

The Mech 5081

Chapter 5081 Blackwing

Ves grew a little more concerned at how much phasewater the Larkinson Clan was using up now that transphasic blast lances entered into production. The previous battle did not yield a substantial amount of this substance as the wheednar raiding fleet was not that important to the alien community.

The expeditionary fleet needed to strike a much larger and better-protected target in order to earn a much greater yield of phasewater!

Even then, the forces of the Golden Skull Alliance needed to secure all of the vaults and storehouses that held all of the containers filled with pure phasewater.

If this did not happen quickly enough, then the vindictive aliens could easily ruin their stash out of spite!

The yurzen raiden fleet that was next on the Golden Skull Alliance's hit list probably did not offer that much phasewater either, so Ves needed to look elsewhere in order to solve this escalating problem.

"We need to raid a serious alien stronghold after we have concluded this operation." Ves determined.

There was nothing wrong with earning sums of MTA merits and lots of decent salvage by defeating a few more alien raiding fleets, but he set out to do a lot more when he initially conceived of the Trailblazer Expedition.

Ves still yearned to hunt down the Eminence of Torment. He occasionally met with Director Calabast in order to discuss the ongoing search effort.

Her Black Cats had already begun to collect intelligence on the state of alien-occupied star systems just over the border of the Torald Middle Zone, but they had yet to find the key piece of information that could result in a breakthrough.

In any case, Ves had to make a careful decision on how many blast lances the Spirit of Bentheim should produce in the face of dwindling phasewater supplies.

Phasewater was needed for all kinds of purposes.

The Design Department used up a decent quantity of phasewater. Multiple mech designers including Ves occasionally needed to use it up in order to conduct their research and advance the development of a transphasic mech design.

The Larkinson Biotech Institute and the T Institute both used up small amounts of phasewater in their own research projects.

While it was not necessary for all of these institutions and departments to expend so much phasewater every month, Ves understood that it was necessary in order for his clan to make faster progress.

An organization with greater ambitions had to master the uses of both E energy radiation and phasewater in order to thrive in this new and much more dangerous age!

It was not enough for the Larkinsons to excel in either of these areas. True greatness could only be attained if they could unlock the greater potential of these exceptional sources of power!

Still, now that the phasewater reserves of the Larkinson Clan continued to drain at an unsustainable rate, Ves could no longer blindly authorize any further reckless forms of phasewater spending.

He struggled to make up his mind on how many blast lances the Larkinson Clan should produce.

Each of them were quite powerful, and having more of them at hand would probably hasten the defeat of alien fleets.

They were especially handy to have if the expeditionary fleet ended up in a fight that was a lot tougher than the Golden Skullers were comfortable with. Once all of the high-ranking mechs became occupied, the standard mech units could only rely on a limited number of options to take down large quantities of warships without suffering too many losses in the process.

Ves eventually made a decision based on various factors.

"5 kilograms of phasewater should be enough to last us a while." Ves told Dulo Voiken. "That should be enough to produce 5000 transphasic blast lances or a little less if there is a bit of waste."

That disappointed Dulo a bit. "5000 blast lances is a lot, but with hundreds of lancer mechs at our disposal, a thousand or so can easily be used up in a typical battle. It will not take long for the supply to run out if we keep fighting in the deep frontier."

Ves sighed. "I know, but we still need to reserve a lot of phasewater for future needs. We at least need to save up a healthy reserve to produce copies of upcoming quasi-first-class mech models such as the Storm Sword and the Transcendent Punisher Mark III. Don't worry. I don't intend to allow our reserves to dwindle for too long. If our upcoming plans bear fruit, we should be able to get our hands on a lot more phasewater. We can afford to produce thousands of more transphasic blast lances. Until then, our lancer mechs should try to use their regular lances whenever possible."

Dulo Voiken shook his head in disappointment. "That may be somewhat acceptable to the Transcendent Charger as it is designed to make use of regular lances to begin with, but the Redlance is expressly designed to work with transphasic blast lances. The design spirit that you foisted on it becomes useless when there is no transphasic equipment to act upon."

"I know that. I think it is best for us to limit the production of the Redlance for the time being since they are so dependent on this luxurious weapon system. We can monitor their performance in real battles and increase production at a later date when it has proven its worth."

Ves considered the Redlance and the associated transphasic blast lance to be useful stopgap solutions in the current situation.

They were just like the transphasic hammer-wielding mechs fielded by the Boojay Family. They granted the Larkinson Clan a much faster means of wearing down the transphasic shields of alien warships.

However, once the Larkinson Army began to adopt quasi-first-class transphasic mechs on a wider scale, the Redlance would probably lose a lot of relevance.

That did not stop Dulo Voiken from designing an upgraded quasi-first-class variant of the Redlance with even more ridiculous performance, but that was a concern for the future.

With that taken care of, Ves turned his attention back to his main preoccupation at this time.

Companion spirits added a lot of strength and versatility to those who were lucky to have them at this time.

The way that Ves created them caused them to function as energy-based life forms for the most part.

This meant that their addition to a person's life automatically increased their spiritual development by a substantial degree!

It could enable people without any notable advantages in this area to obtain spiritual potential.

Those who already possessed spiritual potential could strengthen and activate this essential quality further.

The introduction of exotic radiation did not diminish the value of companion spirits.

It increased their worth even further as each of them were inherent natural cultivators! They were all able to absorb ambient spiritual energies and digest them in a way that furthered their growth.

Companion spirits were also capable of developing special abilities that were mostly based on the talents or inclinations of their human anchors.

Nitaa for example obtained a canine companion spirit with an exceptionally sensitive nose.

Ves could think of many more examples where companion spirits had bettered the lives of many people, but there was one group of human professionals that had the possibility of making even greater use of them than normal.

"How can expert pilots make the most out of their companion spirits? How does this addition make their lives better?"

Ves had not spent enough time to study this particular relationship.

"Is it possible for companion spirits to engage in willpower cultivation when they are already tied to expert pilots?"

This was an important question. When he thought about Emma, he could clearly sense that any extraordinary willpower attached to her form came from Divine Irene Mox herself.

This showed that even a god pilot as powerful as the Destroyer of Worlds did not need a second source of willpower in order to amplify her effective combat power!

When Ves studied the footage of the Ragnarok in action, he could vaguely perceive that Emma's main role was to amplify the main attacks of the god mech.

Divine Irene Mox did not appear to utilize Emma in any other capacity, but that might be because the public footage never showed off the god mech in other combat scenarios.

"Whatever the case, it appears that expert pilots can already get plenty of use out of their companion spirits when attaching them to their weapon systems."

Ves decided to pay a visit to an expert pilot in order to get an update on how they managed to get more use out of their companion spirits.

He found Tusa first, who looked happy to show off his latest tricks.

"I found Blackwing to be quite useful." He said as he jerked his head at the small blackbird companion spirit resting on his shoulder. "So far, I've managed to develop two ways in which he can help me out in battle."

"Chip chip!" The little bird called.

"Can you show me what you can do?" Ves asked.

"Sure."

Once Venerable Tusa entered the cockpit of his expert mech and deployed in space, he quickly demonstrated the two ways in which he was able to make use of Blackwing.

At first, Tusa sent out Blackwing to the transphasic flight system of the Dark Zephyr. This not only imbued it with a greater concentration of shadow and wing energies, but also enabled Tusa to resonate with it to a greater degree.

The result was a considerable boost to the Dark Zephyr's mobility!

Compared to the expert light skirmisher's regular performance, the Dark Zephyr empowered by Blackwing not only became faster and more agile while maneuvering in space, but also became a little more elusive and harder to notice!

While there was no way to make a mech without a stealth system invisible, the stronger shadows that enveloped his form made it a little less ostentatious.

"Interesting." Ves muttered as he studied the data readouts of the Dark Zephyr's current display of power.

Once Venerable Tusa was done with his first show, he shifted Blackwing over to one of the living expert mech's knives.

"Is it possible for you to impart the power of Blackwing in both of your expert mech's weapons?" Ves asked.

"No. I only have one Blackwing, and I can't split him up." Tusa replied.

This caused the Dark Zephyr to become a bit uneven, but Tusa did not mind it. When the expert light skirmisher began to spin around and launch flurry after flurry of knife attacks in the middle of space, the deadly dance immediately fascinated Ves.

Unlike many other Larkinson mech pilots, Venerable Tusa was one of the few who had actually obtained a cultivation inheritance before any of his peers.

The Shadow Dance Dagger Style that he had learned a long time ago became even more entrancing and deadly in this new age.

The Shadow Dances of the past could not come close to matching the charm of the current display!

This was because Venerable Tusa actively evoked the shadow energies around him, causing the immediate environment to turn into a shadowy storm that not only helped to confuse the perception

of his enemies, but also empowered all of the Dark Zephyr's knife attacks with greater power and penetration!

Tusa managed to do all of this without the use of transphasic weapons or armor!

In fact, the Dark Zephyr was still reflected of Ves' older design approach. The expert light skirmisher was still mainly clad with Unending alloy and wielded a pair of Unending alloy weapons.

In particular, the knife that carried the presence of Blackwing looked and felt as if it could slip through tough defenses with almost as much ease as a transphasic weapon!

Ves took in all of this and began to get a greater understanding on how companion spirits could enhance the performance of a mech.

He identified many possible variables that could help expert pilots get more use out of their companion spirits, but Ves fixated on one in particular.

"An effective cultivation method or extraordinary weapon style can make a huge difference!"

Chapter 5082 New Appreciation For Prime Mechs

Venerable Tusa arguably piloted the weakest expert mech of the Larkinson Army.

That did not discourage him at all. Instead, his lack of contributions in the last few battles spurred him on to work harder to develop ways to exceed his limitations.

This was how expert pilots were like.

Fortunately for Tusa, he made a lot of progress. He not only discovered that the Shadow Dance Dagger Style became a lot more effective with the addition of exotic radiation, but also found that his companion spirit could complement his actions!

Blackwing was an extension of himself. Imbuing him into a specific mech part enabled Tusa to resonate with it a lot more than before.

This was a trick that every expert pilot with a companion spirit had come to learn, but that was only a shallow method.

What truly enabled Tusa to draw out Blackwing's potential was when he performed a Shadow Dance!

The sight of the Dark Zephyr dancing in shadows was a show in itself. The expert light skirmisher's display of agility, finesse and charm seemed to conquer the power of heaven around the machine and cause the immediate area to become engulfed in a storm of shadow.

Ves could see that Venerable Tusa and his Dark Zephyr had actually come closest to forming a pseudo-domain akin to the Saint Kingdom of their betters!

By the time Venerable Tusa ended his demonstration and brought his expert mech back to his berth, the expert pilot looked proud.

"What do you think, Ves?"

"These new tricks of yours are certainly impressive, though they don't appear to be too relevant in battles against warships."

"I am still working on that angle." Tusa replied. "I have been working hard to develop a way for me to bypass the transphasic energy shields of enemy warships, but this is way harder and more complicated than anything else I have worked on. I am not even sure that I can pull it off at the expert pilot stage."

That sounded like an incredibly useful ability to have!

However, Ves did not dare to get his hopes up. The likelihood that Tusa would succeed was far too small. His judgment about needing to advance to ace pilot first was likely correct. Even then there was no guarantee that he could pull it off at that stage.

This was fine.

Venerable Tusa could develop a lot of other useful techniques to increase his effectiveness on the battlefield.

His current attainments showed that he had derived a lot of use out of the knowledge he learned from the enlightenment fruit.

He did not stop at mastering what he already learned. The expert pilot also displayed his ability to adapt and innovate by figuring out how to adapt his methods to mech combat and how to integrate Blackwing into his combat approach.

