "This is an ancient relic that I recently excavated. Nothing more."

"It is so old..."

Ves fell in thought as he noticed Aurelia's inexplicable closeness to the skull.

There had to be a clear reason why his daughter responded this way.

He already had a theory in mind. After thinking back on Aurelia's early life and how extensively Ves had supported her growth with spiritual shenanigans such as giving her a companion spirit seed, he suddenly realized that she actually resembled primordial humans a lot more than other people!

Even though Ves clearly felt that Aurelia did not match the properties of an authentic primordial human, the differences shouldn't be too great. Her impressive physical, mental and spiritual development exceeded his original estimates, so much so that it was hard to see any resemblances between her and baseline humans!

While Ves began to consider whether he had inadvertently turned his offspring into primordial humans, Aurelia continued to grow fascinated by the glowing skull. The girl just couldn't get enough of this macabre but endlessly fascinating ancient relic!

Clixie also felt it was special. The cat felt tempted enough to jump at the skull and tap it with her front paws.

"Clixie! Behave!"

"Miaow miaow!"

"You're not a dog, Clixie! You don't need to chew on this bone."

"Miaaaow."

What nobody noticed was that the jewel attached to her neck glinted in multiple colors. It remained unclear whether it did more than that as the aura and the glow of colors exuding from the skull had an obscuring effect.

## Chapter 4795 Defiant Words

As the humans displaced by the pescans moved into position to begin their long-awaited assault, a lot of events took place back in normal space.

The tragedies and losses inflicted on the citizens of the new colonial state centered around Davute were devastating!

The beasts let loose in the packed and congested city center that should have been the safest district of all had an enormous effect on many people.

The festive mood had decidedly been squashed by the violent attack!

Even the colonists located in the many planets that fell within the sphere of influence of the colonial state no longer felt happy and satisfied.

The broadcasts that clearly transmitted the violent and bloody images of death and destruction ensured that no one was able to miss what was taking place on the ground!

Though the citizens of the fledgling colonial state also managed to observe a lot of heroic mechs and mech units vanquish the stronger warbeasts, that did not take away the realization that Davute had screwed up its security precautions.

If the bystanders already had a low opinion of Davute, then those who suffered directly from this catastrophe held an even worse regard for the colonial state!

They had paid a great price to leave the Milky Way and start a new life in the Red Ocean because they thought they could rise to greater heights.

Though the Red Ocean always carried an element of risk, no one thought that a state as strong and well-prepared as Davute would get attacked to this extent.

Now, tens of thousands of people had died and more had suffered varying degrees of injuries.

The emergency services were still in the process of digging out bodies and badly injured survivors from collapsed structures.

The blood that had spilled on the streets had yet to be cleaned!

A lot of reinforcements had converged upon Kotor City. The colonial state had decided to draw forces away from other positions in order to convey absolute security in the symbol of its rule.

The abundance of mechs along with the calming glows of the Pacificer mechs did much to calm everyone's nerves.

Many expert mechs and ace mechs also deployed at the same time in order to do their part to reassure the frightened populace that a repeat attack would never be able to inflict as much damage.

Two hours after the outbreak of violence had ceased, the mood among the people had shifted.

The military and the security forces had done much to stem the bleeding and prevent the population from growing hysterical.

That did not mean that Davute was out of the woods quite yet. The confidence that the colonists and citizens held towards the institutions and the leaders of their new state had become permanently damaged.

A small but noticeable proportion of immigrants had even decided to cancel their plans to become a part of Davute's founding generation and decided to leave right away!

As long as they were not bound by overly restrictive contracts, these individuals who either possessed a lot of wealth or talent were all treasures to the state. The outflow of too many immigrants would definitely cause Davute to deflate.

This might prove fatal to its development!

As the leader of this young and fragile colonial state, President Yenames Clive had come under enormous pressure to lead his people through their very first crisis.

The man wanted to delay for another hour or two and wait if the Larkinsons trapped inside the mysterious pocket space managed to lead all of the trapped VIPs back to Kotor City.

The strange but helpful communication lines that the Larkinsons maintained with their kidnapped clansmen had given Yenames a lot of optimism and relief.

At least his government wasn't left in the dark!

If he could greet the survivors of this heinous act and address his citizens alongside the rescued stakeholders, then Yenames Clive would be able to ride on a wave of optimism!

Unfortunately for him, his subjects were lacking in patience. They demanded answers and they demanded an accounting from the state.

The longer he remained silent, the more room he gave for the people to make up their own answers, and not many of them aligned with his thoughts!

His chief of staff tried her best to persuade him to speak sooner rather than later.

"It is time, Yenames. I am aware you prefer to wait for the outcome of what is about to take place inside the pocket space, but you have an increasing number of angry stakeholders knocking at your door. They are not at all pleased by your previous reassurances. Then there is the general public. Their low opinion of us is spreading through the news cycle, causing many potential colonists to settle for other destinations. What is happening is antithetical to your strategy of inclusion."

The president sighed as he shifted in his ceremonial robes. He had yet to remove them, but seriously considered whether he should do so. He decided against it as he still needed to look dignified.

"Very well. Schedule the speech in fifteen minutes, and make sure it is broadcasted throughout our new territories."

It took time for President Yenames Clive to show up in public again.

He stepped onto the same grand stage that was still floating in a relatively exposed position in the air.

He did so in order to convey that the strength and confidence of the state hadn't been damaged, though the pair of ace mechs flanking it also helped a lot.

The choice of ace mechs guarding the grand stage was rather clever this time.

The leader of the colonial state should not show timidity in the face of this attack. Having an ace knight mech like the Indormeon as a guard was one of the most luxurious forms of protection that an individual could enjoy!

However, Yenames did not want to send the message that he was afraid and that he wanted to turtle up. He also did not want his citizens to let fear and inferiority take root in their hearts.

This was why the two ace mechs chosen to guard over his life possessed distinctive offensive traits.

The Shotgun Shogun piloted by Saint Antai Shogi had been one of the most prominent saviors today. It not only protected a lot of VIPs, but also defeated the powerful warbeasts that initiated the attack!

What was surprising was that Yenames had also invited the Mars to form a part of his protective detail for the time being.

The powerful masterwork ace hybrid mech had made an even greater impression onto everyone due to its domineering offensive might and its aggressive actions.

From firing its multitude of positron beam weapons towards different targets at the same time to utilizing its transphasic axe to chop apart rampaging warbeasts into pieces, the ultimate champion of the Cross Clan had won over a lot of fans and admirers today!

Right now, Yenames Clive did not care about the ace mech stealing his thunder.

He actually wished that more people would get distracted by the impressive masterwork mech

At least this way people would admire its strength and by extension the colonial state that managed to have such a powerful asset on retainer!

With the domain fields of the Shotgun Shogun and the Mars washing over him, President Yenames Clive already started to convey a much more forceful demeanor.

"My fellow Davutans." He spoke as he precisely modulated his voice. "Today is a day of tragedy. None of us wanted this to happen. We should have been celebrating the founding of our state. Instead, we have suffered a grievous blow that not only damaged our proud capital city, but also deprived many citizens of their lives."

The president's eyes burned. "It is tempting for us to become preoccupied by darker and more somber priorities. Whether it is mourning the dead or casting blame on our security forces, I know that many of you want to draw your attention inwards."

This was indeed the case. A lot of people had already started to shout against each other.

