

## The Mech 5441

### Chapter 5441 New Calendar

If Gavin asked whether Ves could fabricate a masterwork version of the Fey Project immediately after the death of the Elemental Lord, then he would definitely receive a negative response!

The loss of his previous Elemental Lord had left a deep scar in Ves' heart.

Although his most recent talk with his mother had successfully distracted him from this loss, Ves still felt a bit of apprehension at the thought of fabricating another mech so soon.

Even if Ves was willing to stay honest and fabricate an unadulterated version of the Elite Edition of the Fey Project, he still felt repulsed at the thought of doing so. It felt too much like attempting to fabricate an inferior substitute to the Elemental Lord.

How could Ves possibly create a masterwork mech when his mood was still affected by the trauma of his most recent loss?

It did not matter if Ves had learned in hindsight that the Elemental Lord had no chance of surviving the lightning tribulation from the start. Its design was too primitive due to his many shortcomings. He should have never attempted to bring this flamed work to life.

His rationality told him that he should accept his mistakes and move on from this incident.

His emotions still couldn't quite let go of the loss. Whether it was doomed from the beginning or not, in the brief time the Elemental Lord was alive, Ves genuinely developed a strong emotional attachment to his proudest and most remarkable living mech to date!

This was most definitely a problem. Ves recognized that he had developed a mental block that prevented him from smoothly fabricating another copy of the Fey Project.

He let out a sigh. "I am not quite ready to repeat my earlier effort. There is a high chance that I won't be able to produce anything special if I start another fabrication run. I need more time to restore my mood."

It was quite disappointing for Ves to be subjected to this constraint. Even though he had touched the third rung of Senfovon's Ladder of Craftsmanship, his grip on the second rung was not solid enough.

Ves had no intention of challenging the third rung anytime soon. It was clear that he still had to master the art of creating masterworks before he could think about taking the next step.

"As for the name... let us call it the Fey Fianna."

The odd name prompted Gavin to raise his eyebrow. "Is that another old mythological reference?"

"Pretty much. It sounds good enough, and it is certainly a unique and distinctive label. What matters is that the performance is good enough. That is indispensable for turning the Fey Fianna into a bestseller. While I am not that proud of the relatively superficial application of hyper technology, the E-technology that I have incorporated in this mech line is unmatched. I do not think that anyone else can design a drone mech with the benefits that I have imparted into my design."

Ves still had reasons to be proud of the Fey Fianna. The shortcomings in relation to hyper technology were not small, but they were excusable as the mech industry was still stuck in the early phase of the Hyper Generation.

"I might not be ahead of everyone else, but I am not too far behind either. I still have time to develop my own unique applications of hyper technology."

Ves definitely wanted to revisit the design of the Fey Fianna in a few years or so and update it into a proper elemental mech.

However, he only wanted to embark on this project after he had built up a robust toolbox of design solutions that were suited for the current mech generation.

In order to do that, he needed to explore what he could do in other mech design projects.

He still needed to finish up his remaining mech design projects.

He also had to take stock of the radical changes to his physique and other properties. Ves had yet to gain a clear idea on what he turned into and how that affected his productivity going forward.

When Ves almost wrapped up his meeting, his assistant gave him a piece of advice.

"I am concerned about you, boss. You have been working at a high intensity for over a month. You have skipped a lot of sleep when you started up three different fabrication runs in quick succession. I do not know how much you can tolerate, but if you are still anything close to a normal human, then it is time for you to take a break."

"Take... a break?"

"You know what I am talking about." Gavin spoke in a surprisingly assertive tone. "I know you still have mech design projects on your plate, but are they truly urgent enough for you to get back to them right away? Your mental condition has obviously deteriorated. You need a proper rest, and there is no better way to do so than to pause your responsibilities and spend more time with your children. Let me ask you this. How much time has passed since you last enjoyed a proper vacation?"

"Uh... I took days off, you know! I took my children to the city and everything!"

"Interrupting work for a single day every now and then does not constitute a proper vacation, Ves. Let's face it. You are too high-strung right now. You look and act like a mech designer that has been running on fumes. It might seem like a waste of time, but as long as you spend enough time on vacation to reset your mind state, I am sure that the problems related to your mood will go away."

Though Ves initially rejected the notion of dropping all of his responsibilities so that he could go on vacation, he gradually started to get around to the idea.

It had been a long time since his mood had dropped so much. Though Ves had been through worse, that did not mean that he was happy about his current state.

Taking the time to recover his mentality would ultimately yield more benefits in the long run.

Perhaps he might be able to recover his mood in time to fabricate a proper representation of the Fey Fianna.

"Okay." Ves relented. "You have convinced me. I guess it will be nice to take the kids out to an interesting new place for a week or so. It's too bad that my wife isn't here to accompany me, but oh well. Is there enough room in my schedule to squeeze in a vacation before the big event, or will I have to wait until it is over before I can take a lengthy break?"

"Given how fast the Bluejay Fleet can travel, we should be able to free up a week's worth of time in your schedule. It just so happens that the Joan Devos Elementary School will soon release its students for the upcoming holiday."

Ves raised his eyebrow. "What holiday?"

"The new holiday that commemorates the passing of the first year of the Age of Dawn, don't you recall? The Red Two has instituted a new calendar that introduces several holidays that did not exist before. I think the mechers and the fleeters want to encourage us to move on from the Age of Mechs and stop pining about the good old days. There are many people who complain about putting our calendar out of sync with the standard one that has always been used in the old galaxy."

That caused Ves to frown for a moment.

Unlike his assistant, Ves had gained a lot more awareness of the plots taking place above everyone's heads.

The new calendar deliberately broke from the calendar of the old galaxy in order to distance red humanity from the Milky Way.

It was one of the many cultural changes the Red Two had made to shape red humanity into a more independent civilization.

Ves did not take these changes as lightly as others. The curse of knowledge had forced him to notice the deeper undercurrents behind this deliberate strategy to steer red humanity's destiny towards a specific destination.

That did not mean that he had to act on the information that he possessed. So what if red humanity arbitrarily changed the calendar? All he cared about was that there were no problems in bringing his children along for the upcoming holiday.

"Will I be able to bring the kids to Bortele?"

"It is not advisable." Gavin seriously responded. "You can submit an application for an extended leave if you want to, but it will cause your children to fall behind in their studies. They can partially make up for it through virtual schooling and self study, but I think it is best to just send them back to New Constantinople VIII after your vacation is over. There is no compelling reason to bring them to the Bortele System. It is also not exactly suitable to bring them to a militarized star system."

He was right. The Bortele System had changed from a fairly remote and underdeveloped port system to a fortified stronghold.

A lot of armed forces had congregated in the star system, and that attracted a lot of service providers that sought to take care of their needs.

It was certainly not a place to relax and spend more quality time with his children.

"Alright." Ves shrugged. "I think that Gloriana should almost be ready to head back at that time, so I guess it will be fine. Have you come up with any suggestions on where I should enjoy my vacation?"

Gavin had already conducted research on this matter. He activated a projection that presented three different holiday destinations.

"I assume that you do not want to spend your vacation in New Constantinople, so I have looked for various destinations that are somewhere on the way to Bortele."

He highlighted the first planet.

"Nirian IX-B is an icy resort planet that is located on the edge of the Agamemnon Upper Zone. It features a lot of ice and snow for you to partake in all sorts of winter sports and winter activities. Given that it is owned and operated by the Terrans, all of the facilities and amenities are top notch. The most popular activity is to ski down the highest mountains of the planet, though it is far from the only draw."

Ves had not really gone on many vacations. The typical ones brought him to the surface of various tropical resort planets. Traveling to an ice planet was a nice way to experience whole new sights. Perhaps he might even be able to gather inspiration on how to utilize the water element.

"This is an interesting option. What about the second one?"

"Ocanon VI is an untamed planet in the Krakatoa Middle Zone that filled with exobeasts and exoplants. Its colonists have deliberately preserved its original ecosystem and made sure to keep a light footprint. It is one of the most biodiverse planets in the region and has a large amount of research value. The people in charge have also turned it into a nature resort of sorts and opened it up for tourism. In fact, the most popular activity on the planet is hunting. There are a lot different exofauna that provide challenges at every level."

That reminded Ves of the time he spent on Felixia I. He still cherished the memories he made of the time he spent on the surface of the cat planet.

In particular, it had also been the planet where he hunted his first and only Crown Cat.

Zeigra would have never become one of his design spirits and the spiritual fusion partner to his father if he never visited that unforgettable planet!

Ves grew more interested in Ocanon VI. Perhaps it might be fun to take his children on a hunting trip and allow them to shoot a few alien critters or whatever.

"What about the last option?"

"Well, the last holiday destination is a bit more special..."

Chapter 5442 Which One

"The last holiday destination is also located in Krakatoa." Gavin explained to Ves. "Port Saliency was originally colonized to take advantage of its proximity to the Torald Middle Zone to attract customers from there as well. It is set up as a cheaper and more remote version of Chance Bay. That means that it hosts a lot of gambling establishments as well as mech arenas, though there are also many other activities that you can enjoy if you are looking for more variety."

Port Saliency was a lot more barren than the previous planet. It definitely looked like a place that attracted all kinds of profiteers and luck seekers.

"This does not really look like a kid-friendly destination, Gavin." Ves said.

"That is true, but I have added this option in case you want to pass on a bit more frontier wisdom to your children." His assistant replied. "You do not have to go for this option if you do not think it is a good idea. That said, the competitive scene over there is something else. It is not only highly active, but has developed its own set of rules and traditions in the few years the planet opened up for business. The colonizers have done so well that Port Saliency has actually attracted a large crowd of people who were originally staying in the Bortele System. That should tell you enough how exciting its mech games and tournaments have become."

Ves took a closer look at the barren rocky planet that only hosted a few colonial settlements.

He could actually spot large craters on its surface. It looked as if Port Saliency had turned much of the lifeless and rocky landscape of the planet into open competition fields!

"If I want to watch a mech duel, I can take a trip to the local arenas in the city of Sandan." Ves said. "I trust you well enough that there are other reasons that make it worthwhile to visit this planet."

Gavin smiled. "There are other planets throughout the zones that try to undertake similar business, but there are two reasons that make Port Saliency more interesting. The first is that it is owned and operated by the Wild Fighter Association."

"Oh? You mean the same organization that is filled with melee combat enthusiasts?"

Though it had been a long time since he thought about the Wild Fighters, his clan had a fruitful business relationship with them. The Larkinsons had managed to win Wild Torch, a powerful fleet carrier, after winning a large mech tournament.

No average organization was willing to award a precious second-class fleet carrier so easily!

Ves suddenly frowned. The Wild Fighter Association was unusually large, wealthy and widespread. It was way more successful than it should if it was an independent group.

The Wild Fighter Association was almost certainly backed by a first-class power!

Was it the mechers? Was it the Rubarthans? Either of these possibilities sounded likely, but Ves did not know the correct answer.

He activated his desk terminal and conducted a few searches on the galactic net.

Nothing.

The Wild Fighter Association did not mention its backing, though there were plenty of rumors that it definitely enjoyed a bit of care from above.

This was concerning to Ves because his clan still had an ongoing business relationship with the Wild Fighters.

"By the way, the other reason why I encourage you to visit Port Saliency is because many of the mechs that are used in the competitions are actually sold by the LMC."

"Huh?"

Gavin smiled at Ves. "This shouldn't come as a surprise. The LMC has a strong market position in the Krakatoa Middle Zone. Port Saliency is one of the more notable markets for the mech company. Living mechs possess certain advantages that make them very interesting to discerning mech athletes. Sales of our staple products have been on an upward trend for years until recently."

