

## The Mech 5451

### Chapter 5451 Phase Lord Benefits

Who did not want to live longer?

Ves had seen enough cases of people who did everything possible to extend their lifespans.

Life-prolonging treatments used to be an unattainable dream to him. Even when he managed to get his hands on a few vials of life-prolonging treatment serum, he did not dare to squander them at will, but treated them as precious resources.

The chance to live forever was practically priceless. A lot of old geezers who had managed to make a lot of accomplishments all kept working even harder just to earn another way to extend their lifespans.

Ves knew that he was far too young to care too much about this pressing need, but he was probably the exception rather than the rule.

It was not easy for people to live for hundreds of years more than their natural lifespans.

Only a tiny proportion of humans were powerful enough to earn the huge amounts of merits required to redeem life-prolonging treatments.

An even smaller number of people possessed the luck, talent and ability to ascend into god pilots or Star Designers.

Opening up an alternative means to extending people's lives would definitely excite a lot of people who previously thought that they had reached the end of their ropes!

If the mechers dangled the chance of becoming a human phase lord as bait, then a lot of old geezers would probably invest nearly everything at their disposal to snatch as much phasewater from the native aliens as possible!

What a devious plan. This was probably an integral part of the calculations of the mechers.

When Ves was finally done with pumping enough information about human phase lords from Jovy, he briefly discussed his intention of going on a vacation.

It went without saying that the Bluejay Fleet had already begun to make the appropriate preparations.

"Your safety is our highest concern." The mecher stated. "We are well-equipped to protect you against most of the threats on Ocanon VI, but you will be exposing yourself and your children to many different risks, a number of which we may be less equipped to handle than others. We advise you to forgo the most dangerous hunting opportunities."

Ves frowned. "I don't want to challenge exobeasts that are too weak. I also intend to hunt down real beasts in my true body form. While I do not intend to spend too much time on my phase lord cultivation, I at least want to feel what it is like to kill in this form. Maybe I will be able to gain useful inspiration during this experience."

That made it harder for the mechers to protect him, but Jovy eventually acquiesced to this plan.

"Fine. We will be ready to employ the right safety measures. Our presence may invalidate your chance to earn a valid hunting trophy, but your safety is more important than satisfying your vanity."

That was a disappointment, but Ves already expected as much.

He instead spent his time on thinking about his own combat system.

He was not a pure phase lord, so there was no reason for him to fight like one. He had a companion spirit as well as other incarnations at his disposal. He could borrow the strength of different design spirits if he needed further help.

More importantly, the Worclaw energy produced by his Jutland organ had not only become a lot more abundant, but Ves also improved his control over its destructive potency!

Ves felt an urge to develop a unique means of combat and self-defense that was fully suited to his own situation.

He was especially interested in combining his spatial manipulation abilities with his ability to command E energy.

Not only would he be able to learn various tricks that could potentially produce amazing synergies, but he could also apply all of his newfound insights in his mech designs!

That last part was especially important to him. He was a mech designer first, so every activity had to improve his ability to do his work.

Jovy looked intrigued when Ves briefly explained his intentions.

"Earlier, you mentioned that your sensitivity to E energy had dropped by a large extent when you unveiled your true body. It should be much harder for you to manipulate space and E energy at the same time if that is the case. That lines up with what we have found among the aliens. The more they are saturated with phasewater, the less they are able to form a connection with E energy. It is an odd interaction that we do not fully understand. We certainly hope that the aliens are unable to solve this interaction."

It was good news that powerful alien phase lords and phase whales were not able to exert a lot of control over E energy.

Powerful ancient phase whales would become several times more difficult to defeat if they were able to utilize their vast and powerful minds to draw strength from the power of heaven as if they were qi cultivators!

"From what I have experienced, it has become a lot harder to leverage E energy when I activate my true body, but this is not an absolute rule." Ves cautioned. "I think that if I really put effort into it, I may be able to leverage space-attributed E energy. I just haven't figured out how to do it when I am in that strange condition."

"That sounds concerning." Jovy frowned. "We shall be sure to investigate that further. By the way, we have noticed that you have made active use of your companion spirit during the testing session. How well were you able to borrow the power of E energy with the help of Blinky?"

"It was much better than before. Blinky's strength lies in this aspect. He was able to employ his full power without getting affected by my body's changes. The only problem is that my own reduced

sensitivity towards E energy has left me unable to assist what my companion spirit was doing at the time."

"Interesting. There is still a strong synergy. I do not think you need this reminder, but I truly do have to repeat to you that you are not allowed to grant a design spirit to any alien entity, period. If a powerful ancient phase whale is able to overcome his congenital shortcomings in this aspect with the help of a companion spirit, then we will have to fight against an apex predator who is strong in both body and energy! The combat effectiveness of such a monstrosity may approach that of a god pilot!"

That was a nightmare scenario for every red human!

Ves simply smiled in response. "I am not stupid enough to make that happen. Rest assured that I have no intentions of arming the native aliens with companion spirits."

"Good. E energy radiation has become a universal resource to both red humanity and the native aliens. We have clear advantages in its usage. The phase whales and the other powerful alien races are still stuck at the starting line. We cannot afford to shrink this gap. The more the native aliens are able to utilize the power of E energy, the more losses we will suffer. Your powerful solutions must remain in red humanity's hands at all cost."

"I agree."

What neither of the two mentioned was that the Bluejay Fleet would likely take measures to prevent Ves from handing over the means to produce companion spirits to the native aliens.

From the moment Ves had presented his companion spirits to the Survivalists during their last conference, it may have already been inevitable for him to get shadowed by their forces!

The soldiers of the Bluejay Fleet were both his protectors as well as his minders.

They might even turn into his executioners if he displayed any intention to betray the interests of red humanity!

Ves did not find this pleasant to say the least, but it was useless for him to complain about it. The only way he could get rid of the Sword of Damocles that was literally hovering high above his head was to become powerful enough to grasp its hilt!

"Anyway, I have stayed here long enough. I should get back and keep my children company."

When Ves finally returned to Diandi Base, he still remained distracted by all of the new insights he gained when he had unfolded his true body.

When he was in that remarkable state, he felt unprecedentedly close to the existence of space.

His connection to the phasewater had increased and his affinity to space had improved by a large margin. This enabled him to look at old problems related to phasewater theory and spatial manipulation from much better angles.

Part of the reason why he found it much easier for him to teleport his body was because of his vastly improved connection to space!

His eyes lit up when he thought about how this might be useful in his work.

He could theoretically experiment with different applications of phasewater technology.

That was not all. He could also team up with Blinky to explore possible ways to combine phasewater technology with hyper technology!

Whereas other mech designers were only able to explore these possibilities by painstakingly fabricating experimental designs before putting them to the test, Ves could try out his ideas much more directly by unfolding his true body!

"This is great!"

While his ability to exploit this advantage was not unlimited, Ves was sure that he could massively speed up his efforts to improve his utilization of both technological fields!

The only issue was that he regularly needed to retreat to a large and strong enough chamber for him to experiment with his extraordinary powers.

"It would be great if I can work together with another clever mind." Ves thought.

His wife was not a suitable research partner or assistant. Her interests rested elsewhere, and her specialization did not grant her any advantages in these exotic fields.

"Alexa will be able to provide better help and feedback."

Though she was still young, she had already proved her excellence many times.

She was not only quite proficient in phasewater theory and hyper technology due to her superior learning ability, she also possessed a strong interest in learning more about living mechs and by extension E-technology.

Ves could not think of a better candidate for him to bounce his ideas from than General Axelar Streon's granddaughter!

Now that he had formed this idea, he decided to approach her at the soonest possible opportunity to learn what she had to say.

Of course, it took quite a bit of time to explain the circumstances surrounding his phase lord cultivation to her. The young assistant was already accustomed to his many surprises, so she hardly looked fazed when he casually explained the full extent of his true body!

"So you are possibly the first real human phase lord." She spoke. "I have many questions, but I shall refrain from answering them. I do not know whether I can be of service to you. It is true that I have been working on improving my grasp of phasewater theory and hyper technology, but how well does that translate to your power utilization? Conventional science simply does not work anymore in those cases."

"It is not as bad as you think. I work differently from high-ranking mech pilots. I think we should just hold a session and give you a glimpse of how I work. I am convinced that we can explore many new applications of phasewater technology and hyper technology by using my true body as an experimental platform!"

It would be as if Ves turned his own true body into a persistent prototype! The amount of research he could conduct by taking advantage of his unique condition was unfathomable.

Ves even started to develop a greater interest in advancing his phase lord cultivation!

He did not want to become a stronger phase lord because he wanted to pursue greater strength, but because it would help him discover more advanced technological applications!

"Wait, I just thought of a good idea. Let us head over to the nearest secure chamber so that we can explore it right away!"

## Chapter 5452 Spontaneously Alive

Though Ves had exerted himself quite a lot when he conducted a lot of tests under the supervision of the mechers, phase lords did not get tired so easily.

There were benefits to having a stupendously strong body. Ves felt as if his physique transformed into a nigh-perpetual biological engine that could sustain highly intensive activity for many hours!

Even though he sensed that he would definitely have to pay the price of his heavy exertions by ingesting a lot of nutrients, that could wait until later.

He had already transmitted a request to his personal assistant to roast enough meat to feed all of the spacers serving in the Bluejay Fleet!

"Are you sure about that, boss?!" Gavin asked in a perplexed tone. "Our cooking facilities do not have the capacity to prepare so much food, and I doubt the quality will satisfy their refined palates."

"There is no need to go through so much trouble. I am not intending to invite the mechers over to a meal or anything. What I need is for you to provide as much cooked meat as possible. It has to be both dense and in excess quantity. The more joules of energy you can prepare within a few hours, the better. Just think of it as preparing enough meat to feed a giant exobeast."

"If you want to feed an exobeast, then it is not necessary to cook or process the meat. Wild carnivores are accustomed to tearing raw flesh from the carcasses of their prey."

Ves smirked. "You're right. You can dispense with the tedious roasting process if you think that is a waste of time."

With that chore taken care of, he continued to lead Ves down to one of the spare chambers that was ordinarily used to perform quick tests or examinations on freshly repaired or fabricated mechs.

The security and monitoring systems were not as robust in this underground space, but Ves had gained enough familiarity in his true body that he was confident he could control his powers to an acceptable degree.

However, for safety's sake, he still insisted that Alexa move up to the control room.

Once she had set herself up behind the control panel, Ves had emerged while being followed by a handful of bots that held a large tarpaulin in their grasp.

Though he no longer had access to the Association's nanosuit, he was still able to retrieve a tarpaulin from the inventory. It was normally used to cover up mechs, but it could work equally well as a makeshift robe.

Ves took a deep breath before he unveiled his true body once again!

Ves made another observation as Alexa grew shocked by the inhuman display taking place beyond the shielded windows!

She learned why Ves had taken the trouble to bring over a large synthetic fabric as the bots immediately began to envelop his growing body in the pale gray tarpaulin.

The act of folding and unfolding his true body was easy, but it also consumed a bit of energy.

The larger his body, the more energy consumed in the process.

He should refrain from needlessly enlarging or shrinking his body.

Once he had reached the same size as before, Alexa completely looked gobsmacked as her famous mentor turned into the human equivalent of a biomech!

"Is this what you have been working to investigate with the mechers?"

Ves nodded. "YES. TIME IS SHORT, SO LET US GET TO BUSINESS. PLEASE MONITOR MY ACTIONS CAREFULLY AND FEEL FREE TO SHARE YOUR FEEDBACK. THE MORE IDEAS WE SWAP, THE GREATER THE CHANCE WE CAN STUMBLE UPON A USEFUL NEW APPLICATION. USE THE SENSORS SCANNERS TO PAY ATTENTION TO ANY SPATIAL ACTIVITY, AND USE MAIA TO MONITOR MY E ENERGY ACTIVITY."