"What you may not take into account is that you will play exactly in the hands of the culprits responsible for launching this brazen sneak attack! The vile and evil murderers of Karlach, for who else could have plotted against our colonial state, have not sought to kill our citizens and inflict damage to a number of our city's structures. No, their ambitions stretch much further. They wish to turn Davutans against other Davutans. By causing us to squabble amongst each other, Karlach would become free to sweep our divided state!"

This time, Yenames Clive did not hide his defiant emotions.

"Do not let the Karlachs have the last laugh! We must not give in to the emotions and impulses that I have mentioned earlier. Davutans must be better than that. In a time of tragedy and loss like this, we must join hands and seek to support each other. Doing the opposite will only weaken us and deliver the outcome that our archenemies sought to accomplish with their unforgivable crimes."

Yenames Clive sneered in front of all of the recorders!

"We must remain unbowed! Show Karlach that our people are not the sort that collapses at the first blow. We can be better than that. Only by directing our hatred and desire for vengeance upon the true culprits of the attack will we be able to deny their satisfaction and pay them back for what they have done!"

Yenames received plenty of feedback throughout his speech. He became more reassured when he heard that most demographics responded well to his words so far. His efforts to direct people's anger towards Karlach played a crucial role in revitalizing the confidence of his state!

"Let us spite our foes by doing the opposite of what they seek. Instead of allowing them to spoil our party and force us to mourn our dead, I intend to complete my declaration and give us cause to celebrate!"

Yenames Clive began to look a lot more solemn this time. Many people already had an inkling that the crucial moment had come.

"On this day of blood debts and heroism, I declare that our colony shall form the basis of a new colonial state! From today onwards, this colony and the colonies that have signed our accords shall formally become a part of the Colonial Federation of Davute!"

The Colonial Federation of Davute!

Many citizens who lived in the sphere of this new state felt inordinately proud of becoming a part of it from the very beginning.

The malaise that previously hung over their heads due to the earlier tragedy had not entirely faded, but it did not affect their moods as much as before.

"By embracing the model of a federation, we guarantee that we provide an equal voice to every citizen, and to respect the rights of each colony in our great and welcoming state. None of us shall be able to declare themselves kings, and no one shall be granted the right to rule over others solely by birth."

A federation had a lot of good connotations!

Though there were clear weaknesses to federations, it did not stop people's enthusiasm for hearing they would live under a more equal society!

"Even I am not exempted from our laws." The Yenamest said. "As the founding president of our federation, I will not hold my post for life, but will step down from it so that another citizen of Davute can be voted into office. Let it be known that our colonial federation is willing to listen to its people!"

This increased people's enthusiasm further!

Not every state promised to hold its leaders directly accountable to its citizens.

After Yenames Clive wound down his speech, he spoke about the planned festivities.

"As I have stated before, we must not let the recent tragedy bring us to despair, but it would be too callous for us to celebrate the founding of our federation too soon. The festival will not be canceled. Instead, our administration will postpone it by several days to give everyone a time to recover and adjust. Only then will we proceed with our week-long celebration! Do not feel guilty for finding joy in this occasion, because we honor Davute with our words and deeds!"

Many people reacted with surprise when they heard that the state still insisted on holding the festival!

While it would be difficult for many people to muster up the same degree of enthusiasm of this festival as before, their new president had successfully persuaded them to enjoy this event without feeling too guilty!

#### Chapter 4796 Preparedness

While President Yenames Clive formally announced the formation of the Colonial Federation of Davute, the people displaced into a dangerous and confining pocket space were on the cusp of launching an attack!

Of the large group that steadily made their way to the main entrance, two separate detachments of troops split away.

The first one consisted of dozens of armored soldiers. The mix of colors and armor designs signified that they consisted of a combination between Davutan guard soldiers and a random collection of private guards in the employ of the organizations valued by the colonial state.

This flanking force had been tasked with attacking the upper floors controlled by the indigenous alien remnants from a different direction.

"Do you think these flankers will produce any results, major?" Ves curiously asked the leader of the government forces trapped in this pocket space.

The middle-aged infantry guard officer maintained an impassive face. The man possessed a lot of experience dealing with high-ranked personnel. He wouldn't have been assigned to oversee the protection of the VIPs invited to the seating blocks if he did not possess the required social acumen.

The man initially appeared unprepared to lead all of the guard troops who had the misfortune of getting trapped in the prison facility, but he quickly adapted to his new role.

This was why Major Durant conscientiously made sure that he did not surrender total control to the Larkinsons.

"We do not have a good understanding of the combat effectiveness of the pescan survivors." The man replied. "We can observe their troops and assets, and we can even form estimates of how effectively they can fight based on what we have learned during the initial invasion of this planet, but several years have gone by since then. The scientists and engineers that Great Chief Jaharon has undoubtedly brought with him must have developed numerous technical improvements. We cannot let ourselves be fooled by what has worked in the past."

The Larkinsons understood this well. They had personally experienced how the native community of the Red Ocean adapted its tech and strategies after humanity broke out and quickly conquered large swathes of territory.

The differences in tech and cross-racial cooperation between the shabby alien pirate forces based in the Boryan System and the modern Fractured House of the Collapsing Star showed that the natives did not object to learning from their betters!

Just as the humans who rose up from Old Earth had rapidly assimilated all kinds of alien technologies in order to close the technological gap, the indigenous intelligent life forms of the new frontier were in the process of imitating this approach!

Ves decided to call up the latest footage recorded by the spy drones that the scouts had tried to sneak into the upper floor.

The trapped humans possessed a good understanding of the outer defenses that could easily be observed from a distance, but it was a lot more difficult to obtain solid details further inwards.

"Why don't we have any good footage of the inner base and the top floors?" Ves asked as he became dissatisfied with the monotony of the collected data.

"The aliens have activated numerous transphasic energy shields that block the passageways that lead up to the next floors." Major Durant answered. "These shields are constantly active, which means that no spy drone, no matter how small or unnoticeable, can move past these barriers."

That was bad news.

Ves frowned. "What a crude and costly defensive measure. Energy shield generators will have to endure a lot of strain to remain constantly active. The wear and tear is significant. In a circumstance where the pescans are cornered in an isolated pocket space where they cannot replenish their spent resources, they should be conserving what little they have left."

"I believe that the pescans understand they are at the end of their ropes." General Verle commented as he studied the borrowed footage of the initial invasion of the alien planet in order to get a better understanding of his current adversaries. "The local aliens have no planet left and they are completely trapped in a zone where they are surrounded by powerful human forces in every direction. This battle will likely be the last swansong of their race."

Ves frowned as he thought back on the behavior of these aliens up until this point.

The entire situation stunk. While he knew little about the pescans, their past interactions with the nuser civilization suggested that they were not a race that was prone to make foolish decisions.

The pescans understood humility and recognized how weak they were in the face of much more powerful races.

"If my intelligence director was here, then she would have asked a lot of pertinent questions about the motives of the pescans." He said to everyone. "Right now, these aliens are most likely the last survivors of their race. If they have any sense of self-preservation, they would have taken advantage of the obscurity of their pocket space and continue to hide for generations. It makes no sense for them to expose themselves and their pocket space to humanity. What do they seek to gain by kidnapping the people that the colonial state most relies upon? Since these pescans understand the importance of our identity, I am sure that they must have been able to study us throughout all of these years!"