"Blackwing is kind of like a co-pilot in that sense." Venerable Tusa told Ves. "My companion spirit can carry a part of my power and has a mind of his own. He can allow me to put a lot of focus on a specific part of my mech and help me utilize it a lot better, especially in highly stressful moments when I cannot afford to get distracted."

He continued to explain how the addition of Blackwing made a positive difference in his fighting style.

"Thank you for explaining that." Ves said as he took in all of the information. "I think you will be able to do just fine. It is clear that the Shadow Dance holds greater potential. As long as you continue to explore and improve upon it, I think that you'll be able to make use of Blackwing in more powerful ways. For example, it may be possible for you to launch Blackwing at your enemies."

That immediately caused Venerable Tusa to come up with a new idea!

"Now that you mention it, I have never tried to attach Blackwing to the Dark Zephyr's transphasic grenades before. I should try it out next and see whether I can find a way to pass them through a transphasic energy shield. It will be a lot easier to bypass defenses with a small grenade as opposed to a full-sized mech!"

Once Ves concluded his meeting with Venerable Tusa, he met with a few other expert pilots such as Venerable Davia Stark and Venerable Brutus Wodin in order to see how they integrated their companion spirits in their own combat routines.

Their methods were fairly effective but also rudimentary. Each of them regularly sparred against each other, so they shared a lot of knowledge with each other.

However, it became clear that Venerable Tusa Billingsley-Larkinson and Venerable Isobel Kotin had taken a step ahead of the rest.

The knowledge granted by their enlightenment fruits enabled them to harness E energy radiation and other spiritual phenomena such as their companion spirits a lot more effectively than their peers!

Other expert pilots such as Venerable Joshua had little choice but to figure everything out from scratch.

Ves drew a number of conclusions from his latest investigation.

"First, our expert pilots and other mech pilots for that matter urgently need a cultivation method. Over time, they must also be able to learn applied cultivation techniques that are specific to their choice of weapons."

It was impossible for Ves to buy enlightenment fruits for so many mech pilots. He needed to find a more cost efficient way to increase the capabilities of so many soldiers.

Ves already had a few ideas on how to make that happen, but he wouldn't be able to realize any of them in the short term.

He focused on what he could do in a smaller time frame. After studying the interaction between companion spirits and expert mechs, Ves felt he figured out a way to increase their synergy.

"I can design a weapon or modify the mech so that it can specifically accommodate the companion spirit!"

It would be similar to how Sharpie empowered the Bloodsinger!

If Ves designed a new weapon or modified an existing one that was already being used to an expert mech, he could make it so that they overpowered to a degree never seen before!

"How can I do this?" Ves quickly frowned.

He instinctively judged that he could make any piece of equipment more compatible with a companion spirit, but that it would work a lot better with prime materials.

This was also why the Dark Zephyr was one of the few expert mechs that experienced the greatest boost after the Great Severing.

Other mechs that incorporated significant amounts of Unending alloy such as the First Sword and the Everchanger also enhanced the extraordinary abilities of their expert pilots.

The value and benefits granted by Unending alloy had skyrocketed now that the Red Ocean became exposed to Messier 87's exotic radiation!

Ves could think of many new uses of prime materials!

It was a pity that the current time period was a bit awkward for Ves.

The Age of Dawn may have given everyone access to E energy radiation, but not enough time had passed for this influence to generate large quantities of brand-new prime materials!

Without access to enough materials, Ves could not make anything that was worth his time!

"I should wait until I upgrade the designs of all of the older expert mechs." He concluded. "I originally made up my mind to transition all prime mechs to pure transphasic mechs, but may I need to reconsider this decision."

Prime mechs and transphasic mechs both excelled in different ways.

The former was a lot more versatile, but a lot more difficult to figure out the best ways to make use of their strengths.

The latter was a lot simpler and more reliable in many different combat situations, but they demanded a lot of phasewater!

It would be best if he could combine the advantages of both in a single powerful machine, but the difficulty and requirements were not small!

However, he suddenly recalled a specific mech weapon that might become a lot more effective, especially when utilized by the right expert pilot and expert mech!

Ves recalled the Gray Lotus and began to upgrade the mech pistol in several different ways.

He applied his latest gains in spiritual engineering and cultivation science to enable the weapon to passively absorb death energy from the environment.

While Ves was not proud with the rate of absorption and the cultivation efficiency of the Gray Lotus, it was better than nothing.

He could always revisit his work at a later date and improve upon the current solution.

Ves also altered the Gray Lotus so that it could draw upon the surrounding ambient spiritual energy to charge up and amplify the lethality of its death beam attacks.

In truth, he did not have to make too many changes. The Black Demon Steel that the Gray Lotus was built around had already been doing this since it started to come into contact with exotic radiation!

The power and other attributes of this remarkable prime material became a lot more pronounced as of late!

In addition to that, Ves also implemented a few measures that should enable a companion spirit to empower it a bit more effectively than before.

The premise was that the companion spirit could get along well with Helena and the death element.

This severely restricted the available expert mechs that paired best with this potent relic weapon.

Ves briefly thought about loaning the upgraded weapon on to the Glory Seekers. Either of the Handmaidens of Death would definitely be able to use the Gray Lotus to its full potential!

"None of them are Larkinsons, though."

Ves did not want the Gray Lotus to benefit other people.

Even if the Glory Seekers followed the Larkinson Clan everywhere, they were ultimately outsiders.

Who knew if the Glory Seekers separated from the Larkinson Clan one day.

Ves decided to pass the Gray Lotus on to the only viable choice in the clan.

He paid a visit to Venerable Joshua and the Everchanger and granted them the right to utilize the powerful relic weapon in the next battles.

Joshua was not unfamiliar with the Gray Lotus. He had even used it for a time. He did not think it was necessary for him to handle this weapon.

"The Everchanger already has enough weapons." He insisted. "The Heartsword, the Vitalus rifle and the Scarlet Ember already give me more than enough options to beat my opponents. That plasma sword is an especially big killer."

"Only at close range." Ves retorted. "Not only that, the Scarlet Ember exerts a massive drain on the Everchanger's energy reserves. The Gray Lotus is a good complement to the Everchanger. It is not only a lot more frugal in terms of energy expenditure, but it is also a good way to damage your targets at longer ranges. The Vitalus rifle is a rather ordinary luminal crystal rifle. It is not even transphasic, though it incorporates a modest proportion of prime materials. You can leave the Heartsword and the Vitalus rifle behind. You can make a much greater impact on the battlefield by relying on a combination of a plasma sword and a death pistol."

"I'm not so sure, Ves." Joshua furrowed his brows. "I might have a good relationship with Helena, but I don't know how my companion spirit can get along with the Gray Lotus when he is filled with life. Won't he cancel out all of the death power of your special gun?"

Ves smirked. "Maybe that is possible if you don't do anything special, but life and death share an interesting relationship. Opposites can attract and amplify each other. It depends on the circumstances. I have a theory that the Gray Lotus can produce much more impressive results in your hands. Don't forget that death energy beams can bypass energy shields and solid matter. You should try and figure out how to build upon that, preferably within a week. If everything goes right, we will start an engagement against an immobilized alien raiding fleet. I expect you to kill a lot of aliens with your new weapon!"

Chapter 5083 Heavenly Materials

Once Ves convinced Venerable Joshua to make use of the upgraded Gray Lotus in the next deployment, he went back to his original research.

After conducting extensive studies, he realized that maximizing the use of companion spirits in mech combat was not simple. There was a lot of depth behind this subject.

If Ves wanted to do a proper job, he needed to gather a lot of specific data and get his hands on a lot of prime materials.

He already had a good idea on how to accomplish both objectives.

In order to complete the first requirements, he composed a detailed memo and transmitted it to Director Pesca Aduc.

Ves saw no reason to waste his time on performing tedious and time-consuming grunt work when it could easily be handled by a bunch of lab workers.

The internment camps of the Dragon's Den had grown even more crowded than before.

The camp holding the orvens had become a lot more populated after the Larkinsons dumped a lot of former officers and crew members taken from the latest orven battleship defeated by the expeditionary fleet.

The Larkinsons also added a brand-new internment camp holding several thousand captives of the wheednar race. Although few people thought that this poor and ugly race had any value, Ves insisted on adding a little more biodiversity to the pool of test subjects.

"All of those races can better test the efficacy and versatility of our newly developed companion spirit fruits." He grinned.

With the T Institute taking care of data collection, Ves turned his attention to the generation of prime materials.

Ves wanted to bring up this subject with his mother. He had long wanted to know the secret to creating materials that could store spiritual energy or interact with it in another fashion like B-stones and F-stones.

While his mother refused to elaborate too much on this subject, she told him the basics on how they came about.

"As you may have already surmised, what you call prime materials are actually substances that have been affected by the power of heaven. This is why they are referred to as heavenly materials, mystical materials and so on." Cynthia Larkinson lectured to Veronica. "Exotic materials are products of the power of earth, so it is not strange that the Milky Way still has them in abundance."

Though she did not say much, her words absolutely had a massive effect on Ves!

So that was why the Milky Way and all of its satellite galaxies contained an abundance of exotics but a shortage of prime materials!

Considering that Messier 87 was flooded with the power of heaven, the supply of prime materials must be astronomical inside this supergiant galaxy. The closer to the center, the greater their abundance and potency!

Veronica looked up at Cynthia. "If prime materials are a product of ambient spiritual energy, is there a way to artificially increase their production? For example, what if I find a way to flood a bunch of materials with E energy radiation?"

The Oblivion Empress smiled as she scratched the cyborg cat behind the ears.

"You are thinking in the right direction. There are entire inheritances that center around channeling and shaping the power of heaven and earth in the environment. However, you don't need to be in a hurry. The Red Ocean is undergoing a galaxy-wide renewal. Heavenly materials will emerge in large enough quantities that you will unlikely suffer a shortage of them. Only the tougher and more powerful types of materials will still be difficult to obtain. You will need to expose materials to a higher concentration of the power of heaven in order to obtain them in greater quantities."

Veronica grew a little frustrated at her mother's habit of withholding information again.

"Can't you teach me how to increase the concentration of the power of heaven in a given area? I don't think something as basic as this is exclusive knowledge. By the way, can you also give me the

material composition or recipes of the 'heavenly materials' that you are familiar with? I need a large amount of uniform prime materials in order to empower my mechs?"

Ves knew that his mother possessed expertise in this area. Her entire meditation room was a clear example of how she was able to generate more ambient spiritual energy and contain much of it within this compartment!

Cynthia held her silence for a few seconds before she relented to an extent.

"I suppose I can teach you the basics. I do admit that I know much more about this subject, but it is exactly due to this reason that I wish for you to build a proper foundation. In order to become a master in this field yourself, you must experiment and explore by yourself. Only through personal experiences will you truly be able to learn how to bend the power of heaven to your will. This is especially helpful for Blinky's future development. If you want him to become a powerful ruler of his own universe, then it is essential for him to develop a greater affinity for qi. It is not without reason that True Gods are inherently associated with the power of heaven."

Despite her restraint, she still gave him a crash course in the field of qi formations. She lifted up her hand and formed a strange symmetrical array that was filled with lines and curves made out of spiritual energy.

The ambient spiritual energy of the Nyxian Gap began to get attracted by this simple formation.

Even though the suction force was not all that great, it was already pretty amazing that Cynthia was able to make this happen just by forming a simple spiritual construct!

"This is a qi formation." She said. "As you can see, it is constructed in a way that exerts a specific influence on the power of heaven and earth. How they work is a deeper subject that touches on the truth of the universe. What I want to tell you is that this is not a new phenomenon to you. Formations have already become a part of your life. Can you guess what aspects are powered by formations?"