As Alexa did as instructed, Ves paid a bit more attention to his mental state.

He had already experienced the rush of power once before, so it was no longer as surprising as before. He became a lot better equipped to suppress the irrational overconfidence that came with gaining the power to crush ordinary humans into pulp!

Getting beaten by a first-class multipurpose mech in less than a second also humbled him a lot. Though it was not pleasant to acknowledge it, the mechers had done him a great favor by beating him up in such an overwhelming fashion!

He did not know what it was like for other phase leaders, but Ves found that he no longer became as susceptible to the mental drawbacks of unfolding his true body.

Of course, that was no reason for him to let down his guard. He bet that the problem would probably return with a vengeance if he ever managed to advance his phase lord cultivation to the point where he could grow as large as the Uranus!

Ves constantly had to remind himself that size truly didn't matter. Operation Night Jazz had decisively shown that even ancient phase whales the size of moons stood no chance against god mechs.

That was truly the factor that helped him rein in his instinctual arrogance.

"Alright, before I proceed with trying out my other ideas, I first want you to record a bit of data. One of the abilities that I have access to after becoming a phase lord is the ability to teleport. It is quite weird to be honest as I shouldn't be able to do it at my stage of body cultivation."

"What should I pay attention to, sir?"

Ves briefly paused before he decided to voice one of his suspicions. "I WANT YOU TO PAY ATTENTION TO ANY ACTIVITY GENERATED BY MY JUTLAND ORGAN. THAT IS THE STRANGE ORGAN THAT HAS TAKEN THE PLACE OF MY HEART. DON'T ASK ANY QUESTIONS ABOUT THAT. IT'S A LONG STORY."

"...Okay..."

One minute later, Ves did what he had done before and activated all of the phasewater spread throughout his body.

Though he had not taken any exact measurements of the amount of phasewater circulating through his veins and other tissue, it was definitely a lot!

He carried more than enough phasewater to build a first-class superdrive that was powerful enough to form a warp bubble around a capital ship!

Since that was the case, Ves should be able to do way more with phasewater, even if much of its power was already occupied with sustaining his abnormally strong body.

Crack!

In an instant, the giant robed form of Ves disappeared from one place and instantly appeared twenty giant paces away!

Alexa and her ragdoll cat companion spirit looked impressed, but they had made sure to pay careful attention.

"WELL?" Ves asked in the loud and deep voice of his true body.

He was actually working on lowering the volume of his words, but he found it surprisingly difficult to do so. He found it a lot more difficult to control his breath. It was as if he was holding a lot of repressed power that was constantly trying to explode from his mouth!

Ves was already thinking about designing and constructing an artificial voice box that could directly transmit his words from his cranial implant, which fortunately maintained its functionality in his inhuman state.

"Your Jutland organ did not generate any elevated activity aside from circulating the blood in your body at a faster rate." Alexa replied. "I am not a biotech scientist, so I am unable to understand the full workings of this odd organ of yours. However, the activity that our sensors have measured earlier does not suggest that your Jutland organ was directly involved in your successful teleportation attempt."

"I SEE. THAT CONCURS WITH MY OWN OBSERVATIONS."

He had been paying close attention to the Worclaw energy accumulated in his body. This strange but powerful energy type was known to produce a number of amazing phenomena that the Alshyr race relied upon to become one of the Seven Apex Races of the Milky Way.

Direct teleportation did not happen to be one of their registered abilities, but who knew whether the records were accurate enough.

It turned out that his hypothesis was wrong this time. His Worclaw energy levels had remained virtually the same before and after his teleportation. It was not the reason why he was able to displace his body with disturbing ease.

Ves shrugged his giant shoulders. "I WILL LOOK AT THE DATA LATER. LET US PROCEED WITH MY NEW EXPERIMENT. I HAVE JUST COME UP WITH A FEW POTENTIAL IDEAS ON HOW TO IMPROVE MY MECH DESIGNS GOING FORWARD. I WILL ATTEMPT TO SIMULATE THEM BY USING MY TRUE BODY AS A STAND-IN FOR A PROTOTYPE MECH."

"Mrow."

The relatively tiny form of Blinky emerged out of his head. The Star Cat was not in great shape at the moment, but he was still able to supply a lot of energy from his Blinkyverse if required.

Though Ves had tapped a lot of energy from the internal universe as of late, the Blinkyverse was much larger than his own body!

No matter whether it was virtual or not, it was undeniable that its internal volume had ballooned to the point where it was starting to approach the size of a typical star system!

Blinky was able to store a huge amount of E energy inside this space. Even if it couldn't be filled up to the brim due to the need to simulate an actual space environment, there was still more than enough space than the companion spirit could fill in a short amount of time.

Right now, Blinky had flown close to Ves' spatial barrier and started to disgorge a large quantity of water energy.

"Myah!"

"None of our sensor systems have the capacity to monitor E energy activity, but Maia is able to observe what you are doing with her own senses. Are you trying to replicate an azure energy shield?"

"NOT QUITE. I AM TRYING TO SEE HOW WATER ENERGY INTERACTS DIRECTLY WITH MY SPATIAL BARRIER."

Ves found that the spatial barrier was able to selectively block or allow for the passage of matter and energy depending on his own cognition.

It worked similar to an energy shield generator in that regard.

What Ves tried to do at the moment was to see how well E energy was able to pass through his spatial barrier when it was trying to block its passage.

He found that it was hard for him to block out pure E energy.

This was both bad and good. His powerful Spirituality and his hungry companion spirit were already accustomed to operating in a medium energy environment.

On the other hand, Ves would remain vulnerable to pure E energy attacks, just like other phase lords.

Ves felt that he should be able to tweak his spatial barriers and improve their ability to block energies that traversed through the imaginary realm. He just had to tweak the expression of his Kelsis organ.

This was not his main purpose, though. Once he had concluded this little test, he proceeded to concentrate on what he truly wanted to accomplish!

"Mrow!"

Blinky no longer released any further water energy, but instead disgorged a bit of life energy!

The power of pure creation started to blend into the water energy that was on the verge of dissipating in the environment.



"Myah?"

Both Alexa and Maia looked perplexed as the free-floating water energy gained life!

Under the deliberate direction of Ves and Blinky, the living entity compromised out of water-attributed E energy not only gained a rudimentary intelligence, but also managed to maintain its volatile form despite the lack of a physical anchor.

The strange new energy life form resembled a water elemental, a typical staple creature that was common in many fantasy stories!

"What... what are you doing, sir?"

Ves smirked but did not reply immediately. He instead commanded the so-called water elemental to enter his hand.

He activated the phasewater concentrated in his palm and spread it out at the front!

Wooosh!

He managed to generate a much more coherent water-augmented spatial barrier that actually looked like it was alive!

The water elemental's body had become dispersed in order to support the spatial barrier in a similar fashion to an azure energy shield.

However, the elemental still retained its consciousness, allowing it to influence how its energies were being used!

"What did you create?!"

## Chapter 5453 Secondary Life Forms

Alexa looked astonished as her companion spirit clearly witnessed what her mentor had done.

He not only bestowed life to a collection of free-floating water energy, but actively leveraged it to form a water-empowered spatial barrier!

During the design process of the Lionheart and the Blood Star Mark II, Ves had worked hard to learn the working principles of azure shield generators.

It was challenging for most mech designers to learn how transphasic energy shield generators worked.

Figuring out how these powerful shield generators could become even more effective by leveraging the power of water hyper materials added another layer of difficulty to their operation!

Fortunately, Ves not only possessed a good grasp of phasewater technology, but also possessed an existing foundation in E-technology and cultivation science.

While he might not be able to develop any iterative improvements to the existing processes of azure shield generators, he was still able to replicate a part of the relevant working mechanisms when he formed a spatial barrier!

Though the effect was still rudimentary, the main reason why he succeeded this time was not because he was depending on Blinky's control over water energy, but because he outsourced this function to his newly born 'water elemental!'

The water elemental was a relatively simple life form. Its sapience roughly matched that of a second order living mech. There was no reason for Ves to improve this further as its current level of intelligence was already enough to fulfill its programmed directive.

Ves' enlarged face smiled as he saw that his whimsical idea actually bore fruit.

The successful experiment not only granted him a means to refine his combat methods while he was in his true body form, but also provided a starting point for a new design application!

"What is it you are trying to accomplish, sir?" Alexa asked.

A mech designer as smart as her definitely generated a few guesses in her mind, but it was better to just ask and receive a clear answer from the source.

Ves smirked even wider as he studied the interaction between his water elemental and his spatial barrier.

"DO WE HAVE ANY ARMED BOTS IN RESERVE? PLEASE SUMMON THEM AND COMMAND THEM TO FIRE AT MY MODIFIED SPATIAL BARRIER. WE NEED TO COLLECT PRECISE DATA ON ITS PERFORMANCE."

"Acknowledged."

"AS FOR YOUR QUESTION, THE ANSWER IS SIMPLE. YOU HAVE TAKEN PART IN THE DESIGN AND FABRICATION OF THE FEY FIANNA, SO YOU SHOULD BE AWARE THAT IT ACTUALLY CONSISTS OF MULTIPLE LIFE FORMS. MY LATEST IDEA THIS TIME IS THAT SINCE A DRONE MECH CAN HOST MULTIPLE LIVING ENTITIES, WHY NOT OTHER MECHS?"

Alexa immediately realized what her mentor tried to accomplish.

"Is it possible for you to design a mech that contains sub-lives without living fey?!"

"WHY NOT?" Ves grinned as he continued to rely on Blinky to feel out the properties of his water elemental. "IF YOU THINK ABOUT THESE DEPENDENT LIFE FORMS, I SHOULD AT LEAST BE ABLE TO INSERT THEM INTO EXTERNAL EQUIPMENT SUCH AS SWORDS AND RIFLES. HOWEVER, I THINK I CAN TAKE THIS A STEP FURTHER AND ADD THEM TO INTERNAL MODULES SUCH AS AZURE SHIELD GENERATORS AND POWER REACTORS."

This would add another layer of complexity to his living mechs! It was like evolving a single-celled organism into a multi-celled organism! This was such a major advancement of his design philosophy that it had the potential to qualitatively improve his living mech designs going forward!

The Fey Fianna mech line was just the harbinger of this new variation or rather new generation of living mechs!

Even Alexa understood the explosive implications of these advancements. She wasn't even able to design any actual living mechs as of yet, but she had already learned enough about it from her mentor to foresee how much more versatile and powerful they could be with multiple intelligent controllers!

However, she wouldn't be a good mech designer if she only paid attention to the benefits of this new design application.

"Wait, won't combining different life forms in a single mech frame lead to E energy attribute conflict?"

"THAT IS POSSIBLE, BUT THAT IS WHY THE PRIMARY LIFE FORMS AND THE SECONDARY LIFE FORMS HAVE TO BE ABLE TO WORK TOGETHER FROM THE BEGINNING. THIS MUST BE ESTABLISHED BEFORE THE MECHS HAVE COMPLETED THEIR PRODUCTION."

The fabrication of the Elemental Lord already taught Ves that mixing multiple elements together during production would inevitably lead to a volatile buildup of conflicting energies.

The closer the opposing hyper materials were put together, the more violent these interactions may become!

However, one of the advantages of living mechs was that they could consciously exert control over these rioting energies and tame them into submission.

Ves was banking on this advantage to keep his multi-life mechs stable.

"Will hosting multiple life forms in a single mech slow down their collective growth?"

