

The Mech 5311

Chapter 5311 A Concerning Pattern

Ves had hastily said goodbye to his wife and quickly made his way back to his temporary office in order to handle this sudden crisis.

"DAMNIT!"

Why hadn't he been told?

How come a leader as important and high-profile as General Axelar Streon decided to randomly set aside his many obligations and make an unannounced visit to New Constantinople?

This didn't make any sense! The Great Severing only happened a few months ago and still produced a huge amount of ripple effects!

In the dawn of a new age where all of the god pilots had disappeared in order to conduct a super secretive operation, every ace pilot was needed to defend the most important colonies in human space!

Powerful leaders and champions such as General Axelar Streon absolutely couldn't afford to leave the core colonies of their clans unattended. Who knew whether the native aliens would launch a deep strike operation on their own in order to cripple the greatest strongholds of red humanity?

For whatever reason, General Axelar disregarded this important responsibility and set off for a star system that was located in the turf of another ancient clan!

It did not take any effort to figure out why this famed and powerful Terran leader traveled all the way to the New Constantinople System at this sensitive time,

"He has come for me!" Ves concluded.

This realization generated a torrent of emotions in his mind.

It had been a long time since he had gone through that short but highly memorable Mastery experience.

From starting out in a drug-addled mind to cheering Axelar on as the hapless pilot utilized the newly materialized Ouroboros to defeat a genuine first-class multipurpose mech in an arena duel, Ves gained a lol from his brief exposure to high-level Terran society!

Although Ves had been enormously impressed by the power of the Terrans and the status of General Axelar Streon in present times, that did not mean he wanted to meet his 'Mastery host' in person!

"Not again." He groaned.

What was it with those annoying Mastery hosts?! Why couldn't they respect his wishes and leave him alone so that they could live their merry lives in peace?

First it was Rion Aaden, the former idiot dwarf turned self-proclaimed emperor.

Next it was Divine Irene Mox, the pilot who was fated to become the Destroyer of Worlds.

Now it seems that General Axelar Streon himself wanted to take his turn to reunite with the mech designer who had inadvertently transformed his entire life!

What was next? Would Eloise Pelican show up out of the blue in the future? That would be crazy!

"Leave me alone!"

Didn't they get the message that Ves wanted nothing to do with them anymore?! Their initial contact with each other was supposed to be a one-off event.

As far as Ves was concerned, he engaged in a transaction with his Mastery hosts.

They all had their own problems which Ves conveniently solved. In return for services rendered, he gained the opportunity to see the mech pilots in action, thereby gaining valuable first-hand insights in the complexities of controlling powerful war machines.

Thai was supposed to be the end of this transaction. Ves most emphatically did not extend the contract or provide any after-sales services. They shouldn't even find out about him in the first place!

Ves never wanted these powerful and dangerous fellows to insert themselves into his present life!

Not only would every point of contact reveal the extremely sensitive secret that Ves possessed the capacity to travel back in time, but his former Mastery hosts could also utilize their knowledge to blackmail him if they found out the truth!

"What did I do to deserve this crap?! Can't you leave me alone?"

At least this situation appeared to be a bit better than before.

Rion Aaden had utilized his amazing intellect to set a trap.

Ves gave away his Involvement almost instantly as soon as he pulled out Emma's spiritual fragment.

As for General Axelar Streon, the man should not have any solid proof that Ves had mixed in his life in the past.

This allowed him to calm down. Now that he regained his composure, Ves figured that the worst-case scenario had yet to occur. This gave him a chance to come away from this impending reunion with his secrets intact.

He just needed to bluff one of the foremost Terran leaders in the Red Ocean and ensure that he did not give away a single clue!

"This is going to be a challenge." Ves frowned.

The greatest variable that could expose his connection to Axelar's uncharacteristic deeds a century ago was his only creation at the time.

Although the modern Incarnation of the Ouroboros had changed enormously since its initial creation, it still retained traces of his work!

The similarities in design philosophies between the Ouroboros and his many living mechs could be used to form a possible connection.

Fortunately, the living properties of the Ouroboros deviated significantly from that of his regular works.

This meant that Ves could still allow Mr. S. to claim credit for the design and creation of this famed Terran hero mech if the situation had reached this point.

Ves relaxed as the tension left his body. Now that he formed a viable gameplan, he no longer held as much fear as before.

The risk of exposure was still ever-present, but so long as he navigated the situation correctly, he should be able to make it through.

The best way to avoid an accident was to avoid the conditions that made it possible.

Could he turn around and leave the New Constantinople System?

"No. That will only delay this at best." He sighed.

Ves had placed himself onto General Axelar Streon's radar. The powerful Terran wouldn't be satisfied with evaluating such an important upstart from a distance.

This was especially the case when Ves had offered to take in his granddaughter as his personal student and disciple!

Though Ves did not regret this impulsive decision, he had grown quite annoyed at the fact he brought on so many repercussions onto himself.

Perhaps he could have taken a subtler approach. He could have just taught young Alexa everything about living mechs without making any high profile announcements.

It was a pity that Ves had acted far too bold!

General Axelar Streon would definitely chase after the Bluejay Fleet if Ves requested Jovy to turn the ships around and leave!

Ves understood that this reunion couldn't be avoided. He needed to get it over with so that he could get on with his life in peace.

He contacted his assistant.

"You called, boss?"

"Have you noticed the latest high profile arrival?"

"Who hasn't?" Gavin sardonically spoke. "The regional news portals exploded with this story almost as soon as the first sensors picked up the arrival of the Termine Hill and her escorts. I have barely begun to coordinate with the Devos Ancient Clan about arranging a grand reception with the leader of the New Terran Federation Movement. The Terrans are really strict about matters like this. The initial meeting between a domestic tier 2 galactic citizen and a foreign tier 3 galactic citizen has to follow a heap of protocols, many of which I haven't even heard of. It will take time to organize the reception, especially when the general had not seen fit to give the Devosans any warning of his arrival."

Though Ves had too little exposure towards the Terrans, they were indeed sticklers about sticking to old and cumbersome traditions. Their heritage was so old that they adopted a lot of ceremonies over the ages.

Ves did not mind this at all. Any delay granted him more time to prepare for the inevitable reunion.

"Continue to work together with the Terrans. Make sure you don't get rolled over by them, Benny. I don't mind it if I have to follow a few silly traditions, but I don't want to act like a clown, do you understand?"

Gavin confidently smiled. "I get it, boss. Pushing back is a good way for us to assert our own power. It is already an honor that the Renewer of Terra has taken the initiative to pay a visit to us instead of the other way around. If we spin this event in the right way, we can boost your reputation and increase your perceived value!"

The personal assistant excitedly rambled on for a minute before he quickly closed the connection so that he could get to work right away!

Ves simply shrugged and decided to contact his other assistant.

"I knew you would call me." Alexa Streon spoke in an expectant tone. "Before you ask, I played no part in this. My grandfather caught many people by surprise. He isn't supposed to be here. He has caused a considerable amount of disarray back in our own territory due to his hasty departure."

"I see. So he decided to travel to New Constantinople on short notice."

Leaders such as General Axelar rarely acted on impulsive decisions, especially when each of their actions always had major implications.

The only explanation for this was that the peak ace pilot acted on a trigger.

What could possibly cause him to change his mind and upend his entire schedule?

Ves asked a few more questions to the young lady of the Streon Ancient Clan, but her grandfather hadn't brought her into the loop at all. He couldn't help but feel disappointed.

"I have spoken frequently to my grandfather about you." Alexa continued to speak. "I tried my best to portray you in a positive light, but he prefers to make his own judgment. As you know, high-ranking mech pilots have their own means of discerning people. He has relied on this for a long time to discern allies from enemies. It is a very useful skill to have in our part of society."

That was for certain. Still, few people were stupid enough to meet with an ace pilot without making the right preparations. The heightened intuition of these powerful champions were mostly attuned towards threats to their personal life and wellbeing. Ves could think of several ways to circumvent this condition, though it would be hard to truly cause General Axelar harm in these causes.

Ves rubbed his hairless chin in thought. "Aside from the obvious, do you know what he wants to talk about when we meet in person? For example, does he intend to discuss business related to kinship networks?"

"That is highly unlikely, professor. It is too soon for that. The ancient clans are still in the process of deliberating on a common set of demands. My grandfather cannot speak on behalf of the entire Terran Alliance when a consensus hasn't even been reached."

"I see."

"I think he may have decided to come for other business. He will let us know in time." Alexa guessed.

"Thank you for your answers. Can you go to him and ask his purpose for visiting this star system?"

The young lady shook her head. "It is not proper for me to do so. While I am his granddaughter, I am also an employee of an institution of the Devos Ancient Clan. Right now, the latter takes precedence. The Devosans have put great effort into preparing for your arrival. This is their show for the time being. My grandfather is aware of that and will remain out of sight in order to give his hosts their due. It may take a week before it is permissible for him to step forward."

Ves tried his best not to express too much relief at that news. "That is good to hear. I am not exactly prepared to talk to him in person. My staff is completely overtaken by this development as well."

"I apologize for that, professor. Our ancient clan will try its best to make up for that. In the meantime, we should discuss the details of your impending arrival to the Eden Institute,"

Though Ves held a lot of concerns about meeting General Axelar Streon, he first had to deal with the Devos Ancient Clan. It would not do to get distracted and cause offense to this relatively small but entrenched Terran power.

Chapter 5312 Bag Inflation

The Bluejay Fleet all had warp travel capabilities, so it took little time for the powerful mecher warships to arrive in orbit of New Constantinople VIII.

As Ves looked down on the beautiful globe from a considerable height, he wondered whether he should stick to his original plan and stay here for the long term.

He certainly made steps to do so. He gained an entire first-class military outpost in a trade when he attended the conference. He already made a deal with the Terrans to deconstruct it and move all of the pieces back to New Constantinople.

This was an expensive and cumbersome process as the cost of shipping bulk materials had risen considerably. The transportation of expensive materials and components needed to be covered by an escort at all times in order to deter any sort of Interception.

What mattered was that Ves would be disrupting a lot of plans if he decided to leave shortly after his arrival.

"I guess I'll stay."

There was no compelling reason to leave the New Constantinople System other than the fact that he did not want to reunite with General Axelar Streon.

Once Ves managed to get past this ordeal, his life in the months to come should proceed a lot smoother.

He decided to reserve his judgment and see how the next few days would unfold.

An hour passed by as various parties made a lot of preparations. The arrival of a rising star was treated as a big event in the Terran Alliance.

While a lot of ordinary people were confused why the higher ups attached so much importance to a second-rater, those who were better informed all paid serious attention to this spectacle!

The way Ves interacted with the first group of Terrans he visited in person would set the tone of his relationship with the powerful first-rate colonial superstate.

There were many interests that benefited if Ves became chummy with the Terrans. There were also many other interests that would rather see the opposite happen.

This was the price for becoming such a famed and controversial figure. Ves could no longer do anything big without attracting an excessive amount of attention and scrutiny.

A few minutes passed as Ves remained in thought.

Eventually, his wife and children entered the teleportation chamber.

Each of them dressed at their best. The mechers had done a good job at fitting them with refined outfits that would not look cheap or tacky to Terran sensibilities.

His wife wore a variation of her favorite deep blue dress speckled with soft pulsing stars. The fabric was deeper and complex patterns became visible when they reflected the light.

Aurelia and Andraste looked like princesses. Their gold and black dresses did not lose out in complexity, but their small sizes made them look adorable as well as elegant.

The ribbons on their heads were a nice touch. They were folded in a way to give the impression that the children had cat ears, though the ends of the ribbons also trailed down a fair length for a bit of extra flair.

Marvaine was the youngest of them, so he wore a tiny and considerably simplified version of a Larkinson dress uniform. The resemblance between his current appearance and that of his father was clear, though the brown-haired boy did not need any ribbons to make him look exceptionally cute.

"Meow."

"Miaow."

Of course, their cats couldn't be left out of the party either.