"Let me guess. The start of the Hyper Generation has broken that trend."

"Sadly, yes. Our mech company isn't moving as quickly to refresh its product catalog with hyper mechs as other competitors. The market has been reset, which means that a lot of customers are looking forward to buying the early models of hyper mechs that have been coming out as of late. You have to be aware that hyper technology adds a notable amount of combat power to a mech without excessively raising its production cost depending on the hyper material composition."

Ves knew this a lot better than Gavin. It was always the case that currentgen mechs were stronger than lastgen mechs on average.

The Hyper Generation exacerbated the problem by introducing a brand new technological field that was just as powerful if not greater than phasewater technology.

This was of great importance to mech athletes who relied heavily on winning in order to earn a living.

So long as they had the money to spare, they would definitely be willing to pay hefty premiums to acquire early generation hyper mechs!

Even though the supply of high-grade hyper materials was still exceedingly constrained, the same was not the case for low-grade hyper materials.

"What is the opinion among our existing customers?" Ves inquired.

"A lot of mech pilots have developed an attachment to their living mechs. It is not so easy to persuade them to switch over to a newer hyper mech as the piloting experience is too different. Besides, not every competition format allows for the use of hyper mechs quite yet. A lot of old and experienced competition operators have instituted rules that allow for a few years of buffer time before mechs of the newer generation can be put into play. This also grants a buffer time for competitive teams to replace or upgrade their old machines. That said, there is definitely growing pressure to switch over to hyper mechs. They are strong crowd pleasers and always attract the largest audiences."

All of that was bad news to Ves. His previous stance on upgrading his product catalog was that he was willing to take his time.

The longer he waited before he updated one of his old mech designs to the new generation, the more time he had to develop his hyper technology applications.

While that undoubtedly remained true, the LMC may actually lose a lot of loyal customers if it didn't hurry up and refresh its entire mech catalog!

The performance improvements were too great and the competitive pressure was too high.

No matter whether it was on the frontlines of the current war or the many mech arenas located in the safer parts of human space, there were far too many customers who demanded mechs that incorporated the latest tech!

Ves frowned when he realized that he had grown far too out of touch with the sentiments of the customers he served.

This was a dangerous development. The less he was able to understand his customer base, the greater the extent his mech designs would become less and less aligned with their needs!

His expression grew stern as his gaze swept back and forth between the projections of Ocanon VI and Port Salience.

Emotionally, he felt a greater connection to Ocanon VI.

While Ves did not consider himself to be a serious hunter, he had fond memories of the few times he participated in hunts.

A part of him deeply wanted to travel to Ocanon VI and spend a week on different hunting activities.

He particularly wanted to bring his children along and give them a taste of 'real' action.

In peacetime, it was not that important for Aurelia and Marvaine to experience what it was like to take the lives of other organisms.

However, the looming conflicts between red humanity and the native aliens of both the Red Ocean and Messier Sy were bound to engulf the entire dwarf galaxy in the throes of war!

Ves did not want his children to grow up soft and ill-disposed towards violence. Bringing them on a week-long trip across alien biomes sounded like a great way to prepare them for the darker times ahead.

Another important benefit to visiting Ocanon VI was that he could vent his own desires.

He missed the rush of the battle that he enjoyed with disturbing regularity whenever he went on an expedition with his fleet.

All of the months he spent in New Constantinople VIII had been fruitful in many ways, but it also prevented him from experiencing the excitement of entering into a life-and-death struggle against irreconcilable enemies!

There was also his recently improved phase lord cultivation.

Even though he had yet to explore the strength of his true body, Ves strongly believed that it should not be weak in combat, especially if he was able to master a few basic spatial abilities!

It did not matter if Ves never had any combat training. Plenty of phase lords in the Red Ocean consisted of scientists, statesmen and other members of the ruling class.

Few of them enjoyed military training, but they still became formidable in a fight once their bodies grew large and dense enough!

Of course, the really effective combatants among them not only knew how to utilize their enormous bodies a lot better, but also dedicated a large amount of time on training and developing their spatial abilities.

Ves was sorely lacking in both areas. He did not have the time to become a good combatant, and it was completely unnecessary for a tier 3 galactic citizen to take charge of his own defense.

Nonetheless, he was still curious to see how he would fare in an actual fight by himself. He had gone through far too many situations where many of his defensive arrangements failed and where he had to take action in person to resolve a crisis.

The most recent debacle of this nature was the time where he and a lot of important figures of his clan got kidnapped by the remnants of the pescan race that originally lived in Davute.

The extensive alien wildlife on Ocanon VI definitely offered Ves a lot of opportunities to explore his newfound combat capabilities in the most satisfying way!

Yet... Port Saliency had its merits as well. Ves felt obliged to visit the rowdy planet in order to take a first-hand look at how his living mechs were doing in the competitive scene.

However, doing that felt too much like work to him. While he did not think he would counteract the purpose of a vacation by accumulating more stress during his visit, he wanted to let go of all of his work responsibilities for a time.

Still, it would be fun to take a look at many different living mechs in use and see how they had grown over the years.

"If I recall, a lot of competitive teams have in-house design teams that regularly modify and upgrade the mechs in their stables." Ves remarked.

"That is usually correct. Some of them even outsource this work to professional design studios or small-scale mech boutiques."

"Have they begun to upgrade their LMC mechs with hyper technology by themselves?"

"Many of them have attempted to do so." Gavin replied. "The results were mixed at first, but a few enterprising mech companies have taken upon themselves to design variants of our products that do a decent job at dragging them into the Hyper Generation. Much of the upgrade work is not that sophisticated. It is mostly mech designers who apply the standard formulas and templates published by the Red Association."

"Hmm. That sounds interesting. I would like to take a look at those third-party variants."

Ves faced a difficult decision. He had already dismissed Nirian IX-B as a vacation destination, but he couldn't make up his mind between the remaining two options.

Both of them had their pros and cons. Though Ves could split his time between both of them, he did not want to spend too little time on either planet. He wanted to stay longer and immerse himself long enough to start the second year of the Age of Dawn with a fresh mindset.

Which one should he choose?

Chapter 5443 Work and Leisure

Ves found it far too agonizing to choose between two good choices.

His heart yearned to travel to Ocanon VI and let go of everything related to mechs for a week.

He looked forward to letting down his guise as a patriarch and a man who attracted the attention of all of red humanity and immerse himself in various hunting and camping activities.

On the other hand, Port Saliency enabled him to engage in his passion from a different angle.

Instead of designing mechs, Ves could reconnect with his work by seeing them in action.

He was curious to see how his older products fared as they grew alongside the mech athletes who they partnered with. The bonds they developed must be deep as mech athletes fought at a much greater frequency than professional soldiers.

Certainly, mech athletes never became exposed to life-and-death struggles, but the strong emotions generated by winning and losing important matches that could define their careers were almost just as potent, especially when they occurred at a much higher frequency!

From what he understood about living mechs, Ves believed that he may be able to witness the most intimate bonds between man and machine among his purely commercial works.

Perhaps his visit to Port Salience might not be totally removed from his work, but he was sure he could gain enough enjoyment during his stay to compensate for any added stress.

"Which one should I choose?"

Ves needed to restore and uplift his mental state one way or another. He could not afford to run himself ragged.

No one was able to maintain a high level of productivity on a continuous basis for so long. This was especially the case when working at a high intensity, as Ves had done when he completed his last five mech design projects.

Ves also grew a little bored of New Constantinople VIII. Even though he had yet to explore all of the curious and wonderful sights that the Terran planet had to offer, he had already witnessed the best of what it had to offer.

New Constantinople VIII lacked the accumulation of history that produced unique local cultural customs and gave weight to old monuments.

That problem was not unique. Red humanity had only formally begun to colonize the Red Ocean very recently, so all of the colonies in human-occupied space suffered from the same problem.

It was one of the many signs that red humanity was still not in sync with the rest of the dwarf galaxy. People like Ves were still regarded as intruders who forcibly tried to carve out a new home in the new frontier.

If Ves wanted to get in touch with anything older, then he had to travel to a planet that had yet to succumb to humanity's insatiable colonization drive.

His choice became clear now that he figured out what he wanted to experience the most.

"I have made up my mind." He announced. "Please make the appropriate arrangements for a week-long visit to Ocanon VI. Give me a more detailed list of hunting activities. I want to hunt a variety of different prey under various different conditions. The planet also allows for the hunting of huge game, correct?"

"That is so, but the supply of large-sized exobeasts is fairly limited."

"Try and arrange at least a hunting trip related to huge beasts."

That caused Gavin to look confused. "You will need to bring your own mechs to hunt such prey. It is overkill to rely on the mechs of the Bluejay Fleet to hunt these prey. The only way to make this

special hunt meaningful is if you issue a special request to the Davute Branch to quickly dispatch a troop of appropriately equipped Larkinson mechs to the Ocanon System."

Ves dismissively waved his hand. "That won't be necessary. I intend to conduct a different sort of hunt. I will explain it to you later after I have conducted an investigation. For now, just reserve a quota for me. I am sure that the colony will be eager to accommodate a guest of my stature."

Since Ves had become a bigshot nowadays, he might as well make use of his privileges.

They talked a bit more about what Ves sought to gain from this upcoming vacation.

"So does that mean that we do not have to make any arrangements in Port Saliency?"

"Not so fast, Gavin. Right now, my schedule is largely constrained by the need to hold a product reveal in a month, right?"

"That is so." His assistant confirmed.

"I don't want to miss out on Port Saliency. It is still necessary for me to reconnect with my old customers and my old works in these changing times. The mech scene on that planet is vibrant, so I am sure I can learn a lot about how my products are faring in the Hyper Generation. How about we schedule a visit after I have finished my product reveal?"

Gavin raised his eyebrows. "That can work. It will delay your return to New Constantinople VIII. We will also have to postpone a few important meetings, but it shouldn't be too much of an issue. Are there any other particular reasons why you want to detour to Port Saliency on the way home?"

Ves steepled his fingers. "I want to take a look at how other mech designers are dealing with living mechs. Competitive mech teams often repair and modify their existing mechs at higher rates. I think that has led to the rise of mech designers who have developed unique insights and approaches on how to tweak the performance of my works. I think I may be able to meet with a handful of interesting second-class mech designers that we bring into our Design Department."

His assistant immediately understood what Ves was aiming for. "Are you looking to fill up the void left behind by the mech designers who have chosen to undergo EdNet training?"

"Yup. We need to replenish our ranks of second-class mech designers, but I don't trust others to hire the right sort of people. The Design Department is one of the most important institutions of our clan, and I do not want to fill it up with people who do not understand living mechs or have opposing ideas. We also need people who are willing to leave their old lives behind and embrace their new identities as Larkinsons."

"I do not think you will have much issue attracting volunteers these days." Gavin remarked. "An invitation from you holds almost the same amount of weight as an invitation from the Terrans or the Rubarthans. You have become the idol of many third-class and second-class mech designers who hope to follow your trajectory."

"Well, I won't complain if it makes it easier to convince talented mech designers to work for me, but I don't want to take on people that can only look up to me." Ves said. "I need mech designers with enough pride and ambition to push themselves to greater heights."

He knew he was being way too picky about this. It was not necessary for the mech designers of the Design Department to design original mechs all of the time.

There was also room for less inventive mech designers that were more suitable to work on maintaining existing product lines.

Perhaps Ves should pay more attention to these sorts of people during his upcoming work visit to Port Salience.

In any case, it did not take long for Ves and Gavin to add this extra trip to the planning.

"I will make sure to inform the Wild Fighter Association and arrange a meeting with the officials in charge of Port Salience. Would you like to mention the topics that you wish to talk about when you meet with them during your visit?"