He spent so much time with Calabast that he had learned how to think from her perspective to an extent. Though he was still far inferior to the kind of machinations that the spymaster was able to deduce from a few scattered clues, even he could not ignore the clear gap in logic presented by recent events.

General Verle, who used to have an intelligence background, was not ignorant of the odd choices made by the pescans.

"It is difficult for us to predict the behavior of aliens by virtue of their non-human cultures and thought patterns. Nonetheless, I also agree with you that these pescans have made odd decisions. There are several possible answers that can explain their behavior which appears irrational on the surface. The first and most obvious one is that the pescans that have fled into this pocket space may be running out of food and water."

That caused both Ves and Major Durant to frown.

Ves waved at the projections showing the state of the alien camp. "With all of this hardware, it should not be difficult for the pescans to start a few indoor farms."

"That may be true, but that also depends on how extensively the aliens of the city state of Davute have prepared for this evacuation." General Verle replied. "Major Durant, how long did the campaign to conquer and cleanse this planet of alien life last?"

"Not long, general. Our leaders were impatient and wanted to build an initial settlement and start the terraforming process as soon as possible. We cannot proceed with either of them without risking attacks from the local indigenous aliens, so one of our most urgent priorities was to make the pescans extinct. Though we did not employ our high-ranking mechs too much, we mustered almost all of our mechs as possible to raze their cities and slay the aliens en masse. Only in certain cases did infantry such as my unit have to step in, mostly to raid the most valuable treasure houses."

"So the pescans hardly had time to prepare for a proper evacuation or backup plan?" Ves asked.

Major Durant reluctantly nodded. "Numerous pioneering fleets had raided the surface of the planet before, so the pescans already learned of us. I was told that those fleets only launched quick raids at the smaller and weaker city states, so there is a great chance that the city state of Davute did not take us seriously at the time. The local aliens also put a great amount of faith in the protection offered by the nunsers. None of the locals could have imagined that we would wipe out their entire race in as little time as possible, especially since they lacked contact with the greater galactic community."

One of the major shortcomings of the civilizations of the Red Ocean was the lack of sophisticated communication.

As far as humanity was aware of, the alien races of the Red Ocean did not possess a widespread network of instant communications.

Although the major alien races most certainly possessed at least some means of communicating across vast distances, most individual aliens did not have access to such tech. Even entire ships and planets remained in the dark of what took place in other parts of space.

This also caused the local galactic community to become a lot more fractured and localized. Even aliens from the same race began to diverge wildly due to how much they were separated from each other.

It was completely plausible that the pescan race had remained ignorant of the scourge of humanity throughout all of this time.

It was not until the pioneering fleets dispatched by the founders of the colony of Davute that the indigenous aliens experienced true despair, but by that time it was too late to do anything substantial!

"Okay." Ves collected his thoughts. "From what I am hearing, the pescans of this city state may have been forced to rush their evacuation to this pocket space. Given that farms and food and stuff are usually located outside the city proper, it may be possible that the aliens under the leadership of this 'great chief' simply didn't have the time to bring in enough food."

General Verle nodded. "That is plausible, sir. A far-sighted leader should have stockpiled sufficient food and agricultural facilities, though. This is why I am also considering other possibilities."

"Such as...?"

"Staying here is not a viable way for a race to persist." Verle said. "This is literally a prison. The space is too confining, there are no stars above their heads and it is impossible to harvest any resources here. If humans can go crazy here, then so can aliens. If this is the case, the pescans may be thinking about staging a breakout attempt."

"That is a rash decision. In the years that have passed by, the founders of Davute have transformed this place into a trade hub as well as a military fortress."

General Verle acknowledged this argument. "You are not wrong, but perhaps they are under time pressure. If they wait too long, then this star system along with all of the other star systems in the zone will become much more unfriendly towards aliens seeking to escape from human-controlled space."

"Do not forget about the timing of the founding ceremony." Major Durant noted. "The fact that so many important figures of Davute have gathered in the center of the Government District is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. If the aliens understand us well enough, then they may have confidence that abducting you and all of the other important leaders may serve as effective leverage in any negotiations."

Ves grimaced. His thoughts already headed towards this direction ever since he discovered that the culprits responsible for bringing them all here were the former rulers of this planet.

It was almost impossible for such a scheme to succeed!

"I think that Davute must definitely have no choice but to surrender to the demands made by the pescans." Ves theorized. "However, I don't think the Mech Trade Association will allow any compromises to be made between humans and aliens."

This caused everyone else to look less optimistic. The pescans may have been able to learn much about the conquerors of their former home planet through unknown means, but their understanding of humanity was still deficient!

If these aliens thought that blackmailing human civilization would produce results, then they would definitely suffer a major penalty!

General Verle "Their original plan likely cannot proceed anymore now that we have escaped those cells. Rather than letting these desperate, traumatized and resentful aliens dictate our fate, it is better to take matters in our own hands and earn our freedom through our own efforts."

"Agreed." Ves said.

"We are approaching the enemy site." Major Durant reminded them. "That is not all. Our scouts have detected elevated activity from the enemy defensive positions. The pescans know we are coming."

#### Chapter 4797 Imperfect Discourse

In a terrain as difficult and confining as this, it was impossible to sneak up on the upper floors.

No matter how primitive the pescans may be, they knew the importance of paying attention to what took place outside of their stronghold.

Ves along with other military leaders carefully observe the live feeds transmitted by the scouts. The feeds showed that hundreds of pescan soldiers began to man the walls and other defenses.

The indigenous aliens utilized fairly basic but practical weapons for the most part. There appeared to be a higher proportion of energy weapons among the troops, and a distressing number of them were transphasic in nature.

"The soldiers armed with transphasic rifles need to be eliminated first." Ves advised.

"Our sharpshooters have already received the necessary instructions." Major Alden Durant of the Davutan guard forces replied. "Their threat towards my men is much greater than your elite guard troops. The second-class combat armor cannot withstand sustained attacks from weapons of this caliber."

The good news was that a lot of alien soldiers were armed with more normal-looking small arms. The quality of these pescan troops were much more reasonable, though they could still pose a significant threat if dozens of them concentrated their fire on individual targets!

"Papa, there are so many of them. Can we win against the aliens?" Andraste asked with a touch of concern.

In order to allow his children to experience the upcoming battle on a more personal level, Ves had brought them along here. Everyone else tolerated the presence of the children as they considered it to be another part of the eccentric nature of the infamous Larkinson Patriarch.

"Of course we can, pumpkin." Ves turned towards his second daughter and grinned. "If we did not have the confidence to vanquish these aliens, we wouldn't have come here in the first place. Do you see all of the projections over here? That is all of the information we gathered on the enemy. Although we haven't figured out the full details of the pescans, we have confirmed that their tech is still stuck in a fairly primitive state. When the disparity in tech becomes too great, the differences in numbers don't play that big of a role."

Although Andraste could easily be fooled by this answer, her mother was not as easy to fool.

He carried Marvaine in her arms as she observed those same projected feeds with much greater concern.

"You do not know what the pescans have stored in the upper floors. Who is to say that their defenses here are representative of their full measures? This prison facility is large enough to fit combat vehicles such as tanks. In addition, these fixed defenses are difficult to destroy with small arms alone. We have to rely on heavy weapons to disable them, but they will run out if we encounter too many obstacles."

He understood these concerns well. "That is just a risk that we have to take. We are not going to allow those uncertainties to put us in a passive position. Tanks may be troublesome, but they are so large and cumbersome that they cannot navigate through the smaller corridors and entrances of this facility. Fixed defenses may make it hard to press much further, but since they are immovable, we can retreat and regroup without a problem."