There was no need to weigh them down with too many accessories. Lucky wore a tuxedo collar that made him look a little less out of place in a formal setting. Clixie wore her usual resplendent collar but also gained a cute pink bowtie on her head.

Aside from that, both cats had colorful ribbons tied to their tails, which added a touch of playfulness to their appearances.

"Make sure to behave and keep an eye on our children, alright?" Ves addressed his two pets. "I don't want to impose too many rules on you, but make sure not to do anything that will cause the Terrans to think less of us. It is best if you act cute and win the hearts of our audience with your impeccable charm."

"Meow!"

"Miaow miaow!"

Seeing that his cats had gotten the message, Ves turned to Gloriana. His eyes immediately became clued to the brand-new handbag hanging off her forearm,

"That's new." He remarked.

"What did you expect, Ves?" Gloriana placed a hand on her hip. "Did you expect me to parade my old Isolde Zhu or Pop Cult bags today? That is absurd! These bags are decent enough status symbols In second-class space, but here? They are worth less than dirt! Carrying them Is no different than presenting myself while dressed In rags!"

Although her logic was sound, Ves couldn't help but wonder how much it cost to purchase this bag.

He was not familiar with the billions of brands in existence, but according lo Vulcan's craftsmanship judgment, the dainty deep red handbag looked like a bespoke job from an exclusive boutique.

Although the artisan had tried to be restrained in the design of the bag, the materials were all natural, hand-processed and devoid of any but the tiniest flaws that couldn't be removed without resorting to industrial means!

This caused the relatively conservative design to exude a refined sense of personality. Ves could even sense that this touch was feminine.

Apparently, the craftswoman was very good at her job, because the handbag had become a masterwork product In the end!

"How much does this bag cost?" Ves asked in a suspicions tone even as he formed his own estimate.

"5 million MTA credits."

"What?! That is one-fortieth the price of a high-quality first-class multipurpose mech! Where did you get the money to buy a bag that expensive?!"

"Pff. Do you think this is expensive, Ves? Your taste is too poor! It is only average to the distinguished figures that we are about to meet."

"Even so, how can you possibly get a masterwork handbag that is so expensive? Did you waste your precious MTA merits on this frivolous purchase? This bag costs many times more than the total price tag of all of the designer baby formulas for our children!"

Gloriana shook her head at him, "I do not own this bag If you must know. I conveyed my handbag problem to one of the Terrans on the surface. This young teaching assistant of yours has graciously loaned this bag to me. I shall have to return It once the public spectacle has passed."

"Oh. That... sounds alright."

"I expect you to compensate me by purchasing a proper bag of my own while we are staying in New Constantinople." His wife continued. "I cannot keep borrowing bags from the Terrans, and it is beneath my new status to go without one. The advantage of stopping in a Terran port system is that there are many shops In the main commercial districts that sell adequate enough products. We should go shopping as soon as you have completed all of your immediate obligations."

"What? No! That's way too expensive!"

His wife shook her head in disappointment. "You have yet to adjust your mentality. You are not a second-rater anymore, Ves. It is much easier for you to earn millions of MTA credits than in the past. It should take little to no effort for you to raise the required sums. Even if yon are having difficulties, you can easily apply for a loan. Any bank will be happy to receive you as a client."

Ves' expression had gone flat. "You only borrow money in order to fund essential investments or cover serious business expenditures. I seriously do not think that you are supposed to take a loan just to squander it all on luxury purchases."

"This is not a luxury purchase! This is an essential investment that improves our impression of the Terrans!"

"I don't think the Terrans are shallow enough to base their entire impression of us by looking at the bag that you happen to carry around."

"YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND!"

The two continued to argue with each other until they finally received a notification of an impending teleportation event.

Both husband and wife quickly regained their composure and made sure they looked impeccably presentable.

While Ves preferred to descend onto the surface of New Constantinople by riding a shuttle, the risks were way too great.

Riding a shuttle in the air gave too many opportunities for powerful enemies to intercept it from many different places.

From a security standpoint, it was best to skip the journey and just arrive at the end destination right away!

For various reasons, it was not suitable for Jovy Armalon and Saintess Ulrika Vraken to accompany Ves and his immediate family.

While the mechs had already teleported a few units of guard infantry and first-class multipurpose mechs, few people cared about them as they served a boring but necessary function that had little political implications.

Though the Terrans didn't like mechs showing up on their turf, Ves strongly insisted on their presence.

He had learned his lesson too many times to grow complacent. Who knew whether the Terran guards would turn against Ves or abandon him for whatever reason.

Although Ves did not trust the mechs that much more, they at least belonged to a different group, which meant they added a lot of redundancy.

Still, in order to guard himself against the powerful high-tech weapons that were regularly employed by first-raters, he had opted to wear his galactic citizenship badge.

It was not only a real status symbol that carried much more weight than a trivial handbag, but also offered a huge amount of protection despite its compact design!

The emergency five-use teleporter embedded in the object could save him from the vast majority crisis. Its range was so impressive that it could easily teleport him back to the Bluejay Fleet in high orbit.

Ves inspected his equipment one more time before he nodded in satisfaction.

"Ready!"

His entire body seemed to melt, only to reform onto a red carpeted surface in an entirely new location.

just as Ves became preoccupied with the different air and smells, a large crowd of people cheered as they reacted to his arrival!

Ves had showed up in the middle of one of the expansive gardens of the campus of the Eden Institute.

A large crowd of students who all wore their assigned uniforms looked incredibly enthused to greet the arrival of the most famous professor of their Institution!

Of course, aside from tens of thousands of students, the crowd also featured plenty of other people, though the Eden Institute had made sure to limit their numbers.

From professors to high status visitors who came from afar, even the adults displayed varying degrees of approval towards Ves.

A familiar figure rose up in the air and flew closer until she settled down in front of Ves.

The 310-year old Master Mech Designer wearing a ceremonial suit and robe made a dignified but sincere bow.

"Welcome to the Terran Alliance, Professor Ves Larkinson. The Eden Institute of Business & Technology is honored to receive you and your family. Every citizen of our colonial superstate is grateful to you for doing your part in preserving our culture and heritage from those who conspired to erase them both. We consider you to be our savior, so we have ensured you will receive a reception that is commensurate with your deeds. Is there anything you would like to say to our Terran population?"

Though much of this had already been planned In advance, Ves was still overtaken by the scale and the emotions of this event.

Fortunately, this was not the first time that Ves had been put in this kind of position, so he quickly took control of his racing emotions.

He raised his arm towards his audience and kept his words simple. "Thank you for allowing me to be in your company. I come here as a guest in order to experience the famed hospitality of your superstate. I look forward to experiencing your culture and forming new agreements with local business partners."

Though his speech was bland, it was more than enough to arouse another cheer of appreciation from the predominantly adolescent crowd!

Chapter 5313 In Control

Although Ves requested the Terrans to make the reception ceremony as subdued, small-scale and restrained as possible, his hosts had a very different interpretation of what that meant.

The Terrans were steeped in ceremony and traditions. Everything from the length of the carpet to the various greeting rituals had thousands of years worth of weight to them. That made it difficult for these people to deviate from these steps.

While It was not a big deal to make minor deviations, any enemy or rival could easily exploit any major break from the established script. This was why the Devos Ancient Clan took great care to hold a formal and proper reception under the circumstances.

Ves mostly ignored all of this useless pomp and circumstance. He practically ran on autopilot as Master Laila Devos introduced him to a variety of high-ranking figures that governed the territory, port system and planet.

Although Ves did not care about these people at all, it was still useful to get introduced to them as he could get a lot of useful stuff done if he contacted them in the future.

As Ves smiled and stood like a dummy while dozens of important Devosans bowed, spoke elaborate words and made other weird actions, they were finally able to move on to a more suitable venue.

After waving and addressing the enormous crowd of students one last time, he along with hundreds of Important figures all moved to a large and elaborately decorated dining hall.

Ves was able to loosen up a bit as the atmosphere allowed for more relaxed actions.

The children sat down and began to squeal in delight as they partook in the specialty dishes of the Devos Ancient Clan.

A bunch of women seated at the same table greeted Gloriana and politely conversed with her. While she had much less accomplishments than Ves, she still possessed a lot of masterwork certificates in spite of her rank and age, and that made her worthy of respect.

They even showed their modest appreciation for her borrowed handbag!

The cats meanwhile attracted a lot of appreciative glances as they ate their customized meals from dainty porcelain-like bowls.

Though Clixie did not attract as much popularity due to her known Rubarthan lineage, it was already enough that the Terrans did not show any open contempt due to her breed.

Lucky on the other hand attracted a lot more attention, especially from mech designers and anyone else with a technical background?

"Is that mechanical cat... made out of genuine archemetal?"

"That... that is impressive! This is one of the rarest and most difficult alien materials to reverse engineer, but the enterprising mech designer did not hesitate to upgrade his pet at the first available opportunity. What a power move! It completely fits his character as well! The depth of signals that he has conveyed through this exorbitant action is profound."

"The technological sophistication of that mechanical cat exceeds that of every other mechanical pet in this star system, no, territory. I told you not to underestimate the Larkinsons. They may be upstarts, but under the leadership of their rising star, they may become our equals sooner than you think. Professor Larkinson is here to stay."

As the banquet proceeded, many people still paid attention to the protagonist of this Important occasion.

Ves had conversed with Master Laila Devos for a while now as he took a few bites off a sausage that admittedly did not taste the best, but was supposedly made based on an authentic recipe that originated from the distant past.

Personally, Ves would have preferred it if the Terrans didn't insist on sticking to old and inferior products all of the time, but this was an unfortunate part of their identity.

"What Is your Impression of our institution now that you have stepped foot on our campus in reality?"

Ves smiled back. "I have yet to explore enough of the grounds and facilities to make a definitive judgment. I am impressed by what little I have been able to see. I have toured the virtual campus several times in the past, but the gardens are livelier and more vibrant in reality."

"Our institution is named after the mythical Garden of Eden. It would not be for us to do less than our utmost in this regard." Master Laila beamed in unrestrained pride. "You will have plenty of opportunities to explore our expansive campus during your extended stay. New Constantinople VIII also offers many other sites that are worth your time to visit. Our ancient clan is more than happy to grant you near-unrestricted access to any location that holds your interest."

"Thank you, Master. I will likely take your offer on that. It has been a longtime since my family and I have spent time on a beautiful civilized planet."

"Will you be teaching your classes in person now that you are physically able to stand in front of the classrooms?"

"Of course. I prize personal interaction a lot. I think it would benefit my students a lot more if I can teach them and guide them in person. As a teacher, I think it is important to soak up as much experience in this as possible. I might not have the luxury to do this often in the future. What I will gain from here will shape my approach towards teaching for the rest of my life."

The two continued to chat a bit about fairly light and innocent topics, but they eventually veered towards slightly more serious business,

"Do you have any intentions to settle on our planet and apply for Terran citizenship?" Master Devos asked in a gentler tone.

Ves plainly shook his head. "I have not changed my mind on these issues. My clan and I do not belong to any state, but we are more than willing to serve all of them if they will have us. While I have great appreciation for your Terran Alliance, there are many more humans that deserve to make use of the entire array of my diverse product lines. The more red humans I can serve, the greater the chance that our civilization remains standing five decades in the future."

"That is a noble purpose. Let us toast to that professor."

It took a remarkable amount of effort for Ves to come up with answers like these. He knew that he had to be extra careful about stating his position.

He couldn't be too chummy with the Terrans or else he would be seen as one of their own citizens.

He needed to disclose his intention to sell his products to all of red humanity, which obviously included the Rubarthans as well, without sounding as if he was expressing explicit favor to the latter.

Ves had to emphasize his stance of neutrality without making it seem as if he had fallen in lockstep with the Red Association.

It was a lot harder to do all of this when he lacked the training and education to handle himself in these high-level social situations!

Fortunately, Ves gained more allowances than usual due to his unusual origins and outsized accomplishments.

A bit of eccentricity and lack of refinement was expected from a fairly young individual who rose up rapidly through the ranks.

