

## The Mech 4991

### Chapter 4991 Grand Convergence II

The imminent return of the Spirit of Bentheim energized the Golden Skull Alliance.

The Glory Seekers, the Crossers, the Adelaines and the Boojays had long expressed their impatience about their continued stay in Davute.

Many of them had become inspired by the expeditionary fleet's past successes. Dreams of rending apart alien warships and plundering hundreds of kilograms of phasewater enthralled many ambitious people.

It had been too long since the expeditionary fleet last fought a thrilling battle!

Though Ves became slightly more distracted by all of the activities related to the expanded fleet's departure from Davute, he still spent most of his time on fleshing out the Dawn Star Project.

The Larkinson Biotech Institute reported that the organic components for the Carmine System were already growing as best as could be expected under the current conditions.

Ves found it quite annoying to work around the limitations of biotechnology.

The biotissue used to create the Carmine System needed to be formulated based on Benjamin Larkinson's DNA.

Every implementation of this organic system also had to match the specifications of a particular design.

If Ves wanted to popularize the concept of 'carmine mechs', then he needed to reduce the complexity of his work.

It was essential for him to design a more generic and universal version of the Carmine System.

This way, specialized biotech companies could produce them en masse and readily supply them to any mech factories responsible for fabricating a lot of carmine mechs.

Ves already started to entertain ideas on how he could turn this into a reality. Designing a generic Carmine System that could readily form a Blood Pact with any human individual sounded difficult, but not impossible.

The most crucial requirement was to ensure that blood connection did not trigger any rejection reaction from the mech pilot.

"I may have to cooperate with an advanced biotech company in order to increase the safety of my universal system."

As Ves continued to make brisk progress in his Dawn Star Project, he became interrupted by another unexpected development.

Normally, Ves was inclined to leave most matters aside in order to save his grandfather's life as quickly as possible, but the contents of the latest message immediately caused him to suspend his work.

"What?!"

Ves almost couldn't believe what he just read!

Although he was sure that his personal assistant did not pass it on without personally verifying that the notification was authentic, Ves still needed to make sure he wasn't being fooled!

"Benny!" Ves roared as soon as he called his personal assistant. "Have you grown lazy or sloppy after all of these years? Tell me whether this message is accurate!"

Gavin Neumann looked as if he already expected his immediate superior to summon him for an explanation. He projected several different logs that showed that he put in the work.

"I personally verified the mail that you have received. I contacted the school in question and talked to one of the secretaries. The administration has a file on you that confirms that it has serious interest in exploring whether it is possible for you to teach a couple of virtual courses. Isn't this what you sought? This outcome is much better than you could have hoped for, boss!"

"Far be it for me to look a gift horse in the mouth, but this particular offer is far too enticing to make any sense." ves narrowed his eyes in suspicion. "I applied for a teaching position at a number of first-class mech design universities, but they were all struggling and failing institutions that are located in relatively neutral regions. I distinctly remember that I did not reach out to a university of this caliber!"

Gavin looked perplexed. "I get that, boss, but that is not a reason for you to regard this invitation as a trap. I already asked around and discovered that one of the schools you originally applied for has passed your name to another institution. Many schools are connected to each other. They can be competitors as well as allies. What often happens is that former classmates continue to stay in touch with each other even as they go on to work at vastly different mech design universities. That is how your name fell into the ears of the recruiting office of the Eden Institute."

Ves studied the brief amount of information that he quickly retrieved from the galactic net.

The Eden Institute of Business & Technology was a recently founded university that centered around educating the next generation of businessmen and mech designers.

It was mainly oriented towards the mech industry. By educating aspiring businessmen and mech designers at the same time, the Eden Institute hoped that the two student groups would learn from each other.

Mech design students would learn how to run a business and form many useful connections with numerous different companies in advance.

Business students would learn how to work together with engineers and mech designers while also forming promising ties with future stars.

According to the reports on the galactic net, the first-raters regarded the Eden Institute of Business & Technology as a middle-tier university.

It received a lot of funding and support from its investors, but it lacked the reputation, prestige and brand value of an old galaxy institution.

The school also did not put a lot of emphasis on academic research, but that could still change in the future.

All in all, the Eden Institute actually sounded like a nice place to attend, if not for a single major blemish.

"This goddamn university is located in the Agamemnon Upper Zone!" Ves complained!

"The zone may be located a lot further away than the other schools you applied for, but—"

"It's not about the distance! It's about the fact that this zone falls under the jurisdiction of the Terran Alliance! The Eden Institute is a Terran-run university!"

Ves may have recently formed plans to establish relations with the Terrans, but he intended to take baby steps at first!

Applying to teach a bunch of arrogant and hyper-intelligent Terran brats was way too fast for his liking!

"Oh, come on, Ves. Isn't this what you have always dreamt of? Don't reject it just because it sounds too good to be true. You should at least attend the interview session and explore whether you agree with the Eden Institute's terms. This may be your best opportunity to come into contact with first-class mech design in the short term. I do not know if any serious first-class university will even think about hiring you. Don't throw this chance away before you have done your due diligence."

Ves eventually sighed as he thought this matter true. Gavin was right. If the offer was serious, then it would be way too premature to throw it away.

"Fine. I will give this a shot. Let's see whether the Terrans are truly serious about this stuff."

It turned out that it was not so simple for Ves to talk to the Eden Institute about employment opportunities right away.

He first had to complete a comprehensive examination that lasted for up to half a day.

Ves became immersed into different virtual environments. He filled out an exam paper like he had returned to school, but also demonstrated his fabrication skills by operating a highly complicated Terran-developed superfab.

Although Ves was not that comfortable with exposing his design capabilities, he still decided to do his best.

He wanted to maximize his chances of getting hired and increase the probability that he would be able to teach the more important courses of the Eden Institute's study programs.

While Ves felt that he had performed quite well as a recently advanced Senior Mech Designer, the problem was that he could only demonstrate his competency in second-class mech design!

It was still too premature for him to teach any classes that were directly related to first-class multipurpose mechs!

Once he completed the virtual tests, he received a one hour break before he finally received a notification that a school official was ready to conduct an interview.

"That's fast." Ves noted.

His test results apparently hadn't disqualified him. This was good news.

He finally arrived at a virtual office where he took his seat in front of an aged but dignified-looking woman.

Ves expected to meet with an ordinary recruiter.

Instead, he somehow entered into a discussion with the dean of the Department of Humanoid Mech Design, one who also happened to be a Master Mech Designer who lived for over three centuries!

"I can understand your skepticism." Master Laila Rebecca Devos spoke to Ves in a steady but unquestionably authoritative voice. "You do not fit the mold of a professor of a Terran educational institution. It is plain to see that you are still wondering why we are considering adding you to our teaching staff."

Ves tentatively nodded. There was no way he could hide his confusion in front of such an old Master.

"Please explain, Master Devos."

She smiled, making herself look even more elegant than before.

Master Leila Rebecca Devos still looked as if she was a healthy grandmother rather than a decrepit old corpse. Her life-prolonging treatments had been remarkably effective.

"I am an old associate of the MTA Mech Supremacist Faction." The Terran plainly responded. "I have cooperated with the Mech Supremacists for centuries. It is true that our Eden Institute did not have any interest in hiring you as a teacher at first, but Professor Gina Cavendish has brought you to my attention. She has praised your talents and your ingenuity, and suggested that you may be particularly suited to teach a number of our courses. The test results confirm her judgment."

So that was why the Eden Institute contacted Ves all of a sudden!

It was the Mech Supremacists that arranged for this connection!

Ves did not know whether to thank or blame Professor Cavendish, but for now he was inclined to view this development in a favorable light.

The Mech Supremacists had no reason to screw Ves over!

"What sort of courses are you willing to let me teach at your department?" Ves asked.

"The test results reveal that you are well-suited to teach three new elective courses, each of which you can organize yourself as they are based on your strengths. We may also consider the decision to assign you as a lecturer at two more courses, one elective and one mandatory. Both Introduction to Phasewater Theory and Crystallography can benefit from your surprisingly good mastery of these subjects, but you will need to prove your ability to teach our students before we permit you to teach these courses."

Ves' eyes lit up! Becoming involved in these courses sounded like a great way to get in touch with a lot of serious mech design students!

"What of the rest, Master?"

"Based on your record, your suggestions and your test results, we are open to letting you organize and teach three different elective courses. Frontier Wisdom should serve as an excellent guide for aspiring pioneers and more adventurous individuals. Introduction to Living Mech Design will likely

be a niche addition to our university's elective course list. Advanced Manual Superfab Operation will be a more serious course that should attract a sufficient amount of mech design students on account of excellent craftsmanship."

These courses sounded quite reasonable.

Ves became happy when the Eden Institute was actually open to allowing him to teach his proposed Frontier Wisdom class!

What was even better was that the university was also willing to let him organize a course that was centered around living mechs!

As for the last course, there was no way that he could help any young mech design student fabricate masterwork mechs in the short term. Ves might get in trouble if the students who attended this course did not gain much of an improvement in their mech fabrication skills.

Oh well.

Ves continued to discuss the details of becoming a professor at the Eden Institute.

Master Leila Devos may be a high-ranking member of the Greater Terran United Confederation, but she did not look down on Ves in any fashion.

This reassured him as he felt that the Eden Institute showed enough goodwill to him that he could foresee that he might actually do well if he started to work for this recently founded Terran university!

### Chapter 4992 Grand Convergence III

Ves had a long and fruitful discussion with Master Leila Rebecca Devos.

The dean and highly respectable Terran Master Mech Designer not only talked about his specific teaching responsibilities, but also explained the circumstances of her school.

"The Eden Institute is a minor component of a larger revival plan of the Devos Ancient Clan." She patiently explained to the young second-rater. "It is not a secret that the ancient clan that I am a part of is in decline. We have always ranked low among all of the other leading Terrans, but the opening of the Red Ocean has presented us with the possibility of improving our standing."

This was a familiar story to Ves. Many of the losers of the old galaxy invested heavily into the Red Ocean in the hopes of catching up and surpassing their old rivals!

"I see. Is the Devos Ancient Clan serious about supporting the Eden Institute?"

The old female Master nodded. "That is correct. Our ancient clan has invested heavily to acquire a claim to the Riston Territory in the Agamemnon Upper Zone. The New Constantinople System is the preeminent port system of our territory, and it is undergoing constant expansion. The Eden Institute is a business and mech design university that we have founded with the explicit intention to enrich and diversify our regional mech industry."

That explained a bit more why the Eden Institute possessed such a strong focus towards the commercial sector.

"Our ancient clan does not have any inherent advantages that can make our mech industry more competitive than that of our rivals." The old Master continued. "It is for this reason that we cannot

blindly afford to follow the established formulas. We must think laterally, and hiring you is one of the possible solutions that can help our students attain better results once they graduate."

Ves took this to mean that the Eden Institute was desperate to succeed despite receiving so much support from the Devos Ancient Clan.

The competition must be really stiff if Master Leila Devos still expressed so much concern!

"That is a clever approach." Ves remarked.

"The Eden Institute is named after the mythical Garden of Eden. We founded it in the hopes that it can become a paradise for many of the future leaders of our regional mech industry. We hope to plant a rich variety of fruit trees in our academic garden. Each fruit can satiate the intellectual hunger of all of our students."

That... was a rather coincidental use of symbolism.

"I see." Ves responded. "Are any of those fruits forbidden?"

Master Leila Rebecca Devos looked amused. "Every Garden of Eden hosts at least two trees. There is the Tree of Life whose fruit grants eternal life, and there is the tree of the knowledge of good and evil whose forbidden fruit are declared taboo."

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"Well, my fruit definitely leans towards the former. Life is my specialty, after all." Ves briefly grinned. "Are you sure my fruit tree will have a place in your garden?"

"I did not reach out to you merely because one of my acquaintances has given me your name. Your record shows that you have high potential. Three different esteemed MTA Master Mech Designers are willing to vouch for you by giving you their letters of recommendation. That is an exceedingly strong endorsement for a second-class mech designer at your age. Their shared Judgment gives our school confidence that you can not only become a positive addition to our university, but may one day become its pillars."

It turned out that it had been worth it to collect so many reference letters!

Ves leaned forward. "I am deeply honored by your consideration that I have a place in your school. I am confident that I can meet your expectations by teaching the courses that you have proposed. Am I to understand that I will be pioneering these courses in your virtual classrooms?"

Master Devos tapped her feeble against her desk. "You understand correctly. Only three years have passed since the Devos Ancient Clan founded this school. Our staff and administration have worked hard to establish a complete core curriculum for our mech design students. It is only recently that we have the capacity to expand our curriculums with a large number of elective courses."

"It sounds as if your school places a high degree of importance on the latter." "If we only teach the core subjects that every first-class mech designer must learn, then our graduates will not only be homogenous, but also lack the advantages that enable them to compete against rivals educated at more prestigious mech design universities. In the absence of other solutions, the most effective solution to address these adverse conditions is to offer a large variety of elective courses. It is the selection and combination of elective courses that will help our students differentiate from their

peers. Once they enter the commercial sector, they have a greater chance to find their place in a niche of their choosing."

The mech industry was highly competitive no matter whether it was in a third-rate state or a first-rate state.

In fact, the competition was more extreme in the latter because the profits were simply greater!

Ves heard that the amount of money bags entering the market made it difficult if not impossible for grassroots mech designers to succeed in their own businesses.

It couldn't be helped. The expense of operating a first-class mech business was so insanely high that only the descendants of rich families and powerful organizations could successfully get started!

Even then, these young but ambitious mech designers had to possess their own advantages in order to keep their companies afloat in the long term!

It all started to make more sense to Ves. While he was just a second-rater, he was a wildcard. He could truly enrich the perspective of many potential students due to his unique experiences and notable successes.