The military officers had already considered all of these variables before. Even if they knew that they would have to pay a price in blood to defeat these formidable threats, they still chose to press on because the price of doing nothing may be far greater in the end.

As General Verle, Major Durant and the others exchanged their views and adjusted the orders of their troops, an unexpected development occurred.

Upon detecting that the humans had drawn closer, the pescans did not begin with opening fire or anything, but instead sent out a small bot down the large hallway.

"It's not a bot." Ves spoke as he analyzed the simple alien construct after he zoomed in. "It is a remote controlled construct."

His wife nodded in agreement. "It was recently built, possibly within the last hour. The alien that made it possesses great skills, and the tools he used are decent by our standards, but he or she had made it with so much haste that there are too many flaws."

By the time the small head-sized vehicle stopped a fair distance away from the humans around the corner, it began to project a tall, two-dimensional screen.

The tech was different, but its function was familiar. The screen portrayed a well-dressed pescan male who stood behind a display of aged stone and wooden ornaments.

Major Durant straightened his back. "That is Jaharon, the great chief of the city state of Davute! So this is how he has managed to escape our manhunt. He was hiding in this pocket space all of the time!"

This was not an unexpected development. Ves and General Verle exchanged brief glances with each other.

"What do you think this is all about?" Ves asked.

"I cannot say for certain, sir." General Verle softly responded. "This Jaharon alien may be desperate to negotiate a way out for him and the remnants of his race. It may also be that he is preparing to encircle us but needs to stall for time in order to close the net."

Ves did not take the former possibility seriously. These aliens deserved to go extinct for what they have done.

His side also deployed plenty of scouts and observation devices in the surrounding tunnels in order to guard against the latter possibility. This was one of the reasons why they did not rush towards the upper floor at their best speed.

The projected alien figure began to speak at this time.

[HU-MAN.] The tall but oddly-proportioned creature spoke. [WE ASK FOR DISCOURSE BEFORE CUTTING BLADES. PLEASE COMPLY.]

Great Chief Jaharon spoke in his native language, but it appeared that his people managed to develop a pretty good translation program over the years.

Of course, a human-developed translation program would probably be a lot more effective!

"I believe that this alien leader is waiting for one of us to step forward and open up a dialogue with him." General Verle spoke up. "Who among us will speak for our group?"

That was a difficult question.

Ves looked towards Minister Shederin Purnesse, who had been analyzing every scrap of data that the Davutans had on the pescan race.

"The pescans have a long and rich tradition of diplomacy and exchanges." The foreign minister said. "Before the arrival of humanity, the city states frequently warred and traded with each other to varying degrees. A good dialogue has eased many potential conflicts. The pescans understand the need for compromise, but it is not guaranteed that these survivors are as rational as before. Their race is literally driven into a corner, so beware of taking everything at face value."

The major of the guard forces was already prepared to project an image of himself in the corridor. "As the highest representative of the Davutan state, I should speak on everyone's behalf."

"Wait." Ves placed his armored hand on the man's shoulder. "Do you have any experience with talking with aliens? Have you ever been put into a situation as dire as this? You are an infantry officer, not a major leader. I have spoken to a lot more aliens in my life. Let me take the lead."

Alden Durant did not like what he heard. He had given a lot of ground to the Larkinsons, but this was pushing it a bit too far. Although his training did not account for a scenario as unlikely as this, he generally knew that he must step up and represent his colonial state, however young and fragile it may be at this time.

"I must insist on answering the pescan great chief this time. No offense, patriarch, but you are not employed by our state. There is no legal basis for you to speak on behalf of our government."

The man had a good point.

They argued a bit further but Ves eventually took a step back.

It would be fine if he managed to produce a favorable result, but if he screwed up here, he would incur a lot of blame.

Ves also couldn't make promises that he couldn't keep. The chances were too great that the pescan would issue demands that were unacceptable to Davute or the Mech Trade Association.

"Very well. You can go on ahead."

It was hard for Ves to let another person play the leading role. He was so accustomed to being the leading figure of any group that he did not feel comfortable with surrounding power to another person.

Major Durant eventually projected a three-dimensional image of himself in front of the indigenous alien leader.

His image was a lot more realistic and life-like, though he had made sure it did not tower over the image of the alien leader.

"Great Chief Jaharon. I am Major Alden Durant, a guard officer of the armed forces of the colonial state of Davute. You wish to speak?"

Durant deliberately spoke in standard human language, which was a clever choice as it shifted the emphasis on the human side as opposed to that of the aliens.

The great chief did not control his body well. The tall humanoid's body shook as he either possessed a great revulsion towards humans or recognized the major's uniform specifically.

[HU-MAN. DIRTY BLOOD SPILLER. BUTCHER OF YOUNGLINGS. CRIMES UNSTACKABLE. GREAT SCOURGE OF THE EXTRAGALACTIC STARS. SON OF UNHOLY BEASTS.]

Ves and several other humans frowned.

"Are all pescans like this or is this Jaharon fellow particularly badly affected by the fall of his race?" General Verle wondered.

"The records that the Davutans have on the pescan race indicate that they are capable of rational communication and that they maintain good control over their impulses and emotions." Minister Shederin softly spoke. "For the last surviving great chief to deteriorate to this state is... concerning. His conduct does not bode well for the sanity of the rest of his remaining compatriots."

Ves wasn't too sure about that. "It could be an act."

Once the alien leader reluctantly reined in his madness, he finally spoke more purposeful words.

[CEASE YOUR STABBING. I AM ATTEMPTING DISCOURSE WITH YOUR CHIEF. RETURN AND AWAIT OUTCOME.]

Major Durant frowned. "Can you confirm that you are actively negotiating with President Yenames Clive?"

[NAME KNOWN. YES. WE ARE DISCUSSING.]

"For what reason did you take us to this prison? What are you demanding in return for our freedom?"

Minister Shederin jerked his body for a moment. The diplomat clearly didn't approve of how Major Durant approached this conversation.

[WE POSSESS NO STABBING INTENTIONS TO YOU. WE PROPOSE SWAP OF YOUR SKINS FOR OUR SKINS. WE ASK OF LITTLE. I DESIRE TEARING YOUR LEFT ARM, BITE YOUR RIGHT ARM, DEVOUR YOUR HEART AND PLANT YOUR BONE IN MY BED TO CALM OUR DEAD. CANNOT. MUST SAVE MY PESCAN'S INSTEAD. LIFE BETTER THAN DEAD.]

As Major Durant had a duty to guarantee the safety of his charges, he preferred to obtain a peaceful resolution to this problem.

The alien leader sounded reasonable enough now that he had regained most of his calm, but what he was asking for was not that simple to fulfill.

This put the Davutan officer into a difficult position. The man did not quite know how to proceed as he did not want to mess up the ongoing negotiations.

As Major Durant continued to converse with Jaharon, Ves looked around and saw that many soldiers had either grown bewildered or confused.

General Verle also noticed what was happening.

"If we want to launch an attack, we need to do so in the next two minutes." The man silently communicated with Ves over a private communication channel. "If we wait too long, we will lose all of our momentum, which will make it much harder for us to press forward in the face of determined opposition."

Ves discreetly nodded. "I understand. Let me think."