As long as the Terrans continued to care about what he could do for them as opposed to how he behaved, relations would continue to remain friendly.

Of course, Ves was well aware that if his value to the Terrans plummeted all of a sudden, he should not expect any help from them at all. They would not hesitate to stab him in the back if the opportunity arose.

The only way he could prevent that from happening was to improve his relationship with the Terrans.

This was one of the goals of his visit to the Terran Alliance. He wanted to transform a relationship that was purely based on mutual interests to a much more intimate bond that was based on genuine friendship and maybe even love.

Ves did not share this particular intention with any of his fellow Larkinsons.

They would call him mad for trying to build up a relationship that was as strong as the one he had with the Hex Federation!

Nonetheless, the fact that he managed to gain the adoration of an entire state meant that he could do it again.

While he couldn't utilize all of the methods he employed last time, Ves was sure he could earn the genuine support of the Terrans.

He already had a few ideas on how to accomplish this, though it would be difficult to pull any of them off without damaging his relationships with the Red Two and the Rubarthan Pact.

After Ves had spoken enough with Master Laila Devos for the time being, Miss Alexa Streon finally managed to get her turn.

She was more gorgeous and charming in reality. The young lady had eschewed the trendy style that she adopted as a young teaching assistant for a more appropriate dress for the occasion.

The blond woman smiled at Ves.

Tara happy to meet you in person. You are one of the most distinctive Senior Mech Designers that I have ever met."

"What do you mean by that, Miss Alexa?"

"Your presence and weight is so much greater than how you appear in the projections. I mean this figuratively, not literally. You are a human that is larger than life. I have only witnessed so much inner strength and gravitas from people who are much older than you. It is no wonder that the mechers have seen fit to promote you to a tier 3 galactic citizen."

Ves was not surprised by this remark. Even though he tried to suppress it, his glow and other signs of sublimation had increased his life state to a higher level. It was natural for superior beings to suppress inferior existences.

Though Ves did not like this dynamic at all, he had to admit that there were advantages to this dynamic. He doubted that the first-raters would have taken him so seriously if he was as strong as he was back when he was still a citizen of the Bright Republic.

Tara sure your renowned grandfather carries a much greater presence."

Alexa smiled at that. "He does. You will be able to take in his unwavering conviction for yourself soon. He has already communicated to me that he is eager to speak to you in person."

"I... see..."

"There is nothing to be concerned about. My grandfather appreciates sincerity and efficiency. He is not too much of a stickler for formality and ritual, which has not earned him too many friends."

"Thai is more than okay. I hold the same stance. Perhaps we will be able to gel along fine."

Just as Ves was about to bring up another topic, he suddenly froze into place.

"What Is it, professor?"

"I feel... a change."

A distant presence suddenly popped up into his awareness.

One that appeared in the neighborhood of the Eden Institute and was moving closer at a fairly brisk pace.

This was strange.

His intuition transmitted a garble of messy and ambiguous signals that made Ves feel a complex set of emotions.

What was happening?

While Ves tried to sort out the changes, the staff in the closed dining hall started to make different movements.

At the same lime, Master Laila Devos began to frown as she received an urgent piece of news from security. She began lo throw a doubtful glance towards Alexa Streon.

"I was not informed!" Alexa spoke with genuine confusion and distress. "My grandfather acted without any warning!"

That caused Ves to snap out of his thoughts. "Explain. What the hell is going on right now?"

"The Ouroboros... teleported directly from the hangar bay of the Termite Hill that had just arrived in high orbit. Its destination... is 7 kilometers away from this location. Currently, my grandfather's ace mech is flying in our direction at a steady pace. This is slow enough to reassure the security services that it is not on an attack approach, but it is also fast enough to convey the determination to reach its destination!"

Ves widened his eyes.

If that was the case, then that meant that he was about to reunite with his former Mastery host and his 'oldest' work!

What was worse was that he would be doing so much faster than scheduled and without any adequate preparation!

"Why is he coming now of all times?!"

Chapter 5314 Taking Action

The Ouroboros did not stop.

Ever since it teleported from orbit to the surface of the planet, the powerful ace mech whose individual combat power was superior to every other mech on the planet instantly put the Devos Ancient clan on guard!

Although it was unthinkable for the Ouroboros to open fire and lay waste to the property and citizens of a Terran territory, the chance of accidents was not zero!

So long as the slightest probability of violent incidents existed, the Devosans needed to go on high alert and stop any disaster from escalating out of control!

As the security services scrambled to contain and deter the Ouroboros from pushing any further boundaries, the atmosphere in the dining room slowly went cold as the news quietly spread among the guests.

"What Is the Streon Ancient Clan doing? It is important for us to form a united front in the eyes of foreigners."

"The Streons are completely stepping on the dignity of the Devosans here. I wouldn't be surprised if a minor grudge war broke out as a result of this insult."

"It makes no sense for the Renewer of Terra to crash this soiree. The Streons and the Devosans have little cause for conflict, and they cannot afford to make enemies with each other. Is a third party responsible for instigating this incident?"

Rumors continued to flow through the lips of the deep-thinking Terrans who were accustomed to thinking this way. Every action at this level conveyed a lot of meaning.

Even Ves grew utterly confused. Had General Axelar Streon lost patience? Was he unwilling to wait for a week until he finally got to meet with the mech designer who wanted to teach his granddaughter?

Whatever was going on, the Ouroboros continued to advance unabated. He did not need to catch sight of the powerful ace mech to determine this. He could feel it in his spirit.

Pieces continued to move into place around him. No matter whether the chance of violent outbreaks was close to zero, the Devosans still needed to do their due diligence.

Invisible transphasic energy shields quietly came online while teleportation machines warmed up to evacuate the guests in a hurry.

Of course, in order to guard against the possibility of hidden enemies teleporting explosive ordnance in the middle of the dining hall, all of the existing anti-teleportation screens worked at full capacity.

More and more armored guard infantry units made an appearance. They previously kept themselves out of sight in order to preserve the elegant ambiance of the opening banquet, but it was more important now for the Devosans to show they were taking everyone's security seriously.

While all of this took place, Gloriana grew concerned while the children all looked curious. Lucky and Clixie stopped acting cute and lingered protectively around the children as they got ready to pounce on any threats that emerged.

"What is happening, papa?" Marvaine asked.

"The Terrans are having coordination problems." Gloriana answered as she lifted her boy into her arms. "The Streons and the Devosans both want to talk with us, and they cannot agree on who goes first."

The boy's looked confused. "That is stupid. Can't they settle the order by running a random number generator?"

"The Terrans are too stubborn and old-fashioned for that, my dear."

While Gloriana was probably not wrong, Ves felt there was a lot more to this unexpected incident than that. If General Axelar Streon urgently wanted to speak to Ves, he could have at least waited until the banquet had concluded in order to secure a meeting under more discreet circumstances.

This was entirely different!

Landing a peak ace mech on a populated planet governed by another ancient clan without following any of the protocols was a clear and naked provocation!

Even if General Streon had no intention of causing offense to the Devos Ancient Clan, his actions could still be interpreted as one, and that was what mattered the most in Terran society!

Despite all of the requests and warnings transmitted to the Ouroboros, the powerful ace mech continued its advance without slowing down. Its pace remained constant and no amount of barrier or obstacle could stop its inexorable flight!

In fact, the Devos Ancient Clan had yet to put any transphasic energy shields in the ace mech's path.

If General Streon acted too stubbornly and actually broke through the shields by force, then that would constitute an offensive act!

This would definitely escalate the sudden conflict between the two ancient clans, and this was not what their leaders wanted to happen!

This was why the Devosan mechs that had been stationed on the campus only shadowed the movements of the Ouroboros up until this point.

During this time, Master Laila Devos and Miss Alexa Streon both engaged in frantic communications with different parties.

They not only communicated privately with each other through an encrypted short-ranged channel, but also contacted their own organizations for updates, clarifications and instructions.

From the tense and uneasy air that surrounded the two representatives of the relevant ancient clans, it did not look as if they were able to come to a resolution.

Ves let out a sigh as he made his own decision. He had already contacted Major Simon Jankowski of the Bluejay Fleet.

Though the first-class multipurpose mechs under his command were completely outgunned by the Ouroboros, their appearance was enough of a guarantee that the Terrans would not come to blows against each other on this location.

Even if the Terrans hated the Red Association, they would never dare to attack the powerful organization openly!

Any party that did so would immediately get disavowed by all of the other Terrans!

Ves also did not sense any sort of danger or malice from the approaching Ouroboros. This gave him the courage to act boldly.

He suddenly stood up, causing the Terrans seated at the main table to direct their attention towards their guest of honor.

"Miss Alexa, will the Ouroboros turn around and go back where it came from?" He asked his teaching assistant directly.

The woman shook her head. "The men stationed aboard the Termine Hill have been trying and failing to make contact with General Axelar Streon. The Ouroboros has refused to accept any incoming transmissions."

That sounded fairly ominous. The least the ace pilot could do was to broadcast his Intentions. This would massively reduce a lot of uncertainty and provide a bit of much-needed reassurance to the others.

Still, Ves did not think too much about this. "It is clear that your grandfather has come for me. At this point, the best way to handle this crisis is to satisfy his request without fuss. We can sort out the mess at a later date when the situation is not as acute."

This was not a simple suggestion. Though young Alexa favored a quick resolution, Master Laila did not like this course of action.

Giving in to the demands of an intruder who brazenly broke the rules would not do the Devos Ancient Clan any good!

The Devosans already had a reputation for being one of the weaker and less successful ancient clans in Terran space.

If it looked as if the Devosans waved the white flag, then that might threaten their stability and legitimacy! A lot of business partners might trim away from New Constantinople as a consequence.

The Terrans were quite snobby about that kind of stuff!

Ves had no patience for this kind of crap. He was accustomed to taking action whenever possible. He didn't get to survive and thrive in the deep frontier by being meek and showing too much deference in other people's opinions.

Sometimes, the best way to untie a knot was to cut it in half.

He did not ask any further questions. He did not ask for any permissions.

He took action.

An aura of strength and determination radiated through his form as he turned around and strode towards the enormous exit of the dining hall.

"Lucky, come with me. Clixie, stay with my family."

"Miaow!"

"Meow."

Though Lucky still harbored a few grudges, the gem cat knew what was important. He lifted off the table and flew closer until he hovered next to Ves.

In the meantime, the well-equipped armored troops of the Bluejay Fleet moved closer and automatically formed a protective envelope around their charge.

The sight looked quite heroic. The sudden formation cut through all of the fog and indecision that had befallen the Terrans.

The contrast between Ves and his hosts became so clear that it was no wonder that he had become one of the driving reasons why the Survivalists adopted the Deep Strike Plan in the end.

Ves received a lot of urgent transmissions from Master Laila Devos and a number of other people, but just like General Axelar Streon, he refused all of them because it was a waste of time to engage in any further talking.

Perhaps Ves and General Axelar were more alike than they thought.

While there were various barriers and defenses in the way, they automatically made way for Ves.

Perhaps the Devosans had already figured out that they had no better option than acquiescing to the rogue actions. It was certainly a bitter pill to swallow for the ancient clan that sought to use this opportunity to stimulate its own fortunes.

Due to the elaborate length of the hall, it took a few minutes for Ves to pass through the final entrance and step outside.

As Ves finally stopped, the Ouroboros had already slowed its pace, causing its advance to appear less threatening, but not harmless.

Many first-class mechs had already arrived. They featured different markings and designs depending on whether they hailed from the Devos Ancient Clan or the Bluejay Fleet.

Each of them kept a healthy distance from Ves and the Ouroboros. It looked as if they were only here for show, which was not too far from the truth.

A much more qualified unit had already appeared in order to respond to General Axelar Streon's unreasonable act.

An ace mech that the Devos Ancient Clan stationed on New Constantinople VIII had already arrived!

Although it was not piloted by a peak ace mech, the Devosan ace pilot should still be capable of holding back his stronger counterpart for a time.