If Master Leila Rebecca Devos happened to be wrong about Ves, then the Eden Institute wouldn't suffer that much harm. It would only have to drop a handful of relatively minor elective courses.

With that understanding in mind, Ves and Master Devos had a harmonious talk. The huge generational difference between them did not seem to matter in the slightest.

Though Ves should have taken his time to mull over his options and properly consider whether it was a good idea to teach at a Terran university, he did not show any hesitation once he was able to express his intention to accept the offer and sign the employment contract!

Who knew whether the Eden Institute would retract its offer after this meeting. Ves did not want to leave anything to chance and quickly went over the contract negotiations just so that he could set everything in stone! Master Devos did not exhibit any surprise at the younger mech designer's behavior. Scenes like this happened many times on many different occasions. Becoming a teacher at a serious first-class mech design university was a fantastic boost to the careers of any Senior Mech Designer!

The old woman reached out with her virtual hand. "Congratulations for your entry into our academic family. You may adopt the title of professor as soon as the contract comes into effect. Remember that the Eden Institute of Business & Technology will not just become your workplace, but also your support circle. You may need to work hard in order to exchange for greater benefits, but our channels are always open to its teaching staff. We merely expect you to teach your upcoming students well."

Ves reached out as well and gently shook the virtual limb. "I will not fail my obligations, Master. Eden is the first school that has extended a serious teaching position to me. I like what I have heard, and I look forward to adding more variety to your course offerings. So when can I start to prepare my courses?

"You may begin as soon as the Mech Trade Association registers this contract, which should not take too long. Once that is in order, you must plan and organize your courses for the next semester that will commence in several months. Please take note that you must ensure that your courses must

comply with strict Terran regulations. In order to assist you in composing your syllabi, I have assigned one of our teaching assistants to you. It is not necessary for you to be too familiar with Terran laws and culture, but I highly recommend you to deepen your familiarity with our customs."

"I will make sure to do so, Master."

Once Ves finished his conversation with Master Devos, he wanted to withdraw and share the good news to his wife and his clan!

He had already spent more than half a day on this fantastic employment opportunity, and he invested a lot of concentration and effort to do well in the virtual tests.

Before he was able to withdraw, he received a notification from his new teaching assistant.

"Hm, I might as well get this over with." He grumbled.

He arrived in a new virtual office. It slowly dawned upon him that it was not only a mirror of a real office room at the campus of the Eden Institute, but that it had also been marked by his name!

[Professor Ves Larkinson]

Ves liked it. He had always dreamt of becoming a Senior and becoming a serious teacher, and now his dream came true a lot sooner than expected!

"Ah, you must be my new assistant." Ves reached out in order to shake the younger woman's virtual hand. "I am pleased to meet you, miss."

The blond woman wearing a plain black professional outfit looked a bit taken aback. It seemed that she had not expected to just come out and shake her hand all of a sudden.

Though she eventually played along and pretended that nothing was amiss, this little incident reminded Ves that he really ought to familiarize himself with Terran customs!

Who knew what other faux pas he might commit once he started to get into contact with arrogant and insular Terrans!

"I am honored to meet with you, Professor Larkinson." The young woman bowed her head. "I have only recently familiarized myself with your exploits, but I am highly impressed with your attainments, at least those that are known to the public."

Ves chuckled. "What makes you think there is more to my story, miss?"

"No third-class mech designer is able to become a tier 6 galactic citizen unless he or she can supply the Mech Trade Association with technology of great importance."

"Good deduction."

"There are too many clues in your public record, professor."

The two sat down in the virtual office, though it was a lot more real for the teaching assistant.

The young woman immediately started to brief Ves on the most relevant regulations.



"The Greater Terran United Confederation is an old state." She began. "We are proud of our heritage, but there are times where it has weighed us down. You must pay attention to many different rules..."

Ves quickly grew dizzy when the sharp Terran teaching assistant began to bring up a dozen different laws, all of which contained extremely dense legal terminology.

He raised his palm. "Stop. Please. I appreciate your enthusiasm, but take into account that I am not versed in Terran law or anything legal for that matter. I am a mech designer, not a lawyer."

The blond woman looked apologetic. "Oh, I apologize for that, professor. I am... not... accustomed to working with foreign mech designers."

"It is okay." Ves responded with a smile. "We will just have to be more careful and figure out how we can best work together. By the way, I haven't caught your name. What may I call you, miss?"

The young teaching assistant straightened her back and proudly presented herself to Ves.

"I am Alexa Striker. I am an Apprentice Mech Designer who once studied and graduated on Old Earth itself. One of the reasons why I have applied to become your teaching assistant is because I have developed interest in your design philosophy. Living mechs. I have never seen or heard anything like it in my life. Would you like to introduce this subject to me, professor?"

•c0m Ves always loved it when other mech designers showed a genuine interest in his design philosophy!

"Why certainly, Miss Striker. Since you are assigned to assist my work, it is only natural for you to understand my subject more thoroughly than the students who will sit in front of the benches in a few months. Let's see. Where should I start..."

#### Chapter 4993 Grand Convergence IV

The Babylon Excavator was a warship built to explore the Red Ocean.

Although she was far from the largest and most powerful warship to enter into service, the CFA reconnaissance carrier was among the fastest vessels that could operate in the wilderness for years on end.

In order to track the movements of the dominant alien forces and scope out the future targets of humanity's invasion, the Babylon Excavator had traveled deep into native territory.

The only CFA vessels that went deeper were the dedicated stealth scout vessels!

Though the Babylon Excavator could not remain hidden as well as the smaller starships that were equipped with the latest transphasic stealth systems, Captain Zonrad Reze loved his vessel anyway.

His word was law on the reconnaissance cruiser.

The traditions of the Common Fleet Alliance granted him a lot of autonomy in the way he ran his ship. As long as the performance standards of his crew remained satisfactory, the Sigrund could make use of his authority to remove or mitigate as many inefficiencies in his command as possible.

Although his crew initially did not embrace his increased emphasis on hard numbers and highly rational decision-making, the fleeters eventually came around to his approach.

Over the past half decade of exploring the deep frontier, he formed new friendships, deepened his understanding of the tech built into his ship and explored his own humanity.

Throughout all these times, Sigrund always had to remind himself that he was not truly human.

His apparent body was just a meat suit that the sentient AI used to camouflage himself among the fleeters.

Yet as his 'real' body continued to integrate with the brain of Zonrad Reze, it became increasingly harder for Sigrund to maintain this distinction.

Through the few self-examinations he managed to conduct outside the view of his own crew and the night-ubiquitous monitoring system of his warship, he found that there was no feasible way to undo the merger!

His original computerized sandman admiral core no longer processed all of his mental activity in isolation.

for one reason or another, his meat suit's organic brain had become a core part of his being!

The integration surpassed the level of an ordinary pairing between a cranial implant and an organic human brain!

They had become so mutually intertwined that not even the strongest implant blockers could successfully place a barrier between his sandman admiral core and his human brain.

This was not supposed to happen according to the customized implantation procedure that he calculated and implemented after he infiltrated the CFA!

The distinctly human thoughts, emotions and feelings that used to belong to Zonrad Reze had started to blend so much into his own thinking that ripping them out would be no less than lobotomizing himself!

Sigrund speculated that if he ever forced a separation, he would essentially split himself into half!

Neither of these halves would ever be able to come close to his current self in terms of intelligence, empathy and drive!

Still, even though Sigrund had become more human than he initially intended, he did not really feel that bad to be honest.

Humans were the dominant species in the immediate area around the Milky Way Galaxy. There was no logical reason for Sigrund to maintain any attachment to his alien origin.

While his inhuman self granted him many advantages, the power of humanity was not weak.

As long as he fulfilled his ambition and promoted the rank of admiral, Sigrund would truly be able to attain his own powerbase among the humans.

He could resolve any hidden dangers related to his true identity and reshape a part of the CFA.

His goal was to reform the Common Fleet Alliance into a better organization that did not irrationally cling to old human traditions and anachronisms!

After all, if his decoded programming forced him to remain loyal to the CFA until his termination, he may as well ensure it remained healthy enough to stand the test of time!

Yet before Sigrund could reach this point, he first had to ensure he survived his current mission.

A powerful explosion rocked the port side of the Babylon Excavator's damaged hull!

Her superdrive had been knocked offline and a third of the reconnaissance cruiser had lost power.

Large rents had been dug into the hull plating of the CFA vessel.

In all of the Babylon Excavator's previous engagements against the indigenous aliens, the hull remained virtually untouched.

The ship had always been able to count on an array of transphasic energy shields that performed a lot better than the equivalents utilized by the native alien races.

This was no longer the case!

"Alert! The alien pursuit fleet is about to launch its next phasewater torpedo salvo!"

"Redirect the fire of our plasma cannons to the torpedo launchers of their battleships and two largest cruisers! Instruct our mech squad to harass the remaining alien cruisers!"

The Babylon Excavator had put up a great effort into holding her own so far, but this time the reconnaissance cruiser managed to make a discovery that could change the course of the Red Ocean!

Sigrund and all of the other fleeters serving aboard the human vessel immediately understood that it became vitally important to pass on their intelligence back to the CFA!

Unfortunately for all of them, the aliens struck a powerful blow that not only blew past all of the Babylon Excavator's external defenses, but also disabled a lot of systems!

The powerful strike not only destroyed all of the quantum communication nodes, it also disabled the backup long-ranged communication device that only Sigiund could access!

Against an enemy of this magnitude, it was all the Babylon Excavator could do to flee from the star system and make her way back to human-occupied space as fast as possible.

The native aliens dispatched a powerful fleet of their own in order to prevent the CFA reconnaissance cruiser from bringing back the news.

For weeks on end, the two groups fought a running pursuit that increasingly dragged on the Babylon Excavator's heels.

"The enemy warships have launched their torpedoes! They are rapidly accelerating!"

"The alien carrier is beginning to launch both starfighters and bombers!"

"Prioritize their interception! Why are half of our tertiary laser turrets not firing?!"

"The last enemy energy weapon strike severed one of the main power lines and disabled two of our power reactors. Our damage control teams require at least three minutes to restore full power to our laser turrets."

"We don't have three minutes!" Captain Reze roared!

"Brace yourself!"

One of the transphasic energy shields that had just been restored a few minutes earlier promptly blew apart when a transphasic torpedo struck it with great power!

Numerous different weapon mounts did all they could to shoot down the remaining torpedoes, but the Babylon Excavator lost so much functionality that far too many torpedoes were about to hit her battered hull!

However, the half a dozen or so torpedoes that were about to open up additional holes in the Babylon Excavator's hull quickly shred apart under a deluge of energy beam fire!

The energy beam salvos accurately struck the torpedoes from their much weaker rear ends, causing them to promptly blow up or weaken them enough to finish them off with a follow up strike.

"Our mechs have eliminated the remaining transphasic torpedoes."

Many fleeters serving on the bridge of the reconnaissance vessel did not express relief when they learned of this development.

None of them felt comfortable with the fact that they needed to borrow the power of the Babylon Excavator's complement of mechs in order to keep the pursuing enemy aliens at bay.

Sigrund did not share the same sentiment. He may have become a fletcher, but that was not a valid reason for him to discount the value of mechs!

"Sir, the alien small craft are about to initiate their attack runs! Our mech squad and our working laser turrets are in the process of intercepting them, but if the enemy warships fire another phasewater torpedo salvo, we will not be able to eliminate the threats in time. At least twenty percent of their bombers will arrive close enough to launch their payloads!"

Captain Reze quickly accessed the data and simulated the unfolding maneuvers for the next two minutes.

He frowned.

"Put our primary kinetic cannons and secondary plasma turrets on interception duty."

"Sir, if we do that, then the enemy warships will reset much of their energy shields."

"We won't be able to eliminate any enemy alien warship if our hull sustains more damage!"

"Our main cannons cannot effectively track the fast-moving enemy torpedoes and small craft! The current alien pursuit fleet has incorporated more modern human high technology!"

"Those damn traitors! How are they able to steal so much of our civilization's tech? How are the aliens able to adapt to them so fast?"

Sigrund already knew the answers to those questions. The Red Cabal had quickly grown to become a unifying power that sought to defend every alien of the Red Ocean!

Ever since this once-secretive cabal emerged from the shadows, the aliens set aside their differences as earnestly as possible and banded together to share and combine all of their strengths.

Not only that, but the Red Cabal also functioned as an organized trading partner for the cosmopolitans.

The human traitors were definitely responsible for outfitting the current pursuit fleet with modern human tech!

Even if much of the tech only reached the standards of Terran or Rubarthan products, this was more than enough to pose a threat to the Babylon Excavator, especially when the aliens enjoyed a substantial numbers advantage.

"Our first-class multipurpose mechs are struggling to eliminate the enemy alien bombers! Compared to the bomber craft that our ship managed to intercept eight days prior, the current models boast transphasic energy shields that can withstand at least three times more damage. Our scans have revealed that they are mounted with Rubarthan-developed power reactors!"

"Those damn traitors!"

The alien bomber craft functioned similarly to human heavy mechs. They could withstand a lot of punishment and could unleash devastating attacks so long as they entered into effective range.

Now, those bombers made ample use of the ample power provided by their human power reactors and fired a series of energy blasts that struck the Babylon Excavator from a less well-defended angle!

"Fire a salvo of Hellspark missiles at those bombers!"

"We only have enough Hellspark missiles left to fire half a salvo! We were forced to eject much of our stock of missiles before a transphasic torpedo breached the storage compartment."

"Then fire the Hellsparks that we have left! We can no longer afford to save them up against the greater threat!"

Fortunately for the fleeters, the few Hellsparks that launched out of the battered missile launchers did their jobs. Their power was just enough to overcome the strengthened energy shields of the alien bomber craft.