Ves definitely wanted to hold a deeper discussion with the Wild Fighter Association. He believed that there was much more room for cooperation. He did not dare to underestimate the second-class organization despite the fact that he was in the process of transitioning into a first-rater.

"Hmm... I do not have anything definitive in mind at the moment. Just tell the Wild Fighters that I may wish to discuss deeper cooperation with them. I would ideally like to meet with a representative who has a strong enough voice within their ranks to make decisions on behalf."

"We shall see what we can do. Port Salience is not their main base of operations, but there should be enough time for the Wild Fighters to prepare for your arrival."

That settled the matter of vacations. With two different trips on the agenda, Ves was sure he could thoroughly restore his mood and return to a more optimal state.

Together with the return of his wife, he and his wife were bound to become a much more effective pair than before!

"By the way, how much progress has been made in the preparations for your upcoming augmentation treatment?"

Gavin couldn't help but smile. "The Senechai has been helpful and transparent every step of the way. However, it is not easy to get anywhere close to his own level of cybernetic augmentation with a lightly upgraded body like mine. I am pretty much a baseline human as far as the Terrans are concerned."

Ves had an inkling of what the issue might be. Baseline humans were simply too weak and fragile compared to the typical Terrans.

"So the Terrans think your body's load-bearing capacity is too low to undergo heavy augmentations?"

"That is so. I will have to undergo several rounds of gene optimization treatments. Once my body has reached a higher standard, the Terran implant surgeons will gradually install more and more mechanical implants in my body until my mind is more extensively digitized. Luckily, my body is not too deviant, so the Terrans do not have to deal with any existing complications."

"How long will you remain absent?"

"The experts of the Streon Ancient Clan believe that they can get it done in less than half a year. They have tried to compress this time period as much as possible, but it is difficult to shave off more days when I need to recover from surgery multiple times."

"I understand."

It would become a little more difficult for Ves to get by without Gavin taking care of all of his trivial chores.

Others could fill in while his long-time assistant was absent, but Ves would miss the deep and tacit trust and mutual understanding that characterized his long relationship with a fellow local from Cloudy Curtain.

After he concluded his meeting with Gavin, Ves took the day off and accompanied his children for a time.

He found it delightful to spend time with his daughters and son again after he exhausted himself in his attempt to bring the Elemental Lord to life.

Ves enjoyed a long night of rest and woke up without his wife by his side.

He missed her warmth and company, but knew that she would eventually return better than ever.

Once he sent his children off to school again, Ves did not follow his old routine by heading over to his design lab.

Instead, he decided to move to the empty testing grounds and entered an underground chamber.

This place was normally reserved for testing mechs. It was spacious enough to accommodate dozens of mechs and possessed enough defenses to withstand decently strong attacks.

Since Ves was not in a mood to dedicate all of his attention to designing or fabricating another mech, he might as well explore his expanded phase lord cultivation today!

"Ves." A familiar voice spoke up behind his back.

"Ah, I expected you would come." Ves turned around and smiled at Jovy. "I take it that you and your fellow mechers want to observe and record more data about myself?"

Jovy nodded. "We still know too little about human phase lords. We have reasons to believe that your transformation into one is close to the ideal state of a phase lord at your stage. You can provide us with a large amount of reference data. We can also assist your attempts to familiarize yourself with your new capabilities by sharing what we know about how alien phase lords operate."

"Hm, that is fine with me. I don't exactly have a manual for this so I can use a bit of guidance."

#### Chapter 5444 New Phasewater Organs

Though Ves never asked for it, he couldn't help but develop a growing interest in what it was like to wield the powers of a phase lord.

The gift from the Red Ocean was rather strange in that he did not seem to undergo any radical changes in size or mentality.

His actual brain had ballooned to a much greater size. He gained a lot more organic processing power as a result, but they did not lead to strange or inhuman thought patterns.

This was one of the reasons why the mechers assumed that his transformation into a phase lord was close to the perfect ideal.

Ves was still Ves.

His personality had not become overly distorted due to the changes and he did exhibit any obvious signs of alienation from human society.

"Did you expect anything different?" Ves asked.

"We have conducted enough studies on phase whales and phase lords to observe personality traits that are common among each of them. These changes transcend the properties of different species." Jovy replied. "Our scientists are not certain whether these shifts in personality are inherent to the development process or whether the inadequate psychologies of the native aliens are at fault."

While they talked, the mechers who teleported inside the underground testing chamber set up their monitoring equipment and brought over a lot of props.

Ves found it rather reassuring to not have to worry about arranging these preparations himself. The mechers are way more interested to see what he was capable of, so they made sure to give him plenty of ways to exercise his new abilities!

"What sort of personality traits are you concerned about, exactly?"

"I cannot say. It is best if we do not tell you about them in advance. You may behave differently if you focus too much of your attention on these changes."

As a scientist and engineer, Ves understood what Jovy was talking about.

It was already rather improper to bring up the subject in the first place, so Ves purposely changed the subject.

"Before I plan to unfold my true body, I want to spend a bit of time on exercising my spatial abilities in my current state. I think it has become a lot easier for me to displace my body and maybe even project a spatial barrier."

Jovy did not object to that. "We are curious to see what you can do as well. Are you able to perform these abilities innately, or do we need to dig out an alien scripture that can teach you the right techniques?"

"I think I can manage on my own for the time being. I think that simple spatial manipulation can easily be done with the help of a phasewater organ that is already programmed to perform specific abilities. Somehow, the latest lightning baptism has caused me to grow a couple of strange new organs inside my body. I can feel them. They are much more compatible with phasewater than the rest of my organs."

Jovy nodded and activated a projection that displayed a cross section of Ves' body.

"It is not easy to reconstruct an accurate snapshot of a body that is compressed in folded space, but our high-powered scans have given us enough data to construct this composite image. According to our studies, the concentration of phasewater in your bloodstream has increased to 1.4 percent. This is still a small figure in absolute terms, but it is many times stronger than the previous level."

Ves nodded. "I can clearly feel that I have grown a lot stronger. I just don't have a clear idea yet because I haven't let my new powers loose."

"Aside from that, your body is home to three new organs that are not inherently human. They do share a great resemblance to the common phasewater organs of other phase lords and phase whales, so we have a decent understanding of their purpose and their mechanisms. The Kelsis organ is

responsible for generating spatial barriers. The Locos organ is responsible for granting you senses that enable you to perceive space and spatial phenomena without the use of tools. The Maracos organ is responsible for shaping and bending the fabric of space."

These were the three 'starter organs' that every self-respecting phase lord had to obtain in order to be recognized as a god among natives.

Ves previously did not possess them, so he never considered himself to be a real phase lord.

"How do the natives gain their phasewater organs? I doubt they can obtain them without effort like myself."

"You are correct about that, Ves. Phase lords as well as phase whales do not automatically grow them as they increase their phasewater concentration. They must rely on themselves or other specialists to cultivate customized organs that are based on their genes and their unique physical circumstances. Once the organs are grown in labs, they can be implanted or absorbed in the bodies of their new owners. After that, they can either grow alongside their owners, or may need to be manually upscaled as the true bodies of phase lords increase even further in size."

All of that sounded complicated.

It showed that not even phase whales were inherently able to develop their phasewater abilities by relying on their existing organic endowments. This was why all of them became masters of biotechnology.

"Is there anything special about the three organs that I should know?" Ves asked.

"There is a lot of room for development for these organs. They are currently in their most basic states. Their stability and fault tolerance are therefore high, which is very suitable for beginners who have not yet improved their control. We have found that phase leaders tend to develop their phasewater organs laterally as well as vertically. What we mean by that is that aside from upsizing them and increasing their phasewater concentration, the organs can also be modified or mutated into more specialized variations."

Ves looked more and more interested in this subject. "What are the common changes made to the organs?"

"It depends on the organs in question. The Kelsis organ can be altered to increase the range of a spatial barrier, allowing you to shield your allies. The Locos organ can be modified to help you discover hidden pocket spaces. The Maracos organ can be changed in a way that makes it easier for you to generate gravity wells. While the benefits are usually great, many changes also entail tradeoffs where you have to sacrifice other traits. In short, the lateral modification of phasewater organs plays an important role in the development of phase leaders."

It was just like mechs in a way. The most basic ones started out simple, but they became progressively more powerful and sophisticated at higher price levels. Even then, there was limited room for customizations, so most mechs could only excel in a few areas.

"It should still be possible to perform phasewater techniques without these organs, right?" Ves asked.

"Yes." Jovy said. "You can theoretically perform any spatial ability that is possible at your current phasewater concentration so long as you are skilled enough. However, the threshold is much higher,

and the efficiency is dreadfully poor. It is like using a single tool to fabricate an entire mech. It is much better to have multiple specialized tools at hand."

"Understood. I guess phasewater organs are responsible for controlling, automating, regulating and amplifying the expression of any phasewater ability."

"They can do more than that, but you have the gist of it. In any case, we do not advise you to modify your organs unless you are serious about developing your combat potential. If you decide to go down this path, then I advise you to let the Transhumanist Faction do the work of implanting new phasewater organs in your body and altering your existing ones."

"I will take that into account."

Ves was not that eager to cooperate with the Transhumanists on this matter. He did not want to surrender control of his phase lord cultivation to an external party. This was just a disaster that was waiting to happen. He still recalled the lesson taught by his mother!

"By the way, there is one notable anomaly to your physique that you should know." Jovy continued and pointed out another organ inside Ves' body. "Your so-called Jutland organ has undergone substantial changes. It has not only evolved to tolerate phasewater, but it has also integrated into your phase lord physique in a more profound fashion. We believe you can utilize Worclaw energy in a more active fashion as well, though I would like to caution you to be careful about that. This is a special form of energy that is highly destructive, as you should know."

"Noted."

Ves asked a few more questions before he changed into a special nanosuit developed by the mechers.

"Most native alien species including phase whales do not have a taboo against nakedness." Jovy explained with a smile. "When they unfold their true bodies, they don't really care about tearing their clothes. However, the more well-equipped phase lords have usually prepared giant suits of armor that can artificially enhance their capabilities. I think you may be able to design one for yourself. However, it will be difficult for you to carry it around if you do not have access to a large enough pocket space."

That indeed sounded like a problem. Ves might have the Vault of Eternity, but it cost a lot of AP to rent more storage space. He also did not want to flaunt his System abilities in public even though he was pretty sure the Red Association already figured out that he was a Holy Son.

"Is there a portable pocket space that I can exchange from the Association?"

"There is, but it will not be cheap. These sort of pocket spaces are almost exclusively reserved for ace pilots to ensure that they will never be too far away from their ace mechs. God pilots have access to even larger ones that are also extremely robust. If you are willing to expend all of the MTA merits that you have accumulated so far, we may be able to supply you with a spare device that is tied to a pocket space with enough capacity to fit a second-class light mech."

"That's too expensive!"

"It is cheap if you know what it takes to create a stable pocket space that is accessible to its owner while on the move. It is also robust enough that other phase lords cannot easily break this pocket space apart from a distance." Jovy patiently explained. "We are pretty much selling it to you at a

loss with the MTA merits that you have on hand. I am only permitted to give you this exchange opportunity due to your continued cooperation in advancing our understanding of human phase lords."

Though Ves did not really care that much about all of the MTA merits he had accumulated so far, he was deeply reluctant to spend it all at once for a pocket space that was not essential to his work.

#### Chapter 5445 The Basic Abilities of a Phase Lord

As Ves tried out various basic abilities, he found that it was a lot easier to perform them as before.

The phasewater organs truly helped to make these abilities more accessible. They acted like formulas that took away much of the work and effort needed to manually figure out solutions.