Already, the Devosans ace mech's reassuring Saint Kingdom enveloped Ves and everyone nearby in a protective embrace. It did not do anything else for fear of provoking an unwanted response from the approaching machine.

As the Ouroboros finally reached a distance of around 200 meters from the entrance of the dining hall, the powerful machine ceased its advance.

It hovered motionlessly above the ground as its powerful optical sensors appeared to focus directly onto Ves!

A connection seemed to spark between the two. Ves could feel a growing sense of longing from the distorted living mech that seemed to possess a strong but incomplete consciousness that reminded him a lot of a non sentient pet.

The Ouroboros did not appear so threatening when Ves looked at it from this perspective. It felt much more like a massively oversized horse in this regard.

Both Master Laila Devos and Miss Alexa Streon had eventually followed after Ves and stopped by his side.

Their expressions turned much graver than before as they pulled Ves into a private and highly secure communication channel.

"We just received word back from the Termite Hill." The young lady transmitted. "The crew of the fleet carrier has been caught by surprise as well. The Ouroboros should have remained dormant at this time, but Instead it spontaneously activated before utilizing its high-powered teleportation system to forcibly appear next to the Eden Institute. Right now, my grandfather has just been pulled from his deep meditation session and is scrambling to take charge over this unfolding crisis."

Ves grew confused. "What are you talking about? Why is your grandfather trying to contain the chaos when he sparked it in the first place?"

"That is because he is still stationed aboard the Termite Hill." Young Alexa revealed. "The Ouroboros went active by itself. All of the actions that it has undertaken so far are apparently the result of autonomous decision making. Its cockpit is empty."

What?!

Chapter 5315 Peak Ace Mech

The Ouroboros was an old mech.

Hardly any of its original parts and materials remained intact and attached to the constantly evolving mech frame of this famous Terran ace mech.

As Axelar Streon steadily grew up and matured into an increasingly more formidable mech pilot, his chosen machine could not be allowed to remain stagnant.

This was why the Streon Ancient Clan assigned numerous highly reputable and competent mech designers to repair, modify and most importantly upgrade the Ouroboros over the years.

It had been difficult for Axelar to insist on piloting the same mech on a continuous basis over the span of an entire century!

Since the first time he piloted it in a mech arena and won a glorious victory against a much more conventional first-class multipurpose mech, Axelar had fallen in love with the Ouroboros.

Though the talented Terran pilot had most certainly piloted other well-designed and well-constructed mechs after his initial ride with the Ouroboros, he never felt satisfied with the machines designed by other mech designers.

No matter how good they were, they could never replicate the feel and responsiveness of the original Ouroboros.

In the first decades of his career as a proper soldier, his odd preference for sticking to the same first-class hero mech that he debuted in the arena attracted a lot of ridicule.

His fellow Terrans didn't understand why he wanted to go back in time and stick to a mech concept that had become outdated a long time ago.

Extreme miniaturization technology enabled every first-class mech to stuff itself full with a dozen different weapon systems, each of which were not weak!

Nonetheless, after Axelar Streon defeated numerous challengers and proved his strength in many different occasions, those words of criticisms increasingly grew quiet.

It didn't matter if Axelar covered his mech in a pink coating or applied a curse word onto its chest.

As long as it remained strong enough to defeat other first-class multipurpose mechs, nearly anything was permissible!

As Axelar Streon continued to demonstrate his brilliance and broke through his bottlenecks, his seemingly archaic hero mech gradually turned from an object of contempt into an iconic symbol of power!

Nowadays, no Terran dared to mock the hero mech type anymore. The Renewer of Terra had single-handedly raised the respect of this archetype in Terran space!

He even set an example for many other Terran mech pilots, particularly those with inferior genetic aptitudes.

Compared to the overly complicated first-class multipurpose mech, the much more 'simpler' loadout of hero mechs allowed inferior mech pilots to still exercise a lot of control over their machines.

Unfortunately, none of the Terran-designed hero mechs that emerged after the rise of the Ouroboros had managed to attain the same level of success.

On one hand, these imitators were not as talented or well-trained as General Axelar Streon.

As a scion of an ancient clan, Axelar's education and training were both excellent.

His genetic aptitude barely made it into the A-grade, but that was also enough to separate himself from the much more numerous Terran pilots with B-grade aptitudes.

On the other hand, the Ouroboros was an exceptional machine from the beginning.

Even though the Streon Ancient Clan increasingly invested more in its upgrades, there were many other Terran groups that could adopt the same approach.

Nonetheless, the Ouroboros had always stood head over shoulders over these would-be challengers because it possessed unique properties that could never be replicated by other mech designers.

It was alive!

Although this trait only made Axelar feel good and more attuned to his machine in the early years, the advantages of piloting a living machine became increasingly more significant over time.

After being upgraded many times and being subjected to decades worth of willpower baptism by one of the powerful and renowned ace pilots of the Terran people, the Ouroboros had transcended the boundaries of a machine that could be made in an instant in a mech workshop.

This was why no one who was present in front of the opulent dining hall of the Eden Institute suspected that the Ouroboros was unmanned at this time.

Even if the powerful ace mech did not radiate a characteristic domain field at this time, most Devosans and mechers assumed that it was because General Axelar Streon wanted to avoid any unnecessary aggression.

The Ouroboros still exuded a strong and intimidating presence even if it was active on its own. Its aura possessed a mixed quality of concepts that harkened towards both creation and destruction.

Much of it happened to echo the presence of General Axelar Streon himself!

This was not a surprise to Ves. The living mech that had steadily grown and fed off the feedback from its powerful ace pilot. It had worked and fought together with its pilot for so long that the machine had taken after his image!

At this time, everyone still remained nervous. The knowledge that the Ouroboros was active but unmanned did not relieve the concerns of those who had been informed.

While the Ouroboros should theoretically be a lot weaker as a result, the machine was packed with so much power that it could still do a lot of damage!

There was a clear and present difference in quality and power between the Ouroboros and the ace mech dispatched by the Devosans.

Even though both machines were exquisite masterwork mechs, their power and sophistication were too far apart!

General Axelar Streon was the standard bearer of the Streon Ancient Clan. As its strongest pilot and military officer, he was able to receive much more investment than normal.

His strength as a peak ace pilot that could initiate the Mech Body Merger Process at any time also enabled him to wield and exert control over much more powerful mech systems than usual.

As such, the Ouroboros had not only received a few powerful upgrades that were usually applied to god mechs, but also received the utmost care and attention of a Star Designer!

Numerous different mech designers had been put in charge of the Ouroboros over the years, but the latest and most powerful one was undoubtedly Sintha Elkron, otherwise known as the Grand Mender!

The famed Terran Star Designer was a pioneer in the field of regenerating metal and repair systems.

She invented many different specialized solutions meant to make first-class mechs last longer in the field by allowing them to repair their own damage with remarkable effectiveness!

Any mech design that she designed in person became nearly as indefatigable as zombies.

Attacks that only partially penetrated the defenses of her mechs only temporarily inconvenienced them as they regenerated back to peak condition in a short amount of time!

The Ouroboros was no exception in this regard. Its defining feature aside from its living qualities was its World Serpent System.

This high-minded name stood for an extremely rapid regenerating armor system that could practically produce new armor plating even when a powerful attack had not yet ceased!

Its synergy with the creation domain of General Axelar Streon and the Ouroboros was fantastic, allowing the Grand Mender to maximize the speed and efficiency of her signature technology!

There were very practical reasons why the Ouroboros put so much emphasis on the World Serpent System.

The first was because the Ouroboros needed to compensate for its lack of armament diversity.

The fact that it was a hero mech that only had access to two external weapon systems was a serious constraint. Axelar encountered too many situations where opposing mechs exploited this vulnerability and entered into many destructive exchanges of attacks with the hero mech.

However, the lack of weapon systems also conveyed the Ouroboros with a powerful advantage. Its mech frame featured a lot more capacity for other purposes, allowing for the Grand Mender to design a significantly more powerful and advanced defensive layout!

The World Serpent System combined with its recently upgraded transphasic multi-layered segmented energy shield generator enabled the Ouroboros to become known as one of the harder and more damage resistant mechs of its caliber!

This granted the Ouroboros a much more substantial damage buffer, enabling it to weather any kind of storm and more importantly keep its valuable pilot alive!

Perhaps other rising champions in Terran space were able to attain more success over their careers, but their chances of meeting a fatal end were much higher due to the inferior defenses of their first-class multipurpose mechs.

There was always a price to integrating too many weapon systems in a mech frame!

In any case, the other functions of the Ouroboros were significantly better on average as well.

The hero mech was able to dedicate more space, energy and other resources to its flight system, its minidrive, its communication systems, its ECM systems and more.

Even if few of them sounded exciting, the clear and noticeable performance gap had granted the Ouroboros quite a few advantages in different situations!

As Ves continued to observe the mech frame of the massively evolved and upgraded Ouroboros, he understood why General Axelar Streon and his ancient clan turned to the Grand Mender.

The Renewer of Terra had always insisted that the Ouroboros stick to the purest interpretation of the hero mech archetype, which meant that it only ever wielded two weapons, no more, no less.

Naturally, this meant that its weapon systems had to be the best that the Terrans could make for an ace mech that was already powerful by itself!

"The Ouroboros exchanged or upgraded its older weapon systems for newer ones numerous times as my grandfather grew stronger." Miss Alexa noted as she gazed at the familiar machine with great affection. "The current loadout consists of the Apocalypse Sword, a tier 2 Destroyer sword, and the Genesis Rifle, a Gosar antimatter rifle. In the hands of my grandfather and his machine, this is enough to defeat almost any opposition."

The Genesis Rifle was arguably the simpler of the two weapons. It wielded the 'power of creation' by firing beams of shielded antimatter particles.

Anything it impacted got annihilated, thereby generating enormous amounts of energy that usually produced extremely powerful explosions!

In fact, it was overkill for the Ouroboros to fire antimatter beams all of the time. They were only really reserved for the strongest adversaries.

Against weaker and less resilient targets, the Genesis Rifle could switch to a secondary fire mode that enabled it to fire weaker but much more versatile laser beams in many different ways.

The Apocalypse Sword turned the Ouroboros into a close-ranged nightmare.

The tier 2 Destroyer weapon was a big deal in human space. Destroyer technology had sounded fascinating but inscrutable to Ves in the past. It wasn't until his status improved so much and gained access to much more exclusive repositories of information that he learned what this tech was all about.

Destroyer technology had long been regarded as exclusively Terran due to the inability for the Rubarthans or anyone else to replicate, imitate or substitute its characteristic weapons.

This was an amazing feat considering how many Star Designers and other powerful researchers had tried to crack this puzzle!

The reason why the Terrans had always been able to maintain perfect control over their tech was because of its principal working mechanism.

Destroyer weapons weren't actually all that special aside from one core feature.

The materials used to construct the weapons were infused with so-called Destroyer particles.

These particles directly enhanced the powered weapons and granted them unparalleled destructive power!

Best of all, these particles were somehow able to discern whether the Destroyer weapons were used by Terrans or those who earned their approval.

This meant that if a Rubarthan or any other mech pilot tried to wield a stolen Destroyer weapon, the expensive object would not display its destructive potential at all! The Destroyer particles would remain absolutely inert unless the weapon had fallen back into the hands of an approved user!

This was an amazing capability and a strong reason why the Terrans continued to make widespread use of Destroyer weapons.

The main reason why these Destroyer particles possessed these reality-defying properties was because they weren't natural or ordinary.

They represented the culmination of extreme high technology that exceeded mortal production capabilities.

A Destroyer particle was a synthetic product that was originally developed by a Terran Star Designer!

The only known method of producing these highly valued particles was by relying on the material production capabilities of god pilots.

Yes, god pilots!

Every Terran god pilot who had learned this highly coveted formula was practically able to produce Destroyer particles out of thin air!

The Terrans subsequently collected these precious particles and infused them into weapons at different concentrations.

The greater the concentration, the more destructive the weapon!

