

The Mech 5341

Chapter 5341 Augmentation Envy

As Ves continued to put his effort into both his studies and his mech design projects, he grew more and more discontented over time.

His performance was beginning to fall behind.

The problem hadn't been that obvious back when he stayed in Davute or in the expeditionary fleet.

He was by far the best and most competent mech designer in the Design Department.

Other second-class mech designers such as Gloriana, Sara Voiken, Cormaunt Hempkamp and most recently Beatrix Hendrix simply could not keep up with his workspace.

Each of them grew up under excellent conditions and became excellent Journeyman Mech Designers despite their relative youth. Their cranial implants played a major role in boosting their work efficiency.

Nonetheless, there was a vast gulf between second-class cranial implants and first-class cranial implants. These crucial devices combined with complementary gene treatments could transform any ordinary human into a partially digitized powerhouse.

The total fusion between human ingenuity and advanced processing allowed mech designers and other engineers to work on the most advanced technologies without getting lost.

The better the cranial implant, the higher the increase in productivity!

There was an astronomical price gap between a second-class cranial implant and a first-class cranial implant.

The latter encompassed an enormous price range. The cheapest ones usually cost a few thousand MTA credits while the most expensive ones that were exclusively designed for high-ranking mech designers and such could cost hundreds of times more than the price of a typical first-class multipurpose mech!

The increase in performance was nowhere near as exaggerated, though. Paying 100 times more for a cranial implant may very well only increase a mech designer's work speed by only several times.

While it was somewhat possible to combine the inherent processing capabilities of a cranial implant by linking it up with lots of external processing banks, there were many limitations and complications to this approach.

The security of this approach was dubious. The tiny but still significant lag between transferring signals between two radically different computer systems made it impossible for the human mind to completely merge with the data systems of a starship or a well-equipped design lab.

In fact, Diandi Base actually came with a respectable centralized processing room. It featured a decent general computer core as well as enough processor banks to exceed the total processing power of the Spirit of Bentheim!

Unfortunately, neither Ves nor Gloriana could make use of their respective cranial bioimplants to intuitively connect with the external processors.

This meant that the pair could only make limited use out of the powerful processing capabilities.

Tasks that required a lot of number crunching but little ingenuity such as running simulations, solving problems by relying on brute force and performing a dizzying number of repetitive calculations was the extent of what mech designers could do with all of this processing power.

While that certainly made their jobs a lot easier, it still fell short of equipping themselves with a cranial implant that stuffed all of that processing power directly in their heads!

Of course, the advanced technology and extremely powerful exotics needed to create such an amazing cranial implant rapidly became increasingly less accessible!

The effect of the law of diminishing returns had become extremely strong at this point. The complexities involved with trying to cram more performance in such a tiny and interconnected package became exponentially more difficult to handle.

Nonetheless, a lot of rich and wealthy people continued to invest lots of wealth into their development.

The market for high-end implants was constantly booming. In an environment where every rival and competitor did their utmost to snatch up the limited opportunities that were available, anyone who refused to invest enormous sums in themselves would inevitably get pushed out of power!

Ves did not experience this pressure that much back when he was hanging around in the middle zones, but now that he had entered the Agamemnon Upper Zone, he became surrounded by excellent first-raters whose cranial implants impressed him on a daily basis!

From Jovy Armalon to the wealthier students who attended his classes, Ves constantly became reminded that his 'hardware' could no longer keep up with his new peers.

In order to get a better sense of difference between himself and the Terrans, Ves planned an exercise during a practical class of his Advanced Manual Superfab Operation course.

He stood in front of the 100 awed and respectful fourth and fifth year mech design students.

Being able to teach them in the flesh as opposed to doing so by remote had only increased the attentiveness of his classes.

Even though Ves was still a second-class mech designer, it was a big deal to get taught by a tier 3 galactic citizen!

Ves did not even have to resort to parlor tricks like unveiling his glow or channeling any of his design spirits to keep these Terran students in line.

He activated a projection that depicted a scaled-down version of a generic second-class mech. It was roughly the size of a person, which meant that it looked similar to a suit of combat armor.

"Each of you have spent enough weeks on familiarizing yourselves with the operation of a superfab. You have learned how to configure its settings to your liking. You have learned a repertoire of fundamental skills. You have gained proficiency in fabricating many of the common parts at an acceptable degree of efficiency. Today is the time to test how much progress you have made. I want each of you to fabricate a copy of this simplified design for the remaining duration of this class. While the scale model is only a simplified second-class machine, I have made sure to add plenty of

tricky nuances in its design. If you think you can rely on automation to do all of the work, then you will be sorely disappointed."

Although the Terran mech design students were too polite and well-educated to groan, Ves could clearly sense that the brats were anything but amused!

Kelly McAfee raised her hand.

"Is this a graded test, professor?"

"Yes."

This time, a couple of the students couldn't help but show their frustration.

Ves did not make an announcement about this beforehand! None of the students had been able to refresh their knowledge and practice their fabrication skills prior to this class as a consequence!

Even Axela Striker did not expect Ves to conduct a surprise practical exam today.

"I am aware that this is not an ideal circumstance to students such as yourselves, but that is exactly why I have decided to impose this test on you today." Ves spoke to them all. "Any mech designer can do a decent job if they have made thorough preparations beforehand. However, if you want to become more than a cog in a giant machine that is called the mech industry, then you must be able to do more than that in order to be remembered."

His words resonated with the hearts of all of these fourth and fifth year mech design students.

They were just one or two years away from graduation. Once they exited the Eden Institute with a diploma, they had to enter a highly competitive mech industry where all of their high-ranking peers already dominated much of the market!

"It takes greater effort to internalize all of the skills and accrue enough practice to become an experienced fabricator." Ves continued. "One of the traits of a good fabricator is the ability to do a good job on the fly."

After he explained the parameters of the graded test, the energetic students quickly approached their assigned superfabs and went to work.

By this time, the students had already moved on from practicing with virtual superfabs to operating the real deal!

It was impressive to see a hundred superfabs entering into operation. Even if they weren't top-of-the-line, the Eden Institute still invested a hefty sum of money into their acquisition.

As the students all became engrossed with studying the scaled-down mech design, Alexa Striker quietly approached her professor's side.

"This was supposed to be an ordinary practice session." She quietly transmitted to Ves. "Your spontaneous decision to turn it into a graded test will cause numerous problems. We will have to file new paperwork with the school administration in order to account for all of the ripple effects of this change."

Ves shrugged. "Then do so. I am sure that this is a trivial problem to the Eden Institute. How well do you think these students will do, Alexa?"

The young lady's expression loosened up. "I think that each of them will perform satisfactorily. Given your rapidly rising reputation, none of them wanted to leave a bad impression of themselves on you. They have all made sure to dedicate additional time on learning and practicing what you have taught."

"Good. I hope I won't see anything ugly today. I expect much from these fine Terrans. By the way, has there been any progress on my latest offer?"

Alexa's eyes grew murky. "After my last talk with my grandfather, I have been trying to get ready to join your clan. It is not simple for me to leave the ancient clan where I have been born and raised. The bureaucratic procedures are cumbersome. Our elders must also convene and personally pass judgment on my case. My grandfather should be able to make it happen, but he prefers to do it slowly in order to avoid attracting too much attention. I should be able to apply to join your clan before the end of this semester."

Ves nodded in understanding. "That sounds good. It doesn't matter if your entry gets delayed for a few months. It is more important for you to adopt the right mentality. I have already told you that it isn't enough to become a Larkinson by name. You need to show enough sincerity and commitment to earn everyone's trust."

"Your famed kinship network has been frustrating many spies as of late." The well-informed teaching assistant commented.

The two eventually split up and walked along the hall. They supervised the students as they started to fabricate the parts needed to assemble a person-sized mech.

Normally, Ves and Alexa would come close and either correct an operation or provide helpful advice.

They did not offer any help this time as this was supposed to be a serious test.

Every student concentrated fully on their own tasks. The speed and efficacy of their work varied considerably.

There were many variables that affected the speed of their work and the quality of their output.

As Ves looked over Klaus Robar-Fulton's shoulders, he became mildly impressed by how far the civilian Terran student had come.

Having enrolled in all three courses taught by Ves, Klaus had become a fan. The fourth year mech designer invested more time in them, even when it came at a detriment to his other classes.

Klaus had already come far since his starting point. His craftsmanship was still fairly basic and sloppy, but he at least made much fewer mistakes than before.

Now that he had gained a decent amount of practice, Klaus had already begun to express a distinct style. He only needed to grow more comfortable with his work in order to develop his personal style further.

That said, despite all of the work that Klaus put into improving his fabrication skills, his overall improvement could only be described as below average compared to his other classmates.

His low-tier augmentation package was holding him back.

If his cranial implant belonged to a higher tier, Klaus should have easily been able to rank in the top 30 of his class!

Ves shifted his gaze to another nearby student who was descended from a clan.

The clansmen easily performed better than Klaus even though his motivation and diligence might not be as great.

His superior cranial implants and other augmentations boosted his performance to a much larger extent!

As long as the clan student did not do anything outrageous and slack off, he could easily remain ahead of a hard worker like Klaus.

This was the power of a superior cranial implant!

Chapter 5342 Finding More Capacity

The surprise test gave Ves an excellent overview

All 100 students who enrolled in his Advanced Manual Superfab Operation course came from different layers of Terran society.

While none of them came from the absolute top or bottom layers of the Terran Alliance, they all grew up under different economic circumstances.

This gave Ves enough diverse samples to study the overall level of performance of different students with different levels of augmentations.

Klaus Robar-Fulton was not the worst performer among the 100 students, but his augmentations certainly ranked at the bottom.

His performance was a testament to how much he was able to utilize his limited resources to a higher degree. He did not let his relatively cheap cranial implant hold him back from pursuing his dreams and make his way up in society!

His approach and determination reminded Ves a lot of himself. This caused him to grow even more sympathetic towards this earnest mech design student.

Of course, the main reason why Ves held a lot of interest towards Klaus was that his latent spiritual potential was among the strongest out of his fellow students!

It was a pity that talent did not determine everything. Ves had encountered plenty of bright third-class and second-class mech designers in the past.

However, their inferior backgrounds and cheaper cranial implants heavily limited their upper boundaries.

The only realistic opportunity for them to be promoted to first-class mech designers was if they advanced to the rank of Master Mech Designer and utilized their much higher earning potential to upgrade all of their conditions.

Even then, it would likely take decades of their precious time to complete this cumbersome transition.

This clear separation between the classes was yet another example of how much the quality and price tier of a cranial implant affected the accomplishments of a mech designer.

Ves continued to study the performance of his students. He moved from superb to superb until he stopped behind Kalister Devos.

As his name suggested, Kalister was a branch member of the Devos Ancient Clan. That automatically meant that his augmentation package was among the most powerful out of the 100 students in this class.

The fifth-year mech design student was superior to Klaus in every other way. Kalister had completed more advanced courses. He learned noticeably faster. The teachings of his powerful ancient clan also gave him a head-start in many important areas.

Still, even when Ves took all of these variables into account, it was abundantly clear that Kalister was able to leverage much greater processing power in his work!

Ves had deliberately come up with a scaled-down mech design that contained a lot of subtle deviations from the norm. It threw the students off-guard and forced them to devise a lot of small solutions on the spot if they wanted to fabricate the parts to a satisfactory standard.

A lot of the problems could be efficiently solved by adequate mech designers who could leverage a lot of processing power.

The stronger the cranial implant, the faster and better their output!