Chapter 4798 Impulsive Trigger

[SINCERE THANKS. WE ARE NOT VIOLENT. WE WANT TO GRIND YOUR FOOT AND THROW YOUR TOE IN VOLCANO, BUT WE ARE TOO EXHAUSTED TO LIFT YOUR LEG. WE ONLY WANT TO FLY INTO STARS AND MAKE NEW HOMELAND. WE HATE WAR. LEAVE US ALONE.]

Ves was growing really annoyed at the awful translation program that incompetently interpreted Jaharon's words.

Although he was smart enough to roughly guess what the alien leader was talking about, he was missing all kinds of nuances and implications due to the strange word choices and odd grammar.

Even so, Ves was still able to pick up a number of clues. The last surviving leader of the pescan race may speak conciliatory words, but his alien body language was both erratic and aggressive.

The image that this presented was a leader who wanted nothing more than to kill as many humans as he could, but that his mission to save what remained of his race took precedence.

"Is this guy truly trying to save his people, though?" Ves questioned.

"Why would you think that is not the case?" His wife responded.

"Because to me, this alien looks like a madman that is driven to a corner. I might not know the pescan race well enough to understand all of their body language and thinking patterns, but if this fellow was a human, he is probably thinking about going out with a bang."

"Shouldn't you have a method of verifying the truth, Ves?"

"You know what, I do! Let me consult my pet prophet for a moment."

Ves lifted the glowing skull in his hand and used it to commune with Ylvaine with greater ease.

Since the human design spirit had recently overutilized his powers, Ylvaine did not have the energy to make costly predictions.

This meant that Ves needed to ask the right question that would best give him the answers he needed.

"Will the humans trapped here in this prison be able to escape here alive?"

Uncertain. Ylvaine could not get a read on the answer of this question because the immediate future surrounding the prison was in flux.

No. it was more than that. From the wordless impressions that the Great Prophet was feeding back to Ves, it appeared that there was so much chaos surrounding what might happen in the following hours that the entire future became obscured!

Let alone making more profound predictions, Ylvaine couldn't even determine whether the local star would be able to rise on Kotor City the next day!

That puzzled and concerned Ves. "Why? Why is this the case?"

The answer was complicated, as always. Too many ace pilots were involved, for one. This indicated that whatever was happening inevitably involved a lot of powerful personalities who produced so much interference that they practically made it impossible for Ylvaine to read anything meaningful.

However, a lack of an answer was sometimes an answer in itself.

Ves narrowed his eyes. Anything that produced a huge mess and involved lots of ace mechs was inevitably bad news in his opinion!

The clues he gathered from Ylvaine matched his concerns. Whether he was being paranoid or not, having an extra source to back up his suspicions strengthened his belief that Great Chief Jaharon was hatching a nefarious plan!

"I think this guy is stalling." He told his fellow Larkinsons. "Whatever words are coming out of his mouth are a bunch of nonsense. He should know that humans like us aren't so gracious as to let him blackmail us into leaving. Even an alien must be clever enough to know that he loses his leverage as long as he gives up his hostages. He will either have to keep us for a long time or resort to another plan to escape human space. That, or he has decided to go out with a bang and wants as many humans as possible to suffer."

Unlike Ves, General Verle did not possess any sharp intuition. "I cannot say anything definite without solid proof. I agree with you that Great Chief Jaharon is unlikely to represent himself truthfully, but that is normal among leaders and politicians."

They both turned to Director Ranya Wodin and Minister Shederin Purnesse.

Ranya was an exobiologist, and while studying intelligent alien species was not her specialty, she could still tell a lot more about alien species than ordinary people.

"I have been studying the information supplied by the Davutans. We should be thankful that Major Durant and a few other officers still retain old briefings and intelligence packages. According to what I have read, the pescans are a young race that have remained fairly sheltered, but not to an exaggerated degree. They should understand the rules of negotiation, deception, deceit and cheating."

"Can you judge that the alien is lying to us at the moment?"

"...I do not have sufficient data to do that, sir." Gloriana's cousin replied. "I can only say the possibility exists."

"Shederin?"

"Reading aliens is different from reading humans, especially if I am unfamiliar with them. My extensive experience with speaking with comparable figures leads me to believe that Great Chief Jaharon has ulterior motives. I cannot rationally explain why I am inclined to believe this, but this is my tentative answer."

All of these answers strengthened Ves' suspicions. If it was up to him, he would have cut this farce short and launched an attack right away.

However, he needed to take Major Durant's opinions into account, however burdensome it may be. The Larkinsons needed the support of the Davutan guard forces in order to press the assault forward.

Without sufficient numbers, his honor guards would probably get overwhelmed!

"It's so troublesome to rely on external forces." Ves muttered.

He had been so pampered in the past. Let alone the Larkinson Clan, the Glory Seekers and the Cross Clan often did what he asked without casting too much doubt.

Although he suspected the pescans of playing tricks, he first needed to gather evidence before he could launch a proper attack.

As he observed the alien continuing to take Major Durant on a ride, he suddenly gained an unusual idea that might just work.

Ves boldly decided to project himself in front of the alien as well!

"You... what are you doing, patriarch?" Major Durant looked incensed at the unwelcome interruption.

Ves ignored the infantry guard leader's query. He didn't have time to explain himself at the moment. He only paid attention to the alien leader.

[LARKINSON FATHER. KNOW YOU. FAMOUS. STABBER OF GREAT ONES. WARRIOR. MAKER. ARCHCRIMINAL.]

Ves smirked. "You are missing a few titles, alien."

[I UNUNDERSTAND YOU, WEAVER OF MECHANICALS.]

The mech designer did not answer immediately.

Instead, he channeled the Phase King once again and fully let go of his own restraint!

This not only allowed him to channel the Phase King's glow to the greatest possible extent, but also increased his phasewater affinity to the point where he was able to resonate with the transphasic parts of his Unending Regalia to a minor extent!

The vibe he exuded became a lot more grand and inscrutable. Although his appearance hadn't changed to a significant degree, the impression he made had become a lot more inhuman!

This produced a noticeable reaction from Gloriana, his children and the other people around him. It was as if an alien had taken possession of his body, which wasn't that far from the truth!

The creepy human skull also added to his monstrous vibe. It glowed a lot brighter than before as it provided a huge amount of help in channeling the aura of the Phase King.

Ves finally answered with a voice filled with unbounded strength.

"RURUWHGGUUUHA RFUHAHUGH."

[POSSIBILITY DENIED! DIVINITY REJECTION! CANNOT MAKE POSSIBLE!]

"GGFRRUUUGHWA ARUGHWUGUH."

[AAAAAAAAAAAAHHHHHHH! STABBING DEATH RAIN OF METEORITES CITIES DROWN MY HEART SMILES WITH DESOLATION ENTRANCES ARE COLLAPSED GOD HAS FORSAKEN AND RETURNED!]

"What did you tell the alien, Ves?!" Gloriana quietly asked. "What have you done to drive him to madness?"

"Oh, it's nothing. I just told him I was a phase lord, that was all. Even I did not expect this fellow to get triggered to this extent. He is a lot less stable than I expected."

"The indigenous alien community does not have a secular view towards phase lords." Minister Shederin clarified. "That is a purely human construct. Since the phase lords themselves buy into the theory that they can be gods, what Ves has done is pass himself off as a god as well."

Gloriana burst into smiles. "Really?!"

While the woman became oddly happy, the same could not be said for other people.