Chapter 5316 Terran Destroyer Technology

Destroyer technology was amazing. It was not without reason why the Terrans regarded it as one of their trump cards.

The Rubarthans had wasted far too many resources and manpower in their futile attempts to crack the source of pride of their archrivals.

The fact that none of these attempts had succeeded over the centuries was a testament to the excellence and the extraordinary nature of Destroyer weapons!

Naturally, General Axelar Streon had fallen in love with these extraordinary weapons. There was little reason for him to switch to other weapon types even if they possessed their own set of advantages.

The main reason why the Ouroboros had always been paired with a Destroyer sword as its melee armament was because it synergized well with its domain!

Destroyer technology was able to evoke the power of destruction in a much purer manner than other forms of weapon tech.

This allowed General Axelar Streon to resonate extremely well with Destroyer swords, enabling him to inflict significantly more damage with an attack than other mech pilots!

As such, the Ouroboros always wielded the same kind of sword over its long and eventful lifespan.

Although the design and technological features of the sword gradually became stronger and more sophisticated, the biggest difference over time was the changing concentration of Destroyer particles!

Tier 6 and 7 Destroyer weapons were usually considered the starting points for most first-class mechs. Their destructive potential was already good enough to cut through most armor systems of any standard mech at full power.

Tier 4 and 5 Destroyer weapons were a step up from the prior ones. Their concentration of Destroyer particles was significantly higher, making them much less suitable for industrial-scale production.

Another downside was that Destroyer particles needed to be fed with lots of energy in order to activate their destructive properties. It became a lot more difficult for mechs to satisfy the greater energy requirements of higher-tiered Destroyer weapons!

The upside to that was that they could cut through matter a lot more effectively, thereby making them the favorite melee weapons of Terran expert mechs!

The next tiers after this resulted in increasingly more powerful and extraordinary Destroyer weapons.

The concentration of Destroyer particles started to produce real qualitative differences at tier 3.

At this tier, any Destroyer weapon became an exquisite piece of craftsmanship, because anything less was not worthy to bear this much destructive power.

Ves had learned only recently that the offensive power of a tier 3 Destroyer weapon became a lot more effective against less conventional defenses.

One of the well-known strengths of Destroyer weapons was that they could cut through most material-based defenses with disturbing ease.

Unfortunately, their ability to overload energy shields had always been relatively average. This problem became more severe after the proliferation of transphasic shield technology.

Tier 3 and higher Destroyer weapons did not suffer from this inadequacy. A tier 3 Destroyer weapon had attained so many exceptional properties that it gained the ability to cut through non-material defenses and obstacles a lot more effectively!

Transphasic energy shields could no longer block as many attacks, and even weirder and more metaphysical phenomena could be cut in half by a single swing of a tier 3 Destroyer sword!

It was exactly because of this exaggerated level of power and versatility that these transcended creations could not be wielded by ordinary mechs and mech pilots.

The less impressive the wielder, the greater the risk that these powerful beasts in the form of melee weapons would grow out of control!

This was why tier 3 Destroyer weapons could only effectively be wielded by ace pilots and higher.

Even the best Terran expert pilots could not guarantee that the highly concentrated Destroyer particles could flare out of control and break their own mechs instead!

What the Ouroboros currently wielded was a step up from that. A senior ace pilot was much stronger than an ace pilot who had recently broken through.

General Axelar Streon's willpower had grown to such an extent that he was adequately able to maintain firm control over an even wilder and more potent version of these swords!

Tier 2 Destroyer weapons packed an even higher concentration of Destroyer particles. This not only enhanced all of the aforementioned advantages, but enabled it to cut through even more esoteric and weirder concepts according to the intention of its wielder.

Its most relevant strength was that it could cut through the Saint Kingdoms of opposing mechs with much greater ease!

When combined with the powerful Saint Kingdoms of its wielder, a tier 2 Destroyer weapon could remove several crucial advantages of an opposing ace mech at closer ranges.

This was why the Terrans favored melee combat to a significantly greater degree than other first-raters!

The mechers and the Rubarthans tended to rely a lot more heavily on the integrated weapon systems that allowed their first-class multipurpose mechs to spit out antimatter beams, plasma bolts and more exotic attacks.

As for tier 1 Destroyer weapons, not even General Axelar Streon dared to make use of such a rare and impossible weapon.

Just obtaining one was nigh impossible as the production requirements were extreme compared to the previous tier.

Just the fact that its creation demanded the active cooperation between a Star Designer and a god pilot was enough to limit their quantity!

This was because only a grand work could bear the extreme concentration of Destroyer particles needed to meet this unparalleled standard.

Anything less would get annihilated shortly after the weapon was made because it was unable to contain all of the destructive pressure!

It had always been the dream of many Terran ace pilots to receive the honor of wielding these unique and legendary weapons.

Unfortunately, no matter how much they pushed their resonance strength, once they hit their ceilings, they still felt short of being able to control a tier 1 Destroyer weapon!

This was why the Ouroboros was still equipped with a tier 2 Destroyer sword despite the fact that Axelar and the Streon Ancient Clan could afford a better product.

That did not mean the Apocalypse Sword was a disappointment. The strong willpower of a peak ace pilot who possessed a highly developed destruction domain had transformed it into a relic that did not disappoint its name!

This had great consequences to anyone who got too close to the Ouroboros while it had drawn its melee weapon.

Even though the Ouroboros kept its signature sword safely inside its sheath, Ves and the others could still feel a hint of the latent threat at this distance!

One of the greatest reasons why the Devosans feared the Ouroboros even when they found out that it lacked its pilot was the presence of this exceptional tier 2 Destroyer sword.

The powerful high-tech masterwork weapon might go out of control if the Ouroboros tampered with the sword by itself.

Only an ace pilot with exceptionally strong willpower was equipped to tame a weapon of this caliber!

Ves briefly looked at Master Laila Devos, who looked increasingly more upset at this situation.

Theoretically, it should not be too difficult for the ace mech of the Devos Ancient Clan to drag the Ouroboros away.

There was a small chance that the Ouroboros might overreact and pull the Apocalypse Sword out of its sheath, thereby causing it to go out of control.

The Devosans couldn't afford to take this risk!

This meant that the Devosans could not reassert their authority and repair the damage in the most direct and obvious fashion.

They had little choice but to fall back on less palatable methods to solve this unpleasant interruption.

"Since General Axelar is available now, can't he quietly teleport inside the cockpit of his own machine and retake control?" Ves transmitted to his teaching assistant.

The young lady minutely shook her head. "We have already thought about that, but the Ouroboros is built with strong anti-teleportation defenses in mind. There are no obvious loopholes that we can exploit no matter when it is activated."

That made a lot of sense. Ves did not question it further even though it made everyone's lives more difficult.

"So the only way to rein in the Ouroboros is to wait for your grandfather to teleport down to the surface of this planet and approach his mech the old-fashioned way?"

"We have formed the same conclusion, but it is not good for us if he does so." Alexa answered. "No matter how well we try to obfuscate his approach, people will still find out that the Ouroboros has gone out of control. This is unacceptable to our ancient clan. We are currently trying to brainstorm alternative solutions to lead the Ouroboros away without generating further incidents or misunderstandings."

This was a highly charged and delicate situation, but now that Ves learned what needed to be done in order to defuse it, he became a lot more relaxed.

"I have an idea." He smirked.

Instead of wasting precious time to explain his plan, he executed it right away.

Ves began to stride forward again, causing Lucky and his bodyguards to move forward as well.

The movement was conspicuous in an area where everyone else had stopped their movements for fear of triggering an explosion.

Many more eyes fell onto Ves as he steadily made his way to the Ouroboros.

The closer he got to one of his earlier works, the more he could feel his special bond with the old and highly developed living mech.

Ves also managed to make much more detailed observations of this machine. His expression quickly grew more complex as he began to gain a much deeper insight of the fundamental problems that held it back from undergoing the ultimate qualitative transformation.

His earlier guesses were mostly correct, but the problems were much more severe and difficult to solve than he expected!

All of those years when the Ouroboros grew up and evolved without the guidance and touch of its original designer had exacerbated its imbalances and deficiencies.

Poor mech.

As Ves started to puzzle out the steps he might have to take in order to restore his old vision, he took a turn and started to move to the side.

He still remembered the map of the campus of the Eden Institute. He knew that if he continued to move in this direction, he would approach the nearest entrance to an underground mech hangar.

The underground hall usually stored the first-class multipurpose mechs fabricated by mech design students in their final years. Ves figured that it should offer decent enough privacy for the Terrans to clean up their own mess.

Even though Ves had not spoken a single word to the Ouroboros, let alone restore the connection that they once shared with each other a century ago, he knew without a shadow of a doubt that the ace mech would follow.

"It's moving!"

Ves could feel from the pressure emanating from the masterwork ace mech that it had begun to follow him at a steady pace.

He tried his best not to smirk. He knew this would happen.

To him, the Ouroboros was an abnormal second order living mech.

Its sentience and intelligence was not too high, but it was strong in other areas due to the enormous accumulation of time and power.

Yet despite all of its formidable power, Ves found that its personality essentially resembled that of a tamed beast!

Every obedient beast recognized its owner, and Ves suspected that the reason why the Ouroboros spontaneously came down was because it recognized him as its original creator!

Ordinary mechs had no way of acting on their own like this, but the peak ace mech was an exception in this regard.

The best way to handle this rogue machine was to treat it in the same fashion as it behaved.

Ves happened to be fairly good at understanding and cooperating with non-human entities. He already knew that he did not have to communicate anything to the overly energetic beast in the form of a mech in order to lead it away.

This was how Ves easily led the eager living mech to a safer location, thereby doing much to deescalate the tense and stressful situation.

Chapter 5317 Unguided Growth

The immediate crisis had passed.

The tension in the campus of the Eden Institute deflated considerably after the Ouroboros calmly floated out of sight.

Even though the powerful ace mech still disrupted an occasion organized by the Devos Ancient Clan, it at least behaved in a civil manner and did not escalate any further.

A lot of people relaxed as a result and began to speculate on what was going on. The repercussions of this abrupt and unwelcome intrusion was bound to produce a ripple effect throughout the Terran Alliance.

"The Devos Ancient Clan has been wronged. It must demand compensation or else its prestige will sustain permanent damage."

"I still cannot determine what General Axelar Streon is thinking. He has worked hard to gain more support, but his lack of control and consideration will set back his plans by a considerable extent."

"There has to be a reason why the general has chosen to break so many rules in order to make contact with Professor Ves Larkinson. What is it about this second-class mech designer that makes him so desirable?"

"I do not know the answer to this question, but it certainly does not hurt to establish a relationship with him. We must grasp the opportunity before us before we lose this chance forever."

The Terrans who witnessed or heard about this incident drew many conclusions from this event. Few if any of them guessed that the Ouroboros had actually been operating unmanned and without direction all of this time.

Neither the Devosans nor the Streons were eager to spread this particular story, so they employed subtle measures to ensure that the prevailing conversations never touched this area.

In the meantime, the leaders from both ancient clans had already scrambled into action. Their negotiating teams were furiously trying to find a way to heal the cracks in their relations and find an amicable way to solve this unwelcome incident.

The Terran ancient clans all had a well-deserved reputation for stability. They strove to maintain it above almost every other priority, so as long as this was under threat, they could become quite motivated!

Fortunately, Ves had stepped in and defused the crisis in a clever way.

From an outside perspective, he had simply presented himself to General Axelar Streon and quietly proposed to open up a dialogue in a more private setting.

Though the Devosans hadn't done anything of note, they did not show too much weakness either, so they managed to avoid the worst-case scenario.

This result produced enough of a basis to find a resolution that reluctantly satisfied both ancient clans.

None of this mattered to Ves at the moment. As soon as he reunited with the Ouroboros, his nature as a mech designer immediately took over.

He forgot about almost everything and became completely obsessed with studying the growth and evolution of what could arguably be his oldest living mech that still existed to this day!

The wonders of time travel enabled a mech designer who was only over 40 years old to get in touch with a work that was over a century old!