Given these conditions, it did not surprise Ves at all that Kalister Devos pumped out high-quality parts at a faster rate than his peers.

What did surprise him to a small extent was how extensively Kalister was able to surpass the likes of Klaus!

The enormous gulf between the two discouraged Ves.

The display illustrated the power of modern mech design-oriented augmentations.

Ves yearned for this power. He would have tried to make a deal with the Terrans of the mechers to replace his old Archimedes Rubai with a proper implant that was designed with his profession in mind if he could!

The fact that he had mutated so far beyond the scope of humanity that this was not possible anymore frustrated him beyond belief.

There was no easy way to lift the upper limit of his productivity.

This meant that he remained stuck in an awkward place in the mech industry.

Currently, Ves estimated that his design speed exceeded that of a typical second-class mech designer.

He could even catch up and surpass the likes of Klaus Robar-Fulton in certain circumstances!

However, Ves was far behind in these areas when he compared himself to the more deep-pocketed individuals such as Kalister Devos and Alexa Streon.

This did not bode well for his future as a first-class mech designer.

Sure, Ves may have been able to become a tier 3 galactic citizen in advance, but he knew extremely well that his current mech design capabilities could not support this extravagant status!

This was bad news. Once he became a first-class mech designer, it would become clear to everyone else he worked with in the future that he was still behind on this important aspect!

Even if his fellow colleagues still respected him for his innovative design applications and his occasional bouts of brilliance, they would still become frustrated at his inability to keep up in other aspects.

Ves needed to close the performance gap to other upper level mech designers.

He could choose from at least two different approaches.

The easier solution was to embrace his differences and focus on strengthening his advantages at the cost of neglecting his weaknesses.

The more difficult solution was to rely on cultivation science and spiritual engineering to shore up his weaknesses and achieve parity with other first-class mech designers.

Ves wanted to try the latter approach first. The advantages of doing so were clear and obvious.

At the very least, he would be able to boost his design speed by several times, allowing him to complete his ongoing mech design projects a lot faster than before!

While it would still take at least a year to design a highly complicated first-class multipurpose mech, he could complete second-class design projects at a much faster rate!

On top of that, his ability to learn and master vast amounts of advanced first-class knowledge became a lot better as well. This could potentially allow him to become a first-class mech designer a year or two earlier!

Ves continued to think about what sort of measures he could take to reach his current goal. He continued to mull over potential solutions until the class had finally come to the end.

"Alright, time's up!" Ves announced the entire class. "You are not allowed to do any further work related to your product! Clean up your work stations and make sure to properly shut down your superfabs. If you have enough time to stick around, then you are free to linger while I begin to evaluate your work."

Once Ves completed his work and left the Eden Institute, he reunited with his wife in the design lab of Diandi Base.

Gloriana knew Ves well enough to know what he was troubled about.

"Are you still struggling to devise a means for you to upgrade your brain?"

Ves nodded. "I am. My ability to come up with spiritual products is not weak, and I have enough of a foundation in cultivation science to devise simple solutions. That does not leave me with a clear direction, though. I can't just come up with a random cultivation method that adds a spiritual computer in my brain. It doesn't work that way, and doing anything rash will threaten my

foundation as a mech designer. I really don't know what else I can do to upgrade myself in a way that works."

His wife threw a jealous look at him. "At least you are able to exert the power of a god to transform your own conditions. I have to rely on costly augmentations to do the same."

It was rather funny that his wife grew envious at Ves' own ability to improve himself.

"If you were in my place, how would you approach this problem?" He asked.

That caused Gloriana to pause in thought. "Hmmm. You told me that you have no clear direction on how to solve it, so the first step you need to take is to find one. Instead of trying to devise one from the ground up, I suggest you look at existing solutions and try to imitate them to the best of your ability. Your work might not be as original as you prefer, but at least you can reduce the uncertainty by adapting an existing template."

That... was actually a good suggestion. Ves hadn't thought of that. He was so fixated on coming up with his own solutions that he didn't think about copying other people's work.

Ves did not like to think in this direction because it was inherently dishonorable. Mech designers tried their best not to turn it into a habit because it would ultimately degrade their ability to solve problems by themselves.

Still, a case like this was not directly related to mech design, so Ves felt it was permissible for him to adopt this approach.

His wife projected a typical first-class cranial implant.

"What you want is to imitate the hardware and software of a cranial implant. The most obvious way to do so is to recreate it in a spiritual form. You do not even need to make it as compact as an actual implant. According to what I have learned from you, spiritual constructs are intangible and do not occupy the same space as material objects. You can create a much larger 'spiritual implant' that is as large as your head. Is it feasible for you to create such a product?"

Ves looked intrigued, but quickly shook his head.

"It's not possible because my head is already occupied by my design flame. This is the part that is related to my profession as a mech designer. Now that I have become a Senior Mech Designer, it is crucially important for me to prevent it from getting contaminated by messy and unrelated influences. I can't engage in multiple competing forms of cultivation at the same time. There is not enough available capacity."

Ves was currently a creation cultivator and a body cultivator. While they entailed two completely different forms of growth, they covered drastically aspects of himself. Their overlap was minimal and did not interfere with each other.

The story would be different if Ves engaged in a form of qi cultivation or willpower cultivation. Doing anything like that would begin to intrude on his existing real estate and displace his existing cultivation!

This was why mech designers could never become mech pilots at the same time.

After they crossed the extraordinary threshold, they could only ever commit to a single path.

Of course, there were always exceptions.

One notable figure that managed to break this rule was Ketis. She had been able to become both a swordmaster and a Journeyman Mech Designer at the same time.

"Wait a second." Ves widened his eyes as he made an important realization!

At the same time, his wife chimed in as well!

Alexandria emerged from her head and began to fly around her body.

"Maow."

"I do not know too much about this cultivation science that you are so obsessed with as of late, but if there is no room in your body to accommodate a spiritual implant, then what about our companion spirits? If Ketis can imbue Sharpie with her potent willpower, then it should be easy enough for you to devise a means to turn your companion spirit into a supercomputer. I am not sure whether you can make it so that you can merge your mind thoroughly enough to directly upgrade your cognition, but if that is not the case, you may be able to make this happen by activating a design network."

"That's brilliant, Gloriana! You've given me lots of inspiration!"

Ves truly meant what he said! As he mulled over the suggestions made by his wife, he suddenly realized that compared to himself, Blinky was not short on capacity in the slightest!

After all, Blinky had already made decent attainments in the cultivation of the Imaginary Universe Method Version 3.0.

The Blinkyverse had already grown a lot larger after continuous cultivation. Blinky had recently completed the first stage and formed a complete planet!

Even if all of it was intangible and made out of spiritual energy, that did not change the fact that there was a huge amount of free space inside the Blinkyverse!

Chapter 5343 Companion Spirit Upgrade Ideas

Now that they uncovered a solid direction, Ves and Gloriana eagerly brainstormed and swapped ideas.

There was great potential in converting a part of the Blinkyverse into a supercomputer!

Although it required Ves to make drastic changes to his existing Imaginary Universe Method, this was fine.

He never thought that this qi cultivation method had been perfected. The fact that Ves added a version number to its name was proof that it had already changed and evolved since he devised the initial version.

The troublesome part about the Imaginary Universe Method was that his mother also had a hand in its development.

Her input enabled Blinky's cultivation method to jump from Version 2.0 to Version 3.0!

The most logical course of action that Ves could take at this time was to approach his mother yet again for help on this matter.

Ves was not eager to solicit her assistance this time. His last interaction with her had thoroughly soured his willingness to collaborate with her on this kind of issue.

Who knew whether she would betray his trust once again and tamper with his cultivation without his knowledge?

Unless his understanding of cultivation science had grown substantially enough to understand his mother's work, it was best not to resort to this option!

Ves much preferred to take control over his own cultivation and develop his own solutions to his current problem.

At least he would be able to maintain control at all times.

As Ves continued to exchange theories with his wife, he began to develop a real framework for a possible way to turn the Blinkyverse into the spiritual equivalent of a server!

"I can't convert the entire Blinkyverse into a supercomputer." He spoke after a moment of thought. "Its main purpose is to serve as an energy reservoir and a place where my companion spirit can turn the imaginary into the physical. Much of the universe needs to remain in its original and untainted form. If I try to change too much to it, the entire essence of the Blinkyverse will change, making it much less suitable for other purposes. Luckily, the internal volume is so big that there should still be plenty of room to accommodate a lot of processors."

Gloriana grew envious as she heard what Ves could do with his companion spirit. How come Blinky was so much more amazing than her Alexandria?!

She hugged her red companion spirit tighter against her chest.

"Can you add a supercomputer to my companion spirit as well?"

"Maowww..."

Ves glanced at Alexandria. The companion spirit had grown a lot since her creation. While she wasn't as versatile as Blinky, her design network was much stronger and more impressive.

His wife could make excellent use of Alexandria if she was able to lead a lot of mech designers, but ever since they moved to New Constantinople VIII, they no longer had any assistants by their side.

Ves intended to change that by recruiting Alexa Streon and numerous other Terran mech designers with high potential, but it was difficult to speed up this process.

"I do not think it is impossible." He replied. "However, I need to devise a different solution for you. Alexandria doesn't have the traits that Blinky has, which means that she can't cultivate anything that resembles the Imaginary Universe Method. I will need to come up with something different that makes more effective use of her design network."

That caused Gloriana to perk up. "Wait! Instead of trying to implant a spiritual supercomputer in my companion spirit, is it possible to upgrade the design network in a way that allows me to commandeer the minds and cranial implants of other mech designers?!"

That was a radical suggestion!

Ves initially wanted to say no to her idea, but he halted as soon as he started to think through this scenario.

The design network in its current form was based on restraint and voluntary exchange.

Ves had tried to make sure to decrease any objectionable aspects about it by giving participants a decent amount of control over what parts of themselves they wanted to block from the design network.

This caused any collaboration to proceed fairly harmoniously. Ves, Gloriana and other Larkinson mech designers trusted each other well enough to avoid prying into overly private matters.

However, the existing barriers also made it so that the design network never worked at full capacity.

What if Ves removed those barriers?

What if Ves developed a version of the design network that not only allowed Gloriana to merge her mind with that of other mech designers, but also enabled her to 'borrow' their augmented brain power in the process?

The resulting performance boost would be enormous!

The Queen Cat could finally make good on her self-aggrandizing title and become the sovereign of her own spiritual distributed computing network!

Gloriana didn't even need to acquire a customized first-class cranial implant anymore.

She could just use her upgraded design network to connect to the mind of a first-class mech designer who already possessed this expensive augmentation!

Of course, that did not make this upgrade useless. In fact, the combination between a mech design-oriented first-class cranial implant and a spiritual distributed computing network could produce massive synergies!

This was especially the case if the first-class cranial implant contained specific programming related to this new form of resource utilization!

Both Ves and Gloriana looked at each other in shock!

This was an immensely powerful idea!

So long as Alexandria's design network connected to plenty of powerful mech designers, Gloriana would be able to perfectly synchronize herself with the design capabilities of the entire collective!

She could forcefully elevate her effective design capabilities to the standards of a Master Mech Designer!

"Maow!"

"You have to work on this, Ves!" Gloriana practically threw herself onto Ves! Her hands eagerly clutched her husband's uniform! "Promise me you will upgrade Alexandria's design network! I don't need a spiritual computer. I just need you to give me the capability to borrow the brainpower and processing power of other mech designers! Once I gain access to this ability, I can complete the Jupiter Project in a matter of weeks rather than months!"