Major Durant maintained tight control over his emotions, so he did not outright glare at Ves. To say he was unhappy was an understatement, though.

"You are ruining our dialogue, patriarch. I must ask you to cease your interference this instant!"

Ves waved towards the maddened alien who seemed to have forgotten all about the humans observing his abnormal conduct.

"Look at him. Do you think he can be a good actor? This alien has clearly snapped. There is no way that you can trust him to negotiate in good faith."

That produced enough doubt for Ves to continue speaking with the alien.

"RGUUUUUGHRHU RWERUUGUGHGUUGG RFGGUGGGRHG."

This time, the projection of Great Chief Jaharon snarled!

[UNTRUTHS DECEPTION STAB! WE ARE RETRIBUTION GROWING LIKE SAPLINGS AND ESCAPING THE STARS! YOUR DEMISE IS SCHEDULED, AS IS THE DEMISE OF OUR HOME! FREEDOM YEARNS FREE, AND YOUR GREAT BROTHER ANCESTOR SHALL BREAK THE SOIL OF OUR CITY STATE AND PRODUCE GRAVES UPON OUR SOARING!]

Although the alien spoke a lot of words that were difficult to decipher, Ves latched onto one particular phrase that caused his intuition to ring alarm bells.

"WRHHGUUGUCW IU AAAAAWURRUUR?"

[GHAGAHHGAHGHAAHAA!] Great Chief Jaharon let out an unhinged laugh that was decidedly not normal for his species. [ANCIENT GOD MORE ANCIENT AND BLOODED THAN YOURS IS OUR GOD! FINAL COUNTDOWN IS UPON US. DESTROY CHAINS AND UNDO OUR HOME! TOO LATE, ALL WILL BREAK. FALSE GOD YOU SHALL DECEASED!]

"What is the alien talking about now?!"

"If Great Chief Jaharon's outburst is true, then we are in great danger." Minister Shederin spoke. "According to my interpretation of his latest words, the alien leader speaks of the presence of another phase lord, one that is greater and more powerful than what Ves pretends to be. I can surmise that Great Chief Jaharon may have colluded with this phase lord to somehow escape together in such a violent fashion that Kotor City may suffer untold damage in the process!"

That was an alarming possibility!

Ves felt that the alien was not lying this time!

Jaharon's badly translated words conveyed a lot of menace and a desire to inflict retribution onto the humans. No words were needed to make it clear that the alien derived a lot of satisfaction at the thought of killing a lot of humans!

"That does not sound like a leader who is ready to compromise." Ves told his fellow people.

"Prepare to attack. We cannot wait any longer."

"Patriarch!" Major Durant barked. "Wait! Let us not be hasty! We cannot afford to take action based on misunderstandings!"

"We don't need any further clarification. We have clear evidence that this alien is plotting to kill us along with many people living in Kotor City by freeing a supposed phase lord from this prison. Don't you realize it already, Durant?! One of the larger cells holds an ancient being of great power. We need to head to the primary control room upstairs and see if we can stop that from happening!"

"You have no proof!"

"Then we will collect it over the dead bodies of those aliens! If you have any shred of duty towards Davute and its people, then you should order your men to back up my honor guards!"

Ves turned towards his children all of a sudden.

At the same time, he held his free hand and materialized the Amastendira in his hands.

"As your father, let me give you a lesson. There are times when procrastination and letting inertia hold you back are detrimental. In situations like these, you need to take drastic action and do

whatever it takes to break the game. Do not hesitate to do what you think is right. As long as you have weighed the risks and are willing to pay the price, just pull the trigger."

Gloriana started to have a bad feeling about this. "What are you doing, Ves?"

"What does it look like?" he grinned as he became more assured in his decision. "I am pulling the trigger!"

Chapter 4799 Inciting Actor

Even as numerous people started to question his odd behavior, Ves said goodbye to the Phase King and called upon Zeigra.

It may be because the Crown Cat had melded extremely closely with his father, but Zeigra possessed a much greater compatibility with Ves!

His vibe exuded a lot of aggression and excitement all of a sudden!

The primordial human skull in his hands no longer exuded an air of mystique, but turned into an illusionary flaming skull that ignited the fire in everyone's hearts!

Ves moved away from the command center and moved forward until he joined up with his honor guards.

"Let's go! March forward and do not stop until you have reached the top!"

"Wait, don't go, Ves!"

Ves ignored everyone else's well-meaning advice and turned around the corner to fire his Amastendira at the nearest turret!

His aim wasn't half-bad these days. The burning bright laser beam struck the defensive installation, causing it to produce a piercing blow that not only cut through its structure, but also damaged whatever was behind!

"ATTACK!"

The bold strike along with the spread of Zeigra's aggressive glow seemed to spur all of the other soldiers to launch their own attacks!

They hadn't even bothered to wait for orders before they joined in on the assault!

"This is madness!" Major Durant uttered in shock and disbelief!

No matter how many orders he transmitted to his units, his troops no longer paid attention to him anymore.

The guard captains may have remained sober enough to understand that they were acting contrary to their orders, but their men just thought that since the Larkinson Patriarch ran ahead, the plan had already commenced!

It was a big misunderstanding that was exacerbated by the aggressive glow that Ves deliberately propagated to the soldiers around him. The man seemed to excel at grasping and inciting the emotions of the people around him, causing them to lose their rationality and to become his unwitting slaves!

Although Major Durant deeply wanted to find a peaceful resolution to their dangerous predicament, now that 'the humans' had fired the first shot, the possibility to reconcile with the pescan remnants had dropped to almost zero!

There was no way he could continue to negotiate the release of the humans trapped within the prison.

Since that was the case, Major Durant had little choice but to support the Larkinsons and hope that their decision to switch to an aggressive strategy yielded results.

"Fire the rockets according to our original plan!"

The heavy weapon specialists who were situated further in the rear exhibited much greater control. They had to be more careful about the firepower in their possession as a single mistake could have devastating consequences.

As such, they kept their weapons in check and waited for an unambiguous order before they took action.

Now that Major Durant had spoken the words, the heavy weapon specialists confirmed the settings of their missile launchers and made sure to inspect the instructions that they programmed into the missiles.

It was only then that they fired their warheads!

Seven guided projectiles quickly flew into the air and began to rapidly turn around a couple of corners before they headed straight onto the enemy defenses!

The heavy turrets and other defensive installations had only just begun to come online. It was as if not even the pescans expected the humans to disrespect their great chief and open fire right away!

The only weapons to open fire were automated projectile interception systems. Rapid streams of kinetic projectiles attempted to shoot down the missiles, but these transphasic guided munitions were not only fast, but could also take a few hits without getting affected!

In the end, the distance was too short and the speed of the missiles were too fast. The warheads struck their intended targets without any suspense and blew them to pieces without fail!

The Davutan guard forces apparently invested a lot of money into acquiring destructive transphasic missiles!

Munitions of this grade were hard to come by and costly to expend, but the Davutan guard forces were backed by a state and carried an important duty.

Davute's ability to earn phasewater was not low on account of its unceasing efforts to create an open and tolerant trade hub.

The superior economic circumstances of Davute even allowed the government to equip its troops with consumable transphasic products on a greater scale.

How luxurious!

As explosions engulfed a part of the fortifications that the pescans had built in this abandoned ancient prison facility, the surviving alien defenders flinched or slackened their fire.

This only encouraged the human soldiers to attack even harder!

"Concentrate your fire onto the other turrets!"