This was an incredibly unique and valuable opportunity to any mech designer, but it was ten times more attractive to a mech designer whose design philosophy centered around growth!

Ves had designed and fabricated many mechs over the years.

Each of his works already became remarkable from the start, and a few of them even came into existence as a third order living mech right away.

Yet no matter how clever or how many interesting features his living mechs possessed, they were still newborn in mind and spirit.

This did not bother Ves. What truly mattered was that each of them had the capacity to evolve and grow in so many different ways that they could vastly exceed their existing limits as long as their growth conditions were favorable enough!

The reason why the Ouroboros held so much attraction to him was that it had not only grown for so many years.

What also mattered was that many of the other variables that played a part in its growth were close to ideal!

It was paired with a talented mech pilot that grew rapidly until he reached the threshold to becoming a god pilot.

General Axelar Streon also possessed a lot of affection for the Ouroboros and spent as much time with it as he could manage.

The growing ace mech received regular repairs and upgrades courtesy of some of the best mech designers of the Terran Alliance, especially in its later years.

The fact that the Grand Mender herself had agreed to work on the Ouroboros in a way that carefully preserved its original character had been especially fruitful!

Under all of these favorable conditions, the Ouroboros should have gotten a lot closer to ascending to another layer of existence.

"It's so close, but that is not enough. Perfection demands more."

Ves looked at his old work in regret as his observations essentially confirmed the reason why the Ouroboros failed to bridge the final gap.

Its weak foundation was the root of its problems. The lack of balanced growth and development during its lengthy operation period exacerbated its flaws.

Now, the problem had run so deep that it required far more than a simple fix to restore the Ouroboros.

Ves felt a pang in his heart. If he had been available to adjust the Ouroboros over the years, he could have solved much if not all of its inadequacies.

He could have at least given Axelar Streon and his Terran mech designers valuable pieces of advice so that they could solve the problems by themselves!

"May I come closer?"

The Ouroboros eagerly nodded its twin heads. This was enough for Ves to lift off the air and come dangerously close to one of the most powerful mechs in the entire Terran Alliance.

It was hard to find any other mech within the Terran superstate that was more powerful than the Ouroboros!

No one aside its pilot dared to get close to the machine because it had too many ways to kill people by accident!

From the overpowering spiritual pressure emanating from the second order living mech to the latent fluctuations of its infamous Apocalypse Sword, a highly developed ace mech that was designed to defeat anything short of god mechs was not a teddy bear!

Nonetheless, Ves held such complete trust in the Ouroboros that he approached the machine without fear.

Aspects about the old living machine that had long been buried deep within its psyche had risen to the forefront after making contact with Ves once again.

The ties between them were undeniable. Both of them had undergone so many changes since their last contact, but that did not prevent the maker from recognizing his product and vice versa!

This was a magical sensation and one that was utterly valuable and precious to Ves.

His design flame burned stronger and his design philosophy already began to stir as Ves had already begun to expand his theories on living mechs based on his ongoing observations.

His suspicions were correct! The Ouroboros was a goldmine for studying the later growth stages of his living products!

Even if its flaws prevented Ves from collecting too much relevant data, there were still many commonalities between the Ouroboros and his contemporary works to form broad inferences!

Ves practically blanked out for a few minutes as his entire mind and spirit became preoccupied with processing the rich and priceless data.

It was as if he was reaping the rewards for conducting a longitudinal study that spanned across an entire century!

While many other researchers such as Master Moira Willix were forced to spend many decades if not centuries of their precious time to conduct similar studies, Ves essentially skipped all of the waiting and obtained the raw results right away!

Of course, the data and conclusions he was able to derive from the Ouroboros was not as detailed and complete due to the inability to take precise measurements, but this was not that big of a deal.

As a living mech, the Ouroboros possessed the capacity to remember past events. It still retained a decent amount of data on its past conditions.

Ves could easily access it simply by conveying a request to the living mech.

Perhaps the Ouroboros would never reveal its own secrets to other people, but Ves was an exception!

How can its own progenitor possess any ill intent towards its own product?

Of course, the Ouroboros may be eager to reunite with its maker, but as a long-lived machine, it was anything but naive.

It was because Ves did not hesitate to bare his own spirit to the Ouroboros that the living mech felt relieved to extend its full trust to its progenitor!

Though Ves assumed a lot of risks by exposing his spirit to another entity, he did so without hesitation because his living mechs weren't like other people.

Aside from that, Ves also did not find the Ouroboros to be a threat at all because the machine was clever enough to recognize that its maker may be the only person who could solve its inadequacies.

If the Ouroboros was not able to resolve its flaws, it could never reach a higher life phase, thereby preventing the machine from realizing its ultimate goal!

This overpowering interest ensured that the Ouroboros would never dare to cause harm to its original maker.

It may even take the initiative to protect Ves from all other threats!

Ves found this situation rather absurd. He somehow managed to gain the affection of a weapon of mass destruction in the form of an ace mech. It became more difficult for him to treat it as anything other than an oversized mechanical pet.

This impression strengthened his desire to solve the root of the old living mech's problems.

This was easier said than done.

His expression grew pained when his eyes drew towards the Apocalypse Sword and the Genesis Rifle.

"These weapons are part of the problem, do you know that? They're far too destructive, and it appears that your pilot has not been able to restrain himself."

The powerful living mech conveyed a feeling of regret. The mech shared the same opinion, but it was a pity that it had taken too much time for it to grow smart enough to become aware of its faults.

What held the Ouroboros back was that it had veered too much from its original vision.

Ves named it after the Serpent of Creation and Destruction for good reasons. The machine was supposed to embody both domains in equal measure, and keep them in perfect balance in order to derive greater synergies that resulted in more powerful outcomes!

Though Ves had been a lot less knowledgeable and competent at the time, his core vision for the Ouroboros was still sound and viable enough to bestow it with unlimited potential!

Unfortunately, the requirements to realize all of that potential were also incredibly strict.

For a long time, General Axelar Streon's utilized the Ouroboros as a combat machine without too much further thought on how it would affect his growing machine.

It was in people's nature to treat mechs as combat assets. Their entire purpose revolved around destruction, so as Axelar continued to pilot his living machine, he frequently engaged in combat in various forms!

Whether it was duels against other powerful Terran mechs or more destructive battles that were carefully controlled by the Terran ruling groups most of the time, Axelar and his Ouroboros made their names by sowing more destruction than their rivals!

As the duo became more successful, the design team assigned to the Ourorobos regularly updated its armament with more powerful and destructive weapons.

Since the hero mech could only ever wield two primary armaments, the Terran mech designers always did their utmost to maximize the lethality of the mech sword and mech rifle to the greatest possible extent!

Years of frequent fighting had distorted the growth of the Ouroboros and caused it to veer off-balance.

The consequences of those many eventful decades became obvious to this day. The destruction domain of the Ouroboros had become dominant. Its neglected creation domain received considerably less room for development and had been squeezed into an uncomfortable corner!

"How can Axelar allow this to happen?"

The Ouroboros ratted out its pilot without hesitation and readily conveyed the answer.

It turned out that Axelar had become intoxicated with the destructive combat power of his own living mech.

The more the Ouroboros leaned towards destruction, the greater its offensive power.

This was the basis of Axelar's success over the years!

If his Destroyer sword hadn't become so much more powerful than the ones wielded by his rivals, it wouldn't have been easy for Axelar to grow to become one of the top leaders of the Terran Alliance!

Unfortunately, everything had a price.

Axelar's decision to prioritize short to medium term gains had sabotaged his long-term future.

The imbalance in his powerful ace mech had become so severe that not even Ves could correct it by making straightforward adjustments to its highly distorted spiritual foundation.

The Ouroboros had become too old and strong! It had partially transcended its original nature as a living mech. It had morphed into a different kind of entity that was much stronger but also much more difficult for Ves to change at his current rank.

Chapter 5318 Ves The Deadbeat Parent

The long and storied history of the Ouroboros unfolded like a tapestry to Ves.

The strong spiritual connection between them allowed the maker and product to exchange words, meanings, images and even heartfelt emotions with each other without any barriers in the way.

This was a magical form of exchange that was not only fast, but also highly efficient, especially when the two parties were considerably advanced as far as entities were concerned!

Best of all, it was completely impenetrable and impossible to intercept, especially at close range!

Ves did not have to worry about the Terrans or the mechers stealing any of his valuable secrets, so he did not hold back whenever he communicated back to his old creation.

As he studied the gradual development of the Ouroboros over time, he noticed that as General Axelar Streon eventually realized his mistake as he approached the peak of what an ace pilot could become.

It was not as if he understood that he had altered the character of the Ouroboros through his actions. He interfaced with it so many times that he had become highly familiar with his machine.

However, he never held onto the mindset that he had to preserve all of its character and traits as much as possible.

This was fairly normal. A mech that used to be hastily designed was not a proper machine to begin with. It contained so many technical deficiencies that the Streon Ancient Clan had to commission a lot of mech designers to upgrade it and raise its performance to a satisfactory level.

Besides, since Axelar was not the true designer of the Ouroboros, how could he understand the full intentions behind its creation?

All of these factors resulted in an attitude that the Ouroboros was a constantly evolving product.

The direction of its growth did not matter at all so long as it became stronger and more effective in the end.

Axelar even embraces the greater emphasis on destruction because that was what he and his clan obviously needed from his battle partner!

The Ouboros was not an industrial mech. It was designed and built for combat, so any changes that made it more effective at this job were beneficial as far as Axelar was concerned!

It was not until General Axelar Streon had reached his current bottleneck and gradually explored what he needed to do that he fully recognized the unfortunate consequences of his unbridled pursuit for greater destruction.

The transition from an ace pilot to a god pilot was the greatest possible series of tests for those who fought with mechs.

In order to attain the power of a god, a pilot must have no regrets and excel in many different areas.

Ves did not possess a clear understanding of what ace pilots needed to do to successfully complete the greatest possible leap of their lifetimes, but the Ouroboros provided a few clues.

Axelar had bonded so extensively with the Ouroboros that the two had become inseparable.

This meant that the state and condition played an outsized role in Axelar's evolution.

It was impossible for the Terran ace pilot to make further progress by exchanging the Ouroboros with another ace mech that possessed a much better foundation.

This meant that Axelar had no choice but to perfect his existing ace mech, but due to the design choices that Ves had made a long time ago, it became insanely difficult to satisfy this essential requirement!

"A misalignment existed between my original vision of the Ouroboros and Axelar's own interpretation of his living mech." Ves concluded. "This divergence in opinions has gone on for so many years that minor differences have accumulated into a vast gulf between ideal and reality."

When Ves initially designed the Ouroboros, he did so by occupying Axelar's body.

This caused him to entertain a few odd and unusual ideas.

One of them was that Ves designed the Ouroboros as a child between himself and Axelar!

Ves was the mother and the creator who breathed life into the hero mech.

Axelar was the father and the destroyer who fulfilled the purpose of his new battle partner.

The best possible way for the Ouroboros to preserve its original duality between creation and destruction was to grow up under the care of both of its parents.

That did not happen.

Like a child that only grew under a single parent, the Ouroboros had grown continuously for a century under the care of its father!

Meanwhile, Ves was like a deadbeat mother who completely disappeared from the scene and deprived his 'child' of the motherly care that it deserved!

It was no wonder that the Ouroboros grew up in a distorted fashion!

Ves never thought about all of this stuff at the time. He always treated the Ouroboros as a temporary product that Axelar would eventually toss aside once he had outgrown this poorly designed machine.

How could Ves had known that Axelar not only fell in love with this rickety hero mech, but also managed to advance all the way to a peak ace pilot with the help of its sole battle partner!

If Ves had known about this in advance, he would have given Axelar extensive instructions to ensure that he properly guided the growth of his chosen machine.

Not every living mech was destined to become all-powerful as they grew older. They could take the wrong turns or become victims to mistakes.

The impossible moat that blocked the subsequent evolution of the Ouroboros was undeniable proof that relying on age alone was not enough.

"What a terrible mess."