"I CANNOT SAY FOR SURE. IT IS LIKELY THAT THEY WILL GROW SLOWER BECAUSE THEY MUST SHARE THE SAME RESOURCES. THE SECONDARY LIFE FORM IS TECHNICALLY AN OFF-SHOOT OF THE PRIMARY LIFE FORM. YOU CAN THINK OF IT AS BESTOWING A 'COMPANION SPIRIT' TO A MECH. HOWEVER, I CAN COMPENSATE THIS SHORTCOMING BY ENABLING THE SECONDARY LIFE FORM TO ABSORB E ENERGY OF AN ATTRIBUTE THAT IS NOT COMPATIBLE WITH THE MAIN LIFE FORM."

For example, a living mech that was primarily aspected towards metal could carry an azure shield generator that was occupied by a water sub-spirit.

In this case, the defenses of such a mech should be much stronger than normal. It was able to rely on its excellent hyper armor system as well as its 'living' azure energy shield to resist a lot more damage than before!

This was one of the possible research directions that Ves had come up with to design a powerful defensive mech of the Hyper Generation.

Just as Ves wanted, he did not want to design a hyper mech that any mech designer could develop on their own. He simply wouldn't be able to beat the competition by relying on ordinary hyper technology applications such as using the water element to create vortexes or whatever.

He needed to tap into his own advantages and start with his own specialty.

Only a single experimental attempt had been enough to prove the viability of his idea!

While he had no idea how much more difficult it would be to design a stable secondary life form inside the frame of a mech, he was determined to see it through!

In fact, Ves just recalled that he still had a couple of ongoing design projects where he could test out this fantastic idea.

Both the Supremo Project and the Transcendent Punisher Mark III Project centered around heavy artillery mechs.

He couldn't help but recall the most recent battle involving the Destroyer of Worlds.

Her Ragnarok launched an extremely powerful explosive shell that was directly amplified by the presence of Emma!

Seeing the god mech's attack demolish a third of the body of an ancient phase whale with a single attack was one of the most memorable sights of the public broadcast!

Ves couldn't help but breathe faster at the thought of being able to bring this mode of combat to the masses.

Naturally, there was no way that the secondary life forms of his heavy artillery mechs could come close to matching the amplification power of Emma, but any increase in firepower was a welcome addition!

Ves barely paid attention to the armed bots that had emerged from another room. They fired their relatively weak weapons at the spatial barrier, causing it to barely lose stability.

In order to gather enough data to make a proper comparison, Blinky recalled the water elemental and no longer supported its existence.

The water elemental soon lost cohesion and started to break apart into loose water energy.

Blinky then took control of this water energy and started to use it to empower the spatial barrier by himself.

Ves allowed the bots to fire at his spatial barrier that had taken on the characteristics of a regular azure energy shield.

Though Ves was not able to take precise measurements, he could feel that his defenses were not as effective as before.

The difference was fairly minor, but he was still able to notice the difference.

Back when his spatial barrier was 'alive', the water elemental took it upon itself to adapt to the incoming attacks. The life form was able to tweak its own body so that it reinforced the sections that were being actively worn down by the barrage of shots fired by the bots.

Both Ves and Alexa grew impressed by this difference. Though minor, it could always be improved through further development.

"I can see how this can be useful, but do you truly have to embed multiple lives in a single mech design?" Alexa asked as she did not fully understand her mentor's rationale. "I mean, it is not always necessary to rely on a secondary life form to create this enhancement. Your mechs are already alive. You can choose to go in a different direction and increase their versatility instead."

Ves appreciated her feedback. "YOU ARE NOT NECESSARILY WRONG, BUT I THINK MY CURRENT IDEA IS MORE SUITABLE WHEN WORKING WITH HYPER TECHNOLOGY AND E-TECHNOLOGY. THE LIVING FEY OF THE FEY FIANNA ADD VALUE BECAUSE THEY CAN NOT ONLY SPECIALIZE IN DIFFERENT FUNCTIONS, BUT CAN ALSO POSSESS DIFFERENT AFFINITIES FROM THE PRIMARY LIVING MECH. THIS IS WHAT I AM TRYING TO RELY UPON TO MAKE MY PRODUCTS STAND OUT FROM THE COMPETITION. I CANNOT THINK OF A CHEAPER AND MORE COST-EFFECTIVE WAY TO COMBINE CONFLICTING E-ENERGY ATTRIBUTES IN A SINGLE MECH FRAME!"

It was not impossible to design a mech that possessed conflicting and contradictory E energy attributes.

However, a mech designer had to make a lot of compromises in his design. He had to separate the strongest mech parts that incorporated the opposing hyper materials. Even then, the designer had to employ other measures to suppress the residual conflicts that came about whenever two hostile E energy attributes came in close proximity to each other.

Ves had the potential to drastically increase the tolerance of conflicting E energy attributes into his mech designs by relying on his latest concept!

He recalled the time during Operation Night Jazz where the Guns of Armageddon exposed a clear flaw in the operation of her new hyper technology.

Her absurdly powerful energy cannon batteries relied on fire energy to enhance their damage output.

However, from the moment the Guns of Armageddon came under focused attack, she had to draw in a lot of water energy in order to reinforce her azure energy shield.

The simultaneous use of water and fire energy caused the performance of both ship systems to degrade, thereby preventing them from reaching their full potential!

If such a problem could happen on one of the Red Fleet's most vaunted dreadnoughts, then it could also happen on mechs!

Now, Ves might be able to reduce or in some cases remove this negative interaction!

He just had to design a mech that relied on at least two conflicting E energy attributes and pair them up with a separate living entity each to test out his idea!

"If your idea has merit... then your mechs will gain a selling point that cannot be matched by anyone." Alexa spoke with a hint of awe in her tone. "What is even more important is that it is cost-effective at every mech class. If you can make it work on second-class mechs, you can make it work on first-class mechs as well!"

That meant that if Ves promoted to a first-class mech designer and relied on this concept to design products for the first-class mech market, it wouldn't be too difficult to match the much more powerful competition!

Of course, Ves needed to bring a lot more benefits to the table in order to impress the wealthy and powerful customers at this level.

It was a start, at least

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## Chapter 5454 In A Cocoon

Ves did not spend too much time on exploring this idea in his current form.

He just borrowed a few spare mech weapons that Diandi Base had in storage and awkwardly used them to beat up a few bots.

The only difference was that he tried to augment their performance by summoning different 'elementals' to see whether he could directly enhance their offensive power.

The results were not as impressive this time.

The spare weapons were holdovers from the previous generation. The lack of hyper materials made it difficult for the elementals to attach themselves to the weapons in a significant way.

It was just like the difference between prime mechs and non-prime mechs. The latter did not offer any direct physical interfaces for the elementals to channel their power in the material realm.

However, their effects were not completely invalid.

Ves managed to make enough observations to determine that utilizing multiple living entities could help in an offensive capacity as well.

He became reminded by the Gray Lotus. That was the prototypical example of this concept in action.

Even though the Gray Lotus was a self-contained relic weapon that could be wielded by any mech, it still represented a means for hyper mechs to effectively utilize other E energy attributes!

What Ves wanted to make was a secondary life that was attached and subordinate to a primary life.

Just like people with companion spirits, they were both separate and the same. They possessed enough distinctions to gain greater flexibility, but they were also united enough to escape many of the coordination problems.

Once he and Alexa had gathered enough data and made enough observations, Ves shrunk his body back to his compact form.

He briefly committed a blunder by getting swamped by the giant tarpaulin that previously acted as his robe.

His reduction in size did not apply to his clothes!

Fortunately, this was just a minor problem that served as another motivation for him to develop his own version of a nanosuit.

No matter what, Ves did not want to tear apart all of his clothes when he unfolded his true body in the future!

"I can contact an equipment supplier and commission a custom suit that can solve your wardrobe problem if necessary." Alexa suggested.

"That won't be necessary. I intend to solve this problem myself." Ves responded. "As a mech designer, I have the expertise and skills to make my own equipment. Aside from a few exceptions such as a personal teleporter, I can make nearly anything. It is not a good habit to rely too much on other people's work. The intentions of the maker are not always so pure. This is one of the many lessons of Frontier Wisdom that I have learned the hard way."

His assistant nodded and no longer made any further suggestions.

The pair continued to discuss their future plans with regards to their mech design projects.

"Will your new delay the completion of the Supremo Project and the Transcendent Punisher Mark III Project? According to your previous words, you hoped to complete them in the next month at most."

"Hmmm... I should be able to make this addition without too much trouble." Ves said as he could rely on Veronica to do much of the work from her end. "I have already solved many of the problems related to making secondary life forms when I completed the Fey Fianna. Right now, I just have to adapt the existing template into a design that is centered around a single whole mech frame. I think my chances of success will be greater in these cases as heavy artillery mechs are so large that they have a much higher fault tolerance when it comes to hyper technology and E-technology."

Since that was the case, then the Supremo Project and the Transcendent Punisher Mark HI were the best candidates for Ves to apply his experimental concept!

Once he managed to make it work with the mechs that were best predisposed to hosting multiple life forms, Ves could work towards miniaturizing his solution so that it could 'fit' into smaller and more compact mech designs.

"That is an excellent idea." Alexa approvingly said. "I admire your creativity. It is not always common for mech designers at your level to generate so many inventive and effective design solutions."

Ves replied with a modest smile. "It is easier this time because the Hyper Generation has just rolled out. There are so many new possibilities that people have yet to explore that I have a chance of exploiting them first."

"I doubt that other mech designers can take advantage of this dynamic. They will have to master the art of designing a living mech. This is a solution that only you can devise and realize."

"Speaking about that, how is your progress coming along, Alexa? I don't know how much time you have put into your studies, but you have been working alongside me for several months. You have assisted in the design and fabrication of numerous living mechs, several of which are quite remarkable. The companion spirit that I have gifted you should have given you a clear advantage in learning the essence of living mechs."

He refused to believe that a talented and well-educated elite Terran mech designer could remain stuck for so long after she enjoyed so many favorable conditions.

The only reason that could prevent her from advancing to the rank of Journeyman Mech Designer was if she lacked spiritual potential, but that was not the case.

In fact, spiritual potential didn't matter anymore in the Age of Dawn. The continuous bombardment of E energy radiation had gradually fed and grown the spiritualities of every human without exception!

While their talent and other circumstances still had a significant influence on how much progress they could make, even the dumbest and most talentless human would gain a boost that may eventually bring him up to par with an individual with good spiritual potential!

Therefore, no Apprentice Mech Designer faced any hard obstacles anymore. So long as they were passionate, motivated and hard-working enough, each of them should be able to form their design seeds in the current environment!

Just as he predicted, Alexa was not as simple as she appeared.

"To be honest, sir, I think I have come close to breaking through as a Journeyman. I cannot give you any absolute answers, but if I want to follow in your footsteps as closely as possible, I only have to study and immerse myself in your teachings and your mech designs. However..."

"You are not satisfied with treading down a beaten path. You want to strike out on your own and pioneer a different interpretation of living mechs, is that correct?"

Alexa nodded. "I cannot repeat how many times I have become impressed by how much you have turned living mechs into powerful assets that can make a strong difference to the mech pilots that depend on them. I do not seek to surpass your contributions to the mech industry, but I still have my own pride. I want to add to the body of mechs from my own angle. I have been working on exploring several directions of research that you have never spent much time on exploring. I just need more time to determine which one is the most viable and suitable for myself."

Ves fully approved of this decision! Even if Alexa slowed down her progress due to the need to rely on her own research to progress her design philosophy, at least she had devoted herself to solutions developed by herself rather than her mentor!

Of course, there were still plenty of ways for the two to exchange their knowledge and work together. Their shared field meant that there would always be room for them to assist each other.

"I look forward to hearing what you have decided to specialize in." Ves graciously smiled. "Can you give me an estimate of how long it will take for you to lock in your choice?"