Accessing them was not obvious to Ves at first. He had no inherent knowledge or awareness of the phasewater organs and their many functions.

It was only when he actively concentrated on them and tried to flex them in different ways that he instinctively became aware of what they could do. It was a strange process to Ves as there was nothing human about these organs that he could relate to. He had to explore everything with caution in order to avoid any uncontrolled outbursts.

Soon enough, he started to grow a little more accustomed with flexing the basic abilities of all three phasewater organs.

"Hit me." Ves requested as he proudly stood in his new nanosuit.

Four different bots surrounded him at this moment. Upon his command, they began to fire harmless white balls that stopped short of hitting his body.

A nearly invisible spatial barrier flared into visibility upon impact. They stably blocked the damage without experiencing any noticeable drain.

"Please escalate the kinetic power of the attacks."

The bots started to launch harder and faster projectiles at Ves. The spatial barrier continued to hold for quite a bit of time, even when the attacks had begun to turn lethal to baseline humans.

Nobody worried too much about the potential risks of accidents. Ves still carried his latest personal azure shield generator, and the nanosuit also possessed notable defensive properties.

Bang! Bang! Bang! Bang!

The attacks grew stronger and stronger until the bots had to launch attacks that could pose an actual threat to third-class mechs!

This was the point where Ves felt he needed to put more serious effort into maintaining his defenses.

The four small bots made way for a single larger one that packed a serious punch.

It was already overkill to employ this killer bot against most infantry units, but Ves no longer fit into this category anymore!

BANG! BANG! BANG!

The kinetic cannon steadily launched progressively more punishing attacks while the mechers gathered a ton of useful data.

They not only monitored the activity of the Kelsis organ, but also studied the exact properties of the spatial barrier that had formed a bubble around Ves' body!

It wasn't until his spatial barrier started to wobble and show more signs of destabilization that Ves truly started to experience significant strain!

"Okay, that is enough." Jovy announced.

The killer bot immediately stopped its attacks and purposefully pointed its kinetic cannon in a different direction.

"Hey, I can still handle more. I have not even come close to my limit yet!" Ves complained.

"We have gathered enough data to calculate your approximate limit. It is absolutely not advisable to subject you to stronger attacks. They can be truly life-threatening, and we do not dare to bet on our backup options to protect you from serious trauma."

Though Ves felt a little frustrated at the early suspension, he understood why the mechers behaved so cautiously. They were only following proper procedures.

"Fine. Let us move on to other tests."

He managed to open himself up to a whole range of new senses with the Locos organ. He gained a special perception towards spatial phenomena.

Although it was not good enough to pick up the most subtle disturbances, it was more than enough to detect any activity generated by other phase lords.

"The range is quite impressive." Jovy said as Ves looked at a point that was situated way beyond the underground walls of the testing chamber. "One of our first-class multipurpose mechs is firing one of its transphasic weapons 12 kilometers away."

"The sensitivity of my Locos organ has severely dropped at the limits of my perception range. I do not think I can detect any spatial activity generated by anything weaker than a transphasic mech at this distance."

That was rather disappointing to Ves. Being able to perceive strong activity 12 kilometers away sounded like a lot, but it was wholly insufficient in actual combat, especially in space. Real phase lords should be able to extend their spatial perception a lot further away.

When Ves seriously began to test the limits of his Maracos organ, he played around with various basic applications.

For example, he found that he could actually bend and fold space as if it was a multidimensional blanket.

It was impossible for Ves to describe the process of doing so. It was simply not human to begin with. The Maracos organ somehow exerted the power of phasewater in such a way that enabled him to knead space as if it was a toy!

Of course, the relatively basic Maracos organ in his body was not highly developed. Ves could not 'fold' space in half or shatter it entirely.

He could only extend the effects generated by his Maracos organ roughly 80 meters away. Any further than that rapidly increased its strain, making Ves feel as if it was starting to burst!

He could consciously increase or decrease the stability of the space around him, making it easier or harder for others to perform spatial tricks.

He was not able to generate any serious gravity wells nor create any wicked space blades. This was strange because Ves could still feel that his Maracos organ had power to spare.

The problem was that it did not come with too many ability templates. Ves figured out that he needed to improve his proficiency in spatial manipulation and be able to perform these specialized applications by himself.

Once he managed to master a method manipulating space to a sufficient degree, he could find a way to solidify the process by updating his Maracos organ.

"This is really troublesome." Ves grumbled.

"You are already lucky enough to enjoy a head start." Jovy responded in a light-hearted tone.

"Depending on the species, it may take years if not decades of manual practice in order to master the few abilities that you have easily demonstrated. You have reached a point in your development where most phase lords must choose to specialize in a specific direction of spatial manipulation. They cannot learn or acquire these advanced applications by themselves, which is why they must always apprentice themselves to more powerful phase leaders."

That was understandable. The phasewater organs were extremely complicated. It was easy to botch any attempt to modify them in any way. Only expert guidance from a more established phase lord or phase whale could ensure that this development process would go smoothly.

This was where the small community of native gods began to splinter into different factions and schools of thought.

Different species possessed different inclinations, and they possessed different strengths that caused them to excel in some applications of spatial manipulation.

It was still unclear what human phase lords excelled at. There was no one else like Ves, and his conditions weren't exactly normal to begin with. He possessed several abnormalities that made it difficult to generalize any of his results.

"If I have to speculate, I think your perceptive ability should be the strongest."

"Really?"

"Do not underestimate the value of strengthening your perception. I think it may serve you well whenever you do any work related to transphasic mechs. It is the only ability so far that can assist you in a productive capacity."

That was actually an astute point. Ves grew thoughtful as he tried to figure out how gaining an enhanced perception of space could help with designing or fabricating better transphasic mechs.

In any case, before Ves was ready to move on to the second phase of testing, he wanted to explore his teleporting ability.

Jovy found it strange that Ves was able to do this naturally. "You do not possess any phasewater organs that are associated with any known displacement techniques. How did you teleport in the past?"

"I... just tried to think about it really hard." Ves lamely said. "I tried to work the phasewater in body to do what I want, and somehow it just... happens."

"...Perhaps we should err on the side of caution. Your method sounds too ad-hoc to be safe. You were lucky that you did not split yourself in half by displacing your upper body while leaving your lower one behind."

"It's not that dangerous!" Ves protested. "I don't know how it is with other phase lords, but I am pretty sure I can pull it off without any risk! Don't forget that I managed to teleport myself as well as Major Simon Jankowski several hundred meters away from the cockpit of the Elemental Lord."

"It was highly dangerous of you to do so, Ves! We were on the verge of remotely activating your emergency teleporter. If that did not work, we intended to utilize a more powerful remote teleportation machine that we had already brought into the field. Relying on your new phase lord constitution to teleport 'by instinct' should be your last possible resort!"

Jovy was right from an objective viewpoint, but Ves felt differently about this subject.

Whether it was unique to Ves or common to all phase lords, he felt that he possessed an innate ability to teleport his body across modest distances.

The Red Association may have learned a lot about phase lords, but Ves did not think the mechers had managed to steal every secret related to phase lords.

"I am trying it out at least once." Ves said in a determined tone. "It is better that I experiment with it in a controlled environment than attempt to pull it off during another crisis situation!"

He repeated the process that worked in the past and tried really hard to will his body into a different position!

Crack!

The noise created by the displacement echoed throughout the chamber as Ves found himself roughly 33 meters away from his previous position!

"Your condition appears to be good. You have not sustained any injuries according to our sensors."

"See? I knew I could do it." Ves grinned as he relished at how he was able to pull it off so easily this time. "I think I am starting to get accustomed to doing this. I don't feel that I am doing anything special. I just try to activate all of the phasewater that is spread throughout my body at once. I don't think it is necessary for me to acquire a specific phasewater organ for this unless I want to increase my range or improve my capacity to overcome space suppression."

"How good is your precision?"

Ves looked down at his feet. The floor of the testing chamber was marked by a temporary grid pattern, making it easier to determine distances.

"I ended up at the exact right location I was targeting. I cannot guarantee my accuracy will be as good if I try to teleport a few hundred meters away."

"Is there any sense of protection or limitation when it comes to displacing your body under the floor or beyond your line of sight?"

"Huh. Now that you mention it, I instinctively feel that I do not have to worry about teleporting into walls, chairs or other solid matter. I don't exactly know why. I know I can teleport to locations beyond my sight, even if I have never been there before. I have a feeling that it is a lot more dangerous, though."

"Do you have any indication of your maximum displacement range?"

Ves looked off into the distance again. "I can get a vague sense of it, but I won't know for sure until I try it out. I estimate that my maximum range should be no more than two to three kilometers."

"That is respectable. I am sure you can move much further if you improve your proficiency with this skill."

Neither Ves nor Jovy were eager to test the range of this teleportation ability.

The risks were simply too great. It was enough to know that Ves could displace himself several hundred meters away with relative ease. He could even bring along any objects he was touching, though the range drastically decreased as they grew larger.

Once they concluded this round of testing, Ves was ready to move on to the most exciting portion of this session.

"Are you sure this nanosuit will sufficiently cover me when I unfold my true body?" Ves worriedly asked as he picked on the 'fabric' of his skinny suit. "It looks awfully thin to me, you know. I can hardly imagine that there are enough nanites to preserve my modesty."

Jovy let out another sigh. "They work differently from what you think. The nanosuit is completely sufficient. Even if an accident occurs that leads you to exposing yourself, what does it matter? We have more than enough scans of your body to know what is underneath. In fact, the nanosuit is constantly broadcasting a precise and accurate capture of all of its shapes and contours at a frequency of 388,000 times a second. We won't be seeing anything new even if your body has grown much larger."

#### Chapter 5446 Ves the Human Biomech

Before Ves conducted the big test, he first had to conduct a quick test of his current physical properties.

The mechanics behind the spatial folding of his body was weird. In his current state, he only had partial and selective access to the properties of his true body.

Ves had an abnormally strong body for a long time, but he never really made use of it since he was a mech designer.

The last two lightning tribulations had improved this seemingly redundant advantage even further.

Not only did his muscle mass become stronger, but they also became a lot more efficient, remedying many of the lingering flaws and imperfections produced by Dr. Jutland's extremely messy implantations!

However, the greatest and most radical change by far was the introduction of phasewater into his body.

From the moment he gained a smidgen of phasewater in his bloodstream, he had already separated himself from his humanity in a physical manner. His body had taken its first steps to physical transcendence and experienced a profound transformation that enabled it to exist in multiple dimensions where it should normally not exist!

All of this sounded incredibly weird and dangerous. It was essential for a body under these conditions to become a lot tougher and stronger.

From the intelligence collected by the Red Two, developing a strong body was essential to the progression of a phase lord!

This was one of the reasons why puelmer phase lords were practically unheard of. These weird ball-shaped aliens were not weak, but they were not known for their athleticism either.

The native aliens that somehow managed to take their first step on the path of the phase lord immediately had to undergo their first test.

If their bodies were strong enough to withstand the dangers introduced by the presence of phasewater, they would be able to go on and live as phase lords without any immediate concern for their health!

If their bodies were too frail or had weakened too much during the advancement process, then the phasewater introduced in their bloodstream would definitely tear their flesh and bones apart!

Far too many native aliens had perished at this junction.

Edge cases also existed where a native alien managed to become a phase lord, but did not quite become strong enough to resist all of the phasewater fluctuations.

This led to the emergence of tortured phase lords like the Eminence of Torment!

As such, no one in the Red Ocean underestimated the need to develop a strong body!

"We believe that a fit, strong and healthy body is essential to successfully advance into a phase lord." Jovy elaborated from the side as Ves punched a few dummies with his surprisingly crushing fist.