The good news was that Axelar did not remain stubborn enough to exacerbate the problem further.

He instead respected his living mech's wishes and sought to reverse the ongoing trend.

The Streons had made the right moves.

They not only contracted the services of the Grand Mender at great cost, but also requested her to infuse the Ouroboros with her extensive design applications, but not to the point of destroying everything that made it alive.

Each and every specification added another burden to the Star Designer, but General Axelar Streon gritted his teeth and pushed through because he understood it was the only way to 'save' the Ouroboros.

Ves swept his gaze from top to bottom. The World Serpent System that the Grand Mender had specifically developed for the Ouroboros had indeed done much to counteract the previous trend.

The fact that it occupied such an extensive blueprint in the mech frame meant that its regenerating properties deeply affected the character of the Ouroboros.

However, even though the Grand Mender had tried her best, she didn't exactly have what the Ouroboros needed.

Her domain was not actually based on creation, but rather restoration.

Her title signified her dedication towards facilitating the restoration of products that had already been produced.

She worked hard to make existing mechs last longer so that they preserved the lives of their pilots. This was her chosen strategy to fulfill her purpose as a mech designer.

This was why the World Serpent System and the other repair systems failed to solve the problem. They only slowed the deterioration at most.

Ves turned his gaze towards the Apocalypse sword once again.

Axelar's love for Destroyer swords was one of the chief causes of the current imbalance.

The more Axelar grew as a pilot, the higher the tier of Destroyer weapons he was able to wield.

More powerful tiers of Destroyer weapons made it a lot easier for Axelar to vanquish over stronger opponents, so he never held back on upgrading whenever the opportunity arose.

This was normal behavior and it wouldn't have been an issue if he piloted any other mech.

Unfortunately, this approach was anything but ideal for a living mech that worked best when it was in a state of balance.

"It would have been better if Axelar settled for a plasma sword or something." Ves grumbled.

Destroyer technology was too unreasonable!

It was a form of extreme high technology that broke the rules because it could not exist without relying on the reality-defying powers of a god pilot and a Star Designer!

Mechs could still be designed and produced by mortals, but Destroyer weapons were essentially godly creations at their core!

Long-term contact and exposure to Destroyer particles meant that it became a certainty for the Ouroboros to develop a bias towards destruction!

It was too late to disassociate the two from the other. General Axelar Streon belatedly learned that his love for Destroyer swords had contributed enormously to the problem, but they had become nearly inseparable to the Ouroboros by this time!

Since Destroyer swords had become a core part of the current machine's identity, switching to a plasma sword would do more harm than good.

Besides, Axelar probably wouldn't be able to bear it either. He had wielded this powerful weapon type for so long that it had become a part of his nature as well.

"Axelar is another contributor to this problem."

If the ambitious Terran ace pilot wanted to make the ultimate leap, he needed to merge with his battle partner.

The greater the differences between the two, the harder it became to make this happen.

As a military leader who fought a lot of battles throughout his eventful career, General Axelar Streon was just as destructive as his mech, if not more.

The man hardly thought about anything else aside from fighting and winning!

It was only after he realized that he needed to form a balance as well that he sought to turn his life around.

"I see." Ves became enlightened. "So this is why Axelar embraced politics. He founded the New Terran Federation Movement with the explicit aim to produce positive changes with his power. He also jumped on the opportunity to be among the first leaders to build the Terran Alliance after the Red Ocean opened up for colonization."

These were Axelar's belated attempts to develop his long-neglected creation domain that had never received much attention in the past.

While Axelar had made substantial gains in this regard, it was a pity that his progress did not directly translate to the Ouroboros.

The most he could hope for that a part of his creation domain would rub off on ace mech through continuous exposure.

Perhaps this might have a chance of working, but it would take way too long to attain the desired result!

Axelar needed to counteract so much damage that it may take half a century or more in order to completely align himself to the Ouroboros once more!

Ves shook his head. "This will take way too long."

Both Axelar and the Ouroboros had become desperate for a golden bullet. They wanted to correct their respective mistakes and imbalances in the fastest and most effective way possible.

This completely explained why the Ouroboros regressed into an eager puppy after reuniting with its long-lost parent.

The living mech bore no resentment at being abandoned by Ves. Its congenital defects had caused it to remain stuck as a relatively simple second order living mech.

The Ouroboros might not have reacted so gently at Ves if it had been a third order living mech!

The living mech's thoughts were quite simplistic at this time. It knew that it was damaged, and it knew that its progenitor may be the only mech designer who could make it right again.

"Professor Larkinson?" A voice called down below.

Miss Alexa Streon had entered the hangar bay a few minutes ago. She had respectfully kept her silence in order to give Ves enough space, but she just received a notification that compelled her to speak.

"What is it, Alexa?"

"My grandfather has teleported to the surface after our clan concluded a preliminary agreement with the Devosans. He is on his way here. It is best for you to leave. The Devos Ancient Clan still wants to have you first, and our clan has agreed to give the injured party priority for the rest of the week."

"Hmm. Understood. I need to think anyway. This powerful mech has given me quite a few surprises."

Chapter 5319 The Responsibility Of A Mech Designer

Ves did not reject the arrangements made by the Streon and the Devos Ancient Clans because he was not eager to meet with one of his former Mastery hosts.

He also did not want to speak with General Axelar Streon without sufficient preparation.

The huge amount of information and insights he gained from his extensive examination and exchange with the Ouroboros had given him a lot of food for thought.

Ves had only been able to conduct a superficial analysis of the state of the Ouroboros for the time being!

This was far from enough to talk about the Ouroboros in a more productive and helpful fashion.

He needed to spend a lot more time on analyzing the exact deficiencies of his old work and figure out effective means to unlock its potential.

It might already be too late to undo all of the damage, but Ves believed he should be able to develop other solutions that could help the Ouroboros unlock the shackles that were holding it back.

As Ves left the underground hangar and rejoined his family, the evening banquet had already come to a close.

The Devosans clearly understood that it was no longer suitable to entertain their guest of honor any further, so they told Ves to take a good rest before they returned the next day.

This was more than fine for Ves as he remained almost fully engaged in his latest preoccupation.

Gloriana practically rolled her eyes when she saw him in this state. "Not again. Has he fallen into his old habits again, Lucky?"

"Meow." The gem cat confirmed.

"Will we be able to shake him from his one-track mind?"

"Meow meow."

"Typical."

The family along with their cats were already accustomed to this. They left Ves to his own thoughts as they moved to a highly secure villa that was tightly surrounded by the first-class mechs of the Bluejay Fleet.

The villa was located well within the campus of the Eden Institute, making it easy and convenient for Ves and his family to stay on New Constantinople VIII during their visit.

While Ves always had the option of teleporting back to the Tarrasque in high orbit, he hated the frequent use of teleportation. There were so many possible ways that it could go horribly wrong that he found it crazy that the first-raters trusted it so much!

A restless night went by as Ves only slept for a short time.

He spent more time on thinking about all of the complexities involved with the Ouroboros that he couldn't bring himself to stop for a long time.

Even though he had not made any agreements with General Axelar Streon, Ves wanted to fix the Ouroboros somehow.

All of his other thoughts and considerations about the old living mech and its pilot went out of the window as Ves became fixated on a single overarching purpose.

"I have to fix this mech!"

It would have been okay if Ves only ever saw the Ouroboros from a projected image.

Yet now that he had come close enough to reconnect with his old work, there was no way he could allow its glaring deficiencies to persist without making any attempt to fix so many obvious mistakes!

There was no deep or complex reason behind this compulsion. It was simply a part of his nature as a mech designer and a service provider.

His principles and the tenets of his design philosophy made it unthinkable for him to leave the Ouroboros to its own devices. This was especially the case when it actively reached out to its progenitor to make it right again!

At this point, Ves longer cared as much about the implications of this course of action.

He originally wanted to maintain his distance and take Miss Alexa Streon under his wing so that she could gradually learn the skills needed to correct the Ouroboros.

While this was still a viable solution, it would take far too long to fix living mech in distress.

If 'saving' the Ouroboros was the greatest priority, then it was much faster and more efficient for Ves to take action instead!

Besides, it was his responsibility to begin with. His unfortunate design choices and actions during his past Mastery experience had caused a living mech to grow up without proper guidance and direction for so long.

Even if Ves hadn't taken the Ouroboros all that seriously at the time, its remarkable growth and survival up to the present day forced him to acknowledge this living mech!

A lot of different mech designers up to the Grand Mender had worked on its design over the years, but Axelar's decision to retain its living traits meant that the Ouroboros still belonged to Ves in the end.

As far as he was concerned, Ves had designed the essence of the Ouroboros and brought it to life.

All of the other mech designers that came afterwards only worked on the less essential aspects of the increasingly more powerful living mech.

Ves was thankful to all of those mech designers for respecting his original vision and intent.

Even though these Terran mech designers did not know him at all, the people of their profession were still able to understand each other by analyzing their works.

Ves felt a strong urge to find a way to get in touch with the Grand Mender so that he could hear her thoughts on the Ouroboros!

In any case, as long as the original essence of the Ouroboros remained alive, Ves knew that he had a bit of room for manipulation!

As morning dawned, the Devos Ancient Clan clearly wanted to resume its engagement with Ves and the Larkinsons.

Ves did not maintain as much interest in dealing with the Devosans as before, but he knew that he needed a lot of buffer time before he was ready to engage with General Axelar Streon.

This was why he tolerated the schedule set for him. He tried his best not to put too much of his mind on the Ouroboros as his current hosts sought to make up for what happened yesterday.

When Ves got in touch with Alexa Streon once again, the young lady briefly explained how the two ancient clans quietly resolved their differences.

"We have to pay significant reparations to the Devosans in a way that makes it clear that we have suffered the consequences of our blunder. Before this happened, it may have been possible to arrange an early introduction between you and my grandfather, but that is completely out of the question at the moment. The Termite Hill isn't even allowed to linger in orbit of New Constantinople VIII to prevent any further incidents."

Of course, Alexa mainly referred to the possibility that the Ouroboros might take unilateral action once again. There was no way that General Axelar Streon would make such a mistake.

Ves found it a pity that the Ouroboros was being moved away from him, but he knew that it was only a matter of time before he would get in touch with his old work once again.

"I understand. Has this accident inconvenienced your ancient clan a lot?"

"Initially, we thought so, but our leaders are trying to make the most out of this unanticipated development. There is an opening for our two ancient clans to build a closer relationship and expand our business ties. With the war against the native aliens heating up, it has become increasingly more important to expand our base of support. With this incident as an impetus, we can make extensive gains by cooperating with the Devosans. It is just that the other party will profit more from this due to our mistakes."

This was how the Terrans preferred to solve a disagreement. Neither side wanted to deepen their animosity towards each other as that would only drain their resources for no good reasons.

Since it was in their best interest to cooperate with each other instead, the Terrans were able to set aside any impulsive ideas and work towards a more desirable resolution.

Ves admired the way the Terrans resolved their differences so effectively.

"This doesn't happen often, professor. It is just that the Devosans are in a weak and vulnerable position. Their ancient clan is not strong to begin with, and the new age has put them in a particularly precarious position as the Agamemnon Upper Zone is too close to the frontlines."

In other words, the Devosans were much more desperate for allies that could back them up in the difficult times ahead!

It was easy enough to understand how the Devos Ancient Clan benefited from a closer partnership, but what about the other party?

"How does your clan benefit from this outcome?"

"I cannot divulge the full details, but I can tell you that our clan seeks to build a coalition among the Terrans. It is no secret that my grandfather has always sought to reform a newer, more modern and more dynamic Terran state. The Devosans are likely much more willing to play along because they can gain the protection of our powerful armed forces."

"I see."

Due to General Axelar Streon's strong commitment to the Red Ocean, the Streon Ancient Clan had definitely invested much more in its colonies than the other Terran clans.

The 1st Streon Mech Army at full strength was one of the strongest backbones of the Streons in the new frontier!