Though there weren't enough missiles to intercept the remaining bomber craft, the first-class mechs did a good job of eliminating the remainder.

However, the transphasic energy shields that protected these powerful humanoid machines from serious damage were just about to run out as well!

The small but fast alien starfighters had constantly put these mechs under pressure!

They even focused their fire on one of the first-class multipurpose mechs!

If the Babylon Excavator still retained her shield link transmitter arrays, then the mechs under pressure would have been able to endure a lot more damage!

As it was, the mech that received the greatest fire had already accumulated a lot of damage in earlier engagements.

As its transphasic energy shield fizzled out, its damaged armor system became exposed to continuous fire.

The fast enemy starfighters had also been mounted with human power reactors! Their speed and rapid-fire energy weapon attacks became much stronger than last time, so much so that the first-class mech could not endure the pressure any further.

The mech exploded its own reactor moments after its cockpit ejected and rapidly returned to the Babylon Excavator!

Sigrund felt pained as his ship lost another powerful combat asset.

"How many more mechs can we construct with the resources that we have at hand?"

"Only three, sir! We can build eight if we lower our performance standards."

"Not enough. That is not enough."

Chapter 4994 Grand Convergence V

Penance.

That had become the latest preoccupation of the nunser known as the Trampler of Stars.

What the alien could not accept was the understanding and forgiveness expressed by the leaders of the Red Cabal.

The wise and powerful descendants of the Elder Gods did not cast any blame towards the lesser nunser god.

The Fractured House of the Collapsing Star had only been constructed fairly recently, and already the hybrid alien homeship had been felled by a fleet of inferior human irregulars.

The Trampler of Stars could accept defeat at the hands of the 'Mech Trade Association' or the 'Common Fleet Alliance', but according to the information supplied by the honorless human sycophants, the group that managed to defeat him and his homeship were nowhere near as important!

This caused his defeat to shame him even more. If not for the fact that he needed to abide by the directives set by the leaders of the Red Cabal, the nunser god would have preferred to stay and fight to the bitter end!

Instead, he had run back to one of the headquarters of the Red Cabal like a nunser who had lost his herd.

As his combat four-legged form strode down the center path of the Sixth Tide Station, all of the nunsers, puelmers and other indigenous alien soldiers striding on the side paths gazed at the living god with awe, worship and respect.

The mortal aliens revered their gods far too much to recognize that the objects of their worship possessed their own flaws and shortcomings.

The Trampler of Stars felt more ashamed as the amount of adoring looks increased. The metal deck underneath his powerful hooves strained even more as they struggled to contain the shockwaves generated by his increasingly less controlled gait.

The alien god deeply wanted to get back to the frontlines so that he could earn his penance by fighting the powerful human mechs and starships.

Yet as much as he wanted to break through the station wall, warp out of this star system and make his way to the nearest nunser-controlled region that had come under attack, his orders compelled him to stay in place.

He did not have the courage or will to defy his orders, not when he thought about the powerful god who issued them in the first place.

The Trampler of Stars happened to be on the way to meet with the powerful descendant.

One of the main reasons why the nunser did not dare to defy the descendant was because this older and more ancient being had mentored the Trampler of Stars.

It was through the help of this higher being that the Trampler of Stars had been able to increase his godblood concentration and master the art of tramplng space.

As the nunser god entered a more restricted area of the gigantic Sixth Tide Station, he felt more relieved as he no longer received as many worshipful gazes.

These aliens should be praying to other gods.

The Trampler of Stars continued to stomp forward until he approached a massive metal gate.

A large amount of godblood had been infused into the gate, so much so that not even the Trampler of Stars possessed the confidence to breach it with his own power!

No guards or automated defense systems protected this gateway because none were needed.

The gate slowly slid upwards as soon as the Trampler of Stars came within sight.

Once the nunser god stepped inside, somehow entered into a completely different environment!

A highly toxic gas mixture surrounded him from all sides. The dim lighting was only enough to make the Trampler of Stars see swirls of beige gasses in every direction.

The pressure, heat and radiation were much higher than before!

The majority of the Sixth Tide Station had set its environment at an acceptable middle ground where most of the races could endure with the help of relatively thin protective suits.

The new gaseous environment that the Trampler of Stars found himself in was never meant to accommodate mortal alien life forms.

Only the most advanced and resilient vehicles had any hope of allowing them to enter this holy enclave.

Even the Trampler of Stars himself struggled to protect his resilient body. He summoned and strengthened his transphasic barriers in order to reduce the pressure on his flesh.

The nunser god kept striding forward. His hooves no longer enjoyed any solid footing, so they dug into the folds of space instead!

On and on the phase lord kept moving. It was extremely difficult for anyone to determine his direction or navigate towards a specific destination, but the Trampler of Stars did not suffer from these limitations.

He was a god, one that had succeeded in holding and utilizing the power of the godblood that flowed through his strengthened veins!

An unknown amount of time went by as the Trampler of Stars kept exercising his body and organs further.

Even for a god of his strength, it was a considerable burden for him to remain in this gaseous environment.

Still, he persisted in his journey. The summons was absolute and there was no way the Trampler of Stars would allow himself to delay his arrival. Slowly but surely, the illumination grew brighter. The Trampler slowed down his steps as he approached what looked to be a miniature star.

It was not a real star, but still possessed a fraction of one!

Such a weak and tiny star could not possibly exist in a normal reality, but the descendant of the Elder God who shaped this enclave had rewritten the fabric of space in front so that an anomaly such as this could exist in a stable form!

The Trampler of Stars did not possess the power or the wisdom to reshape space and create a miniature star by himself. Yet his alien eyes gazed hopefully at the tiny stellar object as knew that he could make one of his own, so long as he managed to evolve and attain the strength of the descendant hovering before his body.

Compared to the miniature star, the phase whale that created it was much more impressive!

The god was not a regular member of his eminent race. As an ancient phase whale, the one known as the Tide Caller had lived long enough to witness the passage of several eras of the Red Ocean!

All of the inferior blood that had once circulated through his body had disappeared long before the Trampler of Stars had been born.

An unimaginably huge quantity of pure phasewater flowed through the ancient phase whale's aquatic body.

The extreme phasewater concentration made it so that the Tide Caller's true physical body was as large as that of a moon or a small terrestrial planet!

No singular intelligent organism in the Red Ocean could boast a body that was large enough to generate its own gravity!

The Tide Caller's near-total mastery of spatial manipulation allowed him to shrink and fold his real body so that its outward size and dimensions closely matched his appearance in his distant youth.

Though the Tide Caller shunted away all of the gravity and immense phasewater fluctuations generated by his titanic body, the Trampler of Stars possessed enough sensitivity to know that the ancient phase whale could crush the nunser god when letting go of any restraint!

The Trampler of Stars did not dare to act presumptuous in front of his mentor.

"I am here, oh caller of storms."

The ancient aquatic alien being had noticed the Trampler's approach a long time ago. His deep and enormous eyes seemed to gain focus as they gazed at the relatively tiny nunser's humble posture.



Space seemed to ripple as the Tide Caller generated a low spatial vibration that actually comprised an alien language!

The nunser phase lord bowed as he struggled to formulate his answer. "We have failed... to protect our Refuge Plan. The 'Big Two' will soon learn of what we intend to do to save our races, preserve our stars and wipe out every detestable human in our galaxy."

Another spatial vibration buffeted the Trampler's body.

"You... do not care? I have the greatest respect for your awesome power, but we have continually underestimated the human invaders. Our latest reinforcements to the front have successfully stalled the fleets sent by the MTA and the CFA, but these powerful human groups are about to send reinforcements of their own. Not even the technologies traded by the humans themselves can stop the collapse of our lines. We do not have enough time and resources to build enough advanced warships."

The ancient phase whale remained unperturbed. It was as if the human threat was inconsequential. Space vibrated yet again.

The Trampler of Stars reacted with shock!

"That does not conform to the Refuge Plan! We are nowhere ready to implement the plan that will save us from the humans that are arriving from the Great Hive. The plan shall fail if we commence the Great Activation."

Space vibrated a bit more this time.

The Trampler became shocked yet again!

"Is that... true? Can human high technology truly make up for the preparations that we have yet to make?"

Space ripple a few times.

The Trampler of Stars started to come around to the idea. "I comprehend... not all can be preserved. We do not have more time to wait until everything is in place. We must trigger the Great Activation quickly before it is too late."

Space rippled in a different rhythm.

"Is my power... needed?"

Space rippled a single time.

"Everyone's power is needed."

The Trampler of Stars could not shirk this duty because every native god must contribute to this great endeavor!

The nunser phase lord listened to the instructions of his great mentor and began to activate his body in a certain fashion.

Soon enough, the gaseous environment around the Trampler began to shake and vibrate as the alien god exerted more of his power!

At the same time, the one known as the Tide Caller began to generate his own spatial manifestation. The humongous pocket space began to shake as the Tide Caller's power not only spread through the entire volume of space, but also to ripple outside of this contained region!

The Sixth Tide Station itself began to absorb the powerful spatial energies released by the local phase whales and the phase lords!

Many alien crew members assigned to the station quickly learned what was happening.

A lot of aliens lowered their bodies in awe and devotion as they all knew that the mighty Tide Caller had started to take action!

This was not the only site where the native gods began to channel their power to such an enormous extent.

The Red Cabal had built 26 other Tide Stations! Each of these large and special constructs were spread throughout the Red Ocean in a circle pattern.

They collectively began to accumulate an enormous amount of spatial power. The gigantic quantities of phasewater that the Red Cabal had incorporated into the station all began to do their work.

They could not have worked so well if not for the recent installation of highly advanced power generators and other potent human devices!

As these Tide Stations began to charge and ripple the surrounding space, they began to trigger secondary ripples as other gods began to cooperate with the Red Cabal!

A large number of phase whales and phase lords who were hiding in the nooks and crannies of the Red Ocean had begun to channel their powerful in special ways, enabling their strong bodies to amplify the spatial ripples in their immediate surroundings!

The humans remained clueless of what was taking place. The spatial ripples that engulfed almost the entirety of the Red Ocean were so faint and subtle that they resembled the ordinary spatial tides that beset the dwarf galaxy from time to time!

Only a few sensitive humans sensed an ominous undercurrent in the Red Ocean.

One of them was the latest god pilot to pass through the greater beyonder gate.

All regularly scheduled traffic in Bridgehead One had ceased as the humans awaited the arrival of one of their greatest heroes!

## Chapter 4995 Grand Convergence VI

Bridgehead One was one of the two busiest star systems of human space.

The only star system that boasted a comparable amount of traffic was Maryun Ultima.

Both transit systems were located hundreds of thousands of light-years away from each other.

Yet what the two had in common was that each of them hosted a greater beyonder gate!

Larger and far more powerful than the lesser beyonder gates that revolutionized space travel in established human space, the greater beyonder gates were the only known means of providing quick and easy transit from the Milky Way to the Red Ocean and vice versa.

Many conspiracy theorists opined that the Big Two must have a second or maybe even a third greater beyonder gate.

The MTA and CFA supposedly kept these gates in reserve in case the main ones malfunctioned.

They mechers and the fleters may have also used these secret gates to transfer way more military assets to the Red Ocean than was apparent to the public.

In any case, that had no bearing to the grand occasion that was unfolding at this hour.

Events such as this only happened a handful of times after the opening of the Red Ocean.

Each time much of the star system froze while directing all of the traffic to the sides, an important figure and his fleet passed through the greater beyonder gate!

The Gate Consortium that managed the beyonder gates only extended this courtesy to a select group of exceedingly powerful figures.

In the past, these figures consisted of Terran ancient clan leaders, particularly old Rubarthan princes and CFA fleet admirals and Star Designers. Yet none of these honored travelers generated as much fanfare and respect as the god pilots of humanity!

Each of them enjoyed the highest amount of regard among the people spread across human space.

They were the rockstars and the heroes of their civilization. The Age of Mechs had elevated anything related to mechs, and none attracted as much respect, envy, hope and ambition as the hundred or so god pilots that were known to the public!

The Divine that had made an unscheduled request to pass through the greater beyonder gate had actually caused a lot of inconvenience.

Usually, these sorts of trips were announced months if not years in advance.

This gave the Gate Consortium enough time to arrange the busy transit schedules and prevent any ships and fleets from suffering any unplanned delays.

It was actually quite a surprise to anyone that the god pilot in question wanted to enter the Red Ocean all of a sudden.

The Rubarthan-aligned god pilot had long been assigned to protect one of the most important borders of human space.

Core Rubarthan territories were at risk if the former dominators of the Milky Way ever decided to regain their ancestral territories.

The god pilot had always taken this duty seriously. She never issued any word of complaint about the necessity of serving as a powerful deterrent that could divert a lot of hostile alien attention away from Rubarthan space.

For her to resign from this duty without any prior warning had briefly rocked the upper echelon of the New Rubarthan Empire!

When it became apparent that the god pilot left her previous posting because she sought to travel to the Red Ocean, the Rubarthans engaged in even more gossip!

From the princes down to the military officials, many of them wondered what had induced such a drastic change in a Divine that had never shown any interest in the Red Ocean in the past.

What was so important about the new frontier to compel her to break her pattern and defy everyone's expectations?

The few Rubarthan princes and other high officials who could boast the honor of being on speaking terms with the Divine failed to obtain any answers.

The god pilot refused to offer any explanations.

Who could possibly inquire any further?

As powerful as they might be within their principalities and the greater empire, not even the direct descendants of the Star Emperor himself dared to force an answer out of a living human god!

There were only three kinds of people that could make the god pilot explain herself.

First, another god pilot.

Second, a Star Designer.

Third, the ruler of the New Rubarth Empire.

It was a pity that none of them showed enough interest to inquire about the willful god pilot's motives and travel plans.

As such, everyone in her path scrambled to adjust their own plans!