Crunch! Crunch! Crunch!

Though Ves had not reached the point where he could tear apart mechs with his bare hands, he found it quite enjoyable to crush these weaker metal bots as if he was a superhuman soldier!

He had never tested his physical might in such a raw and primitive fashion. After all, why would he? Possessing greater might was absolutely useless in a highly advanced technological society where every heavy exertion could be done with bots and machines.

Possessing too much muscles could even become a detriment to the fine manipulation of manual tools during delicate production processes. That was intolerable for Ves as he needed to maintain high dexterity in order to improve his various crafts.

Nonetheless, he still possessed the same wants and needs as other people. There was something compelling about possessing the ability to crush a person's skull with his raw hands.

It made him feel more fearless as he felt he could easily take care of lesser threats himself!

He was no longer as vulnerable and helpless as before!

Even without a weapon, he could rely on his brute strength to crush his opposition!

What was important at this time was that Ves only exerted a fraction of his current strength. Once he unfolded his body, he was not only able to 'unlock' the full expression of his larger true body, but he could also take advantage of the greater leverage granted by his larger limbs and scale!

After conducting a few more quick tests, Jovy summed up his observations.

"Your raw physical properties are impressive for a human. Only the most radically augmented humans can match and in certain cases exceed your exaggerated strength. I have seen one such case myself in the form of a highly mechanized cyborg soldier. His body was almost completely replaced by high-quality mechanical components. He was like a mech on a human scale. You are more like a biomech in the same vein."

Ves smirked. "I think this comparison will become a little more apt once I unfold my true body. Can I do it now?"

"Please wait a moment. There is a high likelihood that nothing will go wrong, but in the faint chance that the process will get botched. We need to calibrate our rescue measures to save you from the dangers of your own body."

The worries of the mechers were unfounded. Ves possessed a good grasp of his own body and he felt that there was no chance he would stumble and tear his own body in half or whatever.

However, he could understand the caution of the mechers. Any good researcher had to prepare for accidents, no matter how unlikely they may be. It was always better to be safe and sorry.

Once the mechers had completed their adjustments of their excessively thorough safety measures, Ves could finally see how his body truly measured up these days.

"I am starting."

Jovy and all of the other mechers had vacated the testing chambers. They all retreated to the observation areas that were all protected behind solid walls and transphasic energy shields.

Shortly after Ves made the determination to unveil his true body, his presence started to shoot up like a rocket.

The act of revealing his true body was like unsheathing a deadly blade. Ves no longer suppressed his glow anymore, causing him to radiate a powerful sense of life and mechs that was reminiscent of his living mechs!

Anyone who experienced his Living Workshop method would feel familiar with this sensation.

However, Ves did not release this glow because he was ready to fabricate another living mech, but because he wanted to draw out his full form, both physically and spiritually!

The testing chamber seemed to shrink in size from his perspective.

It took a few seconds for him to recognize that it was not his surroundings that were growing smaller, but it was because he was growing bigger with each passing second!

More and more strength filled his body as he mysteriously reversed the complex spatial folding that perfectly and seamlessly stored his extra body mass in other dimensions.

Normally, such a process should have produced a lot of stretching, damage and other unpleasant phenomena, but a phase lord somehow possessed the innate ability to dimensionally fold and unfold their true bodies without any danger!

This was an exquisite design! Ves could not believe that phase lord cultivation was a natural phenomenon. It had to be designed and perfected by ancient body cultivators.

Somehow, it had gotten baked into the Red Ocean to the point where its heavenly authority had embraced it as the common standard in the dwarf galaxy.

Though Ves normally looked down on old and outdated methods, he had to admit that there were good reasons why the methods of a phase lord withstood the test of time.

The shift in perspective started to slow as Ves felt as if his growth in size was nearing its limit.

Fortunately, his body had not grown large enough for his head to hit the high ceiling of the testing chamber.

Just as he expected, he had grown a bit taller than a typical second-class medium mech.

In terms of proportions, his muscular but fairly lean body remained the same, which meant that his dimensions had slightly more in common with light mechs.

However, Ves knew that much of the reason why medium mechs tended to be a bit bulkier was because they were always clad with relatively substantial armor plating.

If Ves chose to don himself in a proportional suit of combat armor, he would probably be able to match the bulk of a medium mech that was on the heftier side!

He could even imitate a humanoid heavy mech if his massive suit of armor was thick enough!

However, it wasn't just his height, mass and perspective that had changed.

From the moment he gained full access to all of the body mass and other organs that had previously been hidden away, Ves experienced a huge wave of euphoria that radically uplifted his mood and caused him to feel excited beyond all reason.

"I'M STRONG!" He spoke in a deeper and much more superhuman tone. "I FEEL AS IF I'M UNSTOPPABLE!"

This was not an exaggeration! All sorts of hormones and other changes affected his brain chemistry, causing him to completely push aside his caution and reticence.

For whatever reason, he not only felt strong enough to challenge a mech in a fistfight, but he also felt a lot more connected and in tune with the surrounding space.

His phasewater organs were all able to exert greater strength, and the phasewater spread throughout his body were no longer locked away or burdened by the need to keep his body folded into different dimensions.

All of this meant that his ability to manipulate space had become much stronger than before!

His spatial perception had multiplied by several times.

He felt as if he could actually bend space to the point where he could generate a weak gravity well.

He could probably teleport a lot further than before.

Though Ves had yet to test these drastic improvements, he instinctively felt as if he was not as weak and restricted as before!

After Ves became a little more acclimated to his new state, he immediately turned to the shielded windows of the nearest control room.

Jovy and all of the other mechers had become surprisingly tiny to Ves.

It would be so easy for Ves to crush their bodies in his palm.

This realization profoundly altered his thinking and his perspective on many matters.

Ves felt as if he had truly become the equivalent of a humanoid mech!

Unlike other humans who needed to enter the cockpit of a larger machine in order to gain this kind of combat power, Ves could completely dispense with that and fight with his true body alone!

He looked down at his own suited body and gained a much greater appreciation of his amazing physical state.

The nanosuit surprisingly managed to cover his body despite getting stretched to an extreme degree.

Though it had grown a lot thinner and less concentrated than before, the advanced suit still did its job of preserving his modesty, though it came at the cost of reducing their defensive properties.

Ves didn't care at all. When his body had grown this large and powerful, he no longer needed to rely on mundane protection to withstand greater damage!

After all, his resilience was not solely based on his exaggerated physical size and mass.

The phasewater reinforcing every part of his physical state also played a huge factor in making him stronger and tougher!

Ves truly had the illusion that he was no worse than a transphasic biomech at the moment!

The only question was whether his strength matched the standards of a third-class, second-class or quasi-first-class biomech.

"GIVE ME A DUMMY! NO, GIVE ME TEN DUMMIES! I NEED TO TEST HOW STRONG I HAVE BECOME!"

From the moment the first mech-scale bot entered the chamber, Ves rocketed forward like a giant on the run and simply shoulder-bashed the large contraption against the wall!

CRUNCH!

Ves' huge momentum was too much for the poor bot. It collided against the transphasic energy shield and deformed as its metal construction simply couldn't withstand all of the impact forces!

That was not enough for the unleashed mech designer. He reached down and tore the limbs from the torso one by one as if he was ripping off the arms and legs off a toy doll!

"HAHAHAHA! TOO WEAK! MORE! I NEED MORE!"

Chapter 5447 Abusing Bots

Ves felt as if he had turned into a beast!

Much of his calm and rationality as a mech designer had taken a backseat as the more primal part of his cognition had been brought to the fore!

His extremely exaggerated physical condition made him feel as if he had become stronger than any human.

Not just Ves, but any human that suddenly transcended the weakness of his own physique and started to match the size and physical strength of mechs would feel the same!

Mechs played a huge role in human society. They were the mainstay fighting machines for several centuries, and they had developed a strong and extensive image of martial might in everyone's mind.

For Ves to transition from a puny human to a genuine phase lord was such a significant transformation that he could not help but get lost in his newfound power!

Crunch! Crunch! Crunch!

Ves threw himself at the bots that entered the testing chamber on a continuous basis!

He punched the metal exterior of the bots without fear of breaking his own knuckles. The relatively soft and thin metal layers easily deformed whenever he punched or kicked them with his limbs!

Though the bots soon started to resist more actively and try to attack him from multiple directions, his spatial barrier easily blocked the attacks.

The forces exerted by the bots were not that strong at the moment, and their lack of transphasic properties made it very difficult to exhaust the spatial barrier!

"HAHAHAHAHA! SO THIS IS WHAT IT IS LIKE TO FIGHT LIKE A MECH!"

Previously, he had only been able to feel what it was like to possess the combat power of a mech by going on a Mastery experience.

Even then, he was only able to hitchhike in the mind of a mech pilot, making it so that there was an extra layer of separation between himself and the powerful machines.

This was no longer the case!

Ves' entire body had turned into the equivalent of a transphasic biomech!

Although there were still many differences between his current state and a real biomech, there was enough resemblance that he had the illusion that he could fight and win against an actual machine!

"STRONGER! I NEED THEM TO BE STRONGER!"

The mechers obliged. They had already gathered enough data on Ves' current state to develop a much more accurate estimate of how much he could handle.

"Send in the second-class battle bots." Jovy commanded after he had studied the data.

The weak bots all disappeared from the testing chamber.

Soon, a dozen stronger and more well-equipped bots had entered the fray!

Half of them were armed with rifles while the other half was armed with various melee weapons.

Ves could immediately tell that these were serious battle bots that could pose an actual threat onto second-class mechs.

That meant that their threat to him was not negligible!

It appeared that the mechers were so interested in testing his current limits that they were willing to take a few risks.

"Get ready, Ves. Don't forget that you can command us to stop at any time if you cannot take it anymore. Do not try to fight past your limit."

"I'M NOT THAT FRAGILE, JOVY. JUST START ALREADY!"

The ones with ranged weapons quickly started to open fire onto Ves!

Most of the initial attacks did not exert that much strain on his defenses. Even if he removed his spatial barrier, he had a high degree of confidence that his abnormally dense and phasewater-reinforced body could resist the attacks for a time.

What surprised Ves was that a few of the ranged machines were actually armed with transphasic weapons!

The laser beams and gauss rounds inflicted significant damage to his spatial barrier, making it so that Ves could not ignore their threat.

Ves tried to move and evade, but he found out that he lacked the grace and finesse of a true light mech.

His movements were clumsy and clearly marked by lack of systematic training.

He was unable to dance around the battlefield like the light mechs he had designed in the past.

Phase lords were not meant to be swift and agile!

Their body cultivation focused on promoting their size, mass and phasewater concentration so that they could become absolutely titanic powerhouses that could crush everything by relying on brute force alone!

Dodging was not their style. If they couldn't withstand powerful attacks, then they just needed to make their bodies big enough!

What that meant was that Ves realized that he was not necessarily able to gain the upper hand when he fought against equally-sized mechs and machines, at least when it came to physical performance.

However, a phase lord possessed more advantages than a massive body!

The appearance of a full squad of battle bots was a signal that Ves should no longer stick to simple methods.

He needed to utilize the comprehensive abilities of a phase lord in order to beat this challenge!

"COME!" Ves shouted!

The bots armed with swords, spears and shields jogged forward while maintaining a solid line.

This made it harder for Ves to isolate them and eliminate them one at a time.

It was a good thing that Ves did not intend to confront them first.

He concentrated for a moment and activated all of the phasewater in his body at once!

For whatever reason, it had become a lot easier for him to pull off this step!

Crack!

Ves instantly disappeared from his place and quickly appeared behind the row of ranged bots that were pointing their rifles in the wrong direction!