"It shouldn't take much longer. I think I will likely complete my own research and finalize my choice shortly before or after you have introduced the Fey Fianna to the mech market."

That was hardly any time at all. It sounded as if Alexa was fully confident that she would have the makings of a Journeyman Mech Designer in a relatively short amount of time.

Ves truly looked forward to seeing Alexa advance. She was already incredibly useful to him as an Apprentice Mech Designer. Her value to him would definitely skyrocket once she became a Journeyman Mech Designer!

In fact, her value far exceeded that of the other lead designers of the Larkinson Clan!

She was the most authentic version of a first-class mech designer. She could competently design first-class mechs right away that could be of great use to the Premier Branch in the short term.

Even when Ves gained the qualifications needed to design first-class mechs himself, Alexa would be able to handle a lot of work assignments by herself.

The only Larkinson mech designer that was more valuable than Alexa was his wife!

No matter whether it was the old Gloriana or the new one that came back with a first-class cranial implant, his long-established synergy with her elevated all of their collaboration works.

Fortunately, Ves was not forced to choose between the two. He could cooperate with both of them at the same time.

He spent a few minutes on providing Alexa a bit of guidance before allowing her to return to her own research.

Ves meanwhile had to take care of an issue that had been brewing for several hours.



He needed to eat.

Gavin looked on from the side with a perplexed expression as Ves started to dig into the literal mountains of roasted meat that had been set on long and oversized tables!

Ves did not recognize the species the meat belonged to, and he didn't even spend that much time on savoring the flavors of all of his massive and aggressive bites.

His devouring speed was remarkably quick. It was frankly inhuman for him to be able to bite and swallow so much meat at a time!

However, even that was not enough to satisfy his desire to replenish his reserves. He shed his uniform once again and summoned a giant curtain before using it to cover up his true body!

After that, the huge piles of roasted meat began to diminish at a rapid speed!

The more his flesh rejoiced at the intake of biomass, the more Ves lost his decorum! He ate and ate until there was nothing left on the table!

In fact, he even had a notion that he could devour the table if he really wanted to! The digestive system of a phase lord was far more powerful than that of a human!

Ves loudly burped as he folded his body back into his human-sized form.

He donned his regular outfit yet again and patted his dutiful assistant on the shoulder.

"That was a good meal. Try and stock up on lots of tons of meat in case I get hungry next time. Make sure to order enough industrial cooking facilities to process so much biomass at the same time. I am not always patient enough to wait until all of the batches are done."

"Uh... okay, sir..."

"Good man."

Ves calmly walked away until he reached the nearest restroom.

The place hardly offered any better privacy than the corridors outside, but he had a psychological compulsion to visit a bathroom every time he wanted to take care of a particular kind of business.

"Let's see what I can I get this time."

With a single mental command, all time outside seemed to freeze as he instantly entered the System Space.

Just after he arrived, the System immediately projected a few notifications.

[You have personally assembled a masterwork mech based on your own Lionheart design!]

[You have been awarded with one radiant lottery ticket! Create more masterwork mechs to receive more radiant lottery tickets! ]

Ves started to grin as he confirmed that he had received his desired reward.

He already had a good idea on what to aim for with his latest lottery ticket.

Chapter 5455 Scarce Cultivation Methods

It had been a while since he last entered the System Space.

He made a lot of progress in the last year. He completed a bunch of mech designs, many of which were so innovative and meaningful that he had significantly expanded his toolkit.

He managed to broaden and deepen his application of his design philosophy. He not only managed to develop the second generation Carmine System, but also determined the direction of the even more promising third generation Carmine System.

He adapted well to the Hyper Generation. He utilized all of his progress into spiritual engineering to quickly get started in both hyper technology and E-technology. Every mech he completed in the last months introduced significant advancements in the way in which he applied these new technological fields.

His personal cultivation advanced by leaps and bounds. Blinky and Vulcan both made massive progress once he bestowed them with their own custom cultivation methods.

The Imaginary Universe Method Version 3.0 and the Metal God Method were both characterized as relatively weak in the early stage but incredibly powerful in the later stages, but that did not mean they were useless after attaining a bit of progress!

The oddest and most perplexing development was the explosive increase in his phase lord cultivation. Even though he could still be regarded as a beginner in the path to attaining native godhood, the jump from 0.01 percent to 1.4 percent was so massive that he gained access to a whole new set of advantages that not only drastically increased his comprehension of space, but made him a lot harder to kill!

When he thought back on all of the progress he had made in these past few months, Ves couldn't help but feel proud at how well he had utilized his time.

He thought back on the valuable piece of advice given to him by Professor Velten early in his career.

She had taught him the valuable lesson that time was all too precious for mech designers. It seemed that they had many years to explore and improve their craft, but if they spent too much time on side activities that were not related to mechs, they might find themselves reaching the twilight of their years with few accomplishments to their name!

Her warning had stuck to his mind like a barnacle ever since. He was already in a hurry of sorts, but Professor Velten's impactful lesson had contributed much to his drive for constant progress.

Only under constant pressure would Ves have the motivation to work hard and push himself to his limits all of the time!

Accomplishing little in a year was one of his worst nightmares. If he hadn't made so much progress in the last few months and years, Ves would start to lose his confidence in himself.

From the moment a mech designer stopped making any further advancements, his chances of promoting any further became a lot bleaker!

"I can't grow complacent now that my lifespan has increased by a huge extent." He reminded himself.

The native method of cultivation was dangerous, backwards, primitive and exceptionally resource intensive.

Yet it also had its strong points. Just the physical longevity provided by reinforcing his flesh and bones with phasewater was enough to make countless old geezers jealous of what

Ves had inadvertently gained!

Whenever he thought that he could potentially live for thousands of years even if he made no effort to increase his phasewater concentration any further, he felt it was more of a curse rather than a blessing.

Ves truly could not bring himself to appreciate the extended lifespan brought by being a phase lord.

Instead, he lamented the loss of his humanity. Not only did he feel more and more alienated with the people that he was supposed to serve, he also lost a powerful motivating factor that pushed him into improving his ability to design mechs.

If he had 10,000 years to live, would he still be able to force himself into taking risks?

The last thing he wanted was to suffer from the same faults as the long-lived phase whales!

This powerful aquatic species obviously had great strength and potential, but their endowments also caused them to grow extremely complacent as a result.

Ves did not want his efficiency to drop to this level!

Every day, every month and every year was precious. He could get so much work done if he continued to utilize his time efficiently.

When Ves thought about what he wanted to gain from the System this time, he needed to remind himself that he needed to utilize it correctly.

"I shouldn't use it as a shortcut to quickly master stuff that I can already acquire through my own effort. The more correct way to use it is to gain access to knowledge, skills or goods that are unobtainable through other means. The more these gains expand my possibilities, the lower chance that I will run out of interesting research topics."

Before Ves made use of his radiant lottery ticket, he first decided to make his rounds.

He visited the Divine Bazaar, the Mission Hall and the Tree of Possibilities in turn.

Many of the items offered in these places had been refreshed since his last visit.

The goods offered by the Divine Bazaar were completely random. Though Ves felt awfully tempted by a few offerings, he had way too little resources to squander on these goodies.

"I only have 177 AP to my name. I really should get around to completing a few missions and completing a lot more mech designs." Ves frowned.

However, the Mission Hall did not really offer any easy Missions this time. He would have to fulfill inane and time-consuming tasks such as designing a five-pilot juggernaut or personally ending the lives of every member of the 13 major alien races of the Red Ocean.

Perhaps he might be able to earn a few hundred AP in a short amount of time by completing a lot Missions while constantly extending his stay in the System Space, but this was an intensive and mentally draining activity.

Ves needed to complete his vacation before he was ready to test his mental endurance again!

The Tree of Enlightenment merited most of his attention.

He first tried to confirm whether the expensive enlightenment fruit containing the Divine Blacksmith Records was still present.

"Damn. It's gone."

Ves wasn't too worried about losing the opportunity to redeem this precious inheritance. The same fruits rotated in and out every once in a while. He just needed to earn enough AP so that he could be ready to pluck it from a branch when it showed up again.

He did not really study the hundreds of other enlightenment fruits too carefully this time. He did not want to diminish his AP reserve any further, so he refrained himself from buying any enlightenment fruits even though he thought it was relevant to his current interests.

"I can get way better stuff by using up a radiant lottery ticket."

He wanted to go for quality rather than quantity. The expensive enlightenment fruits might not necessarily provide as much raw information, but they were the only ones that contained the most valuable insights!

This was why he paid more attention to the patterns contained in the descriptions of all of the enlightenment fruits.

He knew that whenever he was able to use a radiant lottery ticket, he could narrow down the range of categories of his prizes.

However, there was always a limit to how much he could exclude unwanted traits. He would have to rely on his luck to see whether the lottery delivered anything that was actually useful to his current situation.

Ves made an assumption that whenever the radiant lottery ticket was fixated on enlightenment fruits, it would draw from a pool of them that roughly corresponded to the distribution of fruits hanging from the Tree of Possibilities.

In other words, there was an equal chance that he could gain an enlightenment fruit that was either relevant to mech design or other forms of cultivation.

What Ves sought at the moment was not the former, but the latter.

Now that he not only promoted to a tier 3 galactic citizen but also started to cozy up on the Terrans and the Rubarthans, Ves was able to gain access to much more exclusive knowledge than before.

While it would be difficult to learn anything related to the core trade secrets of powerful mech designers, Ves was still able to obtain plenty of high-end learning resources that were not as exclusive!

In that regard, the only reason for him to obtain an enlightenment fruit related to mech design was to cut short his study time, but even that was no longer as valuable to him as before.

"I can rely on the E-computers in the Blinkyverse and my phasewater-expanded brain to devour all of this knowledge myself."

With all of these cognitive upgrades, Ves was confident that he could accelerate the learning needed to gain the minimum qualifications of a first-class mech designer.

He believed that his current capabilities should be enough for him to get started with first-class mech designs within a single year!

"However, that is just the minimum of what is expected from a first-class Senior Mech Designer." Ves grumbled to himself.

His standards were much higher than that. He needed to master more extensive fields of high technology in order to design the high-end first-class mechs that would turn the Premier Branch into a frontline fighting force.

"I should probably get that done in a few more years." Ves estimated.

What Ves truly valued was the forbidden and possibly lost knowledge related to cultivation science.

Now that red humanity had broken off most of its connections with original humanity, it had become a lot harder to gain access to exclusive secrets that were unique to the Milky Way!

The mechers and the fleeters had done a good job at keeping the agents of the Five Scrolls Compact away from the Red Ocean.

Perhaps too good.

That meant that relatively little ancient cultivation legacies had bled over into the new frontier.

Outside of scattered and dusty remnants such as the Aduc Family's Annals of Terra of Terra Vita, it was impossible for Ves to get his hands on any secret tomes of this kind!

Only the System could remedy this shortcoming. Secrecy and restricted access posed no hindrance to its powerful and unfathomable capabilities.

After scanning the enlightenment fruits for a while, Ves managed to identify many pertinent patterns.

He frowned when he saw how difficult it may be to gain the knowledge that he truly wanted to obtain this time.

"There are too few enlightenment fruits related to space and spatial manipulation." Ves frowned.

He learned from his mother and other sources that space and time were both high-grade concepts that were extremely difficult to get started with. They were virtually inaccessible to low-level cultivators, and even high-level ones found it difficult to gain true comprehension into these mysterious domains.

Their exceedingly high thresholds combined with the difficulty of making progress in these fields meant that the amount of cultivators who mastered any methods related to them were small.

"That means that there are not that many cultivation methods and techniques to begin with." Ves sadly concluded.

What was even worse was that the Tree of Possibilities did not offer a lot of enlightenment fruits that were directly related to phase lord or phase whale cultivation.