Veronica looked confused for a second.

"Wait... my battle formations... when those mechs adopt specific positions in order to form a formation that feels natural to the mech pilots, is that akin to forming a spontaneous qi formation?!"

"Correct! That is one of the most direct and dramatic uses of qi formations that you have managed to develop on your own!" Cynthia said with pride in her powerful eyes. "This is exactly the sort of ingenuity and experimentation that you are so good at. However, formations encompass far more than this narrow application. Can you make another guess?"

"Uhhh..."

"Your mechs."

"Huh?"

"Do you think that mechs can gain life and acquire other attributes that are difficult to explain through technological means just by infusing them with qi?" She asked.

"Now that you mention it..."

"Every material object or artifact that is empowered by qi can be called an artifact." Cynthia said. "What distinguishes an artifact from a mundane item is that the former is embedded with a fixed qi formation that enables it to hold the power of heaven and earth and make use of it in specific ways."

Ves widened his eyes as he was able to connect a lot of dots all of a sudden!

"If that is the case, then that would explain the nature of mechs, totems and other empowered objects!" He gasped. "Mechs are essentially mass-produced artifacts. Mech designers like myself never truly realized this because the design seed, which is formed by the Kingdom of Mechs, automated all of the complicated processes in the background. If it didn't exist, then people like myself would have to learn the theories and methods ourselves so that we manually form and shape a specific spiritual foundation for our products!"

The mech designer profession centered around designing mechs that were unwittingly imbued with qi formations. This was what made mech designers special.

A mech designer such as Ketis was able to increase the sharpness of the swords that she designed because her design seed likely acted as an automated processor that did all of the heavy lifting.

Ves felt as if he had discovered yet another profound truth about mech design.

"Qi formations are the root of creation cultivation." Cynthia explained with a smile. "Creators became viable cultivators when they discovered that they could not only affix qi formations into the objects that they personally designed and produced, but also enabled them to become more familiar with the forces that make up the universe. The more they excel in their craft, the greater their understanding of these forces. This means that they can imbue their works with stronger and more elaborate qi formations and more. Once they are able to master one of these forces, they have fulfilled the qualifications to become a True God."

That was rather astounding. Ves gained a deeper understanding of the nature of creation cultivation and how it all tied to these so-called qi formations.

Every spiritual construct was a permanent qi formation in a sense.

This made a lot more obvious how creation cultivation originally started out as an off-shoot of qi cultivation.

An artistic conception could be considered another variety of qi formation. It was fixed in the mind of the cultivator himself and served as the nucleus of his own extraordinary strength.

As Ves continued to form a lot of conclusions based on new associations, his mother revealed the truth about heavenly materials.

"There are materials that happen to respond particularly well to the power heaven. What is actually happening is that their molecules and internal structures are set up in such a fashion that they have accidentally formed into natural formations." She said. "Ancient cultivators have developed entire disciplines based around their observations of these naturally occurring phenomena. They have even taken it a step further and developed new materials and alloys in order to produce artificial formations that are considerably stronger or produce effects that do not occur in nature. This is how Unending alloy originally came about."

What his mother taught him might not be a ready-made recipe on how Ves could reproduce a version of Unending alloy in his own fleet, but it was so much better.

Now that Ves understood the fundamental theory on heavenly materials, he could theoretically develop all kinds of different spiritually reactive materials from scratch!

Cynthia gently stroked Veronica's back.

"The power of heaven and earth is different in every galaxy. I have explained to you before why that is the case. It may not be possible for you to reproduce a useful material such as Unending alloy in the Red Ocean. However, as long as the power of heaven is abundant enough, the emergence of heavenly materials is a given. If you wish to obtain them faster, then you must find them and speed up the growth of their natural formations. Every material responds differently to each element, so if you can match heavenly materials with the right elements, you can develop methods to purposely expose them to a higher concentration of elemental energy."

The cyborg cat's eyes glowed brighter. This was an effective method to produce prime materials!

While Ves understood that it was not easy to complete all of the aforementioned steps, he was confident that he would be able to solve every problem in time.

He already had a few ideas on how he could overcome a couple of challenges with ease. As a Senior Mech Designer, he already formed a lot of tools that could perform specific functions.

Engineers excelled at combining different tools in order to produce more complex results!

While it would still take a lot of time before Ves could obtain a batch of 'heavenly materials', he should at least be able to get his hands on them a lot sooner than the general public!

Chapter 5084 Production Of Prime Materials

Ves came up with several different possible methods to accelerate the formation of prime materials.

As long as he was able to develop an effective process that could produce a stable and regular output of spiritually reactive materials, his plans to develop more prime mechs could successfully be brought forward!

In order to set his latest scheme in motion, he took another trip to the Dragon's Den and paid a visit to the T Institute.

There was a research group under the institute that specifically conducted research on how to create prime materials.

To be honest, it accomplished almost nothing over the years. It was only after the Great Severing took place that the idle researchers suddenly became a lot busier.

They had largely spent their time on identifying and cataloging all of the materials that displayed any sort of reaction to E energy radiation.

Their investigations along with the vast body of data that was constantly being updated on the galactic net enabled the research group to form a vast database of interesting entries.

The researchers had even procured substantial quantities of materials that were all showing gradual transformations under the influence of exotic radiation.

This pleased Ves. The prior preparations made by the research group saved a lot of work on his end.

"The key is to increase the concentration of ambient spiritual energy in the storage compartments where these materials are held." Ves determined. "It is best to match specific materials to specific elemental energies."

Just like the Black Demon Steel that played an important role in making the Gray Lotus so effective, there were a lot of varieties of heavenly materials that were highly attuned to only specific spiritual energy attributes.

It was not quite clear which materials were attuned to specific elements. Not enough time had passed for the ongoing transformations to reach an advanced stage where their natural qi formations locked in specific elemental energies.

"It doesn't matter too much for the time being." Ves determined. "So long as there is a way to increase the concentration of ambient spiritual energy in this storage compartment, the nature of these emerging prime materials will slowly become clear."

Ves did not master the method of creating a qi formation that could naturally attract a lot of spiritual energy.

He had tried to reproduce the seemingly mathematical array of lines and circles that Cynthia briefly demonstrated to him before, but his attempts all ended in failure.

Ves understood at that time that he was approaching his work from the wrong direction.

Instead of trying to imitate his mother and try to master a new discipline from scratch, he would be better off if he adapted his existing work and understanding instead!

As a mech designer, Ves was most proficient in designing and making mechs that could fulfill specific purposes.

He decided to call over the Everchanger.

Venerable Joshua spent a lot more time in and around the Dragon's Den these days. His talent and specializations made him a lot more suitable to calm, befriend and placate the mutated beasts that were all beginning to grow stronger through natural cultivation.

"What do you want me to do, sir?" The pilot asked as the Everchanger gently stepped inside the large storage compartment.

"Do you see these containers and the stacks of different metal bars around us? They are all special, Joshua. The short story is that they are all prime materials that are highly useful in developing prime mechs like your own. The only problem is that they need to absorb a lot of E energy radiation in order to make them useful. I need you and your expert mech to work together to speed up their creation."

"That... sounds complicated, sir. Shouldn't this be done in a factory or something? I do not see why I am needed in the production process."

Ves smiled up at the expert mech. "I would have preferred to do so if I had the option, but I do not have the right means. I can only resort to more primitive and readily available methods at the start. What I need is for your Everchanger to cultivate in this space for a time. At the same time, I also

need you to resonate with your expert mech in order to strengthen its glow and find a way to increase the attraction of E energy in this compartment."

The idea that Ves came up with sounded confusing to Joshua, but the Everchanger had a greater understanding of what the mech designer had in mind.

"I UNDERSTAND." The living expert mech spoke. "I WILL ATTEMPT TO GUIDE YOU, JOSHUA. IF WE CAN SATISFY THE PATRIARCH'S REQUIREMENTS, WE SHOULD BE ABLE TO FACILITATE THE CREATION OF BETTER MATERIALS."

The availability of a greater variety of prime materials was of great interest for every living mech. Everyone of them could grow more powerful and acquire more versatile functions as long as they integrated the right prime materials.

Ves, Joshua and the Everchanger spent the next few hours experimenting and fumbling around.

Whenever the Everchanger practiced the Greater Larkinson Metal Guardian Mantra, he was able to form an energy vortex around his physical form that sucked in a lot of ambient spiritual energy.

The formation of a strong enough energy vortex essentially meant that ambient spiritual energy in other locations would slowly get drawn into the storage compartment, thereby exposing the emerging prime materials inside with a lot more E energy radiation than normal!

However, the problem was that the mantra mainly focused on attracting metal energies.

This meant that only the prime materials that were strongly biased towards metal in one way or another benefited from this effect.

Spiritual energies aligned to different attributes did not get affected as much.

However, this was why Ves called on the Everchanger in particular.

"Can you switch your glow to Helena and amplify it so that it dominates this compartment at the strongest possible intensity that you can manage?" Ves issued his next request.

"I can do that, but one of the Everchanger's resonance abilities is mostly geared towards amplifying the range of a glow." Joshua responded. "It is not so good at increasing the strength of a glow within a tighter space. I have tried it out before, but the results are not that impressive."

Ves responded with a reassuring smile. "Just try the best you can, Joshua. You can treat it as a form of practice. Don't let yourself be limited by the technical limitations of your machine. The Everchanger is the most versatile and malleable mech that I have designed. Every design choice that I have made, from designing him as a hero mech to making his glow variable, is meant to make his evolution as limitless as possible. Sure, your expert mech might not be as strong as the other ones in their own areas of specializations, but the greatest advantage of your machine is that it is not constrained in any orientation. If you can't do something, then it doesn't mean that the Everchanger is incapable. It just means that you and your battle partner have yet to develop the right method."

That caused both Joshua and Everchanger to fall silent and mull over the words for a while.

Ves truly felt proud for designing and realizing the Everchanger. Even the newer machines that came out afterwards such as the Minerva and the Phobos could not supplant his love and expectation for the mech that could evolve in any way possible.

Versatility was the Everchanger's greatest strength. It could even help in a productive capacity if it spent enough time and effort in this direction.

Once the Everchanger began to channel Helena with the help of his powerful new mech pistol, the entire compartment gained a sense of gloom that was associated with death.

Her powerful glow not only affected the materials in different ways, but also formed a weak pseudo-domain that formed a greater attraction towards death energy!

Ves patiently sat around while the Everchanger cultivated while also familiarizing himself with the power of death.

The Greater Larkinson Metal Guardian Mantra was technically capable of giving living mechs the ability to slightly attract and absorb other elemental energies.

Now, the Everchanger took advantage of that property by trying to move as much death energy in the environment as possible.

The living expert mech was able to kill multiple birds with a single stone. Not only did the Everchanger fulfill Ves' request, but the machine also actively furthered his growth.

On top of that, Joshua and the Everchanger also deepened their familiarity with Helena and the death element! This would doubtlessly enable them to make better use of the Gray Lotus in the upcoming battle!

As time passed by, Ves made a few rounds and used his implant to mark several specific materials that exhibited higher activity than normal.

Each of them displayed properties that were not that different from Black Demon Steel!

"They're a lot weaker, though." Ves furrowed his brows.

This shouldn't be much of a surprise. Most naturally-occurring exotics were pretty much treated like junk because their properties were not that impressive.

Heavenly materials should share a similar hierarchy. There were a lot of crappy materials and only a few good ones.

Perhaps in the future Ves could figure out how to make artificial prime alloys that were a lot more powerful than the sum of their individual ingredients, but that was a lot of work.