Though the bots responded remarkably quickly by turning around, Ves was too close to let them have their way!

"DEATH!"

He utilized his raw power to grab and tear one of the ranged bots apart, only to get blocked by an energy shield.

"THAT WON'T STOP ME FOR LONG!"

Ves instinctively concentrated on his fist and caused it to gain transphasic attack properties.

It was a relatively crude and inefficient application, but it was not too difficult to pull it off. He wasn't even worried about tearing his own flesh.

Ves punched again, causing his fist to break through the relatively weak energy shield and almost pierce right through the chest of the relatively fragile machine!

He punched the other nearby battle bots as well, completely ending their threat before they could launch too many attacks.

Ves suddenly looked down at the rifles that they had dropped. They were not designed like ordinary mech rifles, but had been specially modified in several ways.

Even though Ves found it a lot more difficult to maintain the calm and highly analytical mind of a mech designer in his current physical state, his brain had not completely degenerated to the level of a simple brute.

"Let's see."

Ves picked up the transphasic gauss rifle and held it in a relatively unfamiliar grip.

Normal mech weapons were locked to their assigned machines, thereby preventing enemy mechs from taking advantage of them on the battlefield.

This was not the case right now. The mechers had deliberately kept these weapons unlocked to see how Ves could handle them in his current form.

He only received a shallow amount of firearms training, and he mostly stuck to using pistols as opposed to long rifles.

Bang!

Ves couldn't help but feel embarrassed when the first pull of the trigger resulted in a gauss round that missed one of the surviving ranged bots by over five meters!

However, he quickly decided to drop to his knees and take the time to aim his weapon properly.

Bang!

This time, he managed to land a solid hit!

The power of the transphasic gauss rifle was not only able to break the energy shield of his target, but also penetrate through its weak armor.

Even though his aim was still a little off, he easily managed to finish off the crippled machine with a follow-up attack.

Ves fired the weapon several times until he managed to eliminate the other remaining ranged bots.

That significantly reduced the pressure and made him feel a lot less restrained.

At this time, the melee bots had come enough to make it a lot less convenient to keep firing gauss rounds at the incoming machines.

Instead, Ves imitated his second daughter and held his gauss rifle like a club.

"COME!"

Ves clumsily tried to evade most of the incoming strikes while trying to break through the defenses of another mech.

However, he found out that his rifle made for a poorer weapon than his fist. It did not have any transphasic properties when utilized in this manner.

This prevented him from inflicting meaningful damage to the defensive bot that had placed itself at the front!

His spatial barrier clanged as the attacks of the other bots exerted a lot of damage to him. The transphasic sword especially stressed his defenses to the point where Ves had to exert his Kelsis organ more extensively in order to compensate.

Ves tossed aside his useless rifle and started to back off and prevent himself from getting surrounded.

However, the bots had already managed to enclose him from every side!

Ves did not think much further and activated all of the phasewater in his body to displace himself a short distance away!

CRACK!

He immediately emerged behind one of the melee bots. His fist quickly crashed through the energy shield and damaged the vulnerable rear of the machine in question!

A few more transphasic punches was enough to cripple the machine, but by this time several nearby bots had quickly turned around and slammed themselves against his spatial barrier!

"AH!"

The spatial barriers held, but Ves felt so uncomfortable that he couldn't help but back away before he endured more strain.

Ves tried to maneuver around to prevent the bots from ganging up on him, but his agility and movement speed were not as good as that of his adversaries, making this effort useless.

He could only win this bout if he went on the offensive!

Ves began to employ his other spatial abilities. He utilized his Maracos organ to bend the space in front of a mech.

When the machine entered the bent region of space, it suddenly went off course and stumbled to the side, but that was all that happened.

He frowned and tried to activate the same ability onto another machine. This caused him to encounter greater resistance. The bot showed a few signs of distress, but Ves failed to tear it apart from within.

Ves was not strong and skilled enough to pull off this feat!

Since that was the case, Ves stuck to what worked and steadily eliminated the remaining bots one by one by utilizing his strong defenses and his tricky ability to displace himself.

Though the exertion was not small, Ves quickly increased his proficiency in his innate teleportation ability.

Not only was he able to teleport short distances at smaller delays, but he also gained a bit more comprehension of phasewater and the properties of space.

Ves found that his affinity towards space had become much more pronounced. He felt as if he could quickly advance his instinctual understanding of phasewater theory as long as he kept exercising his various spatial abilities in this liberated state!

Crunch!

His transphasic fists grew stronger and more piercing as Ves gradually refined his application of his phase lord power.

By the time he managed to eliminate all of the bots aside from the one equipped like a transphasic knight mech, he was able to repeatedly bash the defenses of this powerful machine until it crumbled under his onslaught!

Ves started to breathe a little heavier. He had exhausted himself quite a bit, to the point where he was starting to grow really hungry.

It appeared that exercising his body and spatial abilities with his true body dramatically increased his energy consumption!

Fortunately, his massively oversized body also possessed enormous energy reserves, making it so that he could probably keep this up for a long time.

"We will give you five minutes to rest before we commence the next phase." Jovy announced.

Ves did not really feel the passage of time in his current state. Five minutes came and went so quickly that he jerked in surprise when an entirely different opponent entered the testing chamber.

A second-class hyper mech had appeared of a design that he did not recognize.

A bad feeling came over Ves. Though the materials and tech incorporated into the machine were not that much better, a real professional mech pilot was in control!

The battle bots of before had all been controlled by dumbed down AIs. There had been no need to make them good as the mechers only wanted to test Ves' raw combat performance.

This time was different. Putting Ves up against a real mech was a more comprehensive test that could truly showcase the differences between a phase lord and the most common weapon platform of humanity!

As a mech designer, Ves deeply appreciated the differences that a trained mech pilot could make. There was no way this second-class mech would be a pushover.

#### Chapter 5448 More Than A Phase Lord

The second-class hyper mech arrayed before Ves possessed a simple design.

It was a landbound hero mech that was equipped with a simple laser rifle and a relatively short truncheon.

Neither of these weapons seemed overly threatening. Even if they managed to overcome his spatial barrier and hit his naked body, they would not be able to pierce through his skin and damage his sensitive organs.

That did not mean that Ves looked forward to getting hit by these armaments! It would definitely hurt if he got struck by a powerful whack or a burning laser beam!

Ves had gained a better understanding of his fighting capabilities as a phase lord.

His lack of combat training was painfully evident. The bots had frustrated him multiple times due to his inability to execute his intended moves or his failure to read the actions of his opponents.

These were basic but essential skills that every properly trained mech pilots mastered before they graduated from the mech academy!

Part of the reason why it took at least 10,12 or even 15 years for mech cadets to complete their education was to train all of these fundamental combat skills.

Ves completely lacked this sort of training, so his combat fluency was not much better than a complete civilian.

Becoming a phase lord did not magically stuff his head with martial arts skills or whatever. He just gained an oversized body and the ability to perform a few spatial abilities.

If Ves wanted to become proficient in combat up close and at a distance, then he needed to undergo focused training in these aspects!

"Be careful, Ves. Our mech is about to attack. Try and resist as seriously as you can. Do not hesitate to defeat it with all of your means. Don't worry about the mech pilot. The cockpit is built according to the standards of a first-class multipurpose mech, so you won't be able to break it open that easily, especially when we have prepared other redundant protective measures."

Though Ves could never really trust whether all of these measures could save the life of the mech pilot, he was unwilling to hold himself back.

He needed to know how well he could fight against a real mech. This was why he was willing to cooperate with the mechers and trust that they had their act together.

The opposing hero mech made the first move by running backwards while also raising its hyper laser rifle straight towards Ves!

The pilot was skilled enough to launch an accurate snapshot at Ves in a single smooth motion.

Ves slightly blinked at the bright flash of light. A fiery hyper laser beam had struck his spatial barrier!

While the attack was not transphasic in nature, the hyper tech incorporated in the weapon added a lot of fire energy to the attack. This caused the fiery laser beams to strike significantly harder than normal!

Ves was no longer in his prime condition. His short rest only allowed him to catch his breath and improve his condition by a small extent.

That was a bit troublesome. His body possessed enormous energy reserves, but once they had been depleted, it would take a lot of time as well as nutrients to replenish what he lost.

His spatial barrier flared repeatedly as the opposing hero mech never let up on its attacks.

Though Ves did not feel too threatened by these attacks, it was a bad idea to let his current adversary drain his defenses for free.

Ves did not even bother to run towards the distancing machine. His running speed was not as good as the opposing machine.

He simply activated all of the phasewater throughout his body again and accurately teleported right next to the mech in question!

Ves quickly launched a transphasic punch at the hero mech, only for the slippery mech to evade the attack in time!

The hero mech not only managed to slide back like a slippery eel, but also launched a shot of its hyper laser rifle, causing Ves' spatial barrier to flare with burns once again!

The outburst of light and flames interfered with his sight, but did not block his other senses.

His Locos organ alone had become sensitive enough to perceive the presence and movement of mass in space.

Ves ignored the fire laser beam attacks as best as possible and launched himself towards the hero mech again!

However, the hero mech easily read his movements and always succeeded in evading in the right directions.

Ves grew more frustrated at his inability to express his strength properly. It was not until he utilized his Maracos organ to unexpectedly bend the space around the hero mech that he was able to mess up his adversary's movements!

Crash!

Ves finally managed to inflict a heavy blow against the hero mech's energy shield!

While the energy shield was not transphasic in nature, it was enhanced by the water element, which significantly reduced the damage of kinetic impacts.

It would take a few more attacks in order to break through this defensive barrier!

The hero mech already slipped away before Ves could land another attack.

The machine did not try to avoid a confrontation. It not only fired its rifle whenever possible, but even chose to counterattack by striking its steely truncheon at his spatial barrier!

Ves could sense the strong metal element hardening and improving the attack power of the physical blows. His spatial barrier was losing stability at a distressing rate.

It appeared that the Red Association's application of hyper technology was on a higher level compared to the rest of the mech industry.

He would have loved to sit down and study the more refined and optimized application of hyper technology, but that was currently not possible.

Ves had a fight to win!

The use of hyper technology gave Ves a bit of inspiration.

What if he employed E energy as well? He could just treat himself as a hyper biomech.

Ves had already gained proficiency in a number of 'spells' related to the five elements.

He first tried to reinforce his spatial barrier with the water element in an attempt to mitigate the damage inflicted by the hyper laser rifle.

However, Ves soon discovered that his ability to feel and manipulate spiritual energy had suddenly become worse!

"WHAT?"

Ves tried to keep the hero mech occupied by occasionally teleporting to its side and launching a transphasic punch that could not be avoided.

He quickly discovered that his sensitivity to E energy had dropped.

His body had grown a lot larger, and that kept his own Spirituality a lot busier.

However, the more important reason why he was unable to command the various elements he had grown familiar with was because the space element had become far too dominant!

His true body was filled with phasewater. His sensitivity to spatial phenomena had been raised by a drastic degree.

It was as if a star that represented the space element shone so brightly that all of the other stars had dimmed in comparison!

This was an annoying effect and it prevented Ves from pulling off the tricks he planned before.

Though he was pretty sure he could still force himself to command the various elements, it was much easier to stick to spatial manipulation which benefited from the support of his entire body.

"WAIT A SECOND."

This was a match where he was able to employ all of his means. He still possessed two trump cards that he had yet to employ.

First, his Jutland organ had become integrated in his phase lord body. Ves gained access to a lot more Worclaw energy than before, and now that he had unfolded his true body, he felt he could harness it a lot easier as well!

Second, he also had Blinky and his other incarnations at his disposal. Ves was not a true warrior, so he had no qualms about relying on external help to beat his opponents.

