

The Mech 5571

Chapter 5571 Oscillator Hammer

The effectiveness of the medium-range hyper molecular disruptor astonished many people among the audience.

While it was not entirely unheard of for cutting-edge weapon systems to gain the capacity to circumvent the protection of energy shields, they were far from common.

These exotic and prototypical weapon systems were usually attached to experimental and restricted first-class multipurpose mechs.

The weapons had to be made of incredibly rare and powerful materials, and often had to be sustained by powerful first-class power reactors.

Perhaps it may be possible for a small troop of elite first-class mechs to be equipped with these expensive boondoggles, but it was unthinkable to bestow them to any second-class mechs.

The Dustweaver completely changed the equation!

Even though the mech was a quasi-first-class mech that was unaffordable to most second-class customers, its price had to be within the same range as the Elite Fey Fianna.

This meant that second-class forces could already gain the ability to bypass energy shields by paying just too MTA credits for a mech like the Dustweaver!

Just as people started to fantasize about disintegrating the molecules that made up an entire alien warship, a lot of mech designers and other scientists quickly disabused them of their delusional notions.

"The hyper molecular disintegrator is not a panacea. Look at how little damage it managed to do against the Fey Fianna. It only managed to scrape away a small amount of surface matter from the mech. The transphasic energy shields of a typical alien warship is much stronger without adding in the factor of hyper technology. I can guarantee you that the Dustweaver cannot even disintegrate a single molecule of a properly shielded warship."

"The value in Master Quan's breakthrough lies in its subsequent development. The current version of his hyper molecular disintegrator is still useless against a shielded mech, but maybe other developers can add their own solutions to the weapon system that can amplify its penetration power. If a brilliant mech weapons developer is able to find a way to make the weapon transphasic, then its ability to bypass energy shields will likely skyrocket!"

Many discussions erupted around the same topics.

The Elite Fey Fianna that was leveraging the power of the image of Poseidon used to attract their admiration, but the powerful hyper mech quickly became an afterthought in the face of another astonishing technological breakthrough!

When the Dustweaver fired its medium-range hyper molecular disruptor for a second time, the arena became filled with the same awe-inspiring sound.

WOOOOOOM!

This time, a slightly greater quantity of dust particles fell from the surface armor plating of the Fey and the drone mech.

All of these particles used to comprise the outer structure of the Elite Fey Fianna, but the effects of the exotic weapon had caused the powerful matter to break down and crumble into dust!

"Amazing!"

"The weapon is slightly more effective at closer ranges."

"I wonder how much of the Fey Fianna will break apart once the molecular disintegrator is able to strike the mech without an azure energy shield in the way."

Everyone who was familiar with Master Quan's work knew that molecular disintegrators only truly demonstrated their full power against solid matter.

The immediate goal of the Dustweaver was to demolish the annoying azure energy shields that protected the Elite Fey Fianna!

Unlike the mechs that fought in the previous matches, the speed of the Dustweaver was much greater.

Although the mech endured numerous transphasic fire laser beam attacks that weakened the integrity of its azure energy shield even further, the machine successfully managed to close the distance and get within melee striking distance!

The Dustweaver did not fire its molecular disintegrator again. Its mech pilot focused instead on striking the mech's transphasic hyper oscillator hammer onto the enemy machine's azure energy shield!

BRRRRM!

A sharp vibration spread through the air as the oscillator hammer produced a bizarre effect that significantly destabilized the energy shield projected by the defensive Fey!

Despite all of the power invested in the transphasic water hyper energy shield, the oscillator hammer had been expressly designed to counter this powerful form of protection!

The power of water energy and the artistic conception of Poseidon helped the Elite Fey Fianna buffer the damage to an extent, but that did not stop the exotic hammer from directly shaking the fabric of space upon impact!

A single blow from the hammer was dozens of times more damaging to energy shields than a single attack from the Dustweaver's shoulder-mounted positron beam gun.

What was important to note was that the oscillator hammer was not excessively large and heavy. It was not designed to bash in armor, so its mass was relatively light compared to other hammers. Much of its structure was devoted to high-tech technological components that was responsible for producing a crucial spatial oscillation effect.

All of this meant that the Dustweaver could easily smash its oscillator hammer at the Elite Fey Fianna in quick succession!

"That warhammer is weakening the Fey Fianna's energy shield at an astonishing tempo!"

"If this goes on, then the drone mech will soon become exposed to the molecular disintegrator. Once that happens, the Fey Fianna will lose more than a thin layer of surface molecules!"

Everyone understood that the odd hero mech was a terror to fight against up close. The oscillator hammer expended a lot of energy in order to produce its exotic effect, but the high-quality power reactor of the Dustweaver continually ensured that the high-tech melee weapon could continue to do its job without interruption.

The Dustweaver even silenced its useless shoulder-mounted positron beam guns in order to maximize the operation of its oscillator hammer!