That said a lot about the opinions of the System towards native cultivation methods.

The current iteration of the Mech Designer System put a lot of emphasis on both mech design and 'Spiritual Ascension'.

Perhaps from the perspective of the System, any alien methods that were either unrelated or harmful to his spiritual cultivation were not eligible to turn into enlightenment fruits!

Of course, it could also be that as a product of the Milky Way, the Mech Designer System was ideologically opposed to providing cultivation methods that were strongly related to the Red Ocean.

"All in all, I probably won't be able to kill two birds with a single stone this time." Ves sighed in regret.

## Chapter 5456 Choppy Waters

Ves had two choices to make when it came to redeeming his radiant lottery ticket.

Should he continue to aim for an enlightenment fruit related to space, or should he set his sights on a different target instead?

For example, the five elements sounded a lot more attractive to him than before. No matter whether he gained knowledge related to a single classical element or all of them at once, Ves would always have the confidence to translate what he learned into substantial short-term gains!

He thoughtfully rubbed his hairless chin. "My main elemental focus is currently centered around water, so it is better to dive deeper into this element for the time being."

Though he knew better than to blindly believe everything his mother told him, he believed she was right on this aspect.

Trying to learn all five elements at the same time was an inefficient approach. It might allow him to adapt a lot of shallow but useful applications, but he would ultimately gain little that others hadn't already figured out through their own research efforts.

What Ves needed the most was to delve deeper into the water element.

On the premise that the System was not able to further his understanding of the space attribute, the water element was a much more suitable target.

Not only did it have a special relationship with phasewater, it was also fairly obscure among mech designers.

The only ones that could possibly develop a comprehension towards the water element were biomech designers.

Everyone else primarily strengthened their comprehension of metal and maybe fire or earth.

If Ves made enough progress in drawing out the potential of the water element, he was confident that he could develop much more powerful design applications in a short amount of time!

"Aside from that, the water element can also help me deepen my control over my true body."

This would hopefully enable him to fulfill multiple goals at the same time.

"It all depends on what I can gain out of my radiant lottery ticket."

No matter what he tried to aim for, the essence of a lottery ticket was based on random chance. He could get a reward that exceeded his goal, but he could also easily get an irrelevant prize that was not helpful in the slightest!

"Well, enough delays. It is time to make use of my ticket."

Ves had gained enough of an understanding of what he could or could not obtain from an enlightenment fruit.

Once he moved down to the Wishing Fountain, he held a multi-colored ticket in his hand.

Ves took a deep breath as he thought on what he should do to increase his chances.

"Should I unfold my true body?"

Perhaps that might influence the prize pool. By strengthening his affinity to space at the expense of weakening his connection to all of the other attributes, the Wishing Fountain may decide it was more suitable to add more prizes related to his dominant attribute!

Of course, this was pure speculation. It might make no difference at all. He was not willing to bet on the small chance that he could gain a useful enlightenment fruit that contained serious knowledge related to the manipulation of space.

"I might have to wait until I can earn a more precious lottery ticket."

He took a few moments to concentrate his mind and reaffirm his primary goal.

"In you go." He said as he tossed the ticket into the fountain.

Just like the previous times he utilized a radiant lottery ticket, the Wishing Fountain began to glow in multiple colors.

The water turned into a rainbow spectacle while a huge amount of energy started to brew underneath the surface.

As the Wishing Fountain continued to grow more active, Ves focused as hard as he could on wishing for an enlightenment fruit that was deeply related to the water element!

"Water. Water. Water." He repeated the same word over and over as if he was reciting a mantra.

Soon enough, a tiny golden boat rose to the surface!

Compared to previous fountain manifestations, the boat looked incredibly underwhelming due to its tiny size.

Despite the fact that it looked small enough to serve as a toy for his kids whenever they took a bath, the construction and detail of the waterfaring vessel was exquisite!

It might not be a masterwork, but there was so much care for details that its design must certainly be seaworthy if it was built at full scale.

Ves briefly wondered what he was supposed to do with this little boat.

He did not have to puzzle over this issue for too long because the Wishing Fountain soon produced a second reaction.

Over a hundred tiny rods extended from the decorative water reservoir.

Chromatic water lapped against these rods as they continued to extend from the water as if the Wishing Fountain was in the process of spawning a needle bed.

A third change occurred once the rods stopped and began to unfurl unique flags.

The design of all of these flags instantly attracted his attention. They came in all kinds of colors, and they all depicted different symbols.

For example, one of the tiny flags was purple and displayed an active plasma saber.

Another flag that attracted his interest was a blue one that displayed a wicked shark.

There were around a hundred flags like this spread across the fountain pool.

Ves soon figured out that he was supposed to guide the boat towards the desired flags.

However, this was not as simple as it looked. The more valuable prizes were probably situated on the other side of the fountain. The tiny golden boat had to weave its way around a lot of other flag poles in order to reach the other side.

Another complication was that the water surface wasn't calm. Instead, the multi-colored water had become more and more active. Ves could spot the buildup of tides and possibly other complications. This meant that there was a risk that the boat might sail off-course and hit a flagpole that was not his target.

"How do I control this little vessel?"

He first stepped closer and attempted to reach out with his hand.

An invisible barrier stopped his limb from moving any closer.

"I thought so." Ves did not look particularly surprised.

He conducted a few experiments and became surprised when he found out what he needed to do to get the boat moving.

It turned out that he needed to manipulate the water element around the boat to navigate across the pool of water.

This was a challenge and a test. The greatest rewards required him to stand in place and to extend his control over the water element in the fountain pool.

It was difficult to apply enough power to move the boat but still maintain enough control over its trajectory.

The more the boat moved away from his position, the harder it became to exert fine control over the water-attributed E energy surrounding the boat.

If he wanted to prevent the boat from drifting off-course, then he had to possess a good understanding and feel of the behavior of water under these choppy conditions.

All in all, if Ves wanted to earn the best possible prizes that might possibly be related to the water element, then he had to prove his worthiness in front of the Wishing Fountain!

"This is the strangest lottery draw yet." Ves frowned.

On the one hand, he felt a bit encouraged by this strange display. This was the most direct response yet that indicated that the Wishing Fountain was responsive to his wishes.

On the other hand, he felt that the lottery draws were leaning more towards determining the outcome through skill rather than luck.



Perhaps the Wishing Fountain was responding to his desire to control his own destiny. The current arrangement clearly made it so that Ves would only have himself to blame if he failed to lead the boat to the desired destination.

Since Ves did not have to start right away, he took the time to observe and analyze each and every flag.

Even if the flags were unable to convey precise enough clues, Ves was still able to guess what sort of prizes they contained.

The icons depicted on the flags grew slightly more complicated at the far side of the fountain pool.

By determining which flags interested him more than others, he was able to construct multiple routes that could guarantee a satisfactory outcome even if his boat drifted off-course.

He could not guarantee whether his fine control over the water element was good enough to prevent accidents from occurring. If the golden boat bumped into a flag too soon, he at least wanted to ensure that it was relevant to his current interests.

It was only when he studied the dozen or so flags at the end that he put more thought in their meaning.

The most attractive flag depicted a sea dragon in a dark expanse of stars. The detail of this sea dragon was so much more realistic and lifelike that it attracted him like a moth to flame!

All of the other flags at the far side simply couldn't not compare in his opinion. The fact that it was located in the most distant position was not a coincidence!

Just to be sure, Ves also took the time to designate a few nearby 'consolation prizes' if his boat ended up just short of reaching its goal.

"I'm ready."

One of the annoying restrictions of this test was that he was not allowed to rely on Blinky or his design spirits.

He was only allowed to control the water element from his actual self. This made the test a lot more difficult because his companion spirit was so much better at manipulating spiritual energy!

"Let's see how far I've come."

Ves began to stir the multi-colored waters with his mind. He tried to harmonize with a part of the power of heaven and slowly managed to create gentle waves that pushed the boat along.

Of course, the choppy waters also produced many other waves, so the boat constantly tried to escape his control.

Fortunately, his control over the water element was both stable and strong so far. The boat readily obeyed his directives and always kept its distance from the nearest and most low-value flags.

It was not until the boat drifted further and further away from him that he started to struggle.

Ves was not able to exert precise control anymore.

If he tried to push too softly, then the boat hardly changed its course.

If he tried to push too hard, then the boat might overshoot and completely deviate from its intended route!

Ves started to experience greater and greater strain as he worked surprisingly hard to retain stable control over the increasingly more distant water energies.

"Ah, go back!"

He had accidentally pushed too hard when the boat was only a third of the way across. This not only caused the boat to move away from one of the ideal routes, but also came close to bumping into a green flag that depicted a decaying tree branch!

Ves tried to push the water energies hard on the other side. This prevented the boat from bumping into the wrong flag, but also caused it to follow a completely different trajectory that was not close to any of his consolation prizes!

"Damn, I'm screwed if I make another mistake."

Instead of blindly going forward, Ves tried to manipulate the water energies so that the boat slowly started to approach the center again.

However, a strong wave caused the boat to drift out of his control yet again!

Though Ves responded quickly, he had exerted too much power yet again, causing the boat to change course and move uncontrollably to an orange flag that was located somewhere at the halfway point!

Though Ves tried to prevent the boat from crashing into this flag, the distance and the resistance from the fountain water hinder his attempt!

In the end, his control over water energy simply wasn't good enough. Ves already knew that he had failed this test when the golden boat directly crashed onto the pole with the orange flag.

"Damn!"

This was not one of the consolation prizes that he had designated!

The orange flag was not only in an odd color, but also depicted a musical instrument in the form of a transverse flute!

## Chapter 5457 The Flute

Out of all the flags that his golden boat could bump into, it had to bump into an orange flag that depicted a flute of all objects!

It would have been better if he deliberately crashed his boat towards one of the blue flags that were situated closer to him. Even if the prizes were lower in value, they at least aligned with his current goals.

Instead, he drew a prize that might very well end up teaching him how to play a musical instrument!

This was completely undesirable to him. He was not a musician or practiced the art of music as a hobby.

None of his incarnations had any relations to playing the flute. Perhaps the most he could do with an enlightenment fruit that granted him a music skill was to pass it off to Aurelia!

His oldest daughter had learned how to sing and was able to make good use of her cute and charming voice. It wouldn't be too strange if she started to play the flute as well...

"This is stupid."

Ves felt incredibly sour about this suboptimal outcome even as the Wishing Fountain withdrew all of the other flagpoles.

The golden boat that was responsible for selecting his prize capsized and sank into the waters.

Only a single flag remained above the surface. It began to glow brighter and brighter!

Ves felt no enjoyment at this time. Even though a radiant lottery ticket should never present anything that was truly worthless, he still blamed himself for losing control over the trajectory of the boat.

He underestimated the difficulty of this challenge and overestimated his ability to control the water energy at a distance.

While he couldn't have predicted that the Wishing Fountain would present this kind of test to him, he should have made a more accurate assessment on his chances to lead the boat all the way to the sea dragon flag at the other end.

If he had been humbler and more honest about his lacking control, then he would have formed a more appropriate plan where he aimed to lead his golden boat towards an easier destination!

In the end, one of the root causes behind this failure was that he was unable to make use of Blinky.

He roughly understood the intentions behind this prohibition. Blinky was an inherently spiritual existence. He was born with the talent and the ability to control spiritual energy to an exquisite degree. The Star Cat relied entirely on his innate talent and endowments to become so good in this aspect.

However, Blinky actually spent little to no time on practicing his ability to control E energy. It simply didn't seem necessary in the past.

Ves was even worse. He had completely ceased to waste any of his own time on an activity that he felt was redundant. Why should he work hard to improve his own ability to manipulate E energy when Blinky could already do the same job at least 10 times better?