This was the norm when it came to any god pilot.

Everyone treated them as literal gods. Even the secularists who prayed to no higher being were willing to make an exception if they ever came across the apex of a human transcendent warrior!

Even if their appearances remained human, no one dared to make god pilots wait in line!

As soon as the entirety of Bridgehead One quickly prepared for the imminent arrival of one of human civilization's greatest protectors, the gigantic portal began to surge.

Power flowed through the kilometers-wide ring. Space between the portal structure began to warp and swirl until a wormhole briefly took shape! Ordinarily, it would not take long for a starship or a warship to pass through the gate.

This was different.

The greater beyonder gate began to channel even more power through its structure than normal!

This was an exceptional circumstance and one that troubled the Gate Consortium a lot.

The amount of effort the beyonder gates needed to exert in order to send a vessel from one destination to another varied depending on the mass-energy cost.

This was a unit of measurement that expressed the overall amount of mass or energy that was contained in a ship.

A third-class sub-capital ship for example did not contain a lot of powerful exotics and did not contain any powerful energy sources. Its mass-energy cost was so low that a beyonder gate could easily transfer them to another connected gate without any fuss.

A first-class capital ship was a different story. Not only was her hull built with lots of dense and highly energetic first-class exotics, but she was also constantly supported by dozens of city-scale power generators!

It was not for nothing that a first-class ticket to pass through the beyonder gates was exponentially more expensive than a second-class and third-class ticket.

What caused the gate to struggle so much this time was not as trivial as a first-class capital ship.

No, the entity that sought to leave the Milky Way behind and enter the Red Ocean was even greater than one of humanity's strongest star-faring vessels!

"She is coming!"

"The aliens in our dwarf galaxy are in trouble now. The stalemate at the frontlines will never be able to persist now that we have brought her over to our side!"

The greater beyonder gate seemed to groan even though space did not transmit any sound!

After another great exertion, the gate finally spat out the object that it had struggled to receive from the Milky Way!

Compared to a first-class CFA battleship, the new arrival was nowhere near as physically imposing.

In fact, it was the opposite. The construct that had arrived was so physically tiny that many sensor systems had to zoom in to gain a proper look!

It turned out that the greater beyonder gate put in so much effort just to complete the transit of a single god mech!

Only a small proportion of people understood why the mass-energy cost of a god mech was so exaggeratingly high.

It was not just because of the insanely powerful engineering of the god mech.

As luxurious as the materials and as powerful as its energy sources may be, it was still unrealistic for such a relatively tiny mechanical war asset to generate more power than an entire CFA battleship.

The real reason why this had turned into such a rare sight was because of the god pilot that was permanently fused with the god mech!

The struggling beyonder gates pretty much proved to every human that god pilots were mighty beyond comparison.

Not even the most honored Star Designers could make the beyonder gates exert their capabilities to such an exaggerated extent!

"A new god has arrived." An observer reverently spoke.

Many people in the star system spontaneously fell onto their knees.

They did so not just because they looked up the identity of the new arrival, but also because they could feel her power even if they were several light-minutes or light-hours away!

There was no one in the Bridgehead One System that could miss her arrival!

Nobody knew the precise ranges of the domains of a god pilot.

Yet even if they were fairly small, each god pilot was still able to make his or her presence felt in any given star system!

The ones who were positioned relatively closely to the new arrival experienced more from her than other people.

Visions of endless explosions dominated their imagination.

These visions became more pronounced as the affected individuals gazed at the god mech that had settled into the Red Ocean and began to fly forward under its own power.

"The Ragnarök!"

The god mech that was said to be capable of triggering the Twilight of the Gods had finally entered a dwarf galaxy that was populated by many alien 'gods'!

As the large rust-red mech with no obvious cannon barrels continued to zip forward through space at speeds that could not be matched by any mech equipped with a minidrive, the god mech abruptly stopped in front of a single fleet carrier.

This was the only ship that dared to park closer to the center space lane than the other vessels in the star system.

Her markings and colors immediately revealed her Rubarthan origins.

The fleet carrier was not just a Rubarthan military vessel, but also happened to be the flagship of Prince Antonius, otherwise known as the Inferno Spear Prince!

The 2016th prince of the New Rubarth Empire happened to be one of the few princes that was not only on speaking terms with the newly-arrived god pilot, but also happened to be her friend!

The reason why the Inferno Spear Prince could develop a closer relationship with a powerful Divine quickly became evident when he deployed into space in person!

A hot ace spearman mech launched from the hangar bay of the Rubarthan fleet carrier and quickly closed in on the silent god mech.

It was not until the ace mech approached the much more powerful machine that it began to reduce its speed.

The Inferno Spear Prince enjoyed extremely high regard and could command the respect of virtually everyone under ordinary circumstances.

This was not just because he was the prince to the most powerful empire in human space.

He also happened to be a senior ace pilot, one that was already qualified to commence the fraught and perilous Mech Body Merger Process!

Unlike Divine Irene Mox who boldly started this process as soon as she could do so, the Inferno Spear Prince was completely different!

When he was on the cusp of taking this important step, he hesitated.

He became haunted by his fears.

He feared meeting his own end when he had yet to complete most of his great ambitions.

He feared losing his own life when his lifespan could easily allow him to persist for several centuries more.

He feared the possibility of abandoning his principality and the enormous power base he had amassed over the course of his life.

In the end, his resolve to brave the many dangers of the Mech Body Merger Process had faltered in front of his many fears.

Though the Inferno Spear Prince could technically start the process at any other time, he knew for a fact that he would fail and die without any doubt.

So long as he became weighed down by his own fears, he would never possess the strength of will that was necessary to sustain his entire life going forward!

This failure not only served as the powerful Rubarthan prince's regret, but also caused him to look up to the god pilots who succeeded in conquering their own fears with genuine respect and admiration!

Prince Antonius adopted an uncharacteristically humble posture when his ace mech finally stopped in front of the Ragnarök.

The former even 'knelt' in front of the latter!

"Your... Your Holiness Irene Mox. On behalf of the Rubarthan Pact and the New Rubarthan Empire, I welcome you to the Red Ocean." The prince spoke up in his cockpit.

There was no need for his ace mech to open up a communication channel when it had already entered deep into a God Kingdom!

"SPEAK." A powerful female voice echoed between the prince's ears!

"I have been requested to ask about your intentions. Why have you decided to come to the new frontier? Will you participate in the upcoming joint offensive against the indigenous aliens of this dwarf galaxy?"

The Destroyer of Worlds took no notice of the second question. She only briefly spent her time answering the first one.

I CAME... BECAUSE THE CAT HAS MADE THE WRONG DECISION

That caused the Inferno Spear Prince to grow confused.

"My... pardon, Your Holiness?"

Divine Irene Mox had already decided to move on, though.

The Ragnarök began to light up as the god pilot exerted a fraction of her god-like might!

The space in front of the god mech began to shimmer and light up as a new star seemed to emerge!

This enormous star was so large and powerful that it effortlessly shoved the Inferno Spear's ace mech as well as his top-specced first-class fleet carrier aside!

The ace mech and the fleet carrier could not muster up any resistance to their forced displacement!

In fact, even if they had the power to do so, the Inferno Spear Prince and the crew of the Rubarthan vessel would never dare to resist the will of a god pilot!

The mere sight of the enormous explosive cat was enough to make all of the nearby humans aside from Prince Antonius lose their minds!

This energy cat of enormous proportions not only amplified the God Kingdom around the Ragnarök even further, but also gave everyone the illusion that she was about to destroy the fabric of space and time itself!

As Emma managed to enrapture the near-total population of humans in Bridgehead One, the god cat opened her gigantic maw and filled everyone's ears with a singularly mighty roar that radiated for many light-years!

MIIIIIIIEEEEEEWWWWWWW!

Chapter 4996 Grand Convergence VII

Bridgehead One remained in a state of heightened excitement for several days after the dramatic arrival of the Destroyer of Worlds.

God pilots possessed an outsized influence in human society.

Each of them possessed so much personal might that it was inevitable for them to become famous to the point where their names and titles became known by over half of every human living in the old galaxy and the new frontier!

God pilots attracted the envy of many people. Mech pilots especially aspired to attain their level of strength and use it to forge their own legends. This was the Age of Mechs!

Despite the fact that warships continued to serve as humanity's principal tools of war, the spotlight shone so much on mechs that most people would rather become a mech pilot than a captain of their own starship!

The lucky visitors, residents and workers in Bridgehead One continued to revel in the honor of witnessing the arrival of Divine Irene Mox in person.

This was a memory that they would definitely cherish for the rest of their lives!

"I couldn't even think straight when she finally displayed her might!"

"Now that the most destructive god pilot has entered this dwarf galaxy, those native aliens are about to learn that their temporary resistance is futile in the face of absolute firepower!"

"I really wanted to see the Ragnarök fire a shot. I heard that this god mech only assumes its full form when it is ready to launch its planet-destroying shells."

"What is that giant flaming cat?"



"Oh, that? There are rumors that Divine Mox has a soft spot for cats. With her absolute domain field, it is trivial for her to channel her supreme power and shape it in the form of a cat. God pilots can do way more than that. The Beast King once utilized his God Kingdom to create a life-like illusion of a small planet filled with animals!"

As Bridgehead One struggled to regain its sense of normality, traffic soon began to pick up again.

A lot of pioneering fleets and logistical companies suffered varying degrees of economic penalties due to the delays imposed by the Destroyer of Worlds, but each of them chose to swallow the added costs without issuing a word of complaint.

Some people were just more special than others. God pilots may not have chosen to reign over humanity like the kings and emperors of old, but they were still able to command the loyalty and obedience of every human they came across!

Half a day after the momentous arrival of Divine Irene Mox, the greater beyonder gate went into service once again.

Each time the gate activated, it disgorged dozens to hundreds of starships at a time.

The vast majority of these starships consisted of capital ships!

Those belonging to varying pioneers tended to come in all shapes and sizes. Many of them had been optimized for combat, exploration or colonization, so they needed to be defensible and flexible enough to withstand the rigors of the frontier.

There was also a completely different set of starships that had been constructed with a completely different set of design principles!

They looked like gigantic cylinders of metal. Each of these elongated cigar-shaped starships were clearly designed to push against the dimensional limits imposed by the Gate Consortium!

This category of ships had only emerged relatively recently.

They could only be found in the two known star systems to host a greater beyonder gate.

There was no cheaper and more efficient way to transfer cargo from one galaxy to another than with the use of these newly emerged gate conveyors!

Compared to more traditional mass conveyors, the gate conveyors were less massive and more fragile because they were not required to travel through any dangerous regions of human space.

In fact, since their main purpose was to pass through the greater beyonder gates all of the time, their owners hadn't even bothered to equip them with FTL drives!

·c0m At this time, the greater beyonder gate transmitted a fleet of gate conveyors.

Each of them possessed a uniform appearance. The 12 kilometer-long gate conveyors were all coated with the forest green colors that were characteristic of the Rigel-Ovis Trading Company.

No average company was able to make this intergalactic trade route profitable.

The centuries-old Rigel-Ovis Trading Company happened to possess the right amount of financial resources to commission an entirely new fleet of gate conveyors and have them delivered within a matter of years!

What was even more important was that Rigel-Ovis had also established its brand among the first-rate states of the Milky Way Galaxy for a long time.

Though the company conscientiously did not conduct any direct business transactions with the Terrans or the Rubarthans, the trading ships of the Rigel-Ovis were ubiquitous throughout the territories of the regular first-rate states of the galactic center!

The company utilized its vast network of existing contacts and business partners to immediately put the new gate conveyors to good use.

Vast amounts of trade goods constantly entered their cavernous cargo holds before being transported from one galaxy to another.

Even if most of the trade goods consisted of bulk materials and massive production equipment, these goods were vitally needed to rapidly build up colonies and accelerate their industrial development!

Rigel-Ovis therefore served as one of the important contributors to the rapidly increasing propensity of human colonies in the Red Ocean.

Shortly after they completed their momentous transit to the new frontier, the gate conveyors obeyed the instructions of traffic control and flew to a zone that was especially reserved for massive transport vessels.

A small fleet of destroyers and cruisers hailing from the MTA and the CFA quickly descended on them and activated their powerful scanning equipment.

The gate conveyors had already undergone extremely thorough inspections in the Maryun Ultima System, but the controllers of the greater beyonder gates never slacked off when it came to searching for fugitives, contraband and other illicit material!

The old galaxy was filled with dangers that the Big Two did not want to spread to the new frontier. Even if the expenses were considerable, the inspectors employed by the MTA and CFA performed their duties without any hint of taking it easy.

The warships even sent entire armies of specially-trained and well-equipped inspectors just so that they could observe the trade goods with their own eyes!

At this time, one of many pairs of inspectors flew into a titanic cargo hold and stopped in front of a floating container.

The female inspector transmitted a code that caused the container to open and reveal its contents.

The container carefully stored dozens of ornamental stone statues made out of a particularly hardy material.

Each statue was carefully wrapped by a transparent composite cushioning material that could resist a wide range of physical shocks and damaging radiation.

The male inspector carefully studied the artwork.

The male inspector carefully studied the artwork.

"What a waste of money." The woman remarked. "Can't these colonists make their own sculptures in the new frontier? There is no need to pay so many credits just to import them from the Milky Way."

"This is not a regular batch of goods." The man informed her. "Each of them are carefully sculpted by Master Eric Trilband. His best works can sell for millions of MTA credits."

"I can understand why his best masterworks can command such prices, but these sculptures clearly haven't reached that level of quality."

"Well, master sculptors need to eat as well. The most famous artists aren't always the best at creating art, but they are all excellent businessmen who know how to market their own work."

The two inspectors continued to chat about the realities of the art industry as they completed their routine inspection.