"Sharpshooters, keep your eye out for pescan defenders armed with transphasic weapons."

"Fire the second batch of missiles!"

The broad tunnel became flooded with explosions yet again, causing both humans and aliens to flinch or groan once again.

The fact that these explosions occurred in a confined space made them even worse!

It couldn't be helped. The defenses had to be destroyed as quickly as possible in order to prevent the assault from getting beaten back with ease.

As Ves continued to fire his Amastendira at different targets, he noted that the return fire from the defenders had already dropped by more than half.

The targeting of the defensive installations had been especially helpful as much of the bigger guns in alien hands had already been destroyed!

This was crucial in maintaining the momentum of this attack.

"We need to push forward!" Ves roared in frenzied encouragement! "We need to take over this entire floor before the pescans catch their breath and get their act together. Rush forward!"

It was absolutely amazing and horrifying that the leader of a large clan that played a pivotal role in Davute had put himself in front of other soldiers!

However, people couldn't help but admire a leader that dared to charge forward like no tomorrow and endure the same risks as every other soldier. This was why mech officers who commanded his troops in the trenches were often a lot more effective in inspiring fellow mech pilots.

It became unquestionable to every trooper that was a formidable fighter!

This was especially the case when he fired his powerful first-class laser pistol in one hand and channeled the aggression of Zeigra through the primordial human skull with his other hand.

He looked like a mystical space pirate that had stepped straight out of an action drama!

Of course, Ves did not stay in the vanguard of the human troops for long.

Even though it looked like he had gone absolutely bonkers by charging at the front, he still maintained a shred of rationality and calculation.

He knew how much damage his Unending Regalia could take. If his armor somehow failed to protect him sufficiently, then his personal shield generator could make up the difference.

With the level of protection that he now enjoyed, it was extremely difficult for attacks to kill him in a single blow.

Ves did not even exhibit that much fear against transphasic weapons as his modified Unending Regalia had become a lot better at resisting attacks of this nature.

The only possible concern was that his armor and energy shield could not protect him against the kinetic force of an overwhelming physical attack.

Even so, he would only get blasted off his feet and get knocked around for a moment.

Right now, his beliefs were vindicated as the more responsive and trained pescan soldiers shot at the obvious human target in front of their sights!

Dozens of laser beams struck his Unending Regalia without producing any noticeable results.

The physical attacks were a little more annoying, but his armor resisted them easily enough.

"Hah! Is that the best you can do, aliens?! Come on, men! These aliens are not as tough as they look. The pescan race is a defeated race. Let us hasten their extinction!"

His main purpose was not to fight like a champion, but to incite the foot-dragging Davutan guard forces into committing an assault.

Now that hundreds of infantry guard troopers as well as hundreds more private guards employed by other groups followed the plan and rapidly advanced into the enemy stronghold, there was no need for Ves to set such a dramatic example anymore.

Whether people noticed it or not, he did not march as quickly as the other troopers. This was how the latter quickly overtook Ves and started to carry the brunt of the assault.

With hundreds of laser rifles and gauss rifles firing in the direction of the opposing pescans, the monster that Ves had created through his drastic actions had fully matured!

Even if Ves withdrew Zeigra's glow, the troopers would still press on with their attack!

His honor guards had also caught up by now and took up positions around him. "Sir, please withdraw to the command group!"

A part of Ves wanted to say no and continue to press forward, but he reined in this irrational impulse.

It may be fine to indulge in his desire to fight once in a while, but he should not forget his original identities.

He was a dignified clan leader and a solemn mech designer. How could anyone like him turn himself into cannon fodder on his own accord? It should be other people who took on this job on his behalf!

Ves was not stupid, so he took a deep breath and started to turn back. "Very well. You guys must proceed, though. The other forces are doing well so far, but they will definitely face a lot more opposition. Only you can lead them further."

The honor guards nodded and gripped their heavy assault rifles before marching forward at a steady but solid pace.

Their heavy luminar crystal rifles began to spit out large disruptor beams and slicer beams.

These specialized luminar crystal attack patterns excelled at taking out energy shields and armored targets.

A lot of pescan soldiers couldn't withstand the firepower of the armaments of the honor guards!

It was a pity that Ves hadn't gotten around to making them transphasic, or else they would have been able to inflict a lot more damage on the pescan transphasic defensive installations.

Even so, the combined damage output of just a small group of honor guards was still enough to overwhelm the intact defenses by relying on sheer quantity.

With hundreds of other human troopers making their own contributions, it was not as hard as it looked to destroy the first line of defense!

Unfortunately, the pescans weren't completely defenseless, though.

Once the alien soldiers started to fight in earnest, they managed to slay plenty of humans.

In one instance, a turret fired a wide energy beam that vaporized an entire squad of infantry troops.

Since the soldiers didn't carry any shield generators or other exceptional gear, the chances of those troopers surviving was minimal no matter whether they were wearing any transphasic combat armor.

The casualties did not affect everyone's morale. They had already commenced the attack with the resolve to fight for everyone's lives, and Zeigra's unceasing glow encouraged them not to think too much!

Ves did not think it was wise to maintain this glow forever. Unceasing aggression could be useful in spurring soldiers on, but it could also tire fighters out a lot faster than they should.

For now, all was fine. The pescans had finally rallied to the point where their resistance had stiffened deeper into their camp on this floor.

If the human infantry forces couldn't overcome this hurdle, then they wouldn't be able to invade the floors above their heads!

"Speed up! Don't slow down! We've moved past their initial defenses!"

Aliens cried out as they fought with uncommon ferocity. The hatred towards humans had boiled in their alien hearts for so long that they couldn't hold back their impulses anymore!

It looked as if Zeigra's glow was affecting the aliens as well! The agitation produced by the feline design spirit seemed to induce these aliens into a similar frenzy, causing them to fight back no matter the consequences!

#### Chapter 4800 Unhealthy Fixation

As Ves looked down at what he held in his armored hands, he had the illusion that David's skull was a far more effective weapon in this battle than his old but trusty Amastendira.

"Damn."

This was not only a recognition that David's skull could be incredibly powerful in the right hands, but also an admission that his Amastendira had fallen behind the times!

This shouldn't be surprising. He hadn't upgraded it or altered it in any way.

Previously, this was because he lacked the skills and resources to mess with such exquisite first-class weapons.

Later on, Ves had been afraid of ruining the weapon's connection to the System.

Those conditions no longer applied anymore. He had become a lot more knowledgeable and already formulated many ideas on how he could completely reshape and reinvent his signature weapon.

He just never got around to it because he became preoccupied with other projects.

He also assumed that no one would be stupid enough to confront him by himself and put him in a situation where he needed to attack in person.

He was wrong. This incident had shown that there were always enemies out there that could target Ves directly.

"An effective gun in my hand is a lot more useful than tens of thousands of mechs that are out of reach."

Although Ves still had other weapons at his disposal, his attachment to his Amastendira had become strong enough for him to stick to it rather than switch to a new weapon entirely.

He already decided that as soon as this was over, he would wait until he had entered the right mood before he completely overhauled his Amastendira!

As a talented, brilliant and experienced mech designer, Ves no longer felt as comfortable wielding an imitation of a real masterwork weapon.

He wanted to wield a real masterwork weapon, and one crafted by his own hand no less!

As a mech designer with multiple masterwork certificates on his record, Ves knew that it was never simple to make a masterwork gadget on demand.