Ves coughed as he gently pressed his overenthusiastic wife back. "I will work on it, but not now. There is little point in developing it when the only other mech designer in the Premier Branch is me. It is much more useful if I focus on upgrading Blinky first, since there is no requirement to work with other mech designers."

His words hardly caused Gloriana to dampen her excitement, but she understood that it was unlikely that she could gain this improvement anytime soon.

"I will be waiting for you, then." She said as she regained her composure to an extent. "I will correspond with the implant engineers to make special adaptations related to this future functionality. It will be difficult to explain the concept to them, let alone convince them that this is possible in the first place. We should just claim that you have developed a new and proprietary application of hyper technology. This new branch has already produced numerous miraculous inventions."

The galactic net frequently announced one amazing innovation after another. Humans were nothing if not curious. The more they played around with E energy and hyper materials, the greater the chance they could figure out a revolutionary new application!

Ves did not have to be afraid of exposing anything related to spiritual engineering and cultivation science due to this recent development. The Red Two appeared to have completely let go of the taboo against spreading this kind of knowledge.

He and his wife soon returned their attention to the original subject.

There were a lot of technical and practical limitations to turning a part of the Blinkyverse into an enormous server.

"Is it possible for you to purchase a computer core and insert it into the Blinkyverse?"

"Pff. No. While there is an element of the Blinkyverse that is already physical, the vast majority of it remains imaginary. It is not a giant pocket space where I can dump entire mechs or starships and pull them out whenever it is convenient. My companion spirit needs to attain a breakthrough and advance to the second mode of the Imaginary Universe Method before we can even think about this. Even then, pulling physical objects in and out of the Blinkyverse is another problem entirely."

"If that is the case, you cannot rely on any existing implants or computers to add processing power to the Blinkyverse. The only course you can take is to develop a spiritual computing system from the ground up." Gloriana concluded.

"Those are my thoughts as well, but the rules and circumstances are entirely different, honey. It is impossible for me to produce an imaginary version of a simple processor chip. Perhaps I can develop a spiritual construct that can spit one out, but I will have to design one that actually works in an entirely different setting. It is too difficult to develop a brand new spiritual computing system without any existing foundation for me to borrow from! Perhaps there are ancient cultivation heritages out there that have attempted to produce something similar, but it is unlikely that I can get my hands on this precious knowledge."

The last time he checked the Tree of Possibilities, none of the enlightenment fruits dangling from the branches granted any knowledge that could be useful in this endeavor!

This meant that Ves would likely have to pioneer this field by himself!

"Hmmm, that is indeed a difficult problem to overcome." Gloriana frowned. "Since it is not possible for you to produce any immediate results, I think you should take this step by step. Start with the basics. The simplest and most fundamental computing system is based on bits. If you can create a spiritual version of a transistor that can register two different states, then that is your most basic and important building block of a spiritual computing system. You can expand your scope into qubits and quantum computers later. Even if it is not possible for you to recreate more advanced computing systems, you can advantage of the enormous space available inside the Blinkyverse to construct a massive amount of simple transistors!"

That sounded like an incredibly stupid and inefficient approach, but it happened to be viable because the spiritual real estate inside the Blinkyverse was just that big!

The internal universe had already grown a complete Earth-like planet by this time. The surface area of a planet with a diameter of over 12,000 kilometers was so enormous that Ves could pile up a seemingly endless amount of simple and oversized spiritual semiconductor devices!

Of course, Ves did not think that such an absurd planet-sized computing system could properly work. The lag and delays in the transmission of signals across such vast distances severely decreased its overall efficiency.

What mattered was whether the overall concept was possible. So long as Ves could produce such a simple computer system, he could continue to refine it by miniaturizing the transistors and combining them into more advanced computing systems!

His eventual goal was to develop a powerful imaginary processing bank that Ves could effectively use to expand his internal processing power.

Ves hoped that his close connection to Blinky would reduce the lag and any other barriers to such an extent that he could seamlessly access the spiritual processors stored inside the Blinkyverse with his mind.

"I will need to conduct a lot of studies on how to design and build my own computing systems." He muttered.

His study burden increased yet again, but Ves felt it was more than worthwhile to engage in this research.

The benefits of developing a proper spiritual computing system were huge!

Ves could not only use it for himself, but he could also apply them in other ways!

He wasn't in a hurry to do that. All of this remained speculation for the time being.

If Ves wanted to turn all of these ambitious ideas into reality, he first needed to develop the simplest possible computing system in order to verify his current research direction!

Chapter 5344 The Origin Of Hazardous Regions

"Mrow mrow..."

"Maaow. Maow-"

"Nyaaaaaaaaa-"

Blinky's purple form shook in uncertainty as profound changes took place within his internal universe.

The round globe projected on his intangible body squirmed as large structures appeared on a part of its surface.

In order to soothe his discomfort, both Alexandria and the Golden Cat had appeared to keep him company and to intervene if necessary.

Fortunately, there was no need for the red and golden spiritual cats to make any moves.

Ves and Blinky were able to exert enough control over the Blinkyverse to transform part of the landscape of the primordial planet into crude, giant and incredibly simplistic transistors.

It had taken far more time and effort to develop these simple devices than Ves expected!

Physics didn't quite work right inside the Blinkyverse.

Every universal constant such as the gravitational constant G and the Planck constant h were slightly different from the main universe!

Combined with other anomalies such as the apparent addition of brand-new laws of physics, it was impossible for Ves to directly translate the design of an ancient computing system and expect it to work in the Blinkyverse!

"Why are the rules inside your companion spirit's space so different!?" Gloriana asked in frustration!

She looked as if she was almost ready to tear her hair out! This kind of work did not have any direct relationship with mechs, but it still had major implications to the future of the Larkinson Clan.

None of their ambitions could proceed unless they figured out how to computerize a part of Blinky's cultivation!

This was why Ves and Gloriana expended several days on testing the rules of the Blinkyverse. They meticulously measured every universal constant utilizing tools and methods they had to improvise from scratch. This was incredibly troublesome and tedious work that nonetheless had to be done if Ves ever wanted to utilize his own internal universe to a greater extent.

Only after they managed to build a deviating physics model were they finally able to take the next step. Designing basic tools such as transistors and extremely primitive computing systems became possible again now that the pair were able to adapt their standard designs into ones that were adapted to the internal universe.

As Ves and Blinky concentrated on building up the new imaginary computing system, Gloriana frowned in thought as she studied the parameters of the physics model.

"Why is your Blinkyverse so abnormal?" She asked. "I do not understand why everything works differently inside. I cannot figure out the reason why the universal constants are different, and I understand even less why the abnormal new laws of physics that alter the interaction between forces have taken hold inside your internal space."

Ves smirked even as he made sure to focus most of his attention on his current work.

"It is not that difficult to understand. Many cultivation methods tend to make exaggerated and unrealistic claims. Even if there is a basis in truth in them, they can only be realized in the later stages. However, when it comes to the creation of an entirely new universe inside the bodies of practitioners, it is not as impossible as you think. Don't let Blinky's cute appearance and small size fool you. His internal universe has already reached a diameter of 200,000 kilometers. Can you imagine how much space that actually represents? Not even the oldest and most powerful ancient phase whales can reach this size!"

In that sense, Blinky's actual 'body' had reached such a titanic scale that he had probably grown into one of the largest cats to ever exist!

It was a pity that none of it consisted of physical matter. Blinky constantly absorbed a lot of E energy radiation in order to expand his internal space, but he had yet to master a method to convert energy into matter.

Learning that the universal constant and laws of physics were different in the Blinkyverse actually represented an important breakthrough in this effort.

Now that Ves figured out some of the barriers that prevented him from turning the intangible into the tangible, he had come one step closer into transforming parts of the Blinkyverse into a material realm!

His wife looked at Ves with astonishment. "Are you actually claiming that your Blinkyverse is a complete and independent universe that is comparable to the one we reside in? Does that mean that if you ever manage to cultivate it long enough, you can build up an entire cosmos of your own that is populated by its own life forms and constructs?"

Ves laughed. "Yes! Don't you understand? This is the power of cultivation! It is all about turning the impossible into the possible! That said, I don't dare to think of building anything extravagant like that in the short term. The energy requirements to expand the Blinkyverse will grow exponentially greater. It should be relatively easy to build up a star system, but it will take an awfully long time to build up an entire galaxy that is filled with billions of stars, let alone a galaxy cluster that is even more ridiculous in size. I suspect that the current level of exotic radiation is not concentrated enough to support Blinky's subsequent cultivation. Perhaps Blinky can only make further progress if we are able to move to Messier 87."

The Red Ocean had appeared in a medium energy environment that induced a lot of changes.

Both humans and aliens constantly discovered new phenomena that opened up all kinds of wondrous possibilities as a result.

However, many people who possessed enough awareness understood that the residents of the Red Ocean were just living off a miniscule proportion of the scraps thrown away by the supergiant galaxy that dominated this part of the cosmos!

Messier 87 constituted a proper high energy environment. The more Ves thought about how much more concentrated the power of heaven in that galaxy could be, the more he yearned to travel to this strange new environment and take advantage of all of the abundance!

So what if it was populated by a myriad of strange and powerful aliens?

A galaxy as large as this had to be populated by a huge amount of alien races, many of which fought and lived alongside each other for many eons!

Ves bet that the relations between the native aliens over there were varied and complex. It was unlikely that a single alien race had managed to gain total dominion over Messier 87.

So long as the special galaxy developed a pluralistic galactic community where a lot of different alien races could live alongside each other, it should be no problem for a bunch of humans to blend into the rich and diverse alien community!

Of course, this was all speculation. Ves had no proof that any of this was the case. Even if Messier 87 happened to be welcoming towards outside visitors, there was no way he could bridge the enormous distance. He also did not possess the strength to defend himself against bad actors.

Ves could only bury this burning ambition. At least one of his incarnations needed to become True God before he gained the capital to protect himself in a massive galaxy that was sure to be populated by many equivalent beings.

If he truly wanted to gain a foothold in a place as dangerous as Messier 87, then he must also bring along a few god pilots to be sure!

As the top combat cultivators produced by human civilization, god pilots should not be weak even when they entered the much bigger pond of Messier 87!

All of this took a lot of time. Ves estimated it would likely take a century if not two before he was ready to embark on a trip to Messier 87.

Other conditions had to be met as well. Red humanity had to persist. Ves and the champions of the Larkinson Clan needed to make successive breakthroughs. The Red Association or another power had to develop a practical means to travel to another nearby galaxy.

It was not entirely certain whether all of these difficult conditions could be met in the coming decades and centuries, so Ves did not dare to put too much hope in realizing this particular ambition.

"I understand now." Gloriana spoke as she began to connect different pieces of information again. "There is no rule that states that the laws of physics have to be identical for every universe. In fact, it may be the norm that they are all different from universe to universe. Is this why hazardous regions exist? It might explain why the Milky Way is riddled with them. Could it be that the origin of the Nyxian Gap is the release of an internal universe after the death of a powerful cultivator in ancient times?"

Her theories actually made a lot of sense! Ves thought about all of the weirdness that he had encountered in the Nyxian Gap. If he treated it as an internal universe that had gotten loose and merged with the current universe, then it made complete sense why the rules were still slightly different!

Ves rubbed his hairless chin in thought.