Even though it was highly troublesome and expensive to maintain and update the 250,000 mechs that were dispersed throughout Terran space, the collective combat power of this renowned mech army was enough to make the Red Two nervous!

The Devos Ancient Clan had not invested nearly as much in the Red Ocean. While the Devosans could raise large mech armies comprised out of inferior mechs with relative ease, it was impossible for them to form a strong mech army with more elite specifications in a short amount of time!

Ves suddenly widened his eyes.

He suddenly realized that there were many golden opportunities for him to do business with the Devos Ancient Clan!

Before the Great Severing occurred, the Devosans took a more measured and laid-back approach to colonizing the Red Ocean.

Not only had they entered the new frontier relatively late, they had also been taking their time on building up their colonies.

This had many adverse consequences.

Their armed forces were not only smaller in number, but many of the military mechs weren't the best.

Their population was lacking in comparison with the other ancient clans.

The Riston Territory was smaller and did not offer as much resources.

There weren't enough elite mech academies and other educational institutions to meet the demand of the armed forces in the future.

Ves had always held the image that the Terran Ancient Clans were all so powerful, thorough and meticulous in their actions that they hardly ever needed any outside help.

This might not be wrong back in the Milky Way, but it was substantially different in the Red Ocean!

This was the new frontier!

This was a place where Ves felt much more at home than all of these stuffy and high-minded Terrans!

Ves suddenly sharpened his eyes.

"Alexa?"

"Yes, professor?"

"I would like to receive your rundown on the state of the Devos Ancient Clan." He said with renewed purpose. "You don't have to share any dark secrets about the Devosans to me, but I would like to receive more extensive information than what I can gain through common channels. I will consider it a favor if you satisfy this request."

Alexa Streon was smart enough to guess what Ves had in mind. She paused in thought as this was not the kind of matter that she could decide on the spot.

A dozen or so seconds passed before she eventually nodded.

"My grandfather has just given me permission to do so." The young lady responded. "This is a time where the Terrans must come together as much as possible. If you can meet the needs of the Devosans and earn their trust, then that will facilitate greater trade and cooperation in our region of space. Perhaps it is good for a third party to come in and shake up the status quo in advance."

Ves grinned at that "I like the way you think "

Even though Ves and Axelar Streon had yet to meet in person, they had already formed a tentative blueprint of cooperation, all without speaking directly with each other!

Chapter 5320 Dire Straits

The commotion died down after that eventful first day.

Although the Devosans incurred a lot of ridicule in the Terran community, they quickly and deftly defused the crisis by using this incident to establish greater cooperation with the Streons.

The two ancient clans were quite different from each other. Their varying degrees of investments and commitment to the Red Ocean had caused their strength and accumulation to diverge enormously from each other.

If the Red Ocean still retained a connection to the Milky Way, then the Devosans could still transfer a lot of funding and assets from their home territories.

Unfortunately, the unexpected transition of the Age of Dawn had caused this crucial link to disappear, so the Devosans assigned to the new frontier suddenly found themselves stuck as one of the smaller sharks in the pond!

While an ancient clan still possessed far more capital than an ordinary clan in the Terran Alliance, that did not change the fact that the Devosans had much less fault tolerance than their peers!

What was worse was that because they entered the Red Ocean rather late, they had little choice but to settle their colonies in a place like the Agamemnon Upper Zone, which was positioned closer to the center of the dwarf galaxy.

The Terrans did not consider this to be a disadvantage in the past. After all, so long as the pioneers retained access to an active transportation channel to the Milky Way, it was inevitable for humanity to push the native aliens out of their own core territories.

The Devos Ancient Clan and other latecomers were not only able to take advantage of a better developed infrastructure in the Red Ocean, but could also occupy colonies that were located in relatively richer and more promising regions!

However, whether a condition was beneficial or detrimental depended on the circumstances.

Red humanity had turned from a domineering invader into a stranded group of exiles. The sudden change in fortune caught everyone off-guard and prevented parties such as the Devos Ancient Clan from calling in further support.

This had great implications for the Terran Alliance. The lack of buildup in the early years did not seem to matter at first, but suddenly gained great significance.

With all of the changes that had taken place, the Devos Ancient Clan who previously regarded itself as one of the alphas of the Terran superstate suddenly became the most vulnerable big fish on the chopping block!

Not only was the Riston Territory too small, too far forward and too underdeveloped to adequately defend itself against future alien incursions, the armed forces of the Devos Ancient Clan also weren't numerous or elite enough to take sufficient advantage of the New Elites Program!

"The Terran Alliance owes a large amount of gratitude to the Fist of Defiance for enacting a plan that allows us to retain our culture and heritage." Alexa Streon explained to Ves. "However, the god pilot has made it clear that only the strongest wolves among us have the qualifications to enjoy this right. Every group must nurture at least one high-level warlord to fend off challenges and retain the right to hold a large amount of territory. This is not a concern to my own ancient clan, but the Devosans have started to sweat ever since the implications became clear."

Alexa plainly laid out the crisis that had befallen the Devos Ancient Clan as she sat in front Ves inside the guest villa's lounge.

Lucky calmly rested on her lap, causing her to frequently get distracted by his mysterious and alien archemetal construction.

"Meow-" The gem cat yawned as a delicate hand gently rubbed his metallic back.

The young lady had never met a mechanical pet this wonderful or magnificent. Lucky's design did not match the style of his owner, and few people understood archetech well enough to be able to create such a small and sophisticated technological marvel.

Who created Lucky?

Who upgraded him to his current state?

Was it the Xenotechnician? Or was another highly competent Master Mech Designer behind Ves?

Alexa did not allow her speculations to distract her from her current task.

"In conclusion, the Devosans are most affected by the struggle for survival. They cannot retreat from the Agamemnon Upper Zone, because there are no promising star systems available anymore in the other upper zones. The loss of territory, population and resources will destroy so much of their remaining foundation that they will lose the qualifications of an ancient clan. They can only regress into a lesser clan and lose all of the rights and influence that came with their prior status."

This was an enormous shame and a deathknell to the Devosans! They could not allow themselves to shame their ancestors and fail in such a humiliating fashion!

It would be better if they stood their ground and fought against the invading aliens to the bitter end, but even that was a challenge because their standing armies were too inadequate for the job.

Ves looked thoughtful. "I never expected the situation to be so bad for the Devosans, but the logic of this is quite clear. If your analysis is correct, the whole image of class and sophistication that the Devos Ancient Clan has presented to everyone is a mirage. The reality is that it is an ancient clan in name only. It only takes a bit of external pressure to pierce through the falsehood and uncover the weakness that they have tried so hard to obscure."

This told him that the Terran Alliance was not doing as well as he expected.

Collectively, the Terrans still possessed a lot of strength and accumulation.

However, the Terrans rarely united as one. The ancient clans may regard each other as peers and maybe even friends, but they were also rivals.

This meant that the ancient clans were not inclined to go out of their way to save the ones in distress.

Strength was the ultimate foundation in human space!

An ancient clan that no longer possessed the strength of one did not deserve to exist any longer.

It would be better to let the weak and unqualified groups disappear so that stronger and better adapted newcomers could take their place!

"What is the stance of your ancient clan towards the Devosans?" Ves inquired Alexa.

The woman frowned. "I am not too certain, to be honest. Previously, we did not want to waste our limited resources on supporting an ancient clan that does not have good prospects. Yesterday's incident forced us to change our stance. The Devosans had fought hard to enlist our aid, and it was better for us to cooperate due to the need to restore our reputation."

Reputation was extremely important in Terran circles. No one wanted a prominent leader or an ancient clan to break the rules and upset the balance within their society.

The Devosans knew that and exploited this condition to extract the greatest possible benefits from the Streon Ancient Clan.

Although the Streons originally did not want to get involved in the many problems faced by the Devos Ancient Clan, they at least managed to gain enough benefits to barely make this risky venture worthwhile.

"The Devosans have made a secret agreement with us." The young lady said in a quieter tone. "If our ancient clan can help them weather the storm, they will throw their support behind my grandfather's New Terran Federation Movement. This is a dream come true for him, and it may be the opening he needs to snowball his initiative."

Perhaps other people might just dismiss General Axelar Streon's political ambitions as an ordinary power grab, but Ves already figured out the deeper truth after he examined the Ouroboros.

In order to balance out all of the death and destruction that he had wrought as a militant, he needed to do the opposite and engage in a more productive pursuit.

It was a pity that Axelar was not a mech designer, an engineer or an artisan. The only way he could contribute to society in a productive fashion was to take advantage of his backing and his power base to create a new society of Terrans!

Since the deal between the two ancient clans had the potential to bring Axelar one step closer to becoming a god pilot, the Streon Ancient Clan ultimately agreed to make a lot of concessions that it wouldn't have agreed to under normal circumstances!

Ves rubbed his hairless chin in thought as he considered all of the implications.

"This deal will tie your ancient clan to that of the Devosans." He concluded. "If the Devos Ancient Clan falls, your grandfather will not only lose the chance to make progress, but he will also take a severe hit. After all, he at least made an indirect commitment to protect his allies and prevent them from collapsing. They are already participants of the New Terran Federation Movement even though it hasn't been formalized."

Alexa understood this truth as well. "What we ultimately need to do is to strengthen the Devos Ancient Clan just enough to allow it to stand on its own. Our clan can provide limited reinforcements and other forms of support, but we cannot afford to sacrifice our own progress in nurturing New Elites."

"Are you hoping that I will cooperate with the Devosans and employ my own means to strengthen their troops?"

The young woman nodded. "Your solutions are known to be far more cost-effective and less resource intensive than the alternatives. This is exactly what the Devosans need in this dire time. In the following days, they will do their best to charm you and solicit greater cooperation from you. However, they will not allow you to dictate your terms. Their situation may be dire, but their pride and their cognition has not fully caught up to their current status."

"I see."

Ves kept this in mind as he thanked Alexa for her valuable insights.

Master Laila Devos eventually arrived at his guest villa and invited him and his family to go on a tour.

Several days passed by as the Devosans tried to impress the Ves, his wife and his children by dragging them across New Constantinople VIII.

Even if the planet was not as developed as the ones owned by the other ancient clans, the Devosans were still one of the greater Terran powers, so the cities weren't shabby by any means!

The capital city of Sandan clearly received the greatest share of investment, so the Devosans were especially keen on dazzling the Larkinsons by showing them the local sights.

They visited a few museums and mech galleries where they could admire brilliant works, each of which cost over 1 million MTA credits to produce.

Ves had to drag his wife away from the luxury fashion stores. Even though the Devosans offered to gift the Larkinsons millions of MTA credits to shop to their heart's content, everything had a price!

He would be forced to reciprocate any expensive gift sooner or later. This was how the game was played, and he wasn't eager to participate in it at this time.

Ves also stepped into the real classrooms of the Eden Institute for the first time.

Though he was distracted by a lot of different affairs, he still enjoyed the opportunity to teach his students in person as opposed through projections.

His children giggled and laughed as they flew in the enormous playground of a floating garden.

Other Terran children played tag or different sports that were specially designed for this peculiar environment.

The cats chased after them as well as the peculiar zero-G environment attracted a lot of tame and well-behaved pets as well.

The Larkinsons even visited an exclusive elementary school where the descendants of the most prominent local Terrans sent their youngest children.

The atmosphere was nice, the facilities were excellent and the teachers were all worth their obscenely high salaries.

"We need to send our children here right away." Gloriana concluded. "Just the connections they can make here is worth the admission."

"Let's not be too hasty." Ves cautioned his wife. "This is hardly the only decent school on this planet. Besides, I haven't decided yet whether I will stay."

"You have to, Ves. There is no urgent reason for us to return to a nomadic lifestyle. We are no longer a part of the expeditionary fleet. Our main priority is to establish a firm footing in the upper zones. We should at least stay long enough to get our Premier Branch up and running."

"Maybe you are right..."

Even as the Devosans worked hard to impress the Larkinsons, the Streons did not remain idle during this time.

As the week slowly passed by, Ves began to prepare for his first meeting with the Renewer of Terra.