"I need to get a specialist in materials science in order to do a good job at this." Ves determined.

Professional work should be left to the professionals. Ves did not share a passion in materials science. If not for the fact that prime materials played such an important role in his core work activities, he wouldn't be willing to spend so much in this storage compartment in the first place!

Once Joshua and the Everchanger spent a decent amount of time on increasing the effective concentration of death energy in the immediate area, Ves waved his hand to signal that they could stop their efforts.

"That is enough for today. I know that the two of you can't spend all day over here. You are free to return to your regular schedule."

"Alright." Joshua said. "Do I have to come back in my next work shift?"

Ves nodded. "I will need you to repeat your actions many more times until the prime materials that are biased towards death have completed their transformations. Once that happens, I don't need your help anymore, at least for this specific purpose."

"Truly?"

"If my ideas are correct, I can use the new prime materials to create totems that can essentially do what you have done without requiring your personal intervention."

This was his goal!

Ves wanted to create extremely effective totems of Helena to form entire spaces that attracted lots of death energy!

Just like the ancient statue of the Unending One that was made out of Unending alloy that the Larkinsons once encountered, totems made out of prime materials were much more effective than their ordinary counterparts.

As long as Ves placed another batch of compatible materials in their presence, he would be able to speed up the formation of more heavenly materials!

Ves could subsequently use the newly transformed materials to produce more totems of Helena.

This would multiply the production rate of heavenly materials even further and progressively enable him to obtain so much of what he needed that he would never suffer a shortage again!

Of course, Ves recognized that any attempts to mass produce specific prime materials depended a lot on the availability of enough space and the supply of sufficient quantities of specific raw materials.

It would become increasingly less practical for his clan to produce large quantities of prime materials within the expeditionary fleet.

The only way for his clan to expand production on an industrial scale was to move the bulk of the operations to planets.

Ves could instruct the Davute Branch to buy a large patch of land and build a large-scale production facility according to his specifications.

Since the Davute System was a trade hub, it shouldn't be a problem for the branch to procure large quantities of suitable raw materials.

This meant that the Larkinson Clan could theoretically produce as many prime materials as it wanted!

"I'm sure that other people can figure out their own ways to produce these kinds of materials, but my method works best for me. The production costs are low and the process doesn't require any human intervention."

Chapter 5085 Grades Of Prime Materials

Since phasewater and prime materials would probably become the two key materials that would allow humanity to elevate their tech to a new height of power, gaining access to them became incredibly vital!

Ves aspired to empower his clan with both transphasic mechs and prime mechs. Either types of mechs were powerful in their own ways. They granted the Larkinson Clan and the rest of humanity for that matter hope of defeating the numerically superior native aliens of the Red Ocean.

He even believed that mastery of both phasewater and prime materials may be the only hope for red humanity to resist the arrival of hostile and overwhelmingly powerful aliens from Messier 87!

Although this little experiment did not immediately produce a readily usable batch of prime materials, Ves still saw a lot of hope in the initial results.

He not only noticed that a lot of materials in the storage compartment had sped up their transformation while under the influence of the Everchanger's glow, but that they began to form into more energetic and stronger variations!

Ves discovered that higher concentrations of ambient spiritual energy promoted the formation of higher grades of prime materials!

These versions of materials did not show up when exposed to regular concentrations of exotic radiation!

"I see!"

His mother had once said that as the power of heaven became more abundant, the available heavenly materials became stronger and more mysterious.

This meant that it was incredibly useful for the Larkinson Clan to persist in this artificial production process.

Even when enough years had passed for E energy radiation to complete the transformation of all susceptible metals and other substances, it was still possible to produce higher grades of prime materials through artificial means!

All of this had massive implications to Ves and all of his future work. Though almost no one else around him could understand what he had become preoccupied with, it didn't matter. He was determined to prove the strength of prime materials and prime mechs to everyone in the clan in time!

With the success of this latest experiment, Ves met with the members of the relevant research group and instructed them on what they must do for the following weeks and months.

They had to supervise the Everchanger while the living mech was cultivating inside the storage compartment and keep track of the ongoing transformations of all materials.

Ves suspected that certain prime materials would never emerge unless the concentration of ambient spiritual energy had grown high enough, so he also instructed the research group to collect many different samples of other materials and stuff them all in the storage compartment.

"Just because they have not shown any reaction in the past doesn't mean that they will continue to remain inert. It may be that the current level of exotic radiation has not yet exceeded a minimum threshold." He argued.

Once he established the new processes, he returned to the Spirit of Bentheim with a lot of expectations in his mind.

He understood that passively exposing random goods to higher concentrations of exotic radiation was only a simple method of producing prime materials.

He would need to do a lot more in order to produce a more advanced prime material such as Unending alloy.

However, Ves still needed to learn how to walk before he could learn how to run. It was much easier to secure an abundant supply of ordinary prime materials before he could think about getting his hands on stronger and more potent prime alloys.

As he settled back in his flagship, he took stock of his current progress.

His cyborg leg and Veronica may have made a bit of progress on a number of his ongoing design projects, but he had yet to find a systematic way to upgrade his Carmine mechs by improving their Blood Pact.

He also failed to come up with any solid solutions to help all of the mech pilots make more effective use of their companion spirits if they had any. Only Venerable Tusa Billingsley-Larkinson and Venerable Isobel Kotin made substantial progress in this area.

"It's okay."

While Ves would have preferred to get all of this done before the expeditionary fleet started its next operation against a hostile alien fleet, it was not a big deal to postpone this research for later.

Ves still had to take care of a lot of different affairs.

The starting date of the Survivalist conference had moved closer. It would not take long before a ship of the MTA would come and rapidly ferry him to a central location where he would get in touch with a lot of Survivalists.

He already made plenty of preparations for that. This was the best opportunity for him to form new connections and increase his value to the faction.

"Aside from that, the new school semester has just commenced."

Many children throughout the Red Ocean and the Milky Way for that matter had gone back to school!

None of his classes started on the opening day, but he would have to start his first lectures over the course of the week.

It may even be possible that a scheduling conflict might occur. If the anticipated battle against the yurzen raiding fleet happened during the same time he was supposed to stand in front of a virtual classroom, then that would be incredibly awkward for Ves!

Fortunately, the Eden Institute of Business & Technology had been generous enough to offer allowances to professors who became engaged in vital and patriotic duties such as defending human space from aliens. Ves could apply for leave and have his students come back another day, though they would probably hate him for disrupting their busy study schedules.

Ves spoke with Alexa Striker one more time before his first class commenced.

"You need to make a good first impression on your students." The clever teaching assistant advised him. "They have all decided to enroll in your classes for different reasons, but you can expect many of them to hold doubts over your teaching qualifications and the relevance of your knowledge. If you cannot win them over in their first class with you, then they will continue to remain disengaged throughout the rest of the semester. That will negatively affect their grades and subsequently your teaching evaluation."

Ves nodded while maintaining a serious expression. "I am cognizant of how shaky my position is at the moment. I have no intention of failing in my first formal teaching job. Can you confirm that the specific living mechs and other designated objects will be present in and around the classrooms?"

"The dean approved most of your plans." Alexa responded with a smile. She transmitted an electronic document that went into further detail on this matter. "Master Leila Devos has expressed a lot of understanding towards your individual challenges. She too wishes that you can establish a footing within our academic community. However, she does not approve of the more extreme measures that you have planned."

Ves frowned at that. "What exactly did the good dean reject?"

The young woman awkwardly coughed. "Your request of dumping the students into a no-win virtual training scenario where they are assaulted by alien troops is denied. Your request to terrorize your students by subjecting them to the glows of the Ferocious Piranha and the Valkyrie Redeemer is denied. Your request to bring in real firearms to the classrooms and have them fire over the heads of your students is denied. Master Devos has specifically instructed me to tell you that a good professor should be able to convey his point through words alone."

Ves did not disagree with that sentiment, but he was at a disadvantage at this time. He truly needed to resort to drastic measures in order to capture the attention of a bunch of elitist Terran students and obtain their respect!

He was disappointed that the Eden Institute denied his more radical suggestions. He felt that it would do these spoiled brats a lot of good if they got a good scare and became more personally acquainted with the dangers that red humanity faced in the latest age.

"I believe that you shall do well regardless of these rejections." Miss Alexa consoled him. "I have watched your past public speeches and became impressed by how well you managed to captivate your audiences. Lectures are not much different in that regard. You will just have to make sure to hold the interest of your audience for several hours and be ready to offer correct answers if any of them begin to ask questions."

Ves smiled back. "I am confident that I can do well if it is truly as simple as that. I have a feeling that it will take a bit more effort than that to wrangle all of those Terran students."

"You will do fine."

They talked a bit more about other related matters. It had taken a long time for the Department of Humanoid Mech Design to approve of the expansive syllabi for all of his courses.

Ves was frankly surprised and a little scared for the sheer amount of knowledge that every student needed to master. Baseline humans had no hope in hell of passing courses at this level within five years!

This was nothing new for a first-class Apprentice Mech Designer such as Alexa.

"The cheapest Terran mechs can easily cost millions of MTA credits to produce. Our customer base always demands the best and the sound products from our mech companies. If an aspiring mech designer does not have any hope of meeting the exacting requirements of their customers and clients, then they should make way for those that are more prepared to meet this challenge."

Ves wasn't sure whether he would have been able to survive this gauntlet if he was born within the Terran state.

It was not enough for students to obtain a lot of powerful augmentations. They only boosted fundamental cognitive abilities.

A complicated and multi-disciplinary profession such as mech design also demanded a lot of ingenuity as well as advanced problem-solving skills. These were skills that were difficult to impart through implants or straightforward lessons.

Although the Eden Institute was hardly the most renowned or prestigious university within the Terran Alliance, each of its students were undeniably geniuses! They could easily surpass their peers in the second-class mech market if they ever deigned to lower themselves!

It would be a mistake for Ves to underestimate any of his upcoming students.

"Can you send me the records of all of my upcoming students?" Ves asked. "It would be helpful for me to familiarize myself with their basic background and circumstances in advance."

"I have already prepared the relevant package for you. I will transmit it to you now." Alexa immediately obliged. "I advise you not to put too much stock in the materials. Just as how the students may underestimate you based on your background description, you may do the same when you read what is written about them. It is better to reserve your judgment and learn which of your students are more promising when you are teaching them in person."

"Hmm... you're right, Alexa. I would probably make this mistake if you hadn't warned me about the dangers of developing a bias."

"That said, I took the liberty to mark a dozen names that may be of great interest to you. These students have either attained better results than almost everyone else or possess traits that may cause them to be more receptive to your lessons. I have met many of them in person in one capacity or another, and I have become impressed with their qualities."

That sounded... useful.

"Is it normal for the professors of Terran universities to forge deeper contacts with their students?" Ves curiously asked.

Alexa grinned. "It is completely normal, Professor Larkinson. It is a universal phenomenon that is not limited to Terran institutions. Mech designers such as yourself are especially known for looking for apprentices to pass on your craft. It is completely permissible for you to hold private lessons and tutoring sessions at our facilities in your private time so long as you follow the proper procedures."

Chapter 5086 Three Classifications Of Materials

"Stop, stop, Ves. Your explanation has become too convoluted." Gloriana spoke as she sat next to her husband on the couch in the living room. "According to you, prime materials are equivalent to

heavenly materials, but is that truly the case? You originally defined prime materials as anything that can be used to store spiritual energy, but do sympathetic materials that only respond to certain attributes fall within that category?"

Ves looked stumped for a moment. "Uhhh..."