He needed to turn it into a passion project rather than just a routine project, and in his experience "Careful! The aliens have planted boobytraps! Wait for our scanners to detect them so that we can blow them up in advance!"

that only tended to happen if he became inspired and enflamed with passion.

Ves did not have any brilliant ideas relating to luminar crystal technology at the moment, but he was sure that recent events gave him enough material for him to gain inspiration sooner or later.

For now, all he could do with regards to the Amastendira was wait and continue to deepen his accumulation until the fateful period had come.

Meanwhile, the assault on the floor was proceeding better than he hoped. The initial defensive line got blown up by a succession of missiles, allowing the hundreds of human infantry soldiers to enter the floor and attack the pescans on more favorable ground.

"Press the attack!"

"Don't blow up that structure! Our scanners detect that the pescans have stored a small stockpile of phasewater and other resources inside."

"Careful! The aliens have planted boobytraps! Wait for our scanners to detect them so that we can blow them up in advance!"

"Do not rashly chase the aliens as they retreat! They know the terrain better than us and can use the more confining spaces to avoid getting overwhelmed."

Although the pescans were starting to take down more soldiers due to terrain advantages, this shouldn't last unless the pescans in the floors further above launch a counterattack.

As the initial defense line of the alien remnants no longer posed a threat, the command group moved forward so that they could remain in sufficient contact with the other troops.

As Ves reunited with the people he should have been sticking with, their remarks weren't all that good.

"What were you thinking, Ves?!" Gloriana screeched. "I can tolerate many of your antics, but what you have done goes way above the line! While I can understand your need to set an example and spur all of the soldiers onwards, you are NOT supposed to be anywhere close to a position where an enemy gun can shoot at you. The risks are too great! Are you deliberately trying to make me a widow and have our children grow up without the father they deserve?"

General Verle let out a sigh and crossed his arms. "I do not often see eye to eye with your wife, but I have to agree with her for once. What you have done is not only disproportionately risky, but also unnecessary. Just firing your laser pistol at the enemy from the furthest possible distance along with utilizing that handy glow trick of yours was enough to set our plans in motion."

Ves stubbornly shook his head. "I am a Larkinson. Perhaps you don't entirely know what that means, but to me a Larkinson must be brave. It is why our lineage have become so famed and successful in combat. It is also why other people trust us to fight by their side and do right by them. Yes, I could have hung back, but that would paint me in a completely different light. People aren't stupid you know. The soldiers whose lives are at risk will regard me as a manipulative politician who talks big but always cowers behind everyone's back as soon as anything actually dangerous occurs. Instead, my bold actions have ensured that they will see me as their brother in arms, which will make it much easier to order them around without question."

Ves could feel the trust and admiration he attracted from the soldiers as they swept through the current floor.

It was too bad his wife did not see it that way.

Gloriana glowered at him. "You have an unhealthy fixation towards cowardice, Ves. This is starting to look more and more dangerous in my opinion. Your compulsive need to avoid an association with timidity and cowardice is if you constantly make bold and dangerous decisions. Are you unable to recognize your own faults?"

That caused Ves to narrow his eyes and think back on his many flaws and shortcomings.

He was not blinded by his rush of power. There were much bigger fish in the pond, and just their unconscious movements were enough to produce harmful ripple effects!

Nonetheless, it was this inadequacy that constantly made him feel as if he was short on time. He could not afford to take it slow and steady because then he would have failed to make enough progress to address the crises in the future.

How could he explain all of that to his wife and the high-ranking people around him? He could not divulge all of the information he possessed because a few were bound to trigger the hell out of the more sensitive and upright people.

Major Alden Durant happened to be one of them. He completely gave up on trying to understand the eccentric Larkinson Patriarch.

This man was much crazier than described in the rumors surrounding the man!

There was no point in trying to cast blame or start a fight at this junction. What was done was done, so the major vastly preferred to talk business.

"According to the maps and other intelligence that you have provided us, there are two more floors above us. The scouts sent to scope out the next floor have reported another layer of fortifications and defensive works. Many of the retreating pescans have fallen back to these positions so that they can work towards bleeding our resources for another round. We cannot sustain such an assault, especially when we have run low on transphasic missiles."

"The pescans did not put all of their eggs in a single basket." General Verle analyzed. "While we were able to breach this floor considerably easier than expected, we will only encounter tougher defensive works on the next floors. This should be a means of causing us to expend our limited resources in areas that are not as useful. It is a common strategy in base assaults."

That did not sound good to Ves at all. These pescans understood sound military strategy and could even predict the behavior of the humans to an extent!

"These aliens are going all-out on defense."

Verle nodded. "The tiered defense strategy employed by the pescans is also blunting the effectiveness of our flanking assaults. Detachments assigned to attack from the side and rear of this floor has played no role this time, though that may change in the next attack seeing that the next floor is of much greater significance to the aliens.

"The strategy employed by the pescans show that they expected to take severe losses and that they were willing to take the blows in order to produce another result." Major Durant affirmed the general's words. "The aliens are trading lives and space for time. The greatest question is what requires them to buy so much time."

This fell in line with Ves' suspicions. "I told you these aliens are up to no good. Jaharon's earlier talk was just a ruse, and you fell for it because he understood your concerns."

Although Alden Durant did not directly reply to that, his stormy expression and the clues that he gathered already showed that he had come around to this viewpoint.

The contradiction between the Larkinsons and the Davutan guard forces had eased as a result.

"It is more important to consider how we should conquer the next floor and the one after that." General Verle focused on what needed to be done in the present. "From our initial scouting reports, we have observed less fixed defenses but much more civilian construction. A lot more pescans also reside over there. We will most certainly face greater resistance that can't easily be eliminated with the use of heavy weapons."

When Ves and the others glanced at the projections produced by the various spy drones, they saw that the pescans were organizing their civilians. No matter how poor their combat effectiveness may be, once they donned a basic armored suit whose arms extended into laser guns, they could still pose a threat through massed firepower!

"How much ammunition and relevant supplies do we have left?"

"They are still at adequate levels for the most part." Major Durant responded. "While our guard infantry have been equipped with loadouts on the assumption that they can replenish their spent ammunition and batteries from nearby supply depots, the conquest of this floor did not drag out too much with the help of our missile salvos. Now that our heavy weapon specialists are down to their last warheads, we cannot repeat this feat."

Ves once again experienced the frustration of not bringing enough firepower and support to a battle. He really felt frustrated for only being able to bring his honor guards to this fight. Their quality was excellent but their quantity was wholly insufficient.

"We have already come this far." He stated. "We need to finish the job. Even without the use of missiles, we can still press forward."

"The pescans are most certainly more prepared this time, sir. They have figured us out and know what we are capable of. Seeing that the floor above us appears to be the main and only living space for most of their civilians, the aliens who have lost their homeland will most assuredly fight to the death. Not only do we have to fight a brutal urban battle, the aliens should also hide a few surprises upstairs."

Conquering this floor did not feel like a true victory. Though the humans had undoubtedly ruined the enemy's plan to bleed the attacking force, the next phase of the battle was probably the true fight!

"Let's regroup and use the time we have left to figure out the enemy's weaknesses." Ves proposed. "We have barged into their territory and taken control of this floor before the defenders could take away a lot of assets. We have samples of their tech and we may even be able to salvage intact weapons that we can employ against their former owners. Perhaps we'll be lucky and find missiles or other heavy weapons."