Neither the scans nor their visual inspections revealed anything amiss. Smugglers attempted to defeat the inspectors by hiding contraband deep inside seemingly priceless works of art, but the Big Two had always managed to foil these clever attempts.

What most people didn't realize was that the MTA actually deployed a god pilot at Maryun Ultima and Bridgehead One!

It was just that hardly anyone was aware of their presence.

People thought that Divine Irene Mox was the first god pilot to pass through these star systems in a long time, never knowing that they had been spending time in the presence of two more god pilots!

It wasn't their fault. The hidden god pilots never announced themselves. They quietly exerted their power over the starships that were about to make the intergalactic crossing.

Nothing could escape their awareness within their powerful absolute domain fields!

Although the two Divines never took action when they detected regular contraband and fugitive individuals, they were never silent when they detected any goods and individuals related to the cult that had once controlled human civilization behind the shadows!

The god pilot stationed in Maryun Ultima failed to detect that it was worth notifying the guard patrols.

The god pilot stationed in Bridgehead One made the same judgment.

Once the round of inspections had concluded, the gate conveyors flew to the outer system of the busy trade nexus before they reached a large planet.

There, the gate conveyors began the lengthy process of transferring their cargo to the other trade ships of the Rigel-Ovis Trading Company.

Most of the bulk goods entered the cargo holds of the smaller but far more defensible mass conveyors.

The more high-end and delicate goods were brought to smaller, faster and more luxurious transportation vessels instead.

Soon, these trade vessels formed into different convoys before setting off to various different destinations of the Red Ocean.

Each of them moved to one of several upper zones that fell under the Red Ocean Union.

For a long time, the statues stored in one of those seemingly normal cargo ships remained lifeless and dormant.

Three weeks passed as the convoy traveled increasingly further away from Bridgehead One.

It was only then that one the statues started to exhibit unusual behavior!

Cracks began to form across its smooth and polished surface. These cracks began to web across the entire surface before the upper layer shattered into pieces!

A robed figure that looked much different from the brave warrior depicted by the original statue had emerged!

A bit of stony complexion still covered his skin. The older man struggled hard to complete his transformation and remove every trace of inorganic substance!

The cargo container soon opened up. An unassuming spacer entered the cramped space and bowed in front of the recovered robed figure.

"Welcome to the Red Ocean, esteemed seeker. Our plan appears to have worked. Neither of the two abominations have discovered your presence. It was the right decision to send you here so shortly after the arrival of the Rubarthan abomination."

The Seeker of the Earth Shrine nodded in an imperious manner.

Though his expression looked calm, he understood extremely well that it was never a simple matter to sneak someone as powerful as him through the beyonder gates!

Several of his colleagues had already been caught in the past. Each of them had been forced to end their lives in order to take their secrets to their graves!

The Five Scrolls Compact had never successfully smuggled over a keeper at his strength level!

In fact, Seeker Leorax Remanos only managed to pull it off because he transformed himself into stone several years ago and continuously maintained this state without taking any other actions.

Only this way would he be able to disperse all of his extraordinary traces and camouflage himself as a regular stone statue!

Though the man disliked how much time he lost on this endeavor, the agents that had managed to take root in the Red Ocean had not remained idle!

"List." The Earth Keeper spoke.

The spacer nodded and projected a large and extensive list of names.

"We have performed an exhaustive search for any human or organization that may be involved with the possible arrival of the first immortal god to return to Old Earth. We have tried to whittle down

the list as best as we could by conducting our own limited investigations, but we are still left with over 30,000 cults and religious organizations centered around our mother planet."

Seeker Leorax did not look surprised. He expected as much.

"Expand your investigations. Now that I am here, we can accelerate the buildup of our forces in this dwarf galaxy. I shall take part in the investigations myself. The Holy Son of our Earth Shrine expects to see a result, and we must not keep him waiting for long."

The Earth Keeper skimmed through the list and decided to pay a visit to the groups that ranked at the top.

He couldn't be bothered to visit all of the lesser organizations. The name of the Aduc Family briefly appeared on the scrolling list before the projection scrolled past without anyone taking notice.

#### Chapter 4997 Grand Convergence VIII

After years of accelerated build-up and relocation, the Eternal Vulcan Empire had taken root in the Red Ocean!

Many dwarves had spontaneously gathered together under the unifying banner of the Iron Emperor.

No matter where they hailed from or who they originally pledged their loyalty to, the Iron Emperor's noble dwarven cause successfully persuaded the vast majority of them to apply for citizenship in the Eternal Vulcan Empire!

Dwarven Refuges had sprung up in the two galaxies like mushrooms.

The majority of them were founded within the various first-class, second-class and third-class states of the Milky Way Galaxy.

However, the founder of the Eternal Vulcan Empire had always made it clear that these were stopgap solutions at best.

[THE OLD GALAXY HAS ALREADY BEEN CARVED UP BY THE OLD HUMAN POWERS. NONE OF THEM WILL TOLERATE THE RISE OF A TRULY POWERFUL DWARVEN STATE. OUR FUTURE LIES BEYOND. THE RED OCEAN SHALL BE THE FIRST CRADLE FOR OUR UNIFIED RACE.]

Under the persistent directives of the Iron Emperor, many of the dwarves with means had pooled their resources together to form a large quantity of transportation fleets.

Each of these fleets took in the converging dwarven diaspora that originated from almost every corner of human space in the old galaxy.

The gathering dwarves were initially brought to the Dwarven Refuges spread across the old galaxy.

The dwarves stayed at these dwarven-owned territories for a number of years.

The strong culture and customs of the Eternal Vulcan Empire changed each of them. Not only were the dwarves encouraged to abandon their old cultural norms and values, but the Vulcanites also instilled them with a strong unifying ethos that was meant to bind them together under the rule of the Iron Emperor!

Worship of Vulcan became an indispensable part of this indoctrination process. Even though the greatest dwarven artisans failed to create genuine totems of their god, their craftsmanship were so

exquisite that their individual depictions of Vulcan often succeeded in inspiring devotion from many dwarves!

Once these dwarves completed their retraining and indoctrination processes, an important selection took place.

The most skilled, knowledgeable, obedient or faithful dwarves received invitations to move to the Red Ocean for free!

Once they accepted this generous offer, they were brought over to different dwarven-owned starships and eventually made their way over to the Red Ocean.

It was there that these excellent and lucky dwarves could truly start their new lives!

Already, the Eternal Dwarven Empire managed to found numerous successful colonies in different territories. Each of them developed into brand-new Dwarven Refuges that were good enough to accommodate billions of first-class, second-class or third-class dwarves!

Though the dwarves had tried their best to wipe away the distinctions between the classes, reality was not so kind. Rion Aaden's aim of making every dwarf equal to each other was a lot harder to implement in practice!

Even so, there was one highly desirable destination that gathered the best and greatest dwarven talents irrespective of their backgrounds.

Although the majority of them still consisted of first-raters, it was not entirely hopeless for second-raters and third-raters to successfully get closer to the Iron Emperor!

This was because the sovereign of the dwarves did not reign over his rapidly growing empire in any fixed territory.

The strongest and most developed Dwarven Refuges in the Upper Zones did not attract his interest in the slightest!

Instead of settling down in an opulent palace built on a planet that was completely owned by his empire, the Iron Emperor instead chose to settle in a fleet of dwarven making!

The Eternal Fleet functioned as the roving center of the Eternal Vulcan Empire.

It consisted of over two-dozen impressive first-class fleet carriers and hundreds of sub-capital ships.

To be honest, the vast resources and manpower at the Iron Emperor's disposal could easily support the acquisition of many more first-class starships.

The reason why the Eternal Fleet remained relatively modest despite the vast size of the dwarven empire was because Rion Aaden only demanded the best!

Each first-class fleet carrier consisted entirely of expensive first-class exotic materials. The crews manning all of the important stations were carefully selected in order to ensure the starships could handle every possible emergency scenario.

The dwarves even equipped each and every starship of the Eternal Fleet with the best superdrives that they could get their hands on. The difficulty of acquiring them was great, largely due to the insufficient supply of phasewater!

Still, the Eternal Vulcan Empire possessed enough of a footing in the Red Ocean to build up a strong first-class fleet that was not much inferior to the most well-equipped Terran or Rubarthan fleets!

At the heart of the fleet was the Paramount Vestige.

The 6-kilometer long fleet carrier might not be the largest of her type, but she was built with the best combination of mobility and defenses that the Vulcanites could attain!

The Paramount Vestige was more than a military vessel. The Central Administration of the Vulcan Empire occupied a substantial amount of internal space.

This city within a starship functioned as the de-facto capital of the sprawling dwarven empire. All of the other Dwarven Refuges effectively answered to the offices based in the Paramount Vestige!

The splendor of the Vulcanites was on full display in the flagship of the Eternal Fleet.

She housed the strongest and most effective first-class multipurpose mechs designed by numerous different dwarven Master Mech Designers. The dwarven mech pilots assigned to pilot those powerful mechs had been carefully selected as well.

A particularly high proportion of dwarven expert candidates and expert pilots happened to be stationed on this special ship!

Each of them worked diligently to protect the large quantity of government workers and officials that was responsible for keeping much of the sprawling territories of the Eternal Vulcan Empire connected to each other.

Their work was difficult as they had to ensure that the dwarves remained aligned to the same common cause even if they were physically separated by at least thousands of light-years.

Among the many senior leaders who had proven their ability to govern the rapidly growing empire, only a single one of them managed to earn the Iron Emperor's greatest trust!

Now, this two century-old dwarf had taken valuable time off his busy schedule to meet with the sovereign of the Eternal Vulcan Empire in person.

The white-bearded dwarf who wore an impressive-looking ceremonial robe approached the Inner Sanctum of the Paramount Vestige.

As the head of the Central Administration came close enough, the Praetorian Guard inspected the old man thoroughly before he was allowed to move forward.

The Inner Sanctum possessed a substantially different architecture than the rest of the first-class fleet carrier.

The plain-looking compartments were largely devoid of decorations and refinement. The bulkheads consisted of inferior second-class or even third-class alloys! The crude industrial workmanship of the environment was so awful that the top dwarven craftsmen would weep if they ever entered this odd space!

Even the white-bearded dwarf couldn't help but frown when he entered this section of the ship.

The Inner Sanctum was the personal refuge of the Iron Emperor. He did not have to be on guard or try his best to impress other people when he stayed in this private abode.

The old dwarf's steps slowed as he passed through several compartments.

He eventually reached a study compartment that was filled with bookshelves.

The agents of the Eternal Vulcan Empire had worked hard and invested a lot of resources to gather as many antique books written by dwarves as possible.

Aside from the Praetorian Guard that continually kept watch over the surroundings, the old dwarf only met two other dwarves.

The first was the perpetually encased form of the Iron Emperor.

Even if he resided in the heart of his Inner Sanctum, the dwarf that had founded the Eternal Vulcan Empire never separated his body from his tall and massive metal armor suit.

The second figure was the female dwarf that arguably possessed the deepest friendship with the Iron Emperor.

Both figures noticed the old dwarf's arrival and halted their earlier conversation.

"Your Majesty." High Chancellor Welter Optimus bowed in greeting.

[YOU HAVE ARRIVED. GOOD.] The electronic voice of the Iron Emperor boomed.

The old dwarf couldn't help but feel more awed at his sovereign. Whenever the Iron Emperor spoke, the thick crown mounted on the top of the helmet glowed and seemed to bestow the ruler with additional authority!

Fortunately, the effect was extremely weak as Rion Aaden did not see the need to stimulate this power.

The female dwarf standing next to the sovereign was not an ordinary woman.

Saint Yila Mayorka was the Iron Emperor's most trusted confidant! She had served as his protector when he reigned over the original Vulcan Empire!

His cause had become her cause as well. She cared just as much about the latest developments of the Eternal Vulcan Empire as her sovereign!

"High Chancellor, what is the proportion of dwarves that we have managed to transfer to the Red Ocean?" She asked in an imperious tone.

"We have only just managed to transfer 7 percent of all of the dwarves under our banner to the Red Ocean." The old man respectfully replied. "The dwarven diaspora will continue to pour into our Dwarven Refuges in the old galaxy over time, so it will be difficult to increase this percentage further. At this rate, we can stably transfer billions of dwarven citizens to the Red Ocean a year. Our greatest limitation is not our transportation capacity, but our lack of settlements in the new frontier. We are building up our colonies as fast as possible, but supplies and infrastructure are still too hard to come by. We must compete against a much larger number of human colonists."

Saint Yila Mayorka gazed at the encased form of her sovereign for a moment.

[SLOW DOWN THE TRANSFER OF DWARVES.] The emperor boomed. [WE HAVE ALREADY SHIFTED ENOUGH HIGH-QUALITY CITIZENS TO THE RED OCEAN TO



PROCEED WITH THE NEXT PHASE OF OUR MASTER PLAN. OUR REFUGES IN THIS SMALLER GALAXY HAVE BEGUN TO THRIVE WHILE OUR FLEET IS MORE THAN STRONG ENOUGH TO VENTURE DEEPER INTO THE NEW FRONTIER.]

The high chancellor looked apprehensive. "About the master plan... are you certain we are ready to take this step? If we begin to take more drastic steps, we will draw the ire of the humans of the Big Two. They shall not take kindly to our possible insurrection."

[DWARVENKIND CANNOT FLOURISH WHERE HUMANKIND HAS TAKEN UP RESIDENCE! IF WE ARE TO DEVELOP AS A PEOPLE, WE MUST FOUND OUR CIVILIZATION. THE MILKY WAY GALAXY IS NOT SUITABLE TO BECOME OUR HOME. THE RED OCEAN IS BARELY BETTER, BUT IT WILL DO FOR THE TIME BEING.]