"Aside from that, what is exotic radiation can produce a so-called heavenly material that can't be used by expert pilots to generate prime resonance? As far as I recall, B-stones are spiritually reactive in that they can block spiritual energy, but that same properly also causes them to be unable to produce any sort of prime resonance. Isn't it a misnomer to call it a prime material in that case?"

"Uhhh..."

He had to admit that his nagging wife had a point this time. Ves had automatically been equating prime materials to heavenly materials when they actually referred to two separate types of materials. Their definitions did not match.

"Have you taken a look at the MTA's database as of late? I highly recommend you to visit it again. The mechers have recently updated the official industry standards to account for the emergence of materials transformed by constant exposure to E energy radiation."

Ves did what she suggested. He called up a projection and visited the Red Association's internal portal and immediately sought out the page that explained all of the latest updates.

He immediately grew surprised and a little fascinated in how much the mechers chose to reveal.

According to their general explanation, all forms of matter could be classified in many different ways.

One of the fundamental distinctions that people could make was the overall energy state of matter.

Previously, humanity only needed to put different materials in two broad boxes.

Matter could be mundane such as carbon or iron.

Matter could also be exotic such as Iridescent Mercury or phasewater.

Yet now that the Red Ocean became exposed to exotic radiation originating from Messier 87, a new category had to be made to classify the materials that emerged through unprecedented circumstances.

The Red Two decided to redefine their entire materials science framework in order to take the latest changes into account!

All matter could now be divided in three broad categories.

Low energy materials could be produced without any influence of exotic radiation at all. They were the most basic forms of matter of the universe and could be found pretty much everywhere.

Medium energy materials emerged in environments with at least a small amount of exotic radiation. They were called exotic materials in full, but most people had long taken to shorten it by using the term exotics as a convenient shorthand.

The Red Two claimed that the Milky Way had always produced E energy radiation, but not at a level where it disrupted people's lives.

Humanity and most natives from the Milky Way and the Red Ocean had evolved in a medium energy environment. Their biologies or their tech had become accustomed to taking advantage of the medium energy materials formed in this kind of placid but mildly energetic galactic environment.

Times had changed. Now that red humanity had entered a high energy environment, it became inevitable that a powerful galaxy like Messier 87 triggered the formation of so-called high energy materials! This new classification of materials had the potential to possess even more powerful properties that could massively strengthen the performance of mechs and starships!

Certain high energy materials could be produced at the current levels of E energy radiation.

However, just like Ves, the excellent research groups of the Red Two had already managed to find ways to concentrate E energy radiation under controlled environments, thereby breeding a host of even more energetic materials, all of which possessed even stronger properties!

In order to make a distinction between exotic materials that could be produced in a medium energy environment and the newer class of materials that could only be produced in a high energy environment, the latter received a separate name.

"Hyper materials, or hypers for short." Ves uttered. "I guess that works."

He had the vague suspicion that the Red Two had always known about the existence of heavenly materials. They just didn't use a term that was obviously steeped in religion, superstition and a heritage that they desperately wanted to bury.

This was why they probably found a similar enough word in the form of 'hyper'.

It was short.

It provided a lot of clarity.

It also conveyed an easter egg to 'those in the know' such as Ves that this was meant to be the new standard term for heavenly materials!

Ves most certainly received this message. Personally, he felt that it was a good choice.

"Now that you have learned about hypers, how do you define prime materials?" Gloriana asked after she had given him enough time to take in the new information.

Ves spent a few more seconds on rearranging his theoretical framework on matter. Everything made a lot more sense now that he was able to put every form of matter in three broad categories.

"According to the Red Two's latest model on matter, the prime materials that I have been working on should probably exist as a subcategory of hyper materials. My own definition for prime materials is any form of matter that can store spiritual energy. I can further sub-divide them into sympathetic materials that can only store specific attributes of materials and more broader cache materials that can store any type of spiritual energy."

His wife frowned again. "You have invented several new terms in a short amount of time. Can you clarify what you mean by your new classifications?"

Ves understood that it may be a little difficult for other people to follow his train of thought.

"Take Unending alloy for example." He said. "With the knowledge that I possess today, I can treat it as a hyper material, as it is only possible to make it in a high energy environment or raw materials that emerged from one. At the same time, it is also a prime material as it can be used to make a prime mech. Furthermore, I can classify it as a cache material because it can store any attribute of spiritual energy without any discrimination."

The new terms that Ves used could be used to form a hierarchy of classifications and subclassifications of materials.

What Ves truly desired was prime materials. Any prime material could play a huge role in his works. Even if he did not have a mech at hand that could make good use of a specific prime material, he could always design a new mech that made the best use of available resources!

His wife quickly picked up on what Ves tried to convey with his new words. The single example was enough for her to comprehend his newly revised theoretical model.

"If that is the case, then a P-stone should also be considered a hyper, a prime material and a cache material, correct? It may have vastly different physical properties when compared to Unending alloy, but in terms of usage they are still remarkably similar."

Ves nodded. "That is correct."

"Do you have any examples of a hyper and a prime material that is not a cache material?"

"Yes, but only one. The Gray Lotus that I recently upgraded incorporates a small amount of Black Demon Steel. It is a hyper, a prime material and a sympathetic material that is extremely rare and precious." He responded.

It might not be so rare anymore now that the Red Ocean had entered a high energy environment. Even if he couldn't get his hands on additional quantities of this exact alloy, he believed he could definitely obtain other sympathetic materials with similar properties!

Now that they were talking about this topic, Ves also exposed his latest attempts to artificially promote the formation of prime materials over at the T Institute.

His wife smiled when she heard how her husband used Helena's glow of all means to speed up the transformation of sympathetic materials aspected towards death energy.

"You have essentially confirmed that it is possible to make useful new hyper materials by relying on the blessing of gods." She asserted. "Is it possible for the Hexers to produce a similar result if they gather a large amount of other Hexer mechs such as Blessed Squires to produce 'sympathetic materials' that are closely aligned to the Superior Mother?"

"That is theoretically possible, but... I'm not sure if it will work that way." Ves hesitantly said. "The strength and the intensity of a glow has to be strong enough. The Hexer mech also needs to be alive and actively cultivating in order to produce an environment where one particular type of elemental energy has become dominant. These are difficult conditions that not many other parties can replicate."

Ves had a strong hunch that the Red Two and the first-rate colonial superstates possessed enough heritages and secret knowledge to produce prime materials and sympathetic materials in their own ways.

They might even master methods to make effective use of the properties of all of this new matter!

Ves was not arrogant enough to assume that only he could make good use of prime materials. He could already figure out several more ways to take advantage of materials such as Black Demon Steel without involving living mechs or resonance.

"What about the mechs themselves?" Gloriana asked next. "Is it possible that the glows of your living mechs can steadily induce transformations of its existing material components over time?"

"It's possible, but I don't think it is a desirable outcome. In fact, many mechs designed by others are also suffering from this problem. The uncontrollable mutations can easily produce major flaws if the affected mechs and other machinery haven't undergone revisions."

The greater the energy density of an environment, the greater the problem!

Anyone who managed to travel to Messier 87 would probably have to overhaul their mechs and starships pretty quickly before they mutated to the point where they became inoperable!

At the same time, Ves was not sure if an object made in Messier 87 would degenerate when it traveled to a less energy dense environment such as the Red Ocean or the Milky Way.

The considerably lower concentrations of ambient spiritual energy might negatively affect the performance of at least some of the hyper materials, especially when they were explicitly used to leverage the power of heaven.

In fact, it might not even be necessary to travel to an entirely different galaxy to rob certain hyper materials of much of their potency.

It was enough to drain much of the ambient spiritual energy in a specific area to cripple the functioning of machines that relied heavily on E energy radiation!

Blinky was able to do this to a limited extent, but his current cultivation stage was not high enough to produce an energy vacuum on a typical battlefield.

Ves believed that his companion spirit might one day grow powerful enough to make that happen. Perhaps Blinky might be able to do it when he grows as strong as Emma at her current state one day!

All of this indicated that it was dangerous to develop an overreliance on hypers. Exotics still had their place in red humanity's society.

These medium energy materials were completely self-contained and were mostly stable enough to function precisely the same in any sort of environment no matter the energy density level.

The only anomaly of sorts that did not quite fit in any of the three existing boxes was phasewater.

On the one hand, it behaved like an exotic material for the most part.

On the other hand, its extra dimensional properties caused it to gain access to a lot of energies located in the higher dimensions. This was where phasewater derived much of its power and potency.

Up until now, it did not appear that phasewater exhibited the traits of a hyper material, but according to the phasewater theory that Ves had learned, this shouldn't be the case.

The current theories did not exactly line up with observations in reality. This meant that Ves and the people who wrote all of the textbooks did not understand phasewater as well as they thought.

What was phasewater, exactly?

Chapter 5087 The Potential Of Hyper Materials

The Red Two's recent disclosures related to hyper materials generated a lot of discussion and speculation.

The broad community of red humanity still looked up to the Red Association and the Red Fleet, so they accepted the explanation easily enough.

What most people working in the academic and industrial sectors wanted to know was how they could make use of these new hypers to their advantage.

The greater scientific community had been remarkably unrestrained when it came to sharing data and results produced by fundamental research. This enabled much of red humanity to quickly get a basic grip on the mutating materials phenomenon.

However, their generosity quickly came to an end as soon as research delved into the possible applications of any discovered hyper materials!

None of the states, companies or research institutions were stupid. They all recognized that research on how to take advantage of the properties of hypers was the next big trend!

Any useful and actionable knowledge could be used to fulfill goals that were previously unattainable!

For example, a mech company could release a new mech model that utilized a new hyper to increase its acceleration by 50 percent.

Sales of a mech that moved a lot faster than anything else without costing too much more could easily become a new market leader!

A state like Davute that managed to discover an effective method to turn a hyper into a highly destructive warhead could start a war that could quickly overwhelm the defenses of Karlach in a matter of months!

All of these possible scenarios and more drove many people to frantically engage in their own priority research into hypers!

Ves was no different in that sense. An amazing relic weapon such as the Gray Lotus simply couldn't be made without access to a specific sub-classification of hyper materials.

He previously assumed that it was impossible to obtain similar resources unless he paid a lot of Ascension Points to redeem them from the Mech Designer System.

Now that he discovered that exotic radiation changed this equation all of a sudden, he too had become obsessed with this latest trend!

Different from many other people, Ves already possessed a decent understanding of how he could make effective use of certain hypers.

The only constraint was that it would probably take a while for the T Institute to produce the first batch of prime materials.

Ves couldn't wait to ramp up production and get his hands on a lot of cache materials and sympathetic materials!

More specifically, Ves was already thinking about designing a super deluxe variant of the Valkyrie Redeemer.

He already had plans to design a similar upgraded variant for the Penitent Sisters and maybe the Glory Seekers. He wanted it to become a quasi-first-class mech as well as a transphasic mech in order to maximize its combat power.

If he was able to turn it into a prime mech as well with the use of a sympathetic material that paired well with its design spirit, then the upgraded Valkyrie mech would likely be able to reach a whole other level of power!

At the very least, Ves anticipated that such a Valkyrie mech would be able to produce much more powerful battle formation attacks!

He could think of other ways to exploit the support and amplification provided by sympathetic materials that possessed similar properties to Black Demon Steel!

The other mech designers of the Larkinson Clan had already come up with their own possible ideas.

For example, Ketis saw a lot of promise in them. She had been working with Unending alloy swords for years, so she possessed a head-start in this field just like Ves.

"As you know, resonating exotics are commonly used in expert mechs in order to generate true resonance." She explained to him during a collaborative design session centered around the Storm Sword Project. "They can make swordmasters a lot more powerful, but nothing at the level of the Heavensword. Even the best and most luxurious use of resonating exotics can only enable a swordmaster to damage a typical mech. Defense is much more problematic as a sword doesn't offer enough room to produce an effective resonating shield."