"It is quite troublesome to reinvent new stuff for the Blinkyverse, but I think that there are many advantages to gaining access to our own hazardous region. It should be possible to generate

resources and create products that are otherwise impossible to make in our main universe. The type of specialty products that I can make will depend on the dominant traits and elements of the Blinkyverse. As far as I know, the internal space is particularly aligned towards space, energy and astrology."

Much of that had to do with the key reagents that Ves utilized to birth the Blinkyverse.

Ves managed to obtain the odd Urvenk Obelisk by drawing a radiant lottery ticket. The ancient relic used to be part of a grand mechanism used to move entire stars and planets. It complemented the Imaginary Universe Method extremely well and gave Blinky greater control over the stellar objects inside his growing space.

The 100 kilograms of phasewater that Ves invested in the creation of the Blinkyverse also strengthened anything related to space. It was one of the primary reasons why the internal space had grown so quickly despite not feeding it with E energy radiation for a long time.

All of these variables caused the Blinkyverse to turn into a universe where the forces related to energy, space and astrology gained so much primacy that they essentially rewrote the laws of physics!

To be honest, Ves and Gloriana had only scratched the surface of what they could do with all of those altered conditions. They had only worked to compensate for the many deviations.

The next step that they could take was to actively exploit the advantages created by the odd environment.

For example, Ves even speculated that it might be possible for the Blinkyverse to convert energy into phasewater without the need to steal any phase whale organs!

The research required to develop such a powerful mechanism was too much, though. Ves simply did not have the time to engage in this extravagant research project.

Turning a part of the Blinkyverse into a spiritual supercomputer might make it a little more viable, but Ves needed to deepen his understanding of phasewater theory to a much greater extent before he could do anything meaningful!

"Mrow mrow mrow!"

"Maow?!"

"Have you completed your work?!" Gloriana perked up again.

"I think so." Ves said. "Let me test it out. Please wait a moment."

Several seconds passed before Blinky opened his maw and spat out a trail of spiritual energy.

The trail split up into different sections that rapidly formed in a series of letters.

HELLY GALAXY.

"Congratulations, Ves. You have managed to build an intangible computer that can print out a single sentence." Gloriana smiled. "How much processing power have you gained?"

"Not much. One of Marvaine's toys is easily a trillion times more powerful. This is ancient technology, Gloriana. We still have a long way to go before we can recreate contemporary processing systems."

Chapter 5345 E-Object Development

Being able to construct a basic computing system in an entirely new universe was a massive accomplishment!

The successful development of a simple computer opened up the possibility of creating more powerful ones.

Whether Ves primarily focused on quantity and covered much of the Blinkyverse with crude processor, or decided to focus on quality by rapidly climbing up the technology tree, it had become a lot more realistic for him to turn the Blinkyverse into the spiritual version of a cranial implant!

Unfortunately, just because it was possible did not mean it was easy. Modern computing systems had millenia of development behind them. They not only incorporated the sum of human ingenuity and accumulation, but also assimilated bits and pieces of reverse-engineered alien technology as well!

Even if Ves did not have to develop all of these advancements from scratch and could just copy all of the existing works instead, it was still incredibly troublesome to develop decent computing systems in an entirely new universe.

Ves and Gloriana estimated that they would have to devote decades of their life in order to reproduce a spiritual computing system that possessed enough processing to provide material assistance in their design work!

The cold hard truth was that neither of them could spare the time to do all of this thankless work.

They were mech designers, not computer engineers. It was a waste of time for them to invest an excessive amount of time into designing computer systems. They needed to keep doing what was best and focus on completing their mech design projects.

Given all of these circumstances, Ves decided to no longer invest too much time into furthering the development of a gigantic spiritual supercomputer.

"What will you do, then?" Gloriana asked as she placed her hands on her hips. "You can't give up now! The potential of a spiritual supercomputer is too great. This may be your only way to increase your processing power and amplify the amount of work you can do. If you start to fall behind, our entire clan will fall behind as well. It is imperative for you to finish this project."

Ves let out a deep breath. "Just because I don't want to waste my time on this anymore doesn't mean that I have given up. I just think that it is better to leave this kind of work to the professionals who are specialized in this kind of stuff. I'm quite fond of delegation, you know. Just like how I have delegated much of the development of companion spirit fruit trees to the T Institute, I can just pass off this spiritual computer engineering work to other specialists."

His wife blinked at that. "If you go down this route, it will be hard for you to keep your Blinkyverse secret."

"That's fine." Ves replied with a shrug. "I never really insisted on keeping it confidential. So what if other people know? This is the Age of Dawn, Gloriana. People have begun to do plenty of amazing stuff nowadays. Creating a new miniature universe is not that big of a deal. Besides, just because people know it can be done does not mean they can replicate this feat. It is actually quite difficult to create a decent internal space. It is even more difficult to grow and expand its volume."

The Imaginary Universe Method was actually an amazing cultivation method. It had been derived from other cultivation methods and had especially been customized for Blinky.

Together with the refinements and optimizations made by Cynthia, Blinky had a large chance of becoming a spiritual powerhouse in his own right!

"Who do you want to delegate this work to, then?" His wife asked next. "Do you want to assign a new project to the T Institute?"

Ves shook his head. "No. This project is too big for our research institute. No offense to them, but none of the existing researchers have a strong background in this stuff. The T Institute will almost certainly need to hire a lot of specialists, and given that it is still based on the Dragon's Den, the new recruits can only be second-raters at best. If I want to gain the capabilities of a first-class cranial implant, I will need to gain the assistance of the best possible first-class specialists."

"So you have decided to look for help outside of our clan."

"Yes."

"There are only a handful of first-class powers that you can cooperate with. Will you work with the Terrans?"

"No." Ves shook his head. "I thought about it. I am sure that the cultivators among them will be interested in my spiritual supercomputer, but... I don't think that the Terran ancient clans are united enough to pool their resources and manpower together. I would much prefer to work with the Transhumanist Faction. Human augmentation is their bread and butter, and I bet that they are actively working on reviving a lot of ancient cultivation stuff. I can think of no better candidate to cooperate with. The Transhumanists have much to gain from this research, so I think they will be the most enthusiastic out of all of the possible parties."

"Hmmm... I can understand your logic. Have you been in contact with the Transhumanist Faction as of late?"

"No, but that doesn't mean much. Just because I have developed a more intimate relationship with the Survivalists doesn't mean my relationship with the Transhumanists have cooled. I know how the mechers work. They are only interested in research and progress. As long as I present a good enough case, I am sure that they will be eager to work on this promising project. They might have already developed their own version of a spiritual computing system. It doesn't hurt to try my luck."

He went through with this idea. Later that night, he entered a more private section of Diandi Base and called his most familiar contact from the Transhumanist Faction.

The projection of Master Termaneo Dervidian appeared after a minute. The man looked a lot brighter and more vigorous since Ves last saw him. It was as if he shed another layer of his weak and original humanity.

This was a clear sign that the RA Master Mech Designer already benefited from the latest generation of augmentations that his faction had developed as of late.

"Good day, Professor Larkinson." The projection of Master Dervidian bowed his head. "This communication request is not in our schedule, so I believe you have reason to approach me at this time."

It appeared that Dervidian was a bit pressed for time. He did not bother with any small talk and went straight to the point.

Since that was the case, then Ves needed to keep it short.

"I have started a completely new research project that should be of great relevance to you. Let me give you a summary of what I have worked on as of late..."

It took Ves 10 minutes to compress his goals and ongoing research to Master Dervidian. While Ves had much more to say, he did not want to explain too much only to find out that the Transhumanists could not assist him in this capacity.

"Interesting." Master Dervidian eventually said. "Please wait for a minute."

The man fell in thought as he mulled over what he heard while also using his cranial implant to access any relevant information in the Red Association's internal database.

Once a minute had passed, the Master Mech Designer looked at Ves with an intrigued expression.

"It is rather impressive for you to create an entire universe made out of E energy. We already expected that your companion spirits have high potential, but to be able to birth a complete new universe that contains its own laws of physics is a peak accomplishment. The fact that you can convert a fraction of its expanding internal space into a viable and working computing system has great promise. You have made the right decision to come to us for help. We have the knowledge and expertise to turn your primitive handmade proof of concept into a modern E-supercomputer."

Master Dervidian began to share a few details on what the Transhumanist Faction had been working on as of late.

It turned out that the Transhumanists had indeed begun to work on developing digital systems in a spiritual format. They had already recognized the potential of turning spiritual constructs into computers!

The biggest difference was that the Transhumanists had not put any work into storing these prototype spiritual computer systems into separate pocket spaces that people could carry with ease.

This was a capability that only Blinky possessed for the time being!

"E-objects are relatively fragile by nature and easy to break." Dervidian explained as he used the Red Association's definition of a spiritual construct. "It does not matter how well they perform when any enemy with the capability to launch E-attacks can easily knock out our work. Defense has always been our greatest concern. We have been forced to divert much of our efforts into developing defensive measures, but we have discovered to our dismay that high-ranking mech pilots can defeat them with ease. The only effective means we can use to protect our E-object from external harm is to defend them with our own high-ranking mech pilots."

That was anything but ideal. Expert pilots, ace pilots and god pilots had better things to do than to babysit a fancy spiritual computer.

Ves understood what this meant. He could already predict what Master Dervidian wanted to say next.

"Are you interested in my method of creating a separate universe inside my companion spirit?" He asked.

"We are." Master Dervidian frankly admitted. "If we can create internal universes that can be attached to any companion spirit, then we can carry around much more powerful and useful E-objects without easily exposing them to external threats. The strategic possibilities are endless, especially if the internal universe can accommodate matter as well as E-energy. You would be making a great contribution if you can donate your unique method to our faction."

"It is not that easy to create a separate universe inside a companion spirit." Ves warned. "I only managed to do it because I took advantage of special conditions. I am not entirely opposed to sharing my method to you, but... you will have to adapt it to your own circumstances if you want to create a comparable internal universe."

"Let us discuss this further..."

A negotiation ensued between the two. Both sides wanted something from each other, and their desires were strong enough that they made quick progress.

Although Ves was not willing to expose every secret relating to his companion spirit, he knew that he needed to share a lot of important details about his cultivation method in order to satisfy the Transhumanist Faction's greed.

After a lot of haggling, Ves and Dervidian eventually struck a new deal.

The short version of it was that Ves agreed to share the Imaginary Universe Method Version 2.0 to the Transhumanist Faction. He promised to transfer the complete text aside from a few redactions that revealed too much sensitive information.

While the outdated version of this cultivation method lacked the optimizations made by his mother, Ves was sure that the Transhumanists could rely on their force of cultivators to flesh out their own versions!

In exchange for sharing this crucial information, the Transhumanists agreed to set up a new research team that was devoted to computerizing the Blinkyverse.

This research team would not strictly be responsible for developing E-computers from scratch.

The Transhumanist Faction already set up existing research departments for this important purpose.

Instead, the new research team would focus on translating existing designs of standard E-computers into Blinkyverse-adapted E-computers!

This effectively allowed Ves to benefit from the work that the Transhumanist Faction put into developing intangible computer systems. This was ideal for him as he didn't have to invest a large amount of precious time to upgrade his spiritual processing power!

Both Ves and the projection of Master Dervidian smiled at each other while shaking hands. This was another win-win agreement for them. Not only would be they sharing valuable progress, but their relationship had also grown a bit closer than before!

Chapter 5346 A Few Months Later

The deal with the Transhumanist Faction was not entirely ideal.

Ves not only exposed a lot of strategic information about Blinky's cultivation, but also became dependent on the E-computer designs of the Red Association.