"We are acting too quickly, Your Majesty! Our empire is not ready to take this step. The vast majority of dwarves in the old galaxy will experience increasing discrimination and other difficulties if we alienate ourselves from the humans."

The Iron Emperor remained merciless. [WE SYMPATHIZE WITH OUR DWARVEN BROTHERS AND SISTERS, BUT THE ONES THAT STILL RESIDE IN THE OLD GALAXY ARE TOO UNQUALIFIED OR NOT COMMITTED ENOUGH TO PARTICIPATE IN OUR GREAT CAUSE. THEIR COMING SACRIFICE WILL NOT BE IN VAIN. IF WE ARE TO BUILD A TRUE ETERNAL EMPIRE, THEN WE MUST START WITH THE ABSOLUTE BEST.]

This caused the old dwarf to look shocked!

"That... that is too cruel, Your Majesty! We can still import billions more dwarves as long as we step up our logistical operations!"

Saint Yila Mayorka made a disgusted noise. "Have you not listened to your emperor? There is no place for fools and incompetents in our true empire! Only the best dwarves of our kind can enable our rise."

[THE DWARVEN REFUGES IN THE RED OCEAN ARE NOT AS IMPORTANT AS THIS FLEET.] The Iron Emperor revealed. [I WILL NOT LIE TO YOU, HIGH CHANCELLOR. THE ETERNAL FLEET IS MORE THAN JUST THE HEART OF MY EMPIRE. IT IS THE BEGINNING AND THE END OF MY TRUE EMPIRE. THE DWARVES STATIONED ON OUR SHIPS SHALL HAVE THE HONOR OF BECOMING THE FOUNDERS OF OUR TRUE DWARVEN HOMELAND.]

A true dwarven homeland!

Though High Chancellor Welter Optimus had no idea where the Iron Emperor planned to found such an important place, he felt strangely certain that this ambitious plan would succeed!

Compared to a star territory where the dwarves could reign without submitting themselves to the dominant human authorities, the Dwarven Refuges that housed the vast majority of Vulcanites did not sound so important anymore!

Chapter 4998 Grand Convergence IX

Among the many cargo ships that transferred their goods from one galaxy to another, a single gate conveyor made a routine transit from Bridgehead One to Maryun Ultima.

The massive cylindrical vessel had made this trip hundreds of times since her construction four years ago. Her hull and various systems were still in good shape despite traversing millions of light-years over her short service.

Nobody directed any special attention to this relatively ordinary gate conveyor.

The enormous cargo vessels that were assigned to transport goods from the Red Ocean to the Milky Way rarely returned with a full load of goods.

Many dominant powers would rather invest the goods and resources obtained in the Red Ocean to build up their colonies and colonial states!

The main reason to send Red Ocean products back to the Milky Way was to satisfy the expensive demands of the latter's wealthy consumers.

Many states and organizations in the Milky Way were willing to pay a high premium to import phasewater, transphasic mechs, alien relics and other specialty goods!

However, no matter how high their demand may be, it was difficult to ensure that every gate conveyor passed through the greater beyonder gate with a full load of cargo.

This time, only three-quarters of the current gate conveyor's massive cargo space was filled with goods. The majority of them actually consisted of relatively low-value bulk goods such as raw ores and alien flora.

Once the gate conveyor completed the transit back to the old galaxy and passed through the Big Two's extensive inspections, the massive ship began to transfer her cargo to many other trading vessels.

One of them happened to be a smaller gate conveyor that was assigned to a fixed trade route that ended up all the way to the galactic rim.

Once the interstellar cargo ship filled up her cargo bay from various larger gate conveyors, she passed through one of the many lesser beyonder gates that occupied the Maryun Ultima System and ended up all the way in the Opalis System in the Tarnished Crown Star Sector!

From there, the smaller gate conveyor transferred her cargo to the warehouse of a trading company.

The goods would slowly be transferred to different cargo ships that subsequently traveled to many different star systems.

The relatively low-priority goods would slowly be loaded into different mass conveyors.

The high-priority goods received much better treatment. They were loaded into smaller, faster and more secure cargo ships.

The most prized goods were always brought to their destinations by relatively small courier vessels!

A new category of courier vessels had emerged in the old galaxy.

Different from the existing corvette and frigate-sized vessels, the latest ones were all equipped with relatively expensive superdrives!

These drives that combined the advantages of FTL drives and warp drives were extremely expensive even when they were mounted onto relatively tiny starships!

The logistical companies operating in the Milky Way couldn't bear to construct too many of them. They only needed a handful at most to service all of the high-priority transportation needs of an entire star cluster!

One such rapid vessel happened to load a small but extremely valuable batch of cargo to one of the more remote star sectors of human space.

The frigate-sized courier vessel departed from the Opalis System and began a swift journey through many different star sectors.

The blazingly fast speed of her superdrive ensured that she wouldn't have to spend much time in FTL transit.

The small superdrive also happened to complete its cycling process in a little over three hours, which meant that the courier vessel hardly spent any downtime in realspace.

She could actually dive right into the higher dimensions with the help of a backup FTL drive.

This was a handy capacity if the superdrive ever malfunctioned or if the courier vessel was about to come under attack.

The only problem was that the backup drive was far too slow. The courier vessel mostly kept it in reserve for that reason.

The ship did not encounter any situations that necessitated this emergency response. The main space lanes had always remained secure as countless other major transportation vessels also used the same routes. The high traffic deterred a lot of opportunities from engaging in criminal behavior.

Only half a decade had passed since the so-called Crown Uprising fizzled out. The level of aggression in the old galaxy had dropped so much that many people had long lowered their guard.

The courier vessel therefore completed an uninterrupted journey that started from the Antilla Star Cluster and crossed through the Fermi Star Cluster and the Bardo Star Cluster.

The ship did not make a single pit stop despite traversing so many light-years. The company that operated this courier vessel charged an extremely high premium in order to guarantee safe and fast delivery!

It was not until the courier vessel reached the distant Yeina Star Cluster that she finally ended her journey.

She transferred a large batch of high-value goods to a logistical center in the Winged Serenade Star Sector.

From there, a smaller superdrive-equipped courier vessel took in a part of the newly-arrived cargo and commenced a journey that crossed straight into the Majestic Teal Star Sector before stopping right as she entered the Komodo Star Sector.

The courier vessel only disgorged a few pieces of high-value goods to a space station in the Sentinel Kingdom before moving onwards.

The Sentinel Kingdom happened to be a rather special third-rate state in the changing star sector.

It had not only managed to largely stay out of the destructive Komodo War, but continued to keep the influence of the victorious Fridaymen at bay! There were several reasons why the Fridaymen declined to impose authority on the Sentinel Kingdom.

The most important one was that the Sentinel Kingdom had become deeply involved in a hidden struggle between two strong powers!

What was weird about these powers was that they were supposedly empires based in the Nyxian Gap!

The supposed pirate empires of the Nyxian Gap had become increasingly more well-known in the surrounding star sectors.

Nobody knew how they became so strong, but anyone with enough intelligence and vision quickly figured out that the so-called Oblivion Empire and the Abyss Empire were far more threatening than they appeared on the surface!

There had to be strong reasons why so many different mech forces continually entered the dangerous Nyxian Gap just so that they could pledge their loyalty to these rising forces.

In any case, the Oblivion Empire had begun to radiate its influence throughout the Sentinel Kingdom.

The royal family along with numerous key noble houses had signed secret agreements with the Oblivion Empire.

One of these agreements concerned transit and transportation. Many different ships that came from afar liked to stop by the Sentinel Kingdom before proceeding to head inside the Nyxian Gap.

They usually banded together into large convoys that provided them with better security in the dangerous and unpredictable anomalous region.

A special batch of cargo was loaded onto a combat carrier that secretly belonged to the Oblivion Empire.

The ship subsequently performed her duty as one of the escorts of a larger convoy.

Time went by as the convoy left the Sentinel Kingdom and entered the Nyxian Gap that was filled with an endless amount of asteroids.

All FTL travel became invalid, so the ships could only rely on their sub-light propulsion systems to reach their distant destinations.

It was not until the convey reached a rogue planet called Mournshell where the convoy was met with a massive fleet!

The fleet consisted of a dazzling variety of starships, ranging from shabby light carriers to large and extremely dangerous armed warships!

Yes, warships!

As an empire that was rooted in the Nyxian Gap, the Oblivion Empire did not answer to the authority of the Big Two.

It was impossible for the MTA and the CFA to enforce the prohibition against taboos in such a weird and dangerous region!

As such, both the Oblivion Empire and the Abyss Empire had begun to deploy their own warships.

Even if most of these warships were originally ordinary starships that had later been mounted with varying guns, the distinction was still important!

Still, the two rivaling Nyxian powers had been making use of warships for enough years without incurring retaliation from the Big Two that most people acclimated to their presence!

The combat carrier that had originally been dispatched from the Sentinel Kingdom left the convoy and carefully approached the flagship of the entire Oblivion Navy.

Compared to the enormous battleships of the MTA and especially the CFA, the Throne of Light did not come close to looking as impressive!

As one of the first purpose-built warships that had been completely designed and built within the Nyxian Gap, the Throne of Light was a sturdy heavy cruiser that was small enough to reluctantly navigate the asteroid-filled environment.

As the combat carrier docked with the large and much more dangerous warship, the former quickly handed over a single heavy crate.

A large guard of elite troops soon took charge of the crate and brought it all the way to the center of the Throne of Light.

Three important individuals had gathered together after receiving word about the delivery of this cargo.

As the elite guards placed the crate in a well-lit throne room, their sovereign dismissed them with a single wave of the hand.

Once they were left alone, the youngest of the three couldn't hold in her curiosity any longer!

"Let's open it, mother!" The translucent young woman eagerly spoke.

Even though she did not have a physical body, she chose to 'wear' a blue sports outfit for today. She continued to wear her Death Lotus in her hair, where it softly glowed in an ominous gray light.

"You may proceed." The Lady of the Night replied in a tone that was mixed with both love and unquestionable authority.

Helena studied the metal crate and quickly found the controls.

Normally, her intangible limbs should pass right through the object, but the Nyxian Gap operated by different rules.

The Daughter of Death only had to expend a bit more effort to press the right buttons.

Gas escaped from the crate as the plain metal sides automatically parted.

"Wow!"

A warm glow began to bathe the entire throne room as the contents of the crate turned out to be a human-sized totem of the Golden Cat! Both Helena and her parents smiled as they felt a strong sense of affinity and belonging from the exquisitely crafted metal statue.

"It's nice to meet you again, Goldie." Helena said as she stroked her hand across the reflective metal surface.

The two older adults in the room had come closer as well.

Ryncol Larkinson, the Dark Saint, studied the cat totem carefully as he held the translucent hand of his wife

Our son has weird tastes

Cynthia Larkinson, who reigned over the Oblivion Empress by virtue of her overwhelming might in the Nyxian Gap, curled her lips into a smile. "Ves can be a good boy at times. Don't you agree, my son?"

The powerful Lady Nyx raised one of her arms and made a grabbing motion.

This instantly pulled out a smaller feline that had been hiding inside the totem of the Golden Cat in a phased state all this time!

"Myaow!" The cyborg cat complained as she was held in place by the Oblivion Empress!

Both Cynthia and Helena started to giggle at the sight of the mechanical cat that also possessed a biological core.

"Ves can be a naughty girl as well, hihhi!" Helena remarked and giggled.

"Myaow! Myaow! Myaow!"

"Oh, stop complaining already and give us what we want, 'little brother'. Our mother has waited so long for this that she will probably spank you if you tease her any further!"

The Oblivion Empress started to raise a single eyebrow.

This scared the newly-arrived cyborg cat so much that she began to do as she instructed!

Within a single blink of an eye, Veronica materialized a solid metal coffin!

As soon as the heavy metal object appeared on the deck of the throne room, all three human figures directed their attention to this smuggled container.

The Dark Saint moved first. The powerful ace pilot bent down and unlocked the coffin. Once he managed to lift open the top, everyone fell silent. The coffin held a single complete skeleton.

The remarkable density and appearance of the bones showed that it did not belong to any regular human skeleton.

The bones actually belonged to a primordial human that Ves had taken to calling David!

Veronica had only been able to deliver this crucial ancient relic to Cynthia Larkinson by completing a lengthy journey back to the Komodo Star Sector!

The eyes of the Oblivion Empress grew hot at the sight of this pristine set of bones! "I... can finally regain my body."

## Chapter 4999 Grand Convergence X

"Myaow-"

Veronica represented a strange existence to Ves. The cyborg cat he created by adapting an occult alien ritual primarily served to empower him and better absorb the worship of other beings.

Ves had no idea how the orven race had come up with this idea. The theories and techniques sounded so outlandish that he suspected that the orvens may have stolen it from an external source, such as the primordial humans that must have roamed the Red Ocean in the distant past.

If that was the case, then Ves had stolen this method back.

Not only that, but he adapted it and put his own spin on it to create a living and moving avatar!

Veronica did more than unlock his potential for Spiritual Ascension.

The integration of phasewater also inadvertently allowed him to set foot on the path of a phase lord as well, which was what the orven ritual sacrifice altar was supposed to do from the start!

Yet for all of those useful functions, Ves actually prized one aspect about his living divine artifact above every other benefit.

Veronica enabled him to live another life on a concurrent basis!

Different from Blinky, Veronica was not bound too closely to Ves. She could travel as far away from him without getting subjected to any range limitations.

Different from Vulcan, Veronica was much more anchored to the material realm. The biomechanical body Ves constructed had undergone a lightning baptism as well that permitted his creation to live among other people without needing to expend extra energy!

As his second nucleus of power, Veronica had become an unprecedented existence.

She had become an avatar that was close to perfection!