The total mass of a typical sword designed to be wielded by humans was only a fraction of that of a full-sized mech!

One of the reasons why expert pilots were so unquestionably strong was because their gigantic mechs could accommodate many kilograms of powerful resonating exotics!

Ves already had an inkling what his former student was getting at. "Are you suggesting that the power imbalance between swordmasters and expert pilots might shrink with the introduction of hypers?"

The woman looked a bit uncertain. "I am not completely sure. The Heavensword Association's past records describe legendary weapons that can enable its wielder to amplify all techniques by borrowing 'the power of heaven and earth'. From what we have been able to deduce, this means that the swords of the past were able to derive a massive boost from E energy radiation. There are tales that the Heavensworders previously considered to be fantasies, but are now seen as a lot more

realistic. The right swords can enable swordmasters to fly through space and chop entire starships in half."

"What, really?!"

Although Ves had a lot of expectations towards hyper materials, that did not necessarily mean that he believed that he could buy into the assumption that a warrior like Ketis was able to chop a starship like the Spirit of Bentheim in half by herself!

"I think we should not dismiss these possibilities too quickly, Ves. I believe it is possible to recreate these feats as long as I can get my hands on the right hyper materials. The descriptions of swords at the time suggest that swordmasters don't necessarily rely on their own strength anymore. Their willpower instead allows them to take over the energy within a certain range and use that to execute all sorts of amazing techniques. It is similar to leveraging the Saint Kingdom of an ace mech, except the domain field is no longer a pure expression of the ace pilot's astounding willpower."

Ves couldn't help but nod when he heard that. Her descriptions fell in line with his own theories.

It was difficult to estimate how powerful a swordmaster could become. There were too many variables at play.

The point that Ketis was trying to make was that the upper limit could be incredibly high!

"I'm aware that swordmasters cannot necessarily catch up to expert pilots because expert mechs can also take advantage of hyper materials." Ketis said in a more subdued tone. "It may even be the case that the differences in power will grow even more. A mech can easily fit a lot more hyper materials than a sword. As long as the expert pilot's willpower is strong enough to effectively resonate or take advantage of a large quantity of hyper materials, his expert mech may be able to become strong enough to match the power of an ace mech."

That actually sounded like an incredibly realistic possibility!

"As long as we have enough hyper materials in our possession, we can indeed increase the combat effectiveness of all of our expert mechs to ludicrous heights, but there are still a few caveats." Ves stated. "Ace mechs won't stay at the same power level either. They will also go through a ridiculous amplification of power once they begin to incorporate hypers as well. They might not be able to match the ridiculous combat power of today's god mechs, but they should be able to come awfully close."

This meant that the difference in power between an expert mech and an ace mech would not shrink at all. The opposite would happen instead. Ace mechs would become so domineering that they should easily be able to crush expert mechs like stepping on ants!

"What else is on your mind, Ves?"

"From what I can observe, many hyper materials are powerful because they can enable their users to leverage a lot of the ambient spiritual energy in the environment." He said. "What if it disappears? What if there is nothing left in the surroundings for hypers to act upon? Any swordmaster who is fighting in space by relying on a sword alone will not only lose the capital to participate in a serious battle, but also lose the ability to maneuver effectively in a vacuum!"

"Is it even possible to do that?" Ketis skeptically asked. "Aside from the phase whales teleporting you to an entirely different galaxy, I don't think you can repel spiritual energy from an area to the extent of creating an energy vacuum. The Red Two have clearly stated that E energy radiation cannot be blocked or hindered by anything. The densest exotics and the most powerful transphasic energy shields have completely failed to keep it out. Maybe god mechs can do this due to their absolute control over their God Kingdoms, but they aren't exactly common in this dwarf galaxy."

She was right for the most part. Trying to keep ambient spiritual energy away from a massive battlefield was as difficult as trying to obtain an accurate count of all of the grains of sand on a terrestrial planet.

Ketis did not possess as much information as Ves, though. Even she probably wasn't aware of Blinky's amazing future potential now that he had started to cultivate the Imaginary Universe Method.

So long as Blinky became a True God or close enough to one, Ves believed that his companion spirit should easily be able to deprive a part of a battlefield of all ambient spiritual energy!

By that time, all mechs and starships in the affected area would immediately degenerate back to their pre-Age of Dawn power levels!

Ves had an entirely insightful discussion with Ketis. Both of them could be regarded as partial inheritors of separate but related cultivation inheritances.

While Ves possessed a vastly greater knowledge base on general cultivation sciences, Ketis mastered willpower cultivation to a much greater extent!

Not only that, Ketis also happened to know a bit about forging swords with hyper materials that could produce highly effective amplification for swordmasters!

"If you can supply enough hypers to me, I can use that to forge much more powerful bladed weapons for all of our expert mechs." Ketis offered. "Just think about it, Ves. The Dark Zephyr, the Everchanger, the Blade Chaser Mark II and the Phobos will all be able to fight with their new blades as if they have the power of a small battle formation at their disposal!"

Even Ves began to look forward to making that happen after Ketis had given her pitch!

"I will try my best to give you what you need." He promised to her. "Compared to our other mech designers such as my wife, it sounds like you already have a clear idea on how to take advantage of hyper materials. I am still working on obtaining enough quantities of them, so I advise you to be patient. You can play around with the Unending alloy swords in the meantime."

Ketis had already been doing that, but she did not manage to accomplish much aside from helping Venerable Dise develop slightly more effective sword techniques.

Cache materials such as Unending alloy were much more neutral compared to sympathetic materials. This was an advantage as they were incredibly versatile and could be used in many different applications.

The downside was that their lack of bias and inclinations made it a lot more difficult to produce strong results. The struggles of Ketis and the expert pilots of the Larkinson Clan proved that not all hyper materials were easy to work with. It might take months or years of focused research to produce actionable results.

Ves expected that it would probably take a few weeks or months before he could get his hands on newly formed hyper materials that had just completed their transformations.

What he did not expect was that he would get a call from Director Pesca Aduc not long afterwards.

"Sir? Our researchers have just discovered a batch of ore that has reached saturation after being subjected to the Everchanger's glow."

Chapter 5088 D-L

"So this is it, huh?"

"Yes, sir." Director Pesca Aduc said as she stood in front of a transparent container that currently stored a modest amount of space junk. "What you see before you is 23.7 kilograms of raw ore that has yet to be identified and included in the Red Two's materials database. According to our logs, our clan harvested this ore from a nearby asteroid in one of the star systems that we have visited in the past. It does not possess any special traits. Our clan mainly kept it in storage to build up a diverse library of samples. None of us had any expectations that it would have any significance, but it is the material that responded the fastest after being subjected to the Everchanger's glow."

The speed in which these chunks of rocks completed their hyper transformations demonstrated that their potential was low. Maybe too low to justify his personal interest in their existence.

Nonetheless, Ves did not have anything else to play around with, so he had little choice but to take this new hyper material seriously.

As Pesca Aduc continued to recite more information about this case, Ves had already begun his own investigations.

His spiritual senses told him that the transformed ore had absorbed a slight amount of spiritual energy attributed towards death.

A part of it had altered its physical properties and caused all kinds of modest changes.

Another part of it continued to linger inside the ore, enabling anyone to leverage the stored energy in different ways.

This caused Ves to classify it as a death sympathetic material in his new model of hyper materials.

Its properties shared a close resemblance to that of a P-stone, but the new death sympathetic material was a lot more fragile and limited in compatibility.

"What is it called?" Ves asked.

"For now, we have labeled it as D-1, as it was the first material that exhibited clear physical changes according to our observations. You are free to change it to a name of your choosing."

He shook his head. "That isn't necessary. I think it is clear to the both of us that this material ranks at the bottom when it comes to hyper materials. It is the equivalent of a junk exotic, and quite a bad one at that. Its only advantage is that it is probably easy to obtain in large quantities. How prevalent are the asteroids that contain the ore that D-1 is derived from in the Red Ocean?"

"According to our investigation, the asteroids are not exactly common, but they are not scarce either. You can stumble upon them in 1 every 20 star systems in the Red Ocean. They are not available in the Milky Way, not that it matters."

It did matter, actually. If it was possible to mine large quantities of D-1 in the Milky Way, then Helena would be able to flex her power a lot more extensively when it was all shipped to the Nyxian Gap!

As the director of the T Institute spoke, Ves noticed that she looked slightly ill at ease.

"What's wrong, Pesca? Is your proximity to D-1 making you uncomfortable?"

The woman who had come to worship Gaia as a literal goddess nodded after a couple of seconds.

"As you know, I worship the patron of Old Earth and the life that has flourished from our ancestral planet. Death is... a part of nature, but that does not mean I am comfortable with remaining in its presence. I don't sense a threat from this material, but it is slightly interfering with my inner peace."

It was like introducing a durian into a room. Even though it was relatively harmless, the smell of this infamously stinky fruit could easily drive people who hated this controversial delicacy to madness!

"I understand. Death is not a pleasant concept. I will take this batch of D-1 off your hands and tinker with it further. By the way, I will also inform our clan to mine larger quantities of this ore whenever possible. Even weaker hyper materials can be incredibly useful to us if there is no readily available alternative. You should reserve enough space aboard this ship to accommodate mass production."

Though Pesca Aduc did not look enthused, she acknowledged the instruction.

Before Ves began his experiments, he chatted a little more with the woman. He was curious about what her family was up to these days.

The director of the T Institute became a lot more animated.

"I am aware that times are not good for red humanity as a whole, but our family's prospects are rising." She frankly said. "Ever since our ancestral teachings have become more effective in the new environment, our family's terraforming work has experienced massive improvements. Our services are in much higher demand than before, and we command much greater prices. The Red Two is also offering rich incentives to terraform planets that fall within the territories that red humanity currently occupies."

"I heard about that last part. The mechers and fleeters think that we will stay on the defensive for a long time. If we want to expand our population, our resource extraction and our industrial capacity, we can no longer rely on creating new zones and occupying the most attractive star systems."

There were still plenty of star systems in the Magair Middle Zone and the Krakatoa Middle Zone that were completely devoid of human occupation.

These empty star systems were not barren. They just didn't have any phasewater or sufficient deposits of exotics to make it worthwhile for pioneers to plant their flags.

Times had changed.

With the Red Two's warfleets on the defensive and with the Torald Middle Zone becoming increasingly more penetrated by alien raiding fleets, it made a lot more sense to colonize the previously forgotten planets that were located away from the local galactic center!

According to Pesca, the spread of cultivation within the Aduc Family caused many of its terraformers to develop a green thumb of sorts!

"We can always find a way to make nature flourish." She said with a smile that radiated pride. "Our family has also gained influence among like-minded people and organizations. We have all come together in order to locate the perfect surrogate planet for Old Earth. We have a strong belief that there is a globe out here in the Red Ocean that can be turned into the perfect temple of Gaia in this corner of space!"

"Uh huh." Ves spoke. "Has your little alliance made contact with the Terrans? As far as I know, there are people within the Terran Alliance that are looking to do the same."

"Our family hasn't made any direct contact, but one of the other organizations in our group claims to enjoy Terran backing. We hope to obtain more substantial support once we have made more impressive attainments."

It was difficult for Terrans to take second-raters seriously. Ves did not have much hope for the Aducs and their little club.

He still found it interesting that the Aducs were doing particularly well with the help of their proprietary cultivation method.

It showed that groups that still preserved and respected their old legacies or inheritances could easily get ahead of their rivals and competitors!