He did not forget about the painful lesson taught by his mother. If he rashly took over the work developed by other parties, he risked introducing vulnerabilities into his own systems!

It would not be difficult for the Transhumanists to tamper with the designs and pass on compromised computer designs to Ves.

Without an advanced background in computer hardware or software engineering, it would be difficult if not impossible for Ves to detect all of the possible traps and vulnerabilities embedded into the designs!

Ves would be a fool to trust in the goodwill of the Transhumanists!

However, Ves already thought about this possibility beforehand. He insisted on adding special clauses to the contract to account for this risk.

He managed to add a heavy punishment clause. If Ves ever managed to find proof that the work provided by the Transhumanists ever contained any improper elements that fell outside of the scope of the agreement, Ves could immediately force them to pay a lot of compensation!

This should be enough to discourage any abuse. After all, even if he did not understand how an E-computing system worked, he could always ask for Ylvaine or an ace pilot to inspect whether there was anything improper.

Aside from that, Ves had a more ambitious plan in mind. He did not want to completely rely on the work provided by the Transhumanists, but use it as a basis for a more ambitious creation that should fully satisfy his demands!

However, that was a problem for the future. He first needed a decent E-computing system that was roughly as powerful and filled with features as Gloriana's upcoming mech design-oriented cranial implant.

There was no point in exploring his latest idea when his homebrew E-computer was only powerful enough to display text.

Time continued to pass after this. Ves no longer became obsessed with developing his own E-supercomputer, but entrusted this responsibility to the Transhumanists.

He had already spoken with the members of the new research team and found out that it would probably take a few months to a year in order to obtain a decent result.

Although Ves was disappointed that he wouldn't be able to boost his internal processing power right away, he was patient enough to wait for years before he could meaningfully increase his productivity.

In the meantime, he returned his attention to his usual routine while waiting for major developments to occur.

Many different events occurred in the months that passed. Time flowed like a river. No major disruptions during this calm period, though Ves and his clan had made plenty of progress in other ways.

Ves and the rest of the Larkinsons had made a lot of progress in their ongoing design projects. While none of the important or powerful ones had reached completion, it would not take long before they reached the finish line. This was a huge relief for the Larkinson mech designers that were eager to undergo EdNet deep immersion training.

Ves and Gloriana's children had fully acclimatized to their new school. Despite the major discrepancies in augmentations, Aurelia, Andraste and Marvaine managed to keep up with their high-intensity studies and even have time left over to play with their friends and engage in their extra-curricular activities.

The Survivalists, Transhumanists, Terrans and other groups regularly corresponded and exchanged with Ves and the Larkinson Clan. They managed to advance their shared research projects and occasionally traded valuable knowledge and resources with each other.

The Streon Ancient Clan had become more active and started to invest a lot more in the buildup of its armed forces. General Axelar Streon had yet to make any public moves. His Ouroboros had disappeared from public view, and few if any people could guess that his famed ace mech had received a profound upgrade.

The Devos Ancient Clan intensified its own military buildup and had actively begun to pursue closer ties with smaller Terrans clans. It was clear that the Devosans lacked the confidence to defend the Riston Territory on their own, so they resorted to diplomacy to mitigate their shortcomings.

The Golden Skull Alliance was back on track. The departure of Ves and other key personnel did not diminish everyone's enthusiasm for glory and adventure. After the expeditionary fleet completed its resupply in the Bortele System, it had ventured out towards the deep frontier yet again!

The ongoing semester at the Eden Institute was nearing its end. Many of the students taught by Ves had made massive strides in their courses. None of them had slacked off and tried their best to perform well, if only to avoid shaming themselves in front of a tier 3 galactic citizen!

Rumors started to spread relating to the relative silence from the Red Two.

While the mechers and fleters introduced plenty of technological advances over the months, none of them were particularly huge and transformative in nature.

Even the most ignorant red human could tell that they were keeping a lot of surprises behind everyone's backs!

The native aliens had begun to intensify their incursions of human space. More and more scattered and eclectic alien fleets arrived from the other parts of the Red Ocean and started to form into larger armadas for the purpose of committing devastating raids.

Fortunately, the introduction of the New Elites Program had invigorated so many different human powers that the border regions had become much harder to break!

The upper zones, middle zones and lower zones welcomed many new mech fleets that earnestly pursued battle against the alien invaders!

While the results were decidedly mixed, it gradually became clear which groups had acquitted themselves well enough to become warfighters and which groups deserved to be eliminated from the competition.

Not every human force was suitable to fight against alien warships!

One of the most notable events that happened during this period was that Alexa Streon finally received permission from her ancient clan to join the Larkinson Clan.

The incident actually generated a decent amount of controversy within the Streon Ancient Clan.

Even if Ves had become an important figure to red humanity, that was not necessarily a reason for the Streons to put down their pride and allow one of their prominent descendants to defect to another clan!

The Larkinson Clan did not make any compromises on this matter. Each of its members had to be completely loyal to their new clan and fellow members.

Fortunately, General Axelar Streon possessed enough influence to overcome the opposition of the elders. He did not even have to step forward in person. His Senechai had done most of the work necessary to push through the necessary changes.

Once all of the barriers had been removed, Alexa Streon formally cut ties with her ancient clan and showed up at Diandi Base the next day.

Her expression conveyed a melancholic mood. She did not want to leave her family and her ancient clan, but she did not want to abandon her ambitions either.

If not for the fact that her grandfather had given his full blessings and support, Alexa might have chosen to reject Ves' offer and stay with the Streons!

"Welcome to the Premier Branch." Ves spoke as he greeted his teaching assistant. "I have been waiting for your arrival for a long time. If you ever wish to change your mind and turn elsewhere, you are free to do so. I do not want to force you to join my clan. Even if you cannot bring yourself to become a Larkinson, I can still mentor you to an extent. I can teach you plenty of knowledge related to living mechs that I haven't taught in my introductory course."

The young woman shook her head. "That is not necessary. I have already weighed my decisions long enough. The Streon Ancient Clan can do without me. I have many relatives who are more than capable of fulfilling all of its functions. The Streons will hardly miss me if I am being honest. It is much more important for me to attain a promising design philosophy and gain the ability to design mechs that are powerful enough to change our destiny. So long as I can do that, I can help my fellow Streons much more from the outside than if I remain within my former ancient clan."

As a well-educated Terran scion, Alexa Streon possessed the capacity to make clear and rational decisions for herself. She did not allow her irrational emotions get in the way of making objectively better decisions.

Ves was still impressed by how decisively she was able to commit to a path that was emotionally difficult for her. He had seen plenty of potential first-class recruits fail the loyalty test to understand how difficult it was for proud Terrans to cut ties to their clans and superstates.

Hopefully, Alexa had managed to gather enough resolve for her to be sincere enough about working for the Larkinson Clan.

The pair began to move to the space that the Premier Branch had dedicated towards inductions.

"If you manage to pass the final test, you will need to stop thinking of yourself as a Streon or a Terran. The interests of the Larkinson Clan must always take priority over the interests of your former allegiances. That said, there is no reason to unreasonably harm or target the Terran Alliance and its many powerful clans unless they have provoked us somehow. You can still leverage your existing ties with them to increase our cooperation with its institutions."

"I understand, professor." Alexa dutifully nodded. "Will I be able to gain my own companion spirit once I join?"

"Of course." Ves grinned back at her. "I will personally make and customize one for you. I will make sure that it will come with abilities that should particularly help you master the art of designing living mechs."

"Thank you, sir! This is a gracious gift!"

Enough time had passed for more and more well-connected people to learn about the power of companion spirits.

The Red Association had yet to make companion spirit fruits on a wide scale, but there were still enough people who received this rare reward to showcase the abilities that they had gained!

It helped that many of them were expert pilots that already possessed much stronger and more developed spiritualities.

The companion spirit fruits found extremely fertile soil, and there was no need to wait for the companion spirit seeds to mature and turn into powerful new life forms!

"You don't need to thank me." Ves replied in a good natured manner. "Companion spirits are much more common in my clan. I invented them, after all. The service that I am willing to extend to you may be rare to outsiders, but it is easily attainable to any Larkinson that has proven his or her value. The best form of thanks you can give me is to utilize your upcoming gift to the best possible effect. Do not waste your companion spirit. Make use of it to design better living mechs and help me relieve my workload. You are fully capable of designing first-class multipurpose mechs that are up to standard, correct?"

"Partially, sir." Alexa answered. "My experience is not high, but I am confident that I have learned more high technologies than the average Terran Apprentice Mech Designer. I am confident that I can design a decent mid-tier first-class multipurpose mech, but without strong design philosophies to enhance its performance, my work will never be competitive enough to sell on the market."

Ves did not mind this at all. "That is already enough for a mech designer of your age. I can start to work on first-class mech design projects early if you manage to advance to Journeyman Mech Designer soon enough. If our design philosophies are similar enough, we can combine our respective advantages and collaborate on experimental projects that should have much greater value to certain first-class audiences!"

Chapter 5347 E-Technology

"Congratulations. You have formally joined the Larkinson Clan. Your new identity shall be Alexa Streon-Larkinson, though it is not necessary to add that last part in normal conversations. How do you feel now that you have joined my clan?"

The young woman still continued to kneel in front of the large statue of the Golden Cat.

In order to commemorate this important induction ritual, she had changed into ceremonial robes that had especially been prepared by the best tailors of her former ancient clan.

The relatively modest-sized ceremonial hall offered a suitable stage for the woman to take the final step in severing her ties from the Terran Alliance and join a completely different polity.

From now on, Alexa was obliged to stand up for the Larkinson Clan!

Even if her grandfather or any other Terran contacted her in order to ask for favor, she needed to consider whether her response would benefit or harm her fellow Larkinsons.

It was only now that she formed a connection to the Larkinson Clan that she understood how so many entrants got along so well with each other.

No matter how many differences they had with each other, under the overarching warmth and love radiated by the Golden Cat, the Larkinson Network encouraged every clansman to treat each other as family!

The way Alexa looked at her new patriarch and the other Larkinsons gathered in the ceremonial hall had changed.

She already shared a bond of trust and friendship with Ves, but she had yet to spend enough time with the other members of the Larkinson to develop any similar bonds. They might as well be strangers.

All of that changed now that she had accepted the identity of a Larkinson in heart and soul.

It had taken her a lot of effort and a lot of preparation to shift her mentality to this extent. She had already known that a lot of Terran applicants failed to enter the Larkinson Clan due to their lingering attachments to their clans and their home state.

How could Alexa possibly make the same mistake? With the encouragement of her grandfather and the repayment of much of the benefits that she received throughout her childhood, Alexa managed to settle all of her perceived debts to the Terran superstate and reduce the psychological burden of cutting her old ties.

All of it was worth it in the end. Perhaps other people might think that she had been a reckless gamble by leaving one of the strongest and wealthiest ancient clans of the Terran Alliance, but she had a lot of confidence in the potential of the Larkinson Clan.

Even if she had yet to formally join the Larkinsons up until this point, Ves had already given her plenty of hints about his clan's ambitious plans for the future!

As far as Alexa was concerned, she could enjoy a much brighter future as a Larkinson as opposed to a Streon.

She could also help her former relatives far more as a prominent Larkinson mech designer than a forgettable descendant of a well-established ancient clan.

The Streon Ancient Clan did not suffer a shortage in talents anyway. She knew quite well that the opportunities that the Streons had reserved for her in the coming decades could easily be allocated to the other descendants that had entered the same profession.