It wasn't just Ves who thought that way. When the Oblivion Empress herself finally interrupted her obsessive examination of the skeleton of the primordial human, she finally took a deeper look at the cat that delivered her true salvation!

"Myaow!" The silvery cat with green highlights protested as the translucent woman grabbed a hold of his body!

Veronica shivered as Cynthia Larkinson's eyes seemed to peer straight through her mechanical exterior and past her biological core to gaze directly at her evolved fragment of her progenitor's Divine Core!

What she saw did not please her at first. "Ahem, 'Veronica'?"

"Myaow...?"

"DO YOU KNOW HOW RECKLESS YOU HAVE BEEN!" She burst out as waves of uncontrolled energy leaked from her energy body! "YOU COULD HAVE KILLED YOURSELF! YOU SHOULD HAVE NEVER SUBJECTED YOURSELF TO A DANGEROUS, SELF-MADE RITUAL THAT PERMANENTLY DAMAGED YOUR MOST INNER SELF! DON'T YOU

KNOW THAT THE DAMAGE TO MY OWN DIVINE CORE IS EXACTLY WHY I HAVE BEEN DYING ALL OF THIS TIME!?"

"Myaaaaaooow!"

The mother brought the cat closer to her head. "Dispense with this charade. Speak like a human. I know you have made this form with a fully functional voice box."

Veronica sheepishly smiled. "Uhm, I knew what I was doing, mom. I obtained the original method from the Mech Designer System itself! Everything turned out alright in the end. I gained a powerful new physical avatar that I could send back to this galaxy and deliver the primordial human skeleton to you by making use of the System's storage capabilities. It's quite handy, actually."

Cynthia's energy manifestation began to frown. "How does that work, actually?"

"I can store stuff in a vault that is located in a different dimension and withdraw from it." Veronica answered. "What is important is that it doesn't matter which version of myself is doing the deposits and withdrawals. You don't know?"

"Shouldn't you be more familiar with the Mech Designer System than me, mother?"

"I have never used it in this manner, though I shouldn't be surprised that it is able to offer this service to you." The mother furrowed her brows. "How much did you have to sacrifice in order to deposit this skeleton so far away from the Red Ocean? How great is the burden that you have to bear in order to do this again?"

"Not much, actually. I only need to complete a few tasks from the System in order to pay its fee for a year."

Ves had realized this potential 'exploit' fairly early on. Since he and Veronica were functionally the 'same' person, either of them could withdraw anything they had stored in the Vault of Eternity!

In fact, he still had doubts whether the System would truly maintain this functionality when his cat avatar had traveled hundreds of light-years away from his human form.

The fact that the System was powerful enough to make this happen had massive implications for Ves and his family in the Nyxian Gap!

Ves could pass on many different objects to his father and mother in the Milky Way, while his parents could transfer gifts to him in return!

No longer would they be completely separated through uncontrollable circumstances!

His relatives were not stupid. They understood the implications as well. Shocked expressions appeared on his father's gruff face and his eldest sister's elegant visage.

A few hours went by as 'Veronica' and his immediate family caught up on old times.

The mighty Dark Saint and the resplendent Lady of the Night momentarily dropped their acts and regained a touch of their simpler selves.

The four Larkinsons chatted with each other in the privacy of the throne room like they were just an ordinary family.



They even sat down at a table and pretended to have a normal dinner.

The only inconsistencies were that Veronica was a cyborg cat that ate from a large bowl while the two women could not eat any physical sustenance.

That did not stop the four Larkinsons from enjoying this precious moment!

Cynthia and Ryncol hadn't experienced such a precious dining experience for over three decades!

Helena grinned and giggled as this was the first time she could live through such a characteristically human moment.

"I always dreamt of this." She said as she swallowed a spoon of soup.

Naturally, her entire meal was nothing but a spiritual facade. As a pure energy-based life form, her true sustenance consisted of the spiritual feedback provided by a huge amount of worshippers from both the Oblivion Empire and the Hex Federation.

No matter.

"This moment could have become even more perfect for us if you could have brought over my lovely little grandchildren as well." Ryncol Larkinson spoke as he gnawed on a spiced rib.

Veronica's feline face looked conflicted. "Myaow... I would have wanted to introduce you to my kids as well, but... I don't think that they are ready for this reunion. I am not sure if I want to tell them the truth about all of this. They already enjoy good lives in the Red Ocean. There is no need for us to drag them into this awful mess. I kind of understand why you originally tried your best to keep me out of your affairs, mother. It is not easy being a parent."

Cynthia Larkinson sighed as she leaned her head on her slender palm. "I tried to protect you from my enemies, but... I have come to realize that my desire to keep you safe has also led me to stifle your potential out of fear. The gift you received from your father has allowed you to grow far beyond my initial expectations. You have realized the best of both of our heritages. I am so proud of you, my child. Having you was the best decision of my life. It is only through your persistent efforts that I have stepped away from nihilism and regained my life."

"From what I have heard and managed to observe from Zeigra, your children are much smarter and stronger than you give them credit for." Ryncol spoke up. "Once they grow up, I think it may do them good if they learn the truth, if they haven't already figured it out by that time. They may not escape the consequences of being our grandchildren. We all share a common enemy."

The mention of that enemy caused the mood around the dinner table to drop. Each of them had become involved in a dangerous game centered around a fragment of the Metal Scroll.

Though that very same fragment had enabled Ves to rise and his mother to gain a huge amount of power, the Five Scrolls Compact would eventually come knocking and demand the return of their precious relic.

Once the family completed their intimate dinner, Cynthia carried the cyborg cat away so that the mother and 'son' could talk to each other in private.

They entered a large bedroom that only Ryncol ever really used due to being the only individual to possess a corporeal body.

Cynthia 'sat' down onto the bed and put Veronica on her lap before stroking the cyborg cat in a loving and delicate manner.

"Myaow- that feels so good-" Veronica squinted her eyes in pleasure.

The mother chuckled for a bit. "What possessed you to turn your avatar into a female, Ves? Did you feel you were born the wrong way?"

"No! I like being a man!" The cat's feminine voice claimed! "I just wanted to add a little variety in my life, that is all. I still consider myself male. This is not much different from playing a game and choosing to experience it with a female character. There is nothing else going on. I swear, mother!"

"Mhmm." Cynthia responded in an ambiguous tone. "You are already an adult, so I will not interfere with your inclinations. I would rather discuss matters of greater importance."

"Such as...?"

"Now that you have delivered the precious skeleton, what do you intend to do with your cat avatar? Do you intend to stay with us here in the Nyxian Gap, or did you intend to bring your cat form back to the Red Ocean?"

"Will you allow me to stay with you guys...?" Veronica hesitantly asked.

Cynthia embraced the cat in a hug. "You are my son, Ves. I love you with all of my heart. Leaving you when you were still so young has been one of the greatest regrets of my life. It is a delight to have you back with me. I may have concerns if you were only here in your human self, but since you only arrived in the form of an avatar, it is much less dangerous to keep you around."

Her words reminded Ves that his mother was still caught up in an enormous vortex that was fraught with danger!

"What is the deal with the Oblivion Empire, anyway?" Veronica asked. "Also, has the Nyxian Gap changed since the last time I visited? I don't recall it being so... active."

"I know you would ask that, my son. Let me show you something that will answer many of your questions."

The powerful Lady Nyx picked up the cat and left the bedroom. She moved back to the throne room and sat down onto the throne that turned out to be made out of Unending alloy!

"What?!" Veronica gasped! "How much of this stuff do you have?"

"Oh, this? More than you realize." Cynthia smirked. "What I actually want to show you lies underneath this throne. You can phase through solid matter, correct?"

The cat nodded. "I do, though I can't pass through strong energy shields."

"You don't have to worry about that. Follow me downstairs."

Cynthia and Veronica sank through the Unending alloy throne and continued to go down until they entered a secret chamber.

Many different security features kept this compartment as secure as the Oblivion Empire could manage.

The reason why his mother had this chamber built quickly became apparent when Veronica laid her electronic eyes onto a golden crown!

"What.... Is that?"

"That, my son, is the Golden Laurel Wreath Crown." Cynthia triumphantly revealed. "I took it as my spoils of war after defeating a naughty girl who arrogantly thought she could defeat me on my home ground."

Ves tied in a lot of different clues together. His cat avatar's eyes grew brighter in alarm!

"You... you're the cause of the Crown Uprising!" Veronica gasped! "You are the reason why all of those crazy brainwashed fanatics kept shouting about returning their supposed crown!"

"You are correct." Cynthia said. "I am pleased that you have managed to avoid the storm by moving to the Red Ocean. The cult's influence is not as entrenched over there. I hope you will keep your human side away from this galaxy. Our enemies are too powerful and their hold over the Milky Way remains extensive despite the Big Two's suppression."

Veronica kept staring at the strange crown that radiated with so much power.

"Is this crown... a fragment of a Sacred Scroll?"

The mother laughed. "Hahaha! I can understand your misconception, but no. It is more than that. It is the Water Scroll's symbol of authority. This crown is made out of one of the sources that the Scroll derives its power from. It is made out of a particularly potent kind of blood."

"What?!"

Ves could not see a trace of blood or organic matter from the metal crown!

Yet he did not doubt his mother's words either, because he sensed the enormous power contained within this artifact!

He began to study what the crown was currently doing. He noticed that it had actually been trying to escape non-stop. An elaborate brace made out of Unending alloy and other spiritually-reactive materials kept it in place while also siphoning away a considerable amount of water-attributed spiritual energy!

The engineering was fascinating. Ves wondered what his mother was doing with all of the spiritual energy collected from the stolen crown.

"So what did you want to tell me about this crown?" Ves asked.

"The Golden Laurel Wreath Crown is one of the essential symbols of authority to the Holy Son or Daughter anointed by the Water Scroll." Cynthia straightforwardly explained. "The Compact may elect a new one amongst themselves, but without regaining possession of this crown, the new inheritor will never be able to gain full access to the Water Scroll. This is why the Compact is constantly attacking us under the guise of the Abyss Empire. In order to defend against their escalating assaults, it was no longer enough for me to fight my opponents by myself. I took the lead of your father's organization and elevated it into an empire that is able to dominate the Nyxian Gap."

Ves knew that it was not so simple to build up an empire out of nothing. The Nyxian Gap was perhaps the worst kind of environment to do this, yet from what he had seen so far, his parents were doing better than ever!

He felt strangely inadequate when he compared the size of the Oblivion Empire to the size of his Larkinson Clan.

It turned out that his mother was a lot better at empire building!

"How... are you able to gather so many people?" Veronica asked in confusion. "How are you able to keep the Five Scrolls Compact at bay?"

"There are many answers to those questions, my son. You will slowly be able to gain a complete understanding as long as you spend enough time with us. For now, I can say that it is not difficult to attract so many willing subjects if I am able to give them what they want. If you have taken a look at our mech pilots, you will find that many of them are unusually powerful."

Ves did take note how an unusually high proportion of the soldiers in the fleet turned out to be expert candidates and expert pilots!

There was something odd about them as well, but he hadn't been able to examine them closely enough to figure out their weirdness.

He had a feeling that all of the mech pilots who were eager to break past their limits had paid an unimaginably high price to attain their power!

"As for the Nyxian Gap..." Cynthia raised her arm and caused the space around her to change and warp! "I have taken over a part of this broken space. I am the closest thing to her sovereign."

"That...!"

Ves could not imagine how her mother could even do that! The way that she was able to command the space around them with such ease showed that she could easily grant the Oblivion Empire massive terrain advantages in the Nyxian Gap!

No wonder she managed to keep the Five Scrolls Compact at bay for so long!

"So... what next, mother?"

Cynthia smirked. "Now, we shall commence the restoration of my body and complete my resurrection in full. I have been preparing for this for years. My injury is deeper than you realize, and can only be healed through exceptional means. You have just delivered the bones. Now, I only need to retrieve the blood that can bring my body to life, and what better ingredient to draw from than the blood of an immortal god? There is a reason why I have kept this crown in my possession despite the associated dangers."

She reached out her arm and placed it around one of the pointed spikes on top of the base.

The Oblivion Empress began to apply pressure. The Golden Laurel Wreath Crown did not take kindly to this, and began to shake even harder in order to resist the force exerted by the woman!

Cynthia began to exert even more of her strength in response! She even leveraged her authority over the Nyxian Gap to bend the space occupied by the crown!

Soon enough, the pressure grew too great for the crown to bear!

SNAP!

A golden metal piece snapped loose from the base, and with it, the crown began wail in pain!

A powerful energy shockwave blasted from the crown and quickly spread through the surrounding space, frightening everyone by the suffering released by the relic!

"Uhhh... I don't think the Five Scrolls Compact will like what you have done to their crown." Veronica remarked.

"The Compact cannot stop us any longer. Come with me, Ves. We shall commence the ritual right away. The time of my resurrection is at hand!"

## Chapter 5000 The Return Of The Immortal Goddess

Ves had no idea what his mother was doing, but he supported her all the way.

The two had entered a different chamber, one that was marked by many different symbols and markings.

Cynthia started to set up her supposed ritual with the help of Helena, the cyborg cat hovered to the side while feeling completely useless.

Ves had already played his part by delivering David's skeleton. Helena had brought the bones to the center of a ritual circle.

Cynthia soon began to call in several large storage containers that contained a lot of blood.

"That's not regular human blood." Veronica spoke as she sensed the potent power contained with the red substance.

"That is correct, my son. We have drawn them from the bodies of your father as well as the expert pilots under our command for as long as the Oblivion Empire has existed. They are not the most ideal sources to draw upon, but they are the only empowered humans that we have on hand."

"What about the piece of the crown you broke off earlier?" Veronica asked.

Her mother smiled in amusement. "The blood of an immortal god is far too precious to waste on such a trivial purpose. Now please be a good boy and let your mother work."

A sense of anticipation built up in the secret ritual chamber.