The System had essentially used this vulnerability to teach him a painful lesson about how he had grown complacent in this aspect!

"If I truly want to tap into the potential of the water element, I need to be more honest and invest more time into playing with it." He concluded.

He had learned plenty of basic spells related to the water element, but never really made use of them because he thought they were completely redundant.

He no longer held this view anymore. The Beginner Five Elements Spells Manual became a lot more valuable in his eyes because it not only taught him a lot of useful theories, but also enabled him to gain proficiency in a lot of different techniques that allowed him to get in touch with many distinctive aspects of all five elements!

If Ves wanted to deepen his comprehension of the water element, he had to put in the work and play with it. He would not be able to advance his control over it fast enough if he always stuck theory all of the time.

While he was already working with the water element in practice by incorporating it into his mech designs, this was obviously not good enough.

Perhaps he should act more like a qi cultivator and spend more time on manipulating water energy in a direct fashion.

Even if he was a creation cultivator at heart, he still needed to learn how to control E energy in a more precise fashion in order to craft powerful artifacts.

Woosh!

At this time, the Wishing Fountain had presented the prize that Ves had ultimately obtained by using up a precious radiant lottery ticket!

The silvery flute depicted on the tiny flag actually started to separate from the surface.

Once it had left its former home, the two-dimensional image steadily gained more depth and realism as it transformed into a physical flute.

At the same time, it started to expand in size until it had gained the proportions of a typical human flute!

Ves grew astonished as the flute not only turned into a real object, but gently floated in his direction until it ultimately fell into his hands.

He looked down on the flute with a numb expression.

"Where is my enlightenment fruit?"

There was no enlightenment fruit! The Wishing Fountain had screwed him over!

Instead of sending him an enlightenment fruit that contained valuable information and skills that may be useful to him or one of his trusted subordinates, he instead received a physical flute!

This was not what he desired because he would much rather gain the skills needed to fabricate a powerful object than to acquire the end product directly!

He had developed a distance for acquiring ready-made products from the System. They were only useful to him for a limited amount of time, while any valuable knowledge would likely remain relevant for the rest of his life!

Ves used to cherish certain objects granted by the System such as the Vulcaneye, the OdinEye and the Amastendira.

However, he had outgrown all of them to the point where he just left them to rot inside the Vault of Eternity. He could easily use his regular channels to obtain scanners and weapons that were much more powerful than these outdated artifacts!

Would this flute become the latest artifact that might only be relevant to him for a couple of years?

"My luck and judgment are not good today."

Even though it was an irrational thought, he regretted the fact that he decided to use up his radiant lottery ticket on this particular day.

If he used it a day later, his luck might have been a lot better, enabling him to push his boat towards one of the more acceptable flags!

There was no use lamenting over past events. He could not change the outcome no matter how much he complained. He could only accept this result and move on from this point.

"Let's see what I have gained."

The flute did not look remarkable at first, but its quality was rather high despite not being a masterwork.

A remarkable craftsman had definitely put a lot of effort into making it. The design was rather bland and neutral, but that just made it more difficult to turn such an unassuming object into a piece of art.

Ves appreciated all of the little touches that subtly added a bit of personality to the musical instrument.

The material was also extraordinary in nature. It was made entirely of an unfamiliar hyper metal that possessed a surprisingly strong sensitivity towards water-attributed E energy.

"Wait, it's not related to the fire element?"

He had been misled by the orange flag. It turned out that the color did not represent the elemental affinity of the prize.

Ves' lips curled into a smile when he understood that he managed to make a gain that was relevant to his current goals.

[Oceancaller]

This is a reproduction of an ancient relic that once belonged to a True God. The Mistress of the Oceans was a harbinger of misfortune and disaster and drowned many lives over the course of her existence. Whether on a planet or in space, this feared and mighty deity terrorized entire civilizations by performing her most feared dirges to her intended victims.

This replica artifact does not inherit the death and misery that the Mistress of the Oceans has infused in her iconic artifact. It is a blank instrument and can be turned into an artifact that bestows blessings or retread the steps of its original and drown an uncountable amount of lives.

The replica Oceancaller has become drawn to you. It will unlock more power and become more responsive to you if you are able to earn its approval.

"What...?"

His entire outlook on this flute had changed as he read the System description.

He held the flute more reverently as his estimation of its value had shot up as soon as he learned that it was associated with an ancient True God!

Titles had power. Anyone who became known as the Mistress of the Oceans had to be a bigshot in her era!

Even if the Oceancaller in his hands was just a replica of the original, the fact that it shared much of the same DNA of that ancient relic meant its potential was extremely high!

However, Ves quickly grew a little more vigilant towards the flute when he learned about the infamous deeds of this powerful 'deity'.

"Not all True Gods are good-natured." He reminded himself.

His mother was not the nicest woman either, but this Mistress of the Oceans sounded a thousand times worse!

The original Oceancaller belonged to a mass murderer, a genocidal maniac and a power-hungry despot!

How could Ves not feel nervous about obtaining an object that shared a relation with such a dangerous cultivator?!

Though the Mistress of the Oceans had probably died many ages ago, who knew whether a remnant of her had persisted to this day.

If Ves played around with his new Oceancaller without enough care, he might accidentally bring this dangerous True God back from the dead!

A part of him immediately wanted to throw this cursed artifact away.

However, he couldn't bring himself to discard such an exceedingly precious object.

Not only was it made out of extremely high-grade hyper metals that could only be produced in a high-energy environment, but it was also a high-level artifact!

"You're alive, aren't you?" He whispered towards the flute. "I can't feel you right now, but I am sure there's an artifact spirit inside your physical form."

Ves was surprisingly unable to study what was hiding beneath the exterior of the flute. His spiritual senses encountered an invisible barrier that prevented him from learning how it was made.

This was probably a form of ancient copy protection. Divine Blacksmiths had to protect their secrets well if they wanted to suppress their competition.

Ves actually felt this ancient form of protection may be useful in itself. If he could study the flute and learn how to reproduce this protective barrier, he could apply it to all kinds of works, making it much more difficult for his rivals and his enemies to decipher his works!

"Well, let's see what you can do. Please forgive me. The last time I played a flute was when I was still an elementary school student. I never practiced with a flute of this type either. Please allow me to play a few simple notes."

He awkwardly raised the flute and pressed his lips against the lip plate.

He did not press any of his fingers on the keys, but simply blew his voice through the hole.

An unexpectedly loud sound erupted from the musical artifact!

Its silvery surface became more active and started to light up hundreds of small blue runes, each of which began to draw in the water energies around the clearing!

As the flute produced a monotonous high tone, the water of the Wishing Fountain practically exploded from the pool and launched in the opposite direction of Ves with the force and the momentum of a hurricane!

Ves quickly pulled the flute away from his lips and looked at the glowing instrument with astonishment.

Even though he had only blown a single note, he briefly experienced a rush of power as the flute somehow amplified his control and reach over the surrounding water energies by at least an order of magnitude!

This was the most powerful artifact that had fallen into his hands!

Its power might not come close to the Heavensword, but Ves had a feeling that his Oceancaller may be able to grow just as powerful one day!

#### Chapter 5458 Exploring a New Toy

Ves found it foolish that he reacted with disappointment after receiving the Oceancaller.

Even though it was not the enlightenment fruit that he desired to obtain the most, he quickly found out that the initially unassuming metal flute held a lot more depth and value than he initially assumed!

"Ancient relics can't be judged according to the same standard as modern ones." Ves quickly determined. "This is especially the case for high-level artifacts!"

There were two iconic artifacts that had made a profound impression on him so far. However, they were far too powerful for him to approach and study.

The Heavensword was a grand work that possessed a mind of its own. It was driven by the obsessions imprinted by its ancient master and had become feral after it was left by itself!

The Iron Resonant Crucifix Crown that remained attached to Vulcan's Divine Core may have been reduced to a compliant metal energy dispenser, but Ves had never let down his guard against this dangerous symbol of authority!

Now that Ves had learned a bit more about the true nature of heavenly authorities and how they achieved their goals by enslaving those who grew from their care, he possessed a much greater understanding of how the symbols of authority imitated this *modus operandi*!

The crown was powerful because it was able to grant a huge amount of power in a much more direct fashion.

However, that also made it a lot more dangerous! It only had a single 'client', so whoever received its blessing could not possibly escape the attention of this dangerous artifact!

Ves couldn't help but admire his mother even more for devising a cultivation method that unscrupulously absorbed the Iron Resonant Crucifix Crown without any restraint!

Yet that had also given Vulcan a huge headache that grew stronger with each passing day.

The longer Vulcan took advantage of the crown, the more debts of karma he accrued.

Sooner or later, Vulcan needed to address this looming debt one way or another!

This was what his mother meant by describing one of the four conditions needed for Vulcan to transcend into a True God.

No matter whether Vulcan destroyed it outright, carried out its orders or renegotiated his deal with the relic, it was undoubtedly going to be a herculean task for him to resolve his astronomical debt!

"Thanks mom." Ves grumbled.

Compared to the rogue Heavensword and the nefarious Iron Resonant Crucifix Crown, the Oceancaller held an entirely different meaning to him. It might not be as powerful as the other two legacies of ancient times, but that made it so much more manageable!

Ves had no doubt that the authentic version of the Oceancaller would have been just as dangerous and uncontrollable as the aforementioned sword and crown.

Yet the Wishing Fountain did not present him with this insanely powerful artifact that was steeped in a lot of history.

A radiant lottery ticket simply wasn't worthy enough to draw such a valuable prize.

The best it could do was give Ves an opportunity to win a replica of this ancient artifact.

From what he could gather after studying the flute in his hands, the System had likely reproduced it through a sophisticated process that was more advanced than materialization.

Unlike the materializers utilized by the first-raters, the production process of the System went a few steps beyond that and accurately replicated the ancient hyper technology and E-technology aspects of the artifact as well!

"Yet there is no heart and soul in its creation." Ves sighed in mild regret.

The lack of a skilled human touch only caused the replica to take over the shape of the Oceancaller. It lacked the love, passion, emotions and intent that could have elevated its quality to a much greater height.

Ves was not dissatisfied with this shortcoming.

It was the opposite. He was incredibly happy to have obtained a copy of the real product because it had been neutered just enough for him to maintain control over this artifact!

He did not want to deal with another ticking time bomb like the Iron Resonant Crucifix Crown.

The replica of the Oceancaller possessed all of the basic functions and abilities of the real version, but did not come with any of the baggage!

Of course, its notable shortcomings also reduced its power by an enormous degree, but that was an acceptable tradeoff as far as Ves was concerned.

"The important part is that you are not a static product. Even though you work a bit differently from my living mechs, you still work along similar lines. The more I make use of you, the more you will absorb my spiritual feedback. Combined with absorbing E energy radiation, I am sure you will grow as powerful as the original one day."

Ves had no illusion that this would be a long journey. It could take hundreds if not thousands of years before it grew into an artifact that could serve as a worthy accompaniment to a powerful True God.



That was not necessarily bad. Ves could not handle an Oceancaller that was at the peak of its power. It was better for him to start off with a blank slate and slowly develop an intimate relationship with his new artifact over time.

He lovingly stroked the surface that was still glowing with many exquisite blue runes. "Even though you are not the original, you can be considered its successor. I shall continue to call you the Oceancaller, is that alright with you? I can bestow you with a new name if that is what you prefer instead."

Though the artifact flute did not convey any obvious response to his suggestions, Ves possessed a keen sensitivity towards life.

His intuition vaguely told him that the flute was fine with inheriting the name and the identity of its original.

The flute did not really object to its status as a replica. It possessed a fondness towards the original Oceancaller that it was based upon, and considered it to be an honor to inherit the mantle of this once-powerful artifact!