With that thought in mind, Alexa had no regrets about this major turn in her life. She was free to embrace her new life as a Larkinson without any lingering guilt!

As if to celebrate her successful entry into the clan, the statue of the Golden Cat shone before a manifestation of the ancestral spirit emerged above her head!

"Nyaaaaa-"

The glowing and intangible spirit radiated so much warmth and love that Alexa couldn't help but embrace the adorable little thing in her arms.

Although she found it rather strange at how she was able to 'hold' a creature that shouldn't be physical, her analytical mind took a backseat to her newfound affection to her newly adopted family.

"So you are the real power behind the clan. I didn't expect you to be so... cute. Is this your superpower?"

"Nyaaaaa!"

As Goldie indoctrinated the latest member of the Larkinson Clan with her feline charm, Ves and the others who witnessed the ritual stepped forward and congratulated the former Terran.

"Welcome to the clan, Miss Alexa." Gavin Neumann bowed. "I have been looking forward to your entry. Once you have completed your induction process, our clan would like to request your assistance on a few matters related to our ongoing cooperation and interactions with different Terran institutions. We could sorely use the advice and intervention of a knowledgeable and well-connected insider. While our current deals with the Terrans are relatively satisfactory on the surface, we have encountered plenty of hindrances due to lack of understanding. We have been unable to make much progress due to the obstacles in our way."

The young woman did not look surprised at this. "Terran society is based on long-term trust and partnerships. We rarely work with foreigners and outsiders that have only emerged for a short time. Many different groups come and go like dayflies. For clans that have lasted for centuries if not millenia, there is not much benefit to engaging with these groups. Even if our patriarch is able to present highly desirable inventions, the heritage of the oldest continuous state is not for show. I can readily tell you that our Streon Ancient Clan as well as every other established clan has started up entire research groups that are tasked with unearthing the secrets of our hidden past."

That attracted the interest of Ves.

"How much progress have these research groups made?"

"Their progress will surprise you, I think." Alexa responded in a measured tone. "While I am not informed of any developments that have matched or surpassed your own unique inventions, the sheer quantity of Terran researchers allocated to the new research projects have yielded many different results. The impact of every successful result may not be great, but by pooling so many

advancements together, I believe that the Terran research groups have made decent strides in piecing together systematic theories and applications. Once they have established a proper scientific framework on hyper technology and E-technology, the Terran Alliance will be able to unleash all kinds of powerful advancements."

Hyper technology was any sort of tech that made effective use of the properties of hyper materials. It combined matter with E energy and was easier to work with for most people.

E-technology was a lot more special as it primarily dealt with E Energy! Many people simply couldn't get started in this field because they lack the ability to perceive and manipulate this ubiquitous new form of energy.

However, as Ves' astonishing specialty products already showed, the value and potential of E-technology was just as great as hyper technology if not more!

If Ves hadn't taken the lead by unveiling his companion spirits and kinship networks, the other powers of red humanity would have never invested so much effort into digging up ancient cultivation heritages!

"I guess I have to look forward to much greater competition in the following years." Ves grinned.

In fact, he already got a slight sense of how much progress the various human powers were making.

After months of cooperating with the Transhumanist Faction, the specially adapted E-supercomputer built inside the Blinkyverse had leap across so many generations that it had actually started to come into power!

Even though it was still not powerful enough to satisfy his demands, Ves could actually make decent use out of the additional processing power to speed up his work to an extent!

Once his collaborators over at the Transhumanist Faction managed to solve the most difficult hurdles that prevented them from producing more advanced E-circuitry, the quantity of computing power that could be produced out of intangible chips would definitely skyrocket!

The development of most E-computers had already surpassed a threshold where they could no longer be powered by base levels of exotic radiation.

While there was a seemingly endless supply of E energy in the galactic environment, the rate of flow in the Red Ocean was not that impressive.

Just like how absorbing light could never power a machine as large and demanding as a mech, it was a dream to rely on passive E energy radiation to power the more advanced E-computers!

The Transhumanists and other groups that were working on developing E-computers were having quite a headache about this issue.

Blinky was different! The companion spirit specialized in absorbing lots of E energy. Not only that, but the Blinkyverse was not just a giant reservoir of energy, but also actively circulated it by simulating a real universe!

Even if the laws of physics were rather funky inside, it had still formed a complete planet and was already in the process of forming a star and other stellar objects!

The three fundamental laws of thermodynamics still worked along the same principles. This was important because it meant that energy never really disappeared when it was used to power different devices. It just turned into different forms of energy.

No matter how many E-computers Ves and Blinky built on the surface of the primordial planet, all of the energy they received as input eventually came out in other forms of energy!

Ves did not have to worry about the Blinkyverse draining itself of energy as it circulated throughout the internal universe.

He just had to pay attention to not disrupt the universal ecosystem too much and destroy the natural balance.

Even if the E-computers became a little too demanding, Blinky could always compensate by devouring more exotic radiation from the outside environment!

In short, Ves enjoyed a huge advantage in the utilization of E-computers over other parties.

In contrast, the Transhumanists struggled to create their own internal universes and divert valuable manpower and resources into developing all kinds of supporting E-systems.

While their efforts would ultimately pay off and enable them to make substantial strides forward, Ves was confident that he would always enjoy a head-start due to the unique properties of Blinky and the Blinkyverse!

In fact, developing a successful E-computer was not the extent of his plans relating to the Blinkyverse.

He had quietly spent his time on developing another upgrade to the Blinkyverse. He did not take the initiative to share this secret project with the Transhumanists as he considered this work as one of his future trump cards.

If his efforts paid off, then an aspect that he previously regarded as a weakness would likely turn into one of his greatest strengths!

It was not time yet, though. Today was all about Alexa's successful entry into the clan.

After she spoke with a few of the Larkinsons in attendance, the newly adopted Larkinson finally turned to Ves.

"Am I finally allowed to gain a companion spirit?" She asked.

Ves nodded. "Yup. There are no barriers in the way anymore. The paperwork has all gone through. According to the terms of my agreement with the Red Association, I can only freely grant my companion spirits to the members of the Larkinson Clan. Since you are officially registered as one, I can finally fulfill one of your dreams. Have you already put much thought into the design of your new companion?"

"I have. Let me transfer the files to you, sir."

"Hmmm. A cat. I'm not surprised. Your requirements are not too demanding, so it shouldn't be too troublesome to realize this vision."

"That is good to hear. Will I truly be able to get started with living mechs once I obtain this companion spirit?"

"It is not strictly necessary, but it will make your life a lot easier." Ves responded. "I believe that it should easily save you a few years of exploration. This is not only important to you, but also to me. I have been looking forward to having a capable assistant at my side..."

Chapter 5348 Alexa's Companion Spirit

Ves already had plenty of experience in creating custom companion spirits. There was almost no chance of failure.

Since Blinky was tasked with doing the heavy lifting, his abilities were extremely crucial to the delicate process.

Fortunately, the Blinky had only grown more powerful since the start of the Age of Dawn.

The Imaginary Universe Method mainly focused on increasing his energy reserves and building up his own universe, but it also advanced his qualities as well.

His control over energy had grown a bit more exquisite than before, allowing him to operate on Alexa's spirituality with a delicate and precise touch.

Compared to most people, Alexa's spirituality was already stronger than average.

Her superior background, her frequent proximity to her powerful grandfather, her persistent pursuit of living mechs and more all played a role in shaping her to become the woman she was today.

Of course, the passive absorption of E energy radiation also helped to strengthen her spirituality over time!

This gave Blinky enough room to create a relatively complete companion spirit from scratch.

Ves only made use of two spiritual ingredients.

While there was plenty room for more, he did not see the need to complicate this job by adding useless variables.

Unlike the companion spirit seeds he designed for his children, Alexa was already a mature mech designer who knew what she wanted out of her career.

This was why Ves devoted himself to creating a spiritual cat that was only made out of life energy.

Even if the resulting companion spirit was unable to breathe life into Alexa's creations, it would still come with a complementary ability that could serve her well in her future work!

Aside from that, she still had a chance of inheriting Ves' design philosophy.

As long as she managed to advance to the rank of Journeyman Mech Designer with a similar enough specialization, she still had hope of being able to create living mechs by herself!

With that in mind, Ves and Alexa both agreed that the latter's companion spirit had to possess a complimentary ability.

Just as Blinky was able to absorb, process and output a lot of spiritual energy, Alexa's own spiritual cat needed to give her a strong advantage that would remain relevant throughout the rest of her career.

Alexa's companion spirit gradually took shape. Blinky skillfully combined and sculpted the fragmented spiritual ingredients into a brand new life form.

Ves only utilized two spiritual ingredients this time.

He donated a considerably greater quantity of his own spiritual energy given that it played a much more important role this time.

He combined it with spiritual energy freely given by Gaia in order to add another dimension of life energy to the mix.

It turned out that Ves did not need to worry about Gaia refusing his latest request.

The recently emerged True God had already formed a cooperative relationship with General Axelar Streon.

As his granddaughter, Alexa benefited from the favorable circumstances. The fact that she used to be a Terran also helped to increase Gaia's favor.

The resulting companion spirit therefore combined some of the best traits of Ves and Gaia, leading to an outcome that Ves couldn't fully predict!

Although Ves was able to influence the traits of his creations to an extent, life was inherently complicated and unpredictable. This was especially relevant in cases where he played with forces that he didn't fully understand.

The most important variable that made this job more difficult was the fact that Ves was working with the spiritual energy donated by a True God this time!

Compared with the more low-level spiritual energy of other entities, there was a real qualitative difference with the energy utilized by post-divinity entities.

To be honest, genuine high-level spiritual energy was far too powerful and uncontrollable for Ves to work with. Even Vulkan needed to grow an entire Heart of Steel in order to reluctantly contain and digest the small amount of high-level metal energy that Blinky originally stole from Cassandra Breyer.

It was not a good idea to rashly expose a relatively weak Apprentice Mech Designer to any form of high-level energy. Alexa was far from qualified to harness the power of a True God.

Fortunately, once Ves made the necessary request, Gaia actively put effort into downgrading her spiritual energy to the point where it degenerated into an inferior form.

While the processed energy was not as good as the original, Ves only needed it for its attributes, not its potency.

The process of growth and evolution had to proceed step by step. If Ves wanted to give Alexa's companion spirit the best possible growth prospects, then he needed to focus on giving her a proper foundation instead of a speedy shortcut.

Although Blinky most certainly had to put more effort into processing the degenerated energy donated by Gaia, the Star Cat could still rely on his strong ability to manipulate all kinds of spiritual energies!

As time continued to pass, the newly created cat began to wake up as Blinky had managed to forge yet another companion spirit!

"Myah... myah..."

Alexa watched with amazement as her companion spirit had finally taken a life of her own. The semi-transparent ragdoll cat with a symmetrical pattern of white, gray and dark brown fur was more than just a creature.

It was another part of herself.

The newly inducted Larkinson closed her eyes in order to explore the brand new senses of her companion spirit.

From the perspective of the cat that she was directly connected to, an entirely new reality opened up to her. As the floating ragdoll cat slowly swept her gaze across the workshop, she noticed a lot of phenomena that had always existed but never noticed due to her inferior perception!

The new companion spirit saw the flow of all of the E energy radiation in the environment.

These flows of mixed energies uniformly flowed in a single direction that pointed away from Messier 87.

The companion spirit also noticed the spiritual bond that connected her to a vast and intricate network of connections. Alexa grew amazed that this web of channels spanned over enormous distances.