Once he made this realization, his eyes grew sharper and his glow became more intense.

"Mrow!"

His dramatic increase in body size did not translate to Blinky. His companion spirit still looked as small as a regular house cat. It was hard to imagine that such a small critter could make a meaningful difference in a fight of this scale.

However, the Star Cat possessed a number of strong advantages.

First, the cat began to disgorge a large amount of earth energy from the Blinkyverse.

As an inherent spiritual entity, Blinky was able to skillfully control the earth energy so that it became integrated into Ves' transphasic fist.

The earth element possessed an antagonistic relationship with the water element, so it was the best choice to break the hero mech's water energy shield.

That was not enough. The organ that replaced his heart became hotter and more active as Ves purposefully drew out the Worclaw energy that was locked in a cycle inside his chest!

Ves felt a lot more danger as he tried to draw out this mysterious and potent energy, but that made him look forward to its power even more!

Once he accumulated the Worclaw energy into his earth and phasewater-empowered fist, it began to exude so much power that he was barely able to keep the energies in control!

Crack!

Ves immediately disappeared from his previous position and appeared right next to the hero mech!

The mech pilot was not stupid. He had already commanded his machine to evade in a random direction just before Ves had pulled off his displacement maneuver.

A medium hero mech was not light. Its typical characteristics made it impossible to perform instant evasions, especially when it was not equipped with powerful boosters.

However, the mech pilot possessed keen battle instincts that had been honed through relentless training and a sufficient amount of battles.

Combined with the fact that Ves had repeatedly utilized his teleportation ability during the fight, the pilot successfully managed to prevent his machine from getting struck head-on by the multi-empowered fist!

Though Ves grew incredibly frustrated that his sneak attack had missed, he was unable to control all of the combined energies, causing them to suddenly explode from his fist at once!

B000M!

A surprisingly powerful blast of energies erupted from his supposedly failed attack, causing Ves to get pushed back by the force of his own outburst!

The energy shields that protected the floor of the testing chamber flared considerably as they struggled to resist the forces.

The hero mech quickly appeared into sight. Its water energy shield had been unable to withstand the powerful forces.

Not only that, but the left side of its torso as well as its rifle arm had suffered significant damage!

Ves' eyes lit up as he saw the results of his experimental approach.

He gained a bit of inspiration and tried to pull off another move.

Though the hero mech had tossed aside its damaged rifle and dashed forward in order to overwhelm Ves with a flurry of sword strikes, the inspired phase lord did not take these attacks too seriously.

Blinky disgorged a large quantity of water energy to reinforce his spatial barrier and reduce its vulnerability to the metal element that enhanced the hyper sword.

Meanwhile, Ves drew out a bit more Worclaw energy. Even though his oversized body had massively increased his reserve of this energy, his Jutland organ was not able to replenish it that quickly, so he had to be careful about squandering it too quickly.

When Ves had gathered this Worclaw energy into his palm, he tried to combine it with his spatial abilities, but failed as there was no obvious way to combine them together.

He shrugged and simply chose to combine it with E energy instead.

"Mrow!"

Blinky no longer reinforced the spatial barrier, but instead channeled as much fire energy to his palm as possible.

Ves did not sense any particular synergy between fire-attributed E energy and Worclaw energy.

They were completely different types of energies that did not intersect with each other in any obvious fashion.

This increased its mystery even further. Ves still had little idea what it was and why it was not related to the other forces he was familiar with up to this point.

He could wonder about that later. The hero mech had inflicted significant damage to his spatial barrier. His main form of defense was not going to last much longer!

"BE CAREFUL!"

Ves deliberately pointed his palm a bit downwards before he unleashed the mix of fire and Worclaw energy in a powerful and uncontrolled discharge!

B000000M!

The much greater quantity of Worclaw energy produced a much violent outburst that instantly crushed the legs of the hero mech before it was able to complete its evasion maneuver!

The energy shields protecting the floor flared much brighter this time, but still managed to hold together.

The fight had come to an end. Ves consciously started to relax. He already felt a bit tired after straining his phasewater organs and expending a significant portion of his Worclaw energy.

The latter was a much more precious resource to him. It had made a crushing difference in this bout.

Ves realized that so long as he kept enough Worclaw energy in reserve, he no longer had any reason to feel threatened by one or several second-class mechs!

Of course, he would have a much harder fight on his hand if he was unable to muster enough of this highly potent energy type.

He was frankly disappointed by his basic fighting capabilities as a phase lord. He clearly possessed the ability to compete against mechs, but his awful fighting skills and lack of familiarity with his new capabilities held him back.

As Ves continued to evaluate his combat performance, the damaged hero mech had already been dragged away from the testing chamber.

A much more powerful machine took its place.

Ves immediately felt a much stronger presence as one of the first-class multipurpose mechs of the Bluejay Fleet came into view.

He immediately felt intimidated by the powerful tech and the transphasic hyper modules of its cutting-edge design!

"Ves, your body signals indicate that you are still able to persist in a fight. We would like to ask for your cooperation and test your ability to fight against this mech. We do not expect you to win, but it would be helpful for the both of us if we can play this scenario out in reality."

"UHH... OKAY..."

Now that he came face to face with one of the strongest standard mechs in use, Ves no longer felt as invincible as before.

Bang!

Phasewater-infused blood spilled from his injured body as Ves collided against the shielded wall just 40 seconds after the match had begun!

His nanosuit featured multiple holes as well as awful looking burns as Ves endured several painful plasma attacks!

The first-class multipurpose mech hovered like an invincible metal deity in front of Ves. Its completely intact azure energy shield showed that it had not been threatened from beginning to end!

"Well that is a clear outcome." Jovy said.

Chapter 5449 Preparing for Human Phase Lords

Half an hour later, Ves had concluded a bunch of health examinations. After he shrunk his body to his most comfortable human state, he cleaned himself up and donned his uniform again.

He found it a bit regrettable that he had to return the nanosuit, but he did not mind it too much.

He vastly preferred it if he could design and fabricate a suit of his own that could keep up with his growth in scale.

He already had a number of interesting ideas in mind on how to design a suit that could significantly improve the combat capabilities of his true body.

However, all of that sounded rather superfluous to Ves. The quick and overwhelming defeat against a single first-class multipurpose mech thoroughly disabused him of the notion that he could actually fight alongside his own mechs.

He was not his father. He was not his mother. He was not his uncle. He was not his grandfather. He was not Ketis. He was not Venerable Joshua.

Each of these aforementioned people were trained fighters, soldiers and killers. They dedicated their lives to improving their ability to fight and kill.

That was not all. They not only dedicated at least decades worth of training into honing their craft, they actually managed to win against a lot of powerful opponents!

Each of them could be regarded as highly capable and competent combatants in a fight. They were the first fighters that people would turn to if they sought protection. They could handle themselves on many different battlefields.

What about Ves? Phase lord or not, he was still a mech designer in essence!

Neither him nor his incarnations were true warriors. None of them dedicated themselves towards combat, especially in the odd combination of purely physical combat and extensive spatial manipulation.

Ves hoped that his mysterious transformation into a phase lord also came with instinctual combat skills, but it turned out that he was wishing for too much.

The lack of combat training was a serious flaw that caused him to utilize only a fraction of his potential as a phase lord.

Ves could see it, and so could the mechers.

When he finally met up with Jovy in a meeting room, they both took a look at the battle footage.

Ves felt more embarrassed than ever when he saw how much his rapid increase in power had caused him to lose his rationality.

"As we expected, you are not exempt from the rapid shift in mentality that comes with acquiring an oversized physical form." Jovy remarked. "This is a known phenomenon among the native aliens, but hardly any of them complain about it because they think this is only natural. How do you feel now that you are able to reflect on what has happened?"

It took a few seconds for Ves to formulate his words. "It's difficult to take people seriously when they look so much smaller and weaker. It's like looking at a bunch of small critters such as mice or ants. It is irrational for me to think this way, but there is some sort of biological instinct that forces me to think that I have little reason to fear tiny organisms. I can squash them at will, and it is also difficult for me to regard their intellect at the same level of my own. I know that these thoughts are wrong, but it is surprisingly difficult for me to get rid of these delusions."

Jovy nodded with understanding. "We are afraid that may be the case. While we do not have enough human phase lords to form a definite conclusion of what is happening, we think this is not an inherent fault of phase lords. It is more likely that we are being subjected to the faults of our own biological instincts. It is in our nature to dismiss the threat of creatures as small as ants and to fear the danger of coming close to larger animals such as elephants and whales."

That sounded logical. "I guess the same is true for alien species as well. The phase whales have always been regarded as the most arrogant ones in the Red Ocean, and that is not a big surprise considering how they are by far the largest sentient beings of this dwarf galaxy."

In other words, no matter whether they were humans or aliens, each of them would inevitably feel that they were stronger and superior than everyone else as they grew larger!

It was a literal god complex in action!

"As the most recent battles against the phase whales have shown, being bigger does not always translate into victory." Jovy remarked. "It is important for us to counteract this development when we are ready to train our own batch of human phase lords."

Ves raised his eyebrow. "How close are you to turning humans into phase lords?"

"I am not completely certain, to be honest." Jovy shrugged. "You will have to ask the Transhumanists for details. However, my responsibilities as a liaison between you and the various institutions of the Red Association has put me in touch with their researchers. The direction of their requests and inquiries makes me think that they have made a large amount of advancements in recent months."

Both Ves and Jovy exchanged meaningful glances with each other.

"Is it because they have received the guidance of the Evolution Witch?"

"I cannot say anything in relation to the activities of one of our honored god pilots."

That pretty much sounded like a confirmation to Ves. Many people had been wondering what the Evolution Witch was doing now that her Geneforger had successfully assimilated the body and presumably the brain of the Singularity Lord.

Even if the powerful god biomech was only able to salvage a fraction of the knowledge contained within that gigantic brain, it probably contained a wellspring of memories, much of which was undoubtedly related to the secrets of phase whale cultivation!

Gaining any meaningful knowledge from one of the top phase leaders of the dwarf galaxy was a massive coup!

Besides, it wasn't just the Singularity Lord that ended up in the hands of the mechers. Several other ancient phase whales got killed as well, and even if their bodies were in much worse shape, they could still provide a huge amount of research data as well as experimental materials.

It would be surprising if the highly competent biotech researchers of the Transhumanist Faction failed to make any progress with all of this bounty at their disposal!

Of course, the role of Ves was still important. He provided a viable template of a human phase lord. Having him around was like having a cheat sheet at their disposal. He could help the researchers save a lot of time by making a lot of tedious and dangerous experiments redundant.

This was why it was permissible for Ves to know a thing or two about how much progress the mechers had made in this research direction.

"Once you guys have managed to develop a viable way to produce a human phase lord, what is next? I cannot imagine that you are willing to popularize it. From what I know, it takes a gigantic amount of phasewater to develop those huge bodies. Why invest thousands of kilograms of

phaserwater to nurture a single phase lord when you can use the same amount to equip entire mech divisions with transphasic machines?"

Jovy sighed. "You are right about that. Our society cannot afford to produce large amounts of phase lords. That said, there are still several fantastic uses for them. Their deep control over space combined with their ability to flexibly alter their size from that of a human to that of a space station are undeniable advantages for assassins, saboteurs and bodyguards. I am not privy to any specific plans, but I can guess that our Association has already devised several plans to make the most out of phase lords. The fact that they do not have to be mech pilots is fantastic because that opens up the selection pool by a massive extent."

Infantry no longer became as useless as before. So long as they possessed the right qualifications and so long as there was enough phaserwater, each footsoldier had the potential to transform into a massive giant that could stomp ordinary mechs with their gigantic feet!