That was both good and bad to Ves. While his Oceancaller was comfortable in its own skin, its hero worship towards its predecessor meant that it had partially taken over the likes and dislikes of a relic wielded by a murderous cultivator!

It was like taking over a living mech that had already grown alongside another mech pilot for many years.

Ves needed to accommodate the whims of the flute without going overboard. If he blindly tried to act according to what the flute expected from its owner, then he would eventually find himself turning into the second incarnation of the Mistress of the Oceans!

He could not afford to let that happen!

A lot of thoughts swirled through his mind. He needed to adopt a rational and measured relationship strategy with his new artifact. He wanted to take advantage of all of its possibilities without getting affected by its dangerous quirks.

"So this is what it is like to become an artifact cultivator."

Ves recognized that he had taken the first steps of becoming an artifact cultivator once he made the decision to utilize the Oceancaller. The fact that becoming one did not conflict with his other cultivation efforts made it a lot easier to settle for this course of action!

He did not have to make this decision. He could store it in the Vault of Eternity or pass it off to another candidate.

In fact, he continued to entertain the idea of gifting the Oceancaller to his oldest daughter if she turned out to be a lot more compatible with the extraordinary musical instrument.

However, Ves already felt he had established a bond with the mystical object. It felt completely at home in his hands. Though he could lend the Oceancaller to other people if he wanted to, he would always be its ultimate owner so long as this bond remained in place!

"Let's see what you are made of." He said as he brought his mech designer side of himself back to the forefront.

From the perspective of a creation cultivator, the Oceancaller was a defective product.

Yet that did not change the fact that it had most of the makings of an item that had most of the potential of a True God-level artifact!

The entire flute was made entirely of metal. Though he was not able to look through any of its holes and cavities, he was pretty sure that it did not carry any parts made out of wood or crystal.

Ves was also certain that it did not contain any organic elements.

"You are all metal."

This was a deliberate design choice by the maker of the original flute. There was a purity in its design that made it clear that it only served a single purpose. It contained everything it needed and nothing more.

As Ves utilized his senses as a phase lord to carefully investigate whether it was attached to a pocket space, he failed to detect anything on this front.

Though it may be that the isolation barrier prevented Ves from detecting its presence, his intuition told him that the Oceancaller truly did not carry any pocket spaces.

That disappointed Ves.

"Why not?"

A feared and powerful True God like the Mistress of the Ocean most definitely had the ability to attach a pocket space to her favored artifact.

The Heavensword and the modern god mechs of humanity all possessed their own pocket spaces. They could store a lot of useful stuff, up to and including their own E energy ecosystem!

Ves did not possess the vision and understanding to figure out why the Oceancaller lacked such a useful feature.

He actually became a bit grateful for this design choice when he realized that it had made the Oceancaller more 'affordable'.

Otherwise, he would have never been able to acquire it with the help of a radiant lottery ticket!

The metal attracted his interest as well. His strong affinity towards metal already told him that it was made out of an unfamiliar variety of top-grade hyper metal.

"It is impossible to find a hyper material of this grade outside of a high-energy environment." Ves concluded.

That meant that it was impossible to find natural deposits of this exceptional material in the Red Ocean!

He would likely have to travel to Messier 87 if he wanted to acquire large quantities of this water hyper material!

"These runes look interesting."

Ves no longer fed any of his spiritual energy to the artifact. Though it was able to sustain their activity by drawing from the ambient water energy in the environment, the runes slowly faded by themselves.

The Oceancaller was an artifact that was solely designed for active use. It was not meant to operate by itself, which was a sharp contrast to the Heavensword.

After he examined the glowing blue runes a bit more, he found to his surprise that their shapes and patterns actually shared a close resemblance to his Ascension Runes!

"They share the same origin!"

The differences in style and sophistication made it seem as if they both shared the same language.

The difference was that his Ascension Runes were a lot more raw and crude, as if they were letters written by a rural peasant.

The blue runes imprinted on the surface of the flute was a much more refined application of the same language. The letters had been formed with the personality and style of their 'painter'.

"I didn't know that runes could be applied in this fashion."

There was a strong artistry to the runes that caused them to express and channel their powers in a distinctly different fashion.

Compared to the Ascension Runes formed by 'nature', the blue runes conveyed a distinctive feminine style.

Ves carefully explored the thin, soft and delicate components. He tried to simulate how their exceptional creator was able to string together the runes into a flexible and flowing pattern that empowered the Oceancaller way beyond its material limitations!

It did not take much time for him to count the number of runes of the flute.

"There are 360 runes!"

That was way more than the handful of Ascension Runes that most of his living mechs had managed to accumulate up to this point!

Even though his living mechs could continue to acquire more Ascension Runes as they grew older, it would probably take centuries for them to ever get close to the amount of runes that came with the Oceancaller!

Ves beheld the artifact with a lot more fear and respect.

No matter whether there were considerable differences in operation between Ascension Runes and this new variation of runes, 360 of the latter definitely conveyed a lot more depth and power to this powerful artifact!

Chapter 5459 Dominating Water

Ves learned more about the Oceancaller with each passing minute.

His appreciation for the replica artifact continued to rise as he managed to glean more insights and secrets from this flute.

Just the chance to get a good glimpse of the 360 runes that covered the exterior of the flute alone was enough to widen his horizons!

Ves had made very little progress in developing a greater understanding of his Ascension Runes.

They were pure energy constructs that mysteriously aligned with a fundamental universal force.

That was pretty much the extent of his discoveries.

He had been unable to reproduce them outside of his third order living mechs. This severely limited their applications, which was why Ves had turned his attention away from them despite their huge potential.

Ves needed to pick his battles. He could make much better use of his time if he spent more time on researching phasewater technology or hyper technology.

The appearance of these 360 runes had reignited his interest into the study of runes. If he was able to learn how to artificially apply a bunch of them into any creation, then he could overcome the limitations of his current implementation of his Ascension Runes!

Ves tried to interpret the meaning and the purpose of the individual runes as best as possible.

This was rather difficult as he did not possess a dictionary or a guide. The Oceancaller did not take the initiative to provide any explanations, so Ves had to fall back on his intuition.

With the combined observations and insights of Ves, Blinky and Vulcan, the 360 runes slowly turned into a more recognizable body of text.

As best as he could guess, the runes amplified and regulated the interaction between spiritual energy and the Oceancaller.

They were akin to an ultra-dense form of programming language. They already carried a lot of meaning by themselves, but their complexity rose exponentially when they started to work together with more runes.

There was no possible way that Ves could replicate this amazing application of empowered programming!

The degree of sophistication was simply way too much for him. The runes were as inscrutable to him as the impressive god mechs of modern human civilization.

He would have to become an existence comparable to a Star Designer if he wanted to gain the qualifications to manipulate spiritual energy in such a profound manner.

"Is my mother able to work with these runes?"

Ves was not so sure about that. She was clearly a qi cultivator. That did not prevent her from dabbling into creation cultivation, but the application of runes was so advanced that it was unlikely for part-timers to understand their essence!

Creation cultivators had to develop their own strengths in order to justify their existence. Ves guessed that the study and application of runes was one of the high-level advantages that elevated their craft beyond the reach of other professionals.

He developed a strong desire to obtain an inheritance related to runes!

Ves needed to pay more attention to the Tree of Possibilities. If it offered any fruit that enabled him to get started in this deep and profound application of spiritual engineering, then he needed to take it regardless of the cost!

"If that doesn't work, I can always resort to reverse engineering..."

Ves had no doubt that he would utterly fail to decipher and reproduce all 360 runes of the Oceancaller.

However, it was not necessary for him to possess a full grasp of them. He would already be happy if he was successfully able to master a single rune. If he was able to understand its purpose, functions and application, he could empower every compatible mech with this advanced E energy construct.

That already made the Oceancaller worth the price of a radiant lottery ticket!

Even if Ves was unable to utilize the flute in any fashion, that still did not change the fact that it was a real high-level artifact.

It revealed so much about the production methods of a Divine Blacksmith that Ves and Vulcan could learn a huge amount by drawing from this example!

Ves stroked the surface of the Oceancaller with greater care and affection. It was not necessary for him to decipher every single nuance that went into its creation.

He could already derive a huge amount of benefits from it if he was able to reverse engineer just 5 percent of the secrets that made it so powerful!

In the meantime, he could also make use of it like a normal artifact cultivator. The Oceancaller could not only serve as a powerful weapon, but also came with a lot of shortcuts that could significantly speed up his comprehension of the water element.

"Let's explore your powers a bit more."

Ves carefully experimented with it for ten minutes. He was not in a hurry to blow any further notes with it. He instead wanted to learn how the flute interacted with different quantities and attributes of E energy.

He soon discovered that the flute did not solely interact with water energy.

"Interesting."

He discovered that there was a more advanced way to produce sounds with the Oceancaller.

The mortal way was to blow into the embouchure hole of the artifact flute.

The transcendent way to play the instrument was to inject air energy into the same hole!

PFFFFFFFFF!

When Blinky experimentally blew air energy into the hole, the blue runes not only glowed a lot brighter, but it also took control of a much greater quantity of water energy!

To Ves' astonishment, the water energy rapidly condensed and transformed into a large amount of water that instantly launched into the mountainside of the System Space!

Even though the impact force was not excessive, Ves could easily imagine that he could summon and launch a much greater body of water if he injected a lot more air energy into the flute!

It was not difficult to figure out why the flute was so responsive to air energy. It was a way to play the Oceancaller in a vacuum environment or when he was wearing a closed helmet.

Ves even had a hunch that he would only be able to unlock the true power of the Oceancaller if he skillfully and proficiently made use of air energy.

"Air energy is just a control mechanism. It is not the main driver of its powers."

Ves soon discovered why the flute was made entirely out of metal. There was a reinforcing relationship between metal and water.

The former promoted the latter, so when Ves channeled metal energy into the Oceancaller, the flute was able to convert all of it into water energy!

Combined with leveraging the water energy that was already present in the environment, the flute was able to command water to a much greater extent!

"What about earth energy?"

Earth promoted metal but opposed water. When Ves carefully injected earth energy into the Oceancaller, the artifact immediately showed its first clear sign of an independent personality and shook in his hands!

"Sorry! I will refrain from doing this again."

The Oceancaller had made it clear that it did not like to get exposed to earth energy.

Doing so may be a way for Ves to discipline the artifact flute, but that would almost certainly deteriorate their relationship!

Ves knew that artifact cultivators utilized different strategies to manage their relationships with their bonded objects.

It was not uncommon for these cultivators to train their artifacts into tamed and obedient possessions.

While this approach granted them greater control, the chance of suffering a backlash always existed.

It was not in his nature to develop unnecessary antagonistic relationships with powerful artifacts.

He much preferred to develop a mutually beneficial relationship with them instead.

The Oceancaller was already positively disposed towards him, so Ves had a strong incentive to deepen his friendship with this artifact.

In order to do that, he needed to learn what sort of actions earned its approval and disapproval.

After a bit more experimentation, he concluded that the Oceancaller pretty much excluded every other E energy attribute aside from air, metal and water.

Ves grew disappointed when the flute rejected space energy.

However, that did not cause him to give up his investigation whether it was able to interact with phasewater.

He paused for half a minute before he decided to go down to the Vault of Eternity to withdraw a small portion of pure phasewater that he kept in reserve.

Ves carefully brought the flute to his lips and played a soft note while concentrating on the cup of phasewater that he had placed in front of his body.

Since Ves hardly made any noise, the effect shouldn't be too strong.

The phasewater stirred inside its cup.

When Ves blew a little stronger, the phasewater actually showed signs that it was almost just as responsive as regular water!

His eyes lit up after making this discovery!