22:02

Ves wondered how many other organizations were in the same position as the Aduc Family. He had a easily get ahead of their rivals and competitors!

Ves wondered how many other organizations were in the same position as the Aduc Family. He had a strong suspicion that red humanity was still rife with people who had not forgotten all of their former ties to the Five Scrolls Compact.

Once Director Pesca went back to supervising the experiments centered around companion spirits, Ves immediately began to tinker with the newly produced batch of D-1.

He did not even bother returning to his private workshop over at the Spirit of Bentheim. He immediately sought out a spare workshop in the Dragon's Den and began to play around with his latest toy.

He felt as if he managed to get his hands on a super discounted version of Black Demon Steel. If not for the fact that it could not possibly withstand the rigors of mech combat, he would have felt tempted to integrate it into an existing mech, perhaps one of the Valkyrie expert mechs of the Glory Seekers.

His initial experiments confirmed that D-1 indeed possessed at least some of the properties of a prime material.

It could store a small quantity of death energy. Ves even tried to make more precise measurements.

After a bit of experimentation, he estimated that 1 kilogram of D-1 could store approximately 0.00003 Ves.

"That's not too bad for a material as prevalent as this." He noted with a bit of respect.

The maximum energy density of D-1 sounded abysmal at first, but that was when he had just 1 kilogram of this hyper material.

What if he had 10 kilograms of D-1?

That would mean he could store up to 0.0003 Ves of death energy, which was a big improvement!

If he somehow managed to get his hands on 1000 tons of D-1, then he would be able to store 30 Ves worth of death energy!

This was a pathetic ratio compared to a more sophisticated sympathetic material like Black Demon Steel, but Ves did not mind it because of one crucial difference.

Ves had yet to find any trace of Black Demon Steel outside of the Mech Designer System, whereas his clan could easily mine all of the tons of precursor ore of D-1 as it wanted to in the new frontier!

It was not feasible for the Larkinson Clan to pile up all of the D-1 in the cargo hold of its starships. Storage space was far too limited and precious in the expeditionary fleet.

What he could do instead was to go through with his earlier plans to establish hyper material production facilities on planets such as Davute VII and dump as much D-1 on the surface as he wanted!

It didn't matter if he had an actual need for all of that D-1, because the cost of storing more of it was trivial!

Ves tried to imagine the possible uses of D-1 based on the assumption that its supply was practically limitless.

He could use it to mass produce billions of extremely cheap totems. They might be incredibly fragile, but his clan could produce so much of them that it didn't matter if they were roughly handled!

He could produce giant temples in the Hex Federation that were entirely devoted to Helena. His eldest sister could communicate more effectively with her subjects and harvest a lot more spiritual feedback from the Hexers.

He could use it as a key material to construct a special starship that allowed Helena to exert her strength in the expeditionary fleet to the maximum without needing to rely on battle formations.

Ves tried to imagine what it would be like to live in a city that largely consisted of structures made out of D-1.

Would humans even be able to survive in such an environment, or would the sheer concentration of death energy make it impossible for weak organic life forms to cling to their lives?

This was an interesting thought experiment, so much so that Ves might actually think about turning it into a reality, just so he could see what would happen!

As ideas continued to bombard his mind, he quickly completed his initial examinations by quickly carving a bunch of small totems of the initial batch of D-1.

Once he completed them, he found them to be decently more charming and effective at channeling Helena's presence and glow than comparable objects at the same size.

It didn't matter if their energy capacity was still stupidly small. Any trace of the Daughter of Death within a totem was already enough to increase its transmission efficiency by several times!

"This is a huge improvement!"

If Ves was able to do this with an extremely weak hyper material like D-1, what about other sympathetic materials that were sensitive towards death-attributed spiritual energy?

"There's also mechs as well. If D-4, D-5 or D-6 are strong and resilient enough to be integrated into mechs, how much stronger will the next generation of Valkyrie mechs become?"

Perhaps those mechs no longer needed to employ a battle formation to channel Helena's power in the material realm.

With the help of powerful enough sympathetic materials, the Daughter of Death would always bless their attacks!

Chapter 5089 Improbable Interception

"Meow..."

Lucky yawned as he laid on the armrest of the cockpit chair.

Numerous days had passed since the Hidden Smile split away from the expeditionary fleet and raced towards the target star system with the help of her superdrive.

The Hex Federation had just introduced this new class of stealth frigate into service. Utilized by intelligence agencies such as DIVA, ships like the Hidden Smile not only boasted more modern stealth systems, but could also reach their destinations faster than many other ships!

Stealth vessels like these were hard to come by in the private market. Their development and production required the support of too many large state institutions. The colonial states who invested a lot in them also weren't stupid enough to hand over their most sensitive and proprietary pieces of stealth tech to third parties.

Out of all of the partners of the Golden Skull Alliance, only the Glory Seekers had any chance of getting their hands on specialized starships of this caliber.

They had truly done much to pull their weight in the alliance as of late. It was as if they were afraid that they would lose their value and become irrelevant if they did not work harder to prove their value to the rest of the Golden Skullers.

Whatever the case, the addition of the Hidden Smile added whole new options for the expeditionary fleet.

It made it possible for Venerable Zimro Belson and his feline teammate to sneak up on a powerful alien raiding fleet in transit.

However, catching up to a group of starships that were traveling faster-than-light in realspace was easier said than done!

The sheer complexity and challenges that the group assigned to this mission were hard to overcome were too great.

After quietly arriving at the target destination and stopping at a certain location that was situated in the probable zone where the alien fleet would be passing by, the Hidden Smile remained in stealth.

Although a lot of alien raiding fleets were so haphazardly run that they rarely bothered to send scouts, the Golden Skullers couldn't assume the yurzen raiding fleet was the same.

The puelmers may possess a reputation for brutality and irrational behavior, but they had also shown greater cunning and prudence in their previous clashes against the Red Two.

The Hidden Smile had therefore lowered the power settings of many of her ship systems so that she could run as silently and unnoticeable as possible.

While it was not necessary to dim the lights and force everyone to whisper to each other, the DIVA crew members did so anyway because it put them in the proper mindset.

While Venerable Zimro Belson remained on standby in the cockpit of his expert mech, he thought back on the bewildering discussion he held with the captain of the Hidden Smile.

Every important officer and analysts had gathered in a briefing room. Each of them stood around a square table and projector that displayed a map of the star system where they intended to ambush the incoming aliens.

"This is the Corellix System." The DIVA captain explained. "Though surveyors have yet to detect any phasewater, it is still regarded as a resource rich star system due to its large and easily accessible deposits of bulk metallic ores. The only occupied planet is Corellix III. A medium-sized settlement has been built on the surface that is mostly oriented towards mining."

"What is the size of its garrison?" Venerable Zimro Belson asked.

The female captain did not look annoyed at the expert pilot for interrupting her presentation.

"The pioneers who founded the colony on Corellix III have sought to pull out and depart back to the rear of human-occupied space. If not for the resistance shown by the soldiers and the emergency directive imposed by the Red Two, the pioneers would have brought away as many mechs as their carriers and starships could carry away. As it is, the pioneers have agreed to a deal where they have surrendered all of their colonial properties to the Red Association in exchange for the right to take away a third of their mechs and all of their starships."

That caused Zimro to raise his eyebrows. "What of the remaining troops?"

"Many of them have volunteered to stay and defend Corellix III to the end in order to protect their friends and families who aren't able to evacuate from the vulnerable colony. They also chose to stay because of other reasons such as upholding their honor and doing their duty. It also helps that the Red Association has promised to reward them and grant them greater privileges once the mechers have sent a relief force to fortify the star system into a border stronghold."

Zimro smiled when he heard that. "I see. They have made a difficult choice, but their cause is just and honorable. I hope that they will be rewarded for their commitment to their service."

As an expert pilot, Zimro fully understood the sentiments of those mech pilots. While they were all humans who possessed a real fear towards death, it was unacceptable for them to cut and run when so many colonists depended on their protection.

Such a stain on their records would haunt them for the rest of their careers! It would be a lot less likely for any of the cowardly mech pilots to make any breakthroughs in the future.

Sure, it was almost impossible for ordinary mech forces to resist the might of alien starships, but as long as the chance was realistic enough, they owed it to themselves and the people under their protection to stand their ground!

The captain of the Hidden Smile continued with her presentation. Several lines appeared on the map that depicted the probable trajectories that the incoming alien raiding fleet would take in order to reach Corellix III.

"These are the five most probable routes that the yurzen raiding fleet might take." She explained. "We have formulated these routes based on historical patterns, studies on the racial biases of the puelmers and yurzens, the stellar landscape of the Corellix System and other data sources. As you can see, several of these routes diverge wildly from the others. They are also surrounded by large zones that loosely depict the enormous variance in trajectory. If we are fortunate enough to select the correct route to intercept the alien fleet, we may still miss its passage because we have parked our ship several light-minutes too far away from the actual trajectory."

Intercepting a fleet traveling through space was difficult.

Intercepting a fleet traveling through space in warp travel was even more difficult.

Doing so while maintaining complete stealth was practically impossible!

"The best chance to intercept the incoming alien fleet is to engage in warp travel ourselves, but doing so will expose our existence to the enemy fleet without any doubt." The captain seriously stated. "Warp travel works on the basis of bending space in a contorted shape. This produces obvious spatial distortions that can easily be detected by multiple different sensor systems. The puelmer heavy cruisers are known to possess a comprehensive suite of sensors and detection arrays, so the aliens will know that we are trying to catch up to them despite keeping our assets invisible."

Trying to sneak up to an enemy fleet in warp travel was like trying to approach a military fortress by digging a tunnel under the ground.

Perhaps the approach might not be obvious from the surface, but the vibrations and other disturbances generated by digging activity could not be hidden!

Venerable Zimro Belson frowned. "We can't intercept the alien fleet in warp travel unless we use it as well. We will just get left behind while the aliens quickly reach Corellix III and overwhelm the outgunned defenders."

"That is not entirely correct." The DIVA captain shook her head. "There is another scenario where we can approach the alien warships while maintaining at least some element of surprise. This measure will likely put our adversaries on guard, but so long as they do not maintain their guard for too long, there will be a window of opportunity for your Phobos to approach undetected and strike before the fleet resumes its warp travel."

She pointed at one of the routes, which glowed brighter while the other ones dimmed.

A simulation took place where the yurzen raiding fleet entered the star system and traveled exactly along the estimated route.

Yet halfway through their journey to the inner system, previously hidden transphasic mines came online and exploded just in front of the incoming alien fleet!

The spatial disruptions caused by these mines not only damaged the alien starships in the vanguard, but also forced many of the vessels to drop out of warp travel!

It was at this time that the nearby Hidden Smile quietly flew closer on a relatively fast ballistic trajectory before launching the Phobos that had already activated his stealth systems.

In an ideal scenario, neither of the puelmer heavy cruisers overseeing the 112 yurzen warships had activated their transphasic energy shields.

The Phobos first approached one of the key alien warships in order to drop off Lucky.

The expert stealth mech then proceeded to sneak up on another puelmer warship and knock out all of the alien vessel's warp drives in quick succession!

Zimro frowned. "Is it realistic to expect the puelmer warships to keep their transphasic energy shields down when they have just stumbled on a minefield?"

"We do not know. This is why the success rate of this operation is not high to begin with. If you find yourself unable to sabotage either of the puelmer warships, then we recommend that you attempt to disable the warp drives of the largest yurzen vessels that you can affect."

That was anything but ideal as the yurzen warships weren't worth that much to begin with. As long as the puelmer homeships retained their full mobility, the difficulty of defeating them was much greater!

As Zimro continued to listen to the briefing, he couldn't help but fixate on the greatest point of uncertainty of this difficult operation.