As power began to flow through the blood and the Unending alloy components built into this mystical construction, Ves began to feel more and more palpitations in his heart.

Through Veronica's senses, he could vaguely discern how his mother's preparations were supposed to channel large quantities of energies in many special ways.

Each different component consumed energy to produce a specific reaction. The combination of these reactions were supposed to generate an outcome that ultimately led to his mother coming back to life!

At least that was what she claimed.

Ves began to feel a bit uneasy about this. From snapping a piece from that powerful crown to setting up a ritual that likely involved all of her subjects, this was starting to look more than a simple resurrection attempt.

Either his mother used to be far more powerful than he originally thought, or her ambition was to elevate herself into a higher life form!

He did not have a problem with either possibility. In fact, he would be happy if his mother became a lot stronger through this ritual. He only hoped that she wouldn't pay too much a price to attain so much power.

Ryncol Larkinson eventually came down to observe the preparations. He had even less of a clue of what was going on than his son.

"So mother told you nothing?"

The ace pilot and father crossed his arms and smirked. "Heh, I wouldn't even understand if she told me everything. She does not need to explain herself. I trust her and she trusts me. That is what marriage is all about. Don't you share the same kind of relationship with your own woman?"

"Eh... we're doing okay." Veronica lamely replied.

"This stuff may look discomforting to you, but we have very little choice, Ves." Ryncol explained. "We are in direct opposition to the most powerful human cult. The 'dark gods' they have been able to send through their portal have forced us to fight hard in order to prevent these powerful intruders from wreaking havoc. We have managed to hold out on our own for the time being, but the more time goes by, the more the Compact is able to bring their more powerful assets to the fight."

Veronica turned and glanced at her 'father'. She could feel the raging power that he kept contained within his body!

"You've become an ace pilot. You've actually beaten your brother Ark in becoming the first Saint of the Larkinson Clan!"

"That may be true, but in my current state I can only last a few rounds against the gods of the Abyss Empire. Your mother and your sister are much more effective at killing them than me. I still have a lot to go before I can properly protect my family."

That caused the cyborg cat to frown. "I think you are plenty strong enough, dad. It must be your mech. I haven't been able to work on the Devil Tiger for a decade or so. I have learned a lot more about mech design. I also have a huge batch of phasewater that is sitting inside my special vault. Once this is over, how about bringing me to your ace mech so that I can upgrade it into a transphasic machine?"

"You can do that?" Ryncol asked in surprise. "I mean, you're a cat..."

Veronica arrogantly lifted her metallic head and tail. "Who says that cats can't work on mechs? I can operate a mech workshop just fine with my paws instead of human hands! If that is not possible, I can transmit my commands directly through a data link. I can redesign the Devil Tiger all by myself!"

This was one of the best parts about keeping Veronica with his parents.

Ves could finally contribute more directly to their fight, either by designing and upgrading the Oblivion Empire's mechs or transferring over valuable Red Ocean-exclusive exotics such as phasewater!

That reminded him of another possibility.

"Father?"

"Yes, my son... daughter..., err, this is starting to become confusing."

Veronica shrugged her feline shoulders. "Just call me whatever you want. Anyway, I was wondering if you have any materials to spare. Parts of this chamber happen to be made out of an alloy that is extremely valuable to me. I have also detected other materials that I could make good use of back in the Red Ocean."

"I see no problem with that, Ves, but you will have to discuss the details with your mother. She is in charge of all of this. Now that you are here, I suppose we can open up a direct trade channel and exchange what we need from each other. I have heard so much about transphasic mechs that are becoming more and more common in the Red Ocean. They are starting to emerge in the Milky Way as well, though not as much in our little corner."

Ves saw a lot of promise in this trade channel. As long as the Mech Designer System did not pull a fast one on him and closed this particular- loophole of the rules, he could transfer all kinds of cool stuff between the Milky Way and the Red Ocean!

This trade channel had the potential to make both the Oblivion Empire and the Larkinson Clan incredibly rich!

The resources and goods they could exchange through the Vault of Eternity could also accelerate the growth of both sides!

There were no downsides as long as they were able to keep the existence of this secret intergalactic trade channel a secret from everyone else!

The thought of being able to circumvent the network of beyonder gates made him feel excited beyond belief!

"Ah, I think your mother and your sister are almost ready." Ryncol noted. "I need to go and organize our people. Their participation is essential."

The chamber had become filled with blood scribbles. Ves had no idea how they even worked, but he could feel a portion of the power they contained. Different kinds of spiritual energies already started to flow around the chamber.

"Come, brother." Helena said as she grasped the cyborg cat. "You do not want to stay too close to the center."

The two siblings moved to the furthest edge where most of the markings had diminished. There, they waited for their mother to commence the full ritual.

"Uhm..."

"Yes, brother?"

"Does mother have any use for phasewater?"

"I do not require any phasewater, Ves." Cynthia said as she worked. "I am aware of what you want to propose, but my methods are my own. Phasewater does not have a place in my body."

"Oh, okay..."

Around half an hour passed by. Veronica could detect an increasing buildup of spiritual energies. She discovered that most of it consisted of spiritual energy that had originally been drawn from the Golden Laurel Wreath Crown!

So much energy had accumulated that Ves grew a bit concerned. The Throne of Light could easily blow up if his mother lost control!

"It will be fine, brother." Helena said in a reassuring tone as she stroked Veronica's back. "Mother is an expert at this. She knows more about this than you ever will. You cannot imagine how much power she used to wield. She may have lost her body, but she has retained enough of her knowledge to piece together this grand ritual."

Veronica's tail flicked in concern. "I hope you are right, sister."

Cynthia Larkinson's energy manifestation grew more solid as the energy building up below the deck reached a threshold.

She began to tap into those energies.

A purple corona began to surround her form. Her eyes burned like purple stars!

"FATE HAS CONVERGED ON THIS DAY."

Her empowered words seemed to bend the fabric of reality around her! The ritual chamber became more and more active as the spiritual energies coursed through the markings, causing them to generate many different effects!

At the same time she began to channel the ritual, the subjects of the Oblivion Empire outside had stopped what they were doing and prostrated themselves in the direction of their sovereign!

Every person in the main fleet of the Oblivion Navy fell to their knees and began to devote their hearts and minds to the Lady of the Night.

No matter their backgrounds and no matter their motives for entering the dangerous Nyxian Gap, each of these humans managed to find salvation within the Oblivion Empire!

Now, the time had come for them to pay back the favor. Each of them were willing to do so, no matter whether they were ordinary spacers or powerful expert pilots.

As the citizens of the Oblivion Empire began to pray to their leader who they considered to be a goddess, Cynthia began to gain a mysterious boost that enabled her to exert more control over the powerful energies coursing through the ritual chamber!

A trickle of potent energies began to channel into the primordial human skeleton that Ves had brought back from the Red Ocean!

This caused the extraordinary bones to suck in everything that was sent in their direction!

Just like how Ves had once filled up David's skull with different kinds of spiritual energies, now the entire set of bones began to store a rapidly increasing quantity of energies derived from the stolen crown, Cynthia, Helena and other sources!

The bones began to glow with power and potential. They shone in a predominantly purple light, though hints of blue occasionally flickered from their surface.



Slowly but surely, the skeleton became more saturated. Cynthia did not seem to show any signs of struggle at all despite the immense amount of energy that she was currently harnessing!

As the ritual began to approach a peak, Veronica felt more and more charged by the incredibly high concentration of spiritual energy flowing to the center of the chamber!

Once the bones almost became saturated, Cynthia issued another declaration

"I SHALL SPILL THEIR BLOOD ACROSS THE STARS ONCE AGAIN!"

"Wait, what?" Veronica asked.

A bright flash of light exploded from the center!

The cyborg cat was too well-built to get blinded by this flash. Veronica could clearly see that the glowing bones no longer looked as bare as before.

Instead, the crown spike that the Oblivion Empress had previously snapped from the Golden Laurel Wreath Crown had absorbed a huge amount of spiritual energy that somehow caused it to devolve into a single drop of blood.

It was this drop of blood that released the flash of light.

Time and space itself bent around this extremely vivid drop of blood!

Ves immediately felt an overwhelming desire to fly forward and swallow it no matter the cost!

"Stay put, brother." Helena said as her translucent form became more solid and kept a tighter grip on the cyborg cat.

"Myaow!"

That single potent drop of godblood only hovered in the air for a few seconds before falling onto the skeleton.

What happened resembled pure magic.

From that single drop of lifeblood, flesh and other organic tissue began to unfold and fill up the empty spaces between the primordial human bones.

The drop also generated liters of a less potent form of blood, allowing the newly-formed body to gain all of the elements necessary to turn it alive. Before Ves knew it, a complete human body had formed!

No, it was more than that. The body felt so much stronger and more filled with energy that Ves could not mistake it for anything less than the physical form of a pure-blooded primordial human!

A set of elegant dark robes dropped from above and quickly wrapped around the female body. The spiritually-reactive materials and the exquisite design caused the garments to amplify the sense of nobility and divinity of this empty but extremely potent shell!

The most important part had arrived.

Cynthia's expression was filled with glee as she gazed upon her perfect body.

"LIFE IS AT MY COMMAND!"

With that, her energy manifestation dove into the empty physical body and began to merge with it in full.

This was not as easy as it sounded. The primordial human body was an incredibly powerful container, and it took serious effort for a spiritual entity of Cynthia's current level to wrest control over all of the flesh and bones.

Still, her willpower was great and her mastery over energy was too good.

From her heart to her limbs, more and more of the fleshy body began to fall under her control.

As Cynthia began to take possession of her head and brain, she briefly paused when she encountered an unexpected bump.

"AH! YOU! I KNEW YOU WERE HIDING THERE! DID YOU THINK I WOULD MISS YOUR PRESENCE?"

A second entity that felt vaguely familiar to Ves spiked with power. Despite this new presence's relative weakness, it had managed to put up a surprisingly strong fight against Cynthia!

Nonetheless, what little fight the unwelcome intruder managed to put became irrelevant due to the enormous difference in might.

"I SHALL ABSORB YOUR POWER!"

After taking care of this little hurdle, Cynthia finally completed her takeover and fully inhabited her new body!

All of the remaining energies that flowed through the ritual chamber suddenly began to pool into the robed female form that was beginning to lift off the deck and float into an upright position.

The resurrected woman began to spread her arms in order to welcome the influx of powerful energies even further!

No matter what sort of energy she absorbed, she was able to take all of it without showing any sign that she was suffering any indigestion!

Once all of the free energies disappeared into her incredibly potent body, the impressive feminine form slowly descended until it touched the deck.

All of the blood markings had evaporated, causing the chamber to look a lot cleaner than before.

Both Veronica and Helena watched with awe as they witnessed the return of a true primordial human.

The glowing body of their mother looked otherworldly in a way that was difficult to describe. Her skin glowed with sacred power while her movements made reality around her dance in harmony.

What Ves found especially peculiar was that his mother's glow had become a lot stronger and more developed!

The Oblivion Empress had become an entity that he could easily employ as a design spirit for the mechs of her own empire!

What was also strange was that lightning did not appear from above in order to strike her down for violating some kind of rule.

In fact, the space of the Nyxian Gap seemed to embrace her even more than before. It was as if she was operating in complete harmony with her environment!

"I... AM... IMMORTAL!" She declared, and the entire Nyxian Gap seemed to echo in agreement!

The woman herself cared nothing about this, though. She became preoccupied with another matter.

After a brief moment of concentration, Cynthia proceeded to transmit a pulse of power that soon generated a response a short distance away. "What...?"

Both Veronica and Helena looked surprised as a damaged crown appeared out of nowhere and landed onto Cynthia's head!

"M-Mother!" Helena gasped in shock! "That is impossible! How... how are you able to wear that crown?!"

Cynthia began to smirk as she opened her potent purple glowing eyes. "I have used the power of the Golden Laurel Wreath Crown to steal a portion of its authority."

Veronica's eyes pulsed in shock. "Wait, doesn't that mean...!"

"Yes, that is right, my son. To obtain a part of the authority of the crown means that I have gained partial access to the Water Scroll. The result is that I have become an unsanctioned Holy Daughter of the Water Scroll! I may not wield the power of an authentic Holy Daughter, but my gain shall weaken the Five Scrolls Compact. The ongoing war in the Nyxian Gap shall forever change as a consequence!"

"What?!"

"What!!!

Ves used to think he was special because he was a Holy Son of the Metal Scroll, but he learned later on that he was nothing compared to the more authentic chosen of the Earth Scroll and the Water Scroll.

Now, he found that even his mother managed to surpass him in this capacity.

Unsanctioned Holy Daughter or not, the ability to forcibly channel just a fraction of the power of the Water Scroll was a game changer that would shake not just the Nyxian Gap, but the entirety of human civilization!

The Five Scrolls Compact would definitely grow beyond pissed at what his mother managed to pull off with the stolen crown!

Just as Veronica was about to fly forward and ask her mother about the powers she had gained after taking over the Golden Laurel Wreath Crown, the cyborg cat suddenly froze.

Cynthia and Helena initially did not detect anything amiss. They flew closer and began to embrace each other into a hug.

It took a few more seconds for them to notice that the cyborg cat remained frozen in place.

"Ves?" Cynthia asked in an ethereal voice that was imbued with inherent charm. "What is wrong, my son?"

It took a few more seconds for Veronica to regain a bit of focus.

"Something has happened in the Red Ocean." The cyborg cat shakingly uttered. "The Mech Trade Association and the Common Fleet Alliance has broadcasted a galaxy-wide alert. The entire new frontier... is about to undergo an unknown crisis. The Big Two are claiming that the indigenous aliens are secretly deploying some kind of superweapon that will engulf the entire dwarf galaxy! The natives... are striking back!"