Naturally, the mechers would never waste all of their phaserwater to turn their mech designers into phase lords.

As Ves had shown just earlier, a noncombatant was still inept at fighting even if he was able to match a mech in physical terms!

"What about mech pilots?" Ves asked. "While it might not be cost-effective to turn ordinary mech pilots into phase lords, what about ace pilots? What about god pilots?"

"I cannot say anything official or definitive on this matter. Personally, I think it is superfluous. God pilots already have a strong body in the form of their own god mechs. It makes even less sense to ace pilots. Their only goal is to increase their chances of surviving the ultimate breakthrough process. Becoming a phase lord is a needless diversion that detracts from their greatest goal. Having an abnormally strong body may even interfere with the Mech Body Merger Process as it becomes much harder to merge the body of a mech with an abnormally strong body of a phase lord. Do not forget that willpower is the only source of strength that a god pilot candidate must carry over."

That sounded plausible, but Ves did not completely rule out the possibility that having an abnormally strong body might increase the success rate.

He was sure that the mechers were secretly planning to conduct an experiment of this nature on one of their peak ace pilots.

There were so many of them that the Red Association could afford to volunteer one of them for an important scientific discovery.

If the experiment indeed proved that ace pilots had a much higher chance of surviving the Mech Body Merger Process when they turned themselves into phase lords, then a huge craze for this special form of body cultivation would emerge!

So many ace pilots yearned to become phase lords that the demand of phaserwater would grow at least a hundred times greater!

This would have massive ripple effects in red humanity's society. Transphasic mechs would become luxury products that were only reserved for the very few as it became impossible for most parties to obtain phaserwater.

Ves did not like this at all because phasewater was a strategic resource that could make all of the mechs and starships of the Larkinson Clan stronger.

His forces would be fighting at a severe disadvantage if they no longer had access to a sufficient supply of phasewater!

Of course, a lot of human forces would also become a lot more enthusiastic about fighting the aliens.

Since phasewater had become virtually unobtainable in human space, then the best way to obtain this precious resource was to plunder alien territories!

Whether mech pilots benefited from it or not, Ves realized that the impending emergence of human phase lords may change the new frontier forever!

From what Ves had learned from his mother, this was definitely a move that purposefully increased the connection between red humanity and the local heavenly authority.

There was great meaning in this move. It showed that the mechers still wanted to develop a closer relationship with the Red Ocean, likely in an attempt to counteract the growing influence of Messier Sy.

"Regardless of the presence or absence of human phase lords, we do not intend to place all of our hopes on them." Jovy told Ves. "We have always rested our hopes on mechs, and that has not changed now that we are on the verge of opening up another means of human transcendence. Mechs remain the most powerful, cost-effective and suitable means to combat the threat from within and without. I can assure you that our shared profession will always remain an essential part of our civilization."

"I hope you are right, Jovy. I really do. If our mechs are not strong enough, then we just have to work harder."

#### Chapter 5450 The Longevity of a Phase Lord

Ves had an undeniable connection to the possible rise of human phase lords.

He gave an insightful lecture about it during the Survivalist conference.

He provided follow-up feedback to the Transhumanist Faction over the span of multiple months after he had revealed his unique expertise on phase lord cultivation.

The Transhumanists oddly became a lot less interested in listening to his feedback after the conclusion of Operation Night Jazz.

This was understandable as the Evolution Witch and the other forces participating in this bold operation had managed to capture a huge amount of data as well as enormous amounts of phase leader remains.

By then, Ves had already provided most of the theories and insights that he could squeeze from his mind. His understanding of phase lords was ultimately limited to his shallow personal experiences. There was only so much information that he could provide to the Transhumanists.

His role by this time had been reduced to providing reference data. Jovy and the researchers assigned to the Bluejay Fleet could easily take care of this chore, so Ves had been unable to obtain any useful hints from any of the core researchers who were working on this massive project.

Regardless, Ves still felt that he had contributed enough to this effort to feel responsible for the spread of human phase lords in human society.

If they ended up causing damage to red humanity, then Ves would undoubtedly carry a lot of blame for their actions!

To be honest, Ves did not know what the mechers were thinking by focusing so much on turning humans into phase lords. Was it truly because they wanted to increase their connection to the Red Ocean, or did they have another purpose in mind?

The Transhumanists had always focused on mechs as the ideal means to achieve transcendence. Focusing too much on phase lord cultivation was not only a distraction, but also a huge drain on resources.

Perhaps the only compelling advantage was that all of these studies demystified the existence of phase whales and phase lords. They became a lot less inscrutable. Perhaps all of the gathered information may lead to the development of specific countermeasures that targeted the weaknesses of these powerful native gods.

"Let us get back to your personal performance." Jovy said as he summoned a projection that displayed a model of Ves' true body. "We have gathered a large amount of interesting data on your physique. It is still recognizably human, but it is also so much more. The overall state of your body has improved far beyond what is possible. The only exception is your left leg."

The projection zoomed in on Ves' left leg. It did not look different from the other leg at first, but Ves could see that the flesh was a little less dense and robust. The bones over there also looked wrong.

"Ah. That is due to my cybernetic leg." Ves spoke. "Part of the process that turned me into a phase lord has forced me to sacrifice a part of my body. I previously thought that this sacrifice was permanent, but after my most recent lightning baptism, my true body grew explosively in size while correcting a lot of flaws. The lower left leg of my true body has regrown for the most part, but there is still a bit of weakness that I can't make up for. It's a weird interaction that I cannot fully explain."

Jovy accepted this explanation. "The ritual that you have used has metaphysical components that impose greater consequences on yourself. It is hardly perfect, and it is still too dangerous to be put to use. I can be sure that we will devise our own method of transforming humans into phase lords. Any soldier we choose to undergo this treatment cannot afford to possess these vulnerabilities. They can become a deadly weakness in battle."

The orven ritual sacrifice altar was not that bad. Ves may have come away with a clear physical vulnerability, but he also gained Veronica in the process, which proved to be incredibly useful!

"If I have this weakness, then the orvens most certainly have it as well." Ves surmised. "That is unless they have switched to a different method."

"We shall investigate further. Anyway, we should talk about your future as a phase lord. I do not think I need to convince you that your combat effectiveness is terrible. You have so much power, but you have not developed it in the slightest. Any trained soldier or mech pilot who has gained your physical gifts can easily defeat at least four of you at the same time, and that is only a conservative estimate."

Ves' expression turned ugly as he became reminded by his awful performance once again.

"I know I am bad at this. Are you suggesting that I should undergo combat training?"

Jovy nodded. "Our trainers and mech instructors can assist you in training the basic combat skills of hand-to-hand combat. If it is possible for you to effectively wield transphasic weapons that are scaled to your true body, then that is even better. It may take 3 to 5 years of weekly training for you to turn into a somewhat competent fighter. As for your spatial abilities, we cannot assist you in this, but our biotech research teams can help you upgrade and develop your organic hardware further. You will probably be unable to defeat a typical alien phase lord in a duel after these improvements, but you can rest assured that you will no longer be a liability on the battlefield."

The mechers truly weren't mincing their words here. Though Jovy's judgment sounded harsh, Ves knew it was fair. There just wasn't any possibility for him to gain the combat consciousness of a professional commando or mech pilot in a short amount of time, especially when he was just a mech designer.

Ves tried to think whether it was worthwhile for him to devote a few hours every week on basic combat training.

He quickly shook his head. "There's little point in this. If I am ever forced in a situation where I cannot rely on the protection of others, my best course of action should be to get away as fast as possible. If I truly have to fight, I would prefer to adopt a fighting style that matches my inclinations the most. I would much rather develop my spatial manipulation skills than my physical combat skills. The former is not only more suitable for an intellectual such as myself, but it will also help me understand phasewater theory and deepen my familiarity with this powerful substance."

In other words, Ves wanted to fight like a wizard instead of a warrior.

"That is not a bad idea, Ves, but according to our intelligence, learning how to utilize your true body in combat is the most cost-effective use of your limited time. It may not be to your liking, but you can drastically reduce your chance of getting beaten within half a year of training. As for improving your ability to manipulate space, we have heard that it can take decades, centuries or even millennia to develop powerful enough techniques that can pose a threat against equally strong opponents."

Ves straightened his back when he heard that. "What?! How come it takes that long? I don't feel it should be that difficult."

The RA Senior Mech Designer shook his head. "That is not what we have heard. Every alien phase lord must slowly familiarize themselves with the power of phasewater. They must also delve into the potential of their phasewater organs and improve them step-by-step. No matter whether they rely on self-experimentation or guidance from a more powerful mentor, it takes a long process of trial and error to develop truly useful spatial abilities." a 1,

That was way too much time for Ves. He could not dedicate so much of his valuable time on developing a few redundant spatial tricks.

"How can the native aliens tolerate such slow progress?"

"They do not mind this slow pace because they have all of the time in the cosmos." Jovy replied with a sardonic smile. "The transition from a normal alien into a phase lord is a life changing event. Any body cells that are elevated and saturated with phasewater have become much more powerful in many different ways. One of the more obvious consequences of this is that your body does not really decline with age anymore. No matter whether the original lifespan of an alien phase lord is

100 years or 1000 years, it has become at least two orders of magnitude greater than before. It is even possible for phase lords to become biologically immortal as long as their phasewater concentration has become high enough."

What?

Ves had never really thought about how becoming phase lord affected his lifespan. He was only a little over 40 years old, so he was far from reaching the age where he needed to worry about running out of days anytime soon.

This was why his reaction to this benefit was less dramatic than normal.

If a 500 year old geezer learned that becoming a phase lord enabled them to live for many generations more, then they would probably go over the moon!

Ves suddenly sharpened his gaze.

"Is this why you mechers are so interested in devising a successful method to turn humans into phase lords?"

His friend had no solid answers to that. "I cannot offer any clarification on this topic. I do want to note that we are short on high-level professionals. There is a modest group of Master Mech Designers, ace pilots and galaxy-renowned academicians that our society is heavily reliant upon. Many of them have contributed enormously to our civilization, but their ability to do so is running out due to the fact that they belong to generations that were born before the Age of Mechs or shortly after it has commenced."

It made a lot of sense to turn them into phase lords just to advance their lifespans.

However, Ves was not certain whether their chances of becoming one were high enough. The weaker their bodies, the lower their success rate. Their advanced ages also held them back to an extent.

"There isn't enough phasewater in human space to turn all of them into phase lords." Ves said in a disapproving tone.

"Then it is a good thing that more and more groups are preparing to assault the native aliens that we are at war with." Jovy smiled. "The indigenous alien races have been in control of the Red Ocean for many years. They have amassed plentiful phasewater reserves, much more than we can extract from our own territories in the few years that we have resided in the new frontier. While you may look down on the benefits of becoming a human phase lord, what about your family?"

Ves had not thought about it from that angle!

"My family..."

"Your wife and children may not be as exceptional as you, Ves. If they can become phase lords, their drastically improved longevity will ensure that they can accompany you for many more years. They will also become much harder to kill, and they will become virtually immune to all diseases and physical afflictions. If there is any need, we can help them acquire bodies that will allow them to withstand the test of time. The endless lifespan of powerful phase lords is one of the many reasons why the natives consider them to be their gods. They are immortal and immune to the ravages of time."

Though Ves became enormously attracted by the prospect of upgrading the bodies of the family he cared about the most, he soon rejected this possibility in his mind.

There were more ways to attain transcendence than by copying the methods of the native aliens of the Red Ocean.

Gloriana's goal was to become a Star Designer, and Ves could grant his children their own suitable means to achieve transcendence.

So long as they managed to become a True God, their longevity would no longer be an immediate concern!