"Phasewater may possess a lot of metaphysical properties, but it is still a variation of water. So long as that is the case, it is susceptible to the Oceancaller!"

Ves was not able to induce these reactions through regular spiritual manipulation.

The Oceancaller not only multiplied his effective control by at least 10 times, but it also seemed to expand the categories of water that it was able to control!

In order to test out his latest hypothesis, Ves impulsively conducted a dangerous experiment and tried to use the artifact to stir his own blood!

Ves almost botched his note playing as he actually felt as if the blood flowing through his arms wanted to spring out of his body!

"It works!"

He had made three powerful observations through this brief experiment.

The first important observation was that the Oceancaller was intelligent enough to respond to his conscious thoughts, emotions and intentions. The fact that it did not stir the cup of phasewater in front of him was proof that the flute was able to act according to his thoughts!

The second observation was that the Oceancaller was able to exert control over the blood of living organisms. There was no inherent taboo or restriction that prevented the flute from ripping the blood out of the bodies of other living beings. Only distance and the ability for others to resist this force could prevent this from happening.

The third observation was that the Oceancaller possessed a reluctant relationship with phasewater. The multi-dimensional properties of the latter made it much more difficult to control the exotic liquid. The higher the concentration of phasewater, the more challenging it was to manipulate it with the flute.

"In conclusion, anything that shares even the slightest resemblance to water can be manipulated by the Oceancaller. In fact, I bet it is able to manipulate anything that has liquid properties. Perhaps it can even control mercury or the gasses of a gas giant!"

The Mistress of the Oceans shouldn't be so easily restrained if she ended up in an environment that was devoid of water or water energy.

Ves had a strong hunch that a part of the reason why she made use of the Oceancaller was to expand her versatility and plug some of her obvious weaknesses.

Otherwise, it would have been way too easy for the many enemies of a mono-elemental qi cultivator to put her at a disadvantage!

The only part that was especially relevant to him was that the Oceancaller was able to control phasewater.

Ves wondered how he could take advantage of this property.

For example, he might be able to use the artifact flute to fabricate high-concentration phasewater components for a high-end living mech.

He could also destroy or interfere with the operation of a hostile transphasic mech or warship!

So long as there was anything related to phasewater, the Oceancaller would always have a way to exert control over it! The only limitations that held it back was his own strength and ability to control his artifact!

"What a domineering creation!"

The aggressive functions of the Oceancaller completely contrasted with its delicate and feminine appearance.

The properties of this impressive replica inadvertently granted him a much more thorough understanding of the owner of the original artifact.

Chapter 5460 Ves the Flutist

Ves was close to finishing his initial exploration of his new artifact.

Before he was ready to exit the System Space and prepare for his upcoming vacation, he suddenly had to revise his estimation of the value of the Oceancaller yet again.

This was because he found out that the artifact was incredibly tough and resistant towards damage!

No matter whether he subjected it to physical force or the powerful laser beams the Amastendira, the Oceancaller shrugged off the damage as if it was an umbrella blocking the rain.

When Ves temporarily took off his uniform and unfolded his true body, he suddenly discovered another useful feature of the artifact.

The Oceancaller was actually able to change its size!

In its most passive form, it was only as large as a typical human instrument.

Yet when Ves progressively channeled more E energy into his flute while concentrating on the right mental image, the Oceancaller responded by growing until it matched his intentions!

Ves could even make it grow even larger than the most fitting size for his current true body.

It just became a lot harder for him to meet the progressively greater E energy upkeep needed to maintain its increasingly more exaggerated size!

"This is useful!"

This was an especially useful advantage in battle. Ves did not have to force his true body to finagle a flute that was small enough to slip past his clumsy oversized fingers. He could always make sure that the flute would always remain in proportion.

He could utilize the flute as it was intended to be used, but he could also use it as a makeshift baton or staff if he needed to get more physical!

If he was able to master more advanced water manipulation skills, then he could even develop his own combat techniques that enabled him to weave physical attacks with sweeping water waves.

He could even work together with Blinky to improve his ability to fight in this way!



Ves briefly immersed himself in this fantasy before shaking his head.

"I don't have the time to learn all of these fighting skills."

He was not that interested in utilizing the Oceancaller in battle. That was what his mechs were for. What he truly valued was the reference data that he could gather from a high-value artifact and the ability to speed up his comprehension of the water element.

Both of these could significantly upgrade his ability to harness the water element in his future works!

When Ves examined how extensively the Oceancaller was able to express the water element, he vaguely came in touch with multiple subordinate concepts.

The hyper metal and 360 of its runes shared varying relationships with the concepts of oceans, liquid, storms, waves, tides, heavy water, steam, ice, whirlpools, pressure and blood.

It was much easier for a qi cultivator to deepen his comprehension of the water element by studying one of its lesser concepts first.

The Oceancaller made this process a lot faster and more convenient by giving him access to the spiritual techniques related to these concepts in advance!

Though he would be able to employ these powerful abilities to a much greater extent if he had mastered the concepts in question, the fact that he was able to experience the application of the power of tides or waves without being familiar with them was a priceless learning opportunity!

"What I have to do next is to practice music."

Ves was not a musician. Unlike a number of his other colleagues, he did not even have the habit of listening to music when he designed his mechs.

He enjoyed the process and the challenge of designing mechs. He derived so much enjoyment in the long and difficult process of putting together a good machine that music would only occupy a part of his precious concentration.

That did not mean he hated music. He acknowledged its artistry. He was impressed by the ability for performers to influence the thoughts and emotions with their compositions.

Ves just did not have a thorough understanding of music and how to make it. Even if he regarded himself as an artist, he was much more involved in visual rather than auditory art forms.

Just like how ordinary mech designers possessed little understanding of biomechs, Ves just did not know enough about music to make greater use of the Oceancaller.

The impressive artifact was not a magic wand. It would be disrespectful for Ves to utilize it in this manner.

If he wanted to develop a proper relationship with the Oceancaller, then he needed to learn how to play the flute like a proper musician.

This was why Ves eventually exited the System and started to take virtual crash courses on how to play the flute.

As a transcendent mech designer who had acquired a frighteningly powerful learning ability, it was not that difficult to memorize all of the notes and a few simple songs.

The flute was one of the more approachable musical instruments to get started with, but Ves quickly found out that it possessed a huge amount of depth.

He would have preferred to obtain a string instrument instead. At least then he would be able to take advantage of his dexterity and excellent control over his fingers.

The flute on the other hand demanded that he control his breathing and blow through the hole in a specific manner.

One of the first skills he learned was to prevent the Oceancaller from exercising its extraordinary powers.

After all, it would be quite bad if he accidentally ripped the blood out of Alexa's body or caused Gavin to die in agony as his blood boiled into steam!

Ves found that he only had to maintain a bit of mental discipline and make it clear to the flute that he did not intend to employ any violence.

"I can still use you like a normal flute, right? Good."

Though Ves did not suffer from the typical problems related to physical inadequacies, there was no way to make up for his lack of proficiency aside from spending lots of time on playing the flute.

Fortunately, the Oceancaller was a good sport about it. The high-level artifact understood that Ves was a complete beginner and tolerated all of the times where he botched his technique and produced discordant sounds.

This was good news. The more Ves interacted with the artifact, the more he was able to strengthen his connection to it. The flute would also get to know him better and grow in a direction that was more compatible to his own inclinations.

In the hands of the Mistress of the Oceans, the Oceancaller turned into a symbol of terror, an icon of genocide and an artifact of evil.

Suffice to say, Ves had no interest in acquiring such a distasteful object.

Ves hoped to turn the Oceancaller into a more positive artifact.

If this replica had inherited any of the more negative aspects of the original, then Ves just had to reeducate the artifact spirit until it had been reformed.

In any case, entire days passed by as Ves grew obsessed with practicing the flute. Though he still satisfied his other obligations, it was clear to everyone around him that he had gotten into one of his obsessive phases again.

Before he knew it, Ves, his children and his staff teleported onto the Tarrasque.

Once they had settled into their stateroom, the Bluejay Fleet quickly commenced their journey to the Ocanon System.

"Vacation! Vacation! Vacation!" Andraste repeatedly shouted while she jumped on top of her bed.

"Meow..."

Lucky yawned while he started to nap on the bouncing bed.

"Miaow."

Clixie purred as she rested next to little Marvaine and allowed him to caress her back.

Their father paid little attention to the children. He continued to put his focus on building up the muscle memory of playing different notes by repeatedly playing the same simple songs.

Though the sound of his own music was improving by the day, he still did not act as if he turned into a real musician.

He was not able to evoke the same kind of passion for designing mechs. Ves would have felt much more at home if he engaged in painting.

He felt more and more unworthy to play such a powerful artifact. The Oceancaller deserved to be played by an earnest musician. Though Ves tried to deepen his affection for it, he could not get away from the motivation to turn it into a powerful tool.

As Ves processed his mixed emotions while attempting to play a tune, one of his daughters looked at him with increasingly judgmental eyes.

"Papa, stop!"

"Hmm? What is the matter, Aurelia?"

"You are so bad at this." The girl bluntly accused. "You are not controlling your intonation. You are not adapting your technique to the melody of the song."

Ves smiled back at her. "I am a beginner. Not only that, I do not have an inherent talent in music, unlike you. I have to practice my skills step-by-step. Be patient, dear. I am sure that I can produce better sounds after a few more weeks of practice."

The look his daughter gave him suggested that she had little confidence in this claim. "My classmates in school have already improved further than you after attending only a couple of lessons on playing the flute."

He believed her. Designer babies were just too good. First-class ones were so comprehensive that ones who specialized in music could quickly master any standard human instrument!

"Would you like to try this out yourself?"

"Ido."

Aurelia grinned as she grabbed hold of the Oceancaller.

The high-level artifact did not exhibit any obvious metaphysical traits when it was in its passive form. Nobody was able to identify it as an extraordinary artifact because its isolation barrier did a good job at preventing anyone from peering beneath its exterior.

Though Aurelia had no way of knowing that the Oceancaller held a lot of power, she still gained a hint of the remarkable nature of the instrument as soon as she held it in her small and delicate hands.

Though the artifact looked a bit oversized relative to her small body, she was still able to hold it in a way that looked comfortable and natural.

From the moment she started to play a positive and joyful tune, she entered a state of mind that made it seem as if she was channeling her happiness into the instrument.

She even started to dance and swing her body in tune with the song that she had chosen.

Everyone else stopped when Aurelia played the Oceancaller with skill and confidence.

"So good! You are so much better than papa!" Andraste clapped her hands as she became infected by her older sister's happy vibes.

"Meow meow." Lucky woke up but did not show any irritation.

As Aurelia continued to fill the chamber with her sound, she harmonized with the flute in a way that completely made Ves recognize the gap between himself and his oldest daughter.

She not only mastered the techniques of playing a flute to a high degree, she was able to play the instrument as if it was a vessel for her emotions.

Her skillful techniques and passion for music enabled her to convey much greater meaning in her performance. She not only blew in the right ways and hit all of the correct notes, but she distinguished herself by putting her own personal inflections into a pretty popular song.

This meant that only Aurelia was able to play this tune in this specific fashion. Another artist may have come up with this melody, but Aurelia turned it into her own song by applying her personal touch.

Had Ves made the wrong decision? Was Aurelia the rightful owner of the replica of the Oceancaller all along?

He did not get this feeling from the flute. Days of playing with it had slightly improved his ability to read its mood.

From what Ves could gather, the Oceancaller appreciated Aurelia's skill, but that was all. It was not really a tool for creating music, but rather an instrument that was designed to drown entire planets in an endless flood of tsunamis!

For that reason the high-level artifact much preferred to be wielded by a more powerful individual especially one that was not shy about getting his hands dirty!