The mystery of the Larkinson Network had become clear to Alexa's newly gained sight. She even spotted a powerful and formidable golden glow that occupied the center of the magical network!

It wasn't until Alexa set her sights on her new patriarch and mentor that she was able to get to know a greater part of his true self!

Similar to the Golden Cat, Ves had grown so powerful that he appeared to glow in her sights.

Though Ves mostly kept this part of himself contained, he decided to unveil a part of it just to give Alexa an interesting sight.

There was more to Ves that impressed Alexa.

Her new companion spirit observed a flaming ball that was buried in the center of her patriarch's head. Alexa knew without a shadow of a doubt that it encapsulated the essence of his design philosophy!

It was a pity that Alexa had yet to detect anything comparable in her own self, but that could be remedied in the future.

There were more oddities about Ves that she could spend hours on analyzing. The hammers that he carried on his toolbelt were veritable artifacts. His entire body faintly glowed with not just one, but two entirely different variations of power. There were even hints of additional layers underneath what he showed on the surface.

The flood of new data overwhelmed the former Terran. Alexa could not even begin to analyze all of the new sights that fought for her attention!

"This... is... incredible." She gasped as she finally opened her own pair of eyes. "Is this what you and everyone else with a companion spirit see every day?"

"Pretty much. You get used to it after a while. What you are seeing through your new companion spirit is different manifestations of E energy that exists in another realm that is parallel to the one that our bodies occupy. Now that you have opened your perception to a hidden layer of reality, you have gained the qualifications to manipulate it in a deliberate fashion."

"Is that what you intend to teach me, sir?"

Ves nodded. "Yes. Since the Red Two has yet to announce their latest unified technological developments, I will teach you my own theoretical framework. From there, you can choose to learn more specific methods and techniques from me, or you can choose to explore on your own. Whether you want to follow my footsteps or find your own direction, I don't mind either way. I am sure you can contribute a lot to our clan no matter your choice."

"Thank you." Alexa said with a grateful smile. "I have already made up my mind to an extent. If possible, I still wish to learn how to design mechs that can come to life under my power. Too few people can do this. The Senechai had spent decades searching for other mech designers that could produce comparable works, but he never succeeded. This shows how rare you are. If I am able to learn your craft, then our clan and our society will no longer suffer an irreplaceable loss if anything happens to you. This is a strong and persistent concern to many leaders who have a vested interest in your work."

Ves nodded in understanding. "Then we have little time to waste. Once you have recovered and familiarized yourself with your new companion spirit, I will start to teach you right away."

His attention eventually shifted back to the new companion spirit.

"What have you decided to call your new companion spirit?"

"Maia."

"That is simple enough. Have you already learned what she can do? I think I have a vague idea of her abilities, but I am not entirely sure about my guess."

"I think... I know what she can do. Can I try it out on you? I believe that Maia's abilities won't cause you any harm."

"Sure."

The spiritual ragdoll cat slowly flew forward until one of her paws came into contact with Ves.

A warm and nurturing spurt of energy tried to enter Ves' body.

He had to lower his defenses to allow Maia to insert her energy and exert a measure of active control.

Surprisingly enough, Ves did not really feel as if Maia had intruded into himself. Her energy appeared to contain the same trait of universal compatibility as Gaia's spiritual energy!

Once Maia's energy approached Ves' spirituality, the former melted and began to nourish the latter!

Although it had no effect as Ves was in good condition, his eyes widened as he realized what Maia was doing.

"Your companion spirit... is nourishing my spirituality. This is useful! Can you do more than heal any spiritual injuries?"

Alexa furrowed her brows. "I believe so. I sense that Maia can exert her energy in a slightly different fashion. Let me try..."

Maia's spiritual energy began to shift into a slightly different state that caused it to produce a different effect.

Though Maia was still far too weak to produce any noticeable effect on Ves, it quickly became clear what else the new companion spirit could do under her own power!

"If I am interpreting this correctly, your companion spirit should be able to use her energy to speed up the growth of comparable entities. It just didn't work for me because the gap between us is too great." Ves concluded.

It might also be that this ability only worked on younger spirits.

Alexa looked intrigued. "What does that mean, sir?"

"This is really useful in my field of specialization. One of the greatest weaknesses of my design philosophy is that it takes a lot of time for living products to reach maturity. If Maia can cut this process short by several weeks or months, she can contribute a lot to enhancing the combat effectiveness of our new living mechs."

These auxiliary abilities were enough to turn Maia into a valuable addition to the Larkinson Clan!

Chapter 5349 Introduction to Larkinson Mechs

Alexa Streon had become a Larkinson.

This was a significant event. Her formal entry into the clan not only meant that the Premier Branch had gained a proper first-class mech designer, but also gave the Larkinsons hope that Ves could effectively pass on his teachings!

Although Ves himself cared little about this issue, many people placed a huge amount of importance on inheritance and continuity.

As impressive as Ves may be, he was not immortal. He could die or disappear at any point.

The fact that he managed to stay alive and well given all of the times he put himself at great risk did not comfort a lot of people.

What if his luck ran out one day?

What if he encountered an enemy that he and his forces couldn't defeat this time?

What if he left the Larkinson Clan on a voluntary or involuntary basis?

The Larkinson Clan's status and prestige would instantly plummet as a response!

The lives of many Larkinsons would almost certainly become worse in the future.

Without a brilliant mech designer that could attract a lot of support from the Red Association and other first-rate powers, there was no reason for the Larkinson Clan to merit as much investment as before.

Human society could be cruel in that sense.

While Ves had put a decent amount of effort into passing on his teachings to Gloriana, Ketis, Maikel and Zanthar, none of them had mastered the essence of his full inheritance.

This was why the entry of Alexa was so significant. Even though she only became exposed to Ves' work relatively recently, her qualifications and potential were vastly superior!

It did not matter whether Alexa was unable to live up to her promise. The Larkinson Clan of today could afford to bet on multiple horses.

If the former scion of the Streon Ancient Clan was not able to learn the art of designing living mechs, then Ves could always place his hopes on the first batch of graduates of the Eden Institute that had received his teachings.

Not all of the fourth and fifth-year mech design students of today possessed any talent or interest in working with living mechs, but there should be enough of them to give Ves additional options.

All of that was for the future. For now, the Larkinsons put in a modest amount of effort to welcome Alexa Streon into their clan.

No ordinary new recruit merited so much attention, but even if everyone ignored her impressive background, the value that she could provide to the clan was enough to give her special treatment!

This was how the Larkinson Clan. It was not so different from other powerful organizations in that regard. Merit and value always determined a person's importance.

As the Larkinsons organized a small banquet to celebrate Alexa's entry, Ves carefully observed as the woman in question began to strike up a conversation with Gloriana.

He knew his wife well enough that she always maintained a lot of vigilance towards any woman that came close to him. The problem became exacerbated when the woman was a mech designer who was bound to work with Ves on a frequent basis going forward!

"Welcome to our clan." Gloriana spoke in a calm and even tone. "I look forward to your contributions."

Alexa responded with a charming smile. "I am eager to learn and assist in the design of my new clan's living mechs. I am also looking forward to studying your unique approach to mechs. Your husband has explained your god body method to me before, I have never been able to study it first-hand."

"You are in luck, then." Gloriana smirked. "We have recently completed the Greenaxe Project and the Bloodripper Project. They are both quasi-first-class expert mechs that incorporate some of our latest advancements. Their intended users are on their way to New Constantinople to test our latest high-end works and bring them back to the middle zones. Now that you have joined our clan, I can permit you to study our latest mechs. I look forward to receiving the input of a first-class mech designer."

Alexa responded with a modest smile. "Do not expect much from me. Much of my expertise is related to first-class technologies that are normally unrelated to second-class mechs. My overall experience and judgment of mechs cannot match that of a seasoned Journeyman and masterwork mech designer such as yourself. As the pioneer of a means to enable mechs to upgrade their quality

on an autonomous basis, I believe that you can teach me much about your own area of specialization. I would love to receive lessons from you as well."

As the two women continued to talk with each other, Ves did not detect any signs of tension or conflict.

The two apparently got along pretty well! They even started to talk about further cooperation!

It was not until Alexa finally concluded her talk with Gloriana that she explained why nothing happened.

"I have already spoken to your wife numerous times in the past. A woman like her can be... protective, but it does not take an excessive amount of effort to reassure her concerns."

Ves looked impressed. Sure enough, first-raters were different from other people, and an elite Terran scion like Alexa Streon was even better!

A woman like her could easily navigate her way through complicated social situations. The fact that she had done her research on Gloriana and adopted the appropriate strategy spoke well for her ability to contribute to the clan in the future.

Ves even thought about asking Alexa to tutor her daughter.

In the days that ensued, Alexa began to immerse herself in the Larkinson Clan.

Although Diandi Base was too small compared to the expeditionary fleet, Ves and the other Larkinsons stationed on the planet tried their best to treat her as a genuine Larkinson.

Alexa got introduced to all kinds of weird and unusual stuff that were common sense to any Larkinson but completely unique to outsiders!

From design spirits to totems, Ves did not hold back in introducing her to the various specialties that made his clan different.

"So this is the woman who promises to bring death at the first-class level?" Helena asked in a flat tone. "She's just an Apprentice Mech Designer. Your clan already has hundreds of them. What makes her special? Is it her companion spirit? Her cat reminds me of Gaia and our mother."

Alexa truly appeared stunned at this time.

"Sir..."

"Yes?"

"There are sources that claim that you actually consider some of your creations to be your relatives. I never put much credence to these claims as they do not sound plausible to my ears, but... do you truly consider her to be your sister?"

"Ahem! I am not just any sister. I am his eldest sister!" Helena insisted as her energy manifestation flew closer to Alexa. "I may not be older than him on a chronological basis, but I

am most certainly his eldest on a mental basis! Even our mother acknowledges that I am the eldest and most mature out of the two of us. Anyway, I am pleased to meet you. I hope

that you can improve quickly so that you can take over the chores that occupy far too much of my brother's precious time."

The former Terran responded with a controlled smile. "I shall do my best, but I have much to learn before I can satisfy your request."

"Great! It was about time that Ves managed to get himself a decent assistant! I would love to introduce you to our mother, but she has been preoccupied as of late."

Helena and Alexa chatted for a bit longer before the Daughter of Death said goodbye and retracted her awareness.

The Apprentice Mech Designer slowly turned towards Ves. "Tell me the truth. Is she... truly your sister, or is she a creation that is posing as one?"

"It's complicated, Alexa." Ves sighed. "The answer depends on your definition of life and kinship. I don't want to argue philosophy with you, so I will keep it simple. As far as I am concerned, Helena is my eldest sister and the Superior Mother is my mother. Yes, I know it might not make total sense to you, but I am not ready to explain the full story behind them to you. Just treat them as they are my actual siblings and you should be okay."

"Very well..."

Alexa probably contemplated whether Ves was insane. The probability that this was the case had shot up by quite a few percentage points.

This strange incident did not depress her enthusiasm about the rest of the Larkinson Clan.

After familiarizing herself with many different aspects of her new family and organization, Ves and Gloriana finally introduced her to their latest completed works.

The Greenaxe Project and the Bloodripper Project were two vastly different expert mechs that also shared a lot in common.

As products envisioned just before the Age of Dawn but had only been completed after the Great Severing occurred, the two expert mechs already incorporated new advancements in hyper technology.

While neither of them ended up as masterwork mechs, they were still impressive in terms of power and quality!