"All of this sounds good, but we won't be able to do any of this if we cannot select the right route and plant your transphasic mines at just the right coordinates. How can you possibly make the correct determinations? Space is too wide and vast to just get it right."

The only realistic way to actually hit a fleet traveling through space was to prepare an ambush close or right on top of its end destination.

The problem with doing that in this case was that the colony on Corellix III would still get raided by the aggressive yurzens.

This meant that the Golden Skull Alliance could say goodbye to the huge bonus rewards for stopping the aliens before they could commit their awful deeds.

The DIVA captain was well aware of how difficult they were making this for themselves.

However, she was confident that they could make this improbable interception attempt happen.

"The Supreme Son has informed us of a measure we can take that can significantly increase our success rate. He told us that you are carrying a totem on your person. Can you show it to us, please?"

It took a few seconds for Zimro to understand what they were referring to. He reluctantly reached into his uniform pocket and pulled out a hand-sized Unending alloy totem of Ylvaine!

A sense of purity and sacredness immediately spread in the immediate area.

The DIVA captain's eyes lit up as she beheld this small icon.

"Venerable Belson, please commune with the Great Prophet. We sincerely request his guidance. Which of the five routes will the alien fleet traverse? Which coordinates should we plant our mines, and what ballistic trajectory should the Hidden Smile take in order to ready for a swift but unnoticeable approach?"

"..."

The expert pilot couldn't believe that all of these serious and professional DIVA operatives were willing to gamble on the success of this entire operation by listening to the predictions of a prophet!

A male prophet at that!

Chapter 5090 Gnawing Uncertainty

It was common sense in space to never travel in straight lines.

This was especially the case in times of war and conflict.

Any human fleet that traversed through alien-occupied space would always be vigilant about getting ambushed en route.

If the aliens collected enough information about the coordinates and the direction of travel of a human fleet, then it was possible to prepare an ambush along the way.

The best way to prevent this from happening was to vary the direction of travel from time to time.

By deviating from the most mathematically optimal route and taking a few short detours, the chances of slamming into ambushes dropped dramatically!

This was a habit that had already been ingrained into many well-run human fleets.

The same applied for the aliens.

Even if the aliens did not think it was likely for adversaries to prepare an ambush for their fleet, it was still prudent to make regular course changes, just to prevent them from flying straight into a field of mines.

The operation that the Hidden Smile had just commenced should have little to no chance of successfully working.

Predicting the right route and coordinates of the incoming yurzen raiding fleet should be as difficult as finding a needle in a planet-sized haystack!

Venerable Zimro Belson had a better chance winning a lottery than to make the correct predictions.

Yet that was exactly what they had just done!

When Zirmo 'communed' with Ylvaine and recited the set of coordinates supplied by the design spirit, the DIVA operatives proceeded into motion as if the information they obtained was infallible.

This was ridiculous!

It was not as if Venerable Zimro doubted Ylvaine's ability to make accurate predictions. The successful performance of the Transcendent Punishers and the Transcendent Chargers among other Ylvainan mechs showed that the design spirit possessed real prediction skills.

However, Zimro still found it rather difficult to believe that Ylvaine could foresee enemy movements so far in advance while still providing accurate coordinates!

Trying to predict the correct route and coordinates among so many different possible choices was mind-bogglingly difficult!

Most fleets did not just vary their trajectories on the horizontal plane. They also did not hesitate to fly significantly above or below the invariable plane of a star system!

Making a correct prediction to intercept a fleet that varied its flight path to such an extent was virtually impossible.

Yet the Golden Skull Alliance did not hesitate to turn this into the lynchpin of its ambitious plan!

"Do you think this can truly work, Lucky?"

"Meow meow." The cat replied in a non-committal tone.

The cat had already changed into his upgraded Misfortune Harness at this time. The black metal armor was supposed to make him look more menacing, but it also happened to make him look cuter in the process!

Though Venerable Zimro wasn't able to understand cat speech like certain other members of the Larkinson Clan, he was able to gauge the cat's emotions easily enough.

"You have greater faith than me, then." The expert pilot shook his head. "What about you, partner?"

"Faith has gained a power of its own in the Age of Dawn." The third order living mech spoke in a soft tone to reflect their hidden state. "Your mindset is still stuck in the Age of Mechs. That is cute, Zimro, but it will not avail you much in these changing times. Exotic radiation is more powerful than you can comprehend. Ever since I have started to 'cultivate' according to the method passed on to me, I can already feel myself growing smarter and tougher in ways that should be impossible."

Venerable Zimro along with many other mech pilots felt puzzled by that. They never heard about mechs absorbing energy from the environment and magically evolving by themselves all of a sudden. Even biomechs did not grow over time to such an extent!

Still, they could not deny what was happening in reality. They interfaced and interacted with their living mechs every day. They not only experienced the accelerated growth of their battle partners practically first-hand, but also benefited from it a bit as some of that progress fed back to them through the man-machine connection!

Time passed by as Venerable Zimro continued to wait for further developments.

At one point, he received an update from a DIVA communications officer.

"Our listening posts have successfully confirmed that the incoming yurzen raiding fleet is still following the predicted trajectory." The woman spoke. "The fleet in warp is projected to hit the mines or bypass them within approximately 76 minutes. Please get ready. If the mines succeed in pulling the alien warships out of warp, then we must move quickly before the aliens can depart."

The expert pilot grew a lot more alert at this time.

The remaining minutes ticked by with excruciating slowness as Zimro constantly wondered whether the alien fleets would bump into the mines.

Did Ylvaine manage to make the correct prediction?

Zimro truly wanted to believe that the design spirit had managed to get it right, because the consequences of getting it wrong were too serious!

The colony established on the surface of Corellix III housed around 900,000 colonists according to the latest count.

This was a massive figure for a colony at this stage of development, but the pioneers had originally been optimistic about starting extensive mining and industrial processing operations in this metal-rich star system.

Now, only around 1300 mechs along with an incomplete array of defensive turrets and fortifications were all that stood in the way of total destruction.

Thinking about how many lives were at stake made Zimro feel increasingly more concerned.

He thought about how few minutes the Hidden Smile deployed. The stealth frigate was small and slim to begin with in order to make it as easy as possible to hide her emissions.

Her storage capacity was quite limited for that reason. She was only able to carry a single mech and two small stealth shuttles in her hangar bay. Her cargo hold also couldn't hold more than a couple of dozen modestly-sized transphasic mines.

The damage potential of these mines were fairly low. They were mainly designed to break warp bubbles and throw starships out of warp travel.

These mines had an effective range that stretches on for tens of kilometers in a vacuum environment, but that was incredibly small in open space!

In order to increase the hit rate of these mines, they possessed the capacity to move and relocate, but that only worked against relatively slow-moving targets, not ships traveling in warp!

The alien fleet could easily bypass the 'net1 cast by the Hidden Smile by thousands of kilometers or more if it just shifted its forward direction at the slightest of angles.

When the critical time dwindled down to 30 minutes, Venerable Zimro could no longer hold in his unease.

"What if Ylvaine is wrong?"

He did not have any proof that the interception attempt would fail, but that did not stop him from feeling incredibly uncertain about this dubious operation.

His instincts couldn't avail him in any way at this time. No one among the crew of the stealth frigate saw any reason to question Ylvaine's oracle.

As Zimro continued to stare at the projected map that displayed an estimation of the yurzen raiding fleet's current coordinates and route, he developed an increasing feeling that events wouldn't play out according to plan.

If they got it wrong, then many of the colonists who were stuck on Corellix III would most definitely perish!

Even if the expeditionary fleet managed to catch up to the yurzen raiding fleet while it remained in the vicinity of the planet, it would already be too late to save all of those human lives!

"Phobos?"

"Yes, my friend?"

"You can feel my anxiety, right? Am I being too sensitive about this, or are my concerns justified?"

"...I truly do not know, Zimro."

Though a living mech like the Phobos possessed a lot more confidence in Ylvaine's predictions, his constant exposure to his pilot's doubts had caused him to become a lot less certain about this operation as well.

Neither of them could predict whether this highly improbable interception attempt would succeed.

Zimro pulled out the totem of Ylvaine from his pocket. The patriarch had personally shaped it out of a spare piece of Unending alloy and gave it to the expert pilot.

"Ylvaine is good at predicting a lot of stuff." Ves said at the time. "You can trust him to point you in the right direction for the most part. The biggest caveat is that he struggles to predict powerful entities and highly abnormal phenomena. The energy required to read their futures is too great. I also cannot say for certain whether the aliens possess any intentional or unintentional factors that can mess up his future sight. If you have any reason to doubt his predictions, then listen to your intuition. This is the strongest and most admirable quality of expert pilots such as yourself."

That sounded good, but the problem at the moment was that Zimro's intuition wasn't telling him anything!

He felt he needed to do more than stay dormant in the hangar bay of the Hidden Smile.

He had no influence on everything that was about to happen outside if his expert mech remained hidden and out of the way.

Venerable Zimro made an impulsive decision in an attempt to suppress his inner turmoil.

"Open the main hatch."

"Pardon, Venerable Belson?"

"I need to launch into space in advance."

"That is inappropriate, sir. The plan doesn't call for that. You should wait until the Hidden Smile has maneuvered closer into position before you bring out your Phobos."

"I can't wait for that." Zimro retorted. "Please oblige my request."

It took a bit more arguing before the captain of the Hidden Smile decided to trust the expert pilot and grant permission.

The act of launching into space was a little different from normal. The Hidden Smile was designed in such a fashion that a mech like the Phobos could launch out while keeping the ship under near-perfect stealth.

Perhaps a few minor disturbances were unavoidable, but the Hexer shipwrights and stealth experts had done a good job at minimizing them whenever possible.

The Phobos had already activated his Seferath transphasic active stealth system at this time.

As the expert stealth mech quietly drifted away from the hidden position of the Hidden Smile, Venerable Zimro felt a bit lost at the moment.

What was he supposed to do now that his expert mech had left the hangar bay?

"Meow?"

Even Lucky expressed his confusion! His metallic tail curled in an uncertain manner as he waited to see what Zimro would do next.

Venerable Zimro did not speak at this time. The Phobos was doing his best to remain hidden.

Several minutes passed by as the expert stealth mech continued to drift off without any destination in mind.

It was not until his instincts began to generate a nervous thread in a specific direction that he altered course.

The Phobos made a gentle turn and began to traverse a direction that slightly brought the expert mech closer to the hidden minefield.

The more distance the Phobos traversed, the more Zimro felt as if he was approaching a looming threat.

There wasn't supposed to be anything in front of his expert mech aside from the transphasic mines, and these gadgets had little chance of threatening his machine at this distance.

What was wrong with him? Why did he feel progressively more nervous?

It wasn't until the Phobos drifted forward by a dozen or so kilometers that Zimro forced the Phobos to stop his forward motion.

"Meow?"

"What is the matter, Zimro?" The Phobos asked.

The expert pilot's heart rate had abruptly surged.

His eyes shook as he peered through the forward sensors of the Phobos.

"Can't... can't you feel it, partner?" The man whispered. "If my hunch is correct... we are not alone in this region of space at the moment."

"Meow?!"

Lucky grew a lot more alarmed at the moment.

"I don't think I am wrong." Zimro softly spoke as he gently controlled the Phobos to back away a bit. "In fact, the more I stare at this empty patch of space, the more I think my worries are justified. There is a hostile stealth ship lying in wait in the vicinity of the minefield!"

This was a bold statement, especially when Zimro could not provide any solid proof to back up this explosive assertion!

If his improbable prediction was correct, then the aliens may have arrived in this star system a lot sooner than the humans thought!