"So these are the two expert mechs that you are about to deliver to the pair of expert pilots that have broken through not too long ago?" Alexa asked as Maia playfully flew around her body. "I can tell that they are much more powerful than the typical expert mechs designed for low-tier expert pilots. Are you not afraid that their new expert pilots cannot properly handle all of this power?"

"That is indeed a concern, but not as much as you think." Ves calmly responded. "I have introduced you to the MSTS yesterday, so you should know that it can accurately simulate the performance of expert mechs. Our low-tier expert pilots can spend enough hours in the MSTS to thoroughly familiarize themselves with their new machines and master all of their nuances before they enter into their first real battle with their new machines."

With the help of the MSTS, no Larkinson expert pilot should ever be able to make poor use out of their powerful living expert mechs!

It was inexcusable if any of these powerful champions still struggled to control their powerful machines after months of dedicated practice.

Seeing that Ves did not worry about this problem at all, Alexa did not push her argument any further.

She instead began to study other noticeable aspects about the new expert mechs.

"Compared to the living mechs that I have already seen, these ones are different. One of them feels oddly empty. The other one feels... just as alive as other humans."

"That is because they are." Ves smiled. "The second-class mechs that the Eden Institute imported from the middle zones are all mass produced mechs. These two are our handmade works. Do you know why we prize craftsmanship so much? This is part of the reason why. Both of them have reached the standard of a third order living mech. The Bloodripper Project is a classical living mech, so the livelier its personality, the stronger it becomes. The Greenaxe Project is a so-called second skin living mech, so it is deliberately kept blank so that it can best embody its pilot."

"Third order? Second skin?"

"You'll learn about that later." Ves waved his hand. "There are many distinctions between living mechs, and I am sure that more variations will emerge in the future. The development of living mechs is still at an early stage. Perhaps in the future you can contribute your own variation to our body of work."

Alexa shook her head. "That is a steep expectation. Even if your two expert mechs have not reached the first-class standard, I can judge that the work that you have done to them cannot be matched so easily."

"That's okay, Alexa. You still have plenty of time ahead of yourself. Just work towards becoming a Journeyman first. Then you will get your chance to work on mech design projects like these."

Chapter 5350 Testing New Advancements

It took a bit of time before the intended pilots of the Greenaxe Project and the Bloodripper Project arrived in New Constantinople.

Once the Bluejay Fleet's courier vessel brought them over to Diandi Base, the expert pilots first went through a thorough examination in order to verify their current condition.

Unlike the other expert pilots of the Larkinson Clan, Venerable Kolak Glendale and Venerable Pedro Rodrigo had yet to make use of any general cultivation elixirs.

While these amazing elixirs had the effect of accelerating the growth of resonance strength, they were made to speed up the growth of expert pilots, not replace this essential process entirely.

An expert pilot that forcefully boosted their resonance strength yet never seriously fought with an actual expert mech would become completely useless at the later stages!

Any serious battle-tested high-tier expert pilot could easily demolish a peer that had only made it this far by piling up elixirs after elixirs.

This was also one of the reasons why Ves felt reassured with letting his own pilots make use of the elixirs. They had already fought and challenged powerful opponents plenty of times.

Even now, the expeditionary fleet of the Golden Skull Alliance as well as the Warborn under the command of General Ark Larkinson had moved right back to the border regions in order to defeat more aliens!

In any case, once Venerable Glendale and Venerable Rodrigo left with their new expert mechs, they would soon be able to speed up their growth in a controlled manner!

The two pilots expressed great enthusiasm for their upcoming testing session. Once they had read through the manual and familiarized themselves with all of the unique settings, they soon changed into their newly issued piloting suits and waited for their turn to come.

The Larkinsons decided to conduct the test on the proving grounds that was situated outside of Diandi Base.

Ves and Gloriana had already anticipated the need of a large and extensive site to test the performance of their new mechs, so they commissioned the Terrans to construct the necessary facilities.

There was nothing fancy about the proving grounds. There were large spaces, obstacle courses, bot dispensers, privacy screens as well as more secure underground testing chambers in case there was a need for greater secrecy.

Ves did not really care that much about maintaining total confidentiality this time. Neither the Greenaxe nor the Bloodripper were all that strategically important to the Larkinson Clan at this time. He wouldn't lose any sleep if the mechers or the Terrans happened to observe the newly fabricated expert mechs.

Ves, Gloriana and Alexa had moved to a well-protected control tower that granted them a clear overview of the surrounding terrain.

The lack of assistant mech designers increased their burden to an extent, but it was not a big issue. They could just go over the data logs after the tests had ended in order to gain a complete understanding of the performance of the new machines.

Besides, Alexa alone was worth dozens of assistant mech designers by herself! Her ability to process data and interpret patterns were so good that Ves and Gloriana could focus on the areas that interested them the most.

"Can I ask you a question, sir?"

"Go ahead, Alexa. You're my disciple now. Asking questions comes with the territory."

"I still do not fully understand why you are investing so much attention and effort into the Greenaxe Project and the Bloodripper Project. These are extravagant machines at the second-class level. Even if their assigned pilots can reluctantly make use of all of their features, they are still disproportionately costly compared to other second-class expert mechs. If future breakthroughs happen at a higher frequency, it becomes increasingly less tenable for the two of you to commit so much energy into these kinds of projects."

Ves smiled even as he continued to set up his workstation.

"You are partially right. We do not intend to invest an unreasonable amount of effort and resources into the development of second-class expert mechs going forward. Our second-class colleagues in

the Design Department can pick up the slack while our attention shifts to first-class mech design projects. The Greenaxe and the Bloodripper are the last of their kind. We started them, so we have to accompany them to the end of their initial development track."

Gloriana provided an additional explanation.

"The Greenaxe and the Bloodripper have greater significance to us than to meet the needs of two of our low-tier expert pilots. They also serve as testbeds of our latest technological innovations. They possess features that are not present in our older generation works. It is vital for us to test our latest advancements and collect enough empirical data. The results from these experiments are vital to the development of the Jupiter Project and the Blood Star Mark II Project."

In other words, the Greenaxe and the Bloodripper could also be regarded as experimental works!

They contained a lot of new and untested technological advancements that might not perform as stably and optimally as their developers wished.

By testing them out in less important expert mech designs, the Miracle Couple could gain much more certainty that their upcoming high-tier expert mech designs would perform well despite pushing so many technological limits!

Realization dawned in Alexa's eyes. "I understand. What are the key advancements that you intend you to observe during the initial tests?"

"There are several key systems that merit a lot of attention, but let us focus on the basics first. We should start with the Greenaxe as that is the simpler of the two machines."

They waited as Venerable Kolak Glendale entered the cockpit and settled inside his new battle partner for the first time.

Unlike many of the other Larkinson expert mechs, the Greenaxe lacked a distinct personality and ego, so it did not actively respond to its expert pilot on its own initiative.

The Greenaxe was rather dull in that aspect, but this was a deliberate design feature.

It wasn't until Venerable Glendale activated his powerful machine and interfaced with it that the Greenaxe truly came alive in a way that could not be fully described!

Venerable Glendale already started to resonate with his machine despite not having practiced this skill!

The more Alexa gazed at the Greenaxe that had been placed in the middle of a field down below, the more she had the illusion that she was looking at a giant version of its expert pilot.

She let out a small gasp. "So this is what you mean by second skin. This variation of living mech gives up on turning a mech into a living partner so that the pilot can exert greater control over the entire mech frame. Won't the burden be greater for Venerable Glendale?"

"It depends." Ves responded. "The Greenaxe is not a complicated mech, so the burden of controlling it is not that great to begin with. Even if we install additional modules later on, Glendale will still be able to maintain a high degree of control as he grows stronger. From what we have observed from the Mars, it is no problem at all for an ace pilot to embody his entire machine."

The Greenaxe started to move and perform a standard testing routine. The more Venerable Glendale moved his formidable melee expert mech, the more he became proficient in its control.

This was one of the advantages of a second skin mech. The pilot was able to ignore the barriers that got in the way of controlling a machine, allowing him to control it as if it was his actual body!

The advantages of this were especially great for melee mechs. When the Greenaxe started to lift up its green-edged greataxe and started to swing it around, the machine immediately displayed exquisite control and fluency over its own movements!

"The greataxe is the most powerful aspect of this expert mech." Gloriana spoke with pride. "With the help of a local development company, we managed to invent a new transphasic alloy mixture that combines a resonating exotic with a hyper material. This key feature allows the Greenaxe to cut through solid matter with crushing force. More importantly, we believe that it should be able to cut through transphasic energy shields with much greater efficiency, especially if it reaches masterwork quality in advance. I anticipate that it should only take three to four months before the greataxe can improve in quality, and that is only because the weapon is so massive."

That caused Alexa to grow confused.

"Shouldn't it take years for the god body method to produce a qualitative transformation?"

"That is indeed the case for my past works, but I have improved my design application since then." Gloriana confidently smirked. "I have recently completed the development of my second generation god body method. The Greenaxe and the Bloodripper are the first of my works to benefit from this advancement."

"How is it different from the first generation?"

"I am glad you asked, Alexa. Compared to the first generation of my tech, the second generation is faster and more efficient in every way. The greatest difference is that my expert mechs are embedded with concentrated hyper material nodes. You can think of them as seeds that are especially good at absorbing energy. These hyper material nodes can absorb a greater amount of spiritual feedback and exotic radiation to accelerate the transformation of a mech."

"That is not the extent of what these new hyper material nodes can do." Ves added.

"My husband is right. The original reason why I developed these nodes is to facilitate the process of selective advancement and repairs. You see, as long as the pilot or living mech sets priority on one or a handful of these hyper material nodes, much of the energies absorbed by a god body mech will only focus on improving the quality of a part of the mech frame. This is useful in many ways. The Greenaxe can concentrate on improving its axe first, thereby making it stronger and more effective at breaking through strong defenses. This is the most effective means of improving the expert mech's combat performance in the short term. The other parts of the expert mech can wait."

Alexa looked impressed!

"I see! This is even more useful for repairs!"

"Indeed." Gloriana grinned. "It is difficult for the mech designers and the mech technicians in the field to reproduce parts of masterwork quality. Outside of my husband and I, no one else in the clan can reproduce the high-quality parts. There will be circumstances in the future when our local branches and detachments have to take care of this problem themselves. With my second generation

god body solution, the logistics of bringing a damaged masterwork mech back to peak conditions have become much simpler."

Ves nodded in agreement. "The Larkinsons in the field can simply fabricate a replacement part of lesser quality and install it onto the damaged mech in question. The living mech can then set a priority on the new part, allowing it to channel the majority of absorbed energies into speeding up the improvement of its weakest components."

The implications of this advancement were enormous. At the very least, the expeditionary fleet could handle the repairs of its expert mechs without needing to rely on the help of Ves and Gloriana!

Alexa had a decent understanding of the significance of masterworks. They had become even more important in the Age of Dawn as masterwork products worked particularly well with E energy radiation!

The Greenaxe continued its test by chopping its new greataxe onto a transphasic energy shield.

Even though the transphasic energy shield was not that strong, the resonating greataxe easily managed to cut the barrier in half. This destabilized it to such an extent that it immediately collapsed!

"Excellent! The new alloy is doing its work!"

The transphasic greataxe managed to cut through solid alloys with even greater ease, and only got slowed down when it tried to cut through blocks of first-class alloys.

The only problem of cutting through so many difficult obstacles was that Venerable Glendale tired out at a much faster rate!

"This will improve in time. He's just a low-tier expert pilot for now."