The Elite Fey Fianna could not afford to let this continue. Seeing that the power of E energy and the image of Poseidon could not effectively negate the hard power of the Dustweaver's frightening hammer, the drone mech had little choice but to lock weapons against its adversary.

The oscillator hammer was a specialized anti-shield weapon. Its effectiveness against solid matter was much weaker!

"Fix bayonet!"

The Elite Fey Fianna performed a familiar maneuver. It drew out its backup knife and attached it to the front of its transphasic hyper luminar crystal weapon.

Different from the Standard Edition, the backup knife of the more expensive variant of the mech line was a bit more special.

A fiery glow emanated from the edge of the bayonet blade.

"It's a plasma torch, no, a plasma blade!"

"That will surely do a lot of damage!"

"It is also putting a large amount of strain on the Fey Fianna's power reactor."

The plasma bayonet was not as effective as a proper plasma sword. Its power was considerably weaker, but still remarkably high compared to most cold weapons.

The Elite Fey Fianna could not maintain this state for long. Not only did the plasma bayonet consume a lot of energy, but it also generated a lot of heat and stress to the luminar crystal rifle and the mech frame itself.

It was worth it as far as the Larkinson mech pilot was concerned. When the drone mech skillfully started to swing its plasma blade against the strained azure energy shield of the Dustweaver, the hero mech seemed to flinch as the brief moment of contact inflicted a lot of damage!

When the Elite Fey Fianna thrust its bayonet a second time, the Dustweaver had no choice but to deflect the attack with its oscillator hammer.

Woom!

The brief contact produced a much weaker oscillation noise. The high-quality luminar crystal rifle minutely shook for a few seconds, but other than that the weapon did not appear to have suffered any significant damage. It only exhibited a small amount of instability when the oscillation effect disturbed the phasewater integrated into the ranged weapon.

Seeing that it would take far too long to shake the luminar crystal rifle apart, the Dustweaver no longer channeled any power into its oscillator hammer during subsequent collisions.

Only when the hammer was able to strike the Fey Fianna's azure energy shield on occasion would the exotic hammer produce its characteristic effect!

WOOOOM!

WOOOOM!

WOOOOM!

Phoca arena continued to produce strange noises as the Dustweaver did its best to drain the energy barriers that kept the Elite Fey Fianna safe.

However, the drone mech was not taking all of these hits without hitting back in return.

The two offensive fey continued their efforts to drain the sole azure energy shield of the Dustweaver with the power of the fire elf.

The more the luminar crystal cannon fey fired their weapons, the more their subordinate spirits embodied the power of their shared artistic conception.

The fire laser beams gradually became a little more mysterious and ephemeral. The differences were difficult to spot, but the slow shift signified a lot of promise so long as the fey had enough time to develop this capability in the future.

The two mechs continued to weave and dance around in the air while seeking to deplete each other's energy defenses as quickly as possible.

The fourth challenge match turned into a high-stakes endurance contest as neither mech wanted to lose the protection of their powerful energy shields so soon!

The Dustweaver possessed a pair of remarkable weapon systems, but its defenses had clearly fallen behind in order to control its mass and cost. Its transphasic hyper armor system only offered limited protection against the potent attacks of the Fey Fianna.

The Fey Fianna and its various fey were also incredibly vulnerable to the full-powered effect of the molecular disintegrator.

If not for the fact that the Fey Fianna had access to two azure energy shields, it would have become exposed a lot sooner!

Throughout the furious exchange of attacks, there was one more factor that significantly affected the progression of this duel.

The lone space suppressor fey had begun to exert its effect onto the azure energy shield of the Dustweaver!

The auxiliary fey had not showed up in any of the previous matches because there was no point in utilizing it. The space suppressor fey wouldn't have been able to play any useful role when used against normal energy shields.

It was only when the Fey Fianna was locked in a fight against an adversary that was protected by a transphasic defensive system that the space suppressor fey had a chance to shine!

Under the faint but all-encompassing blessing of the image of Poseidon, the space suppressor fey started to exert a more stabilizing effect on the surrounding space.

The azure energy shields of the Fey Fianna were already specially modulated to shrug off the newly erected space suppression field.

The same could not be said for the azure energy shield of the Dustweaver!

Its operation suddenly experienced multiple different hindrances due to the close proximity of the active space suppressor fey.

The effect was incredibly dramatic! The Dustweaver's energy shield suddenly lost much of its transphasic properties.

This caused the transphasic fire laser beam attacks as well as the potent plasma bayonet attacks to drain the impaired azure energy shield much faster!

The Dustweaver's weakened defensive layer even started to show signs that it was unable to prevent the attacks from going through and striking the mech frame outright!

"Bringing a space suppressor fey in this fight is almost cheating!"

"The Dustweaver isn't equipped with a space suppressor. All of its capacity is already taken up by high-tech components and energy cells. There is no room for any additional modules inside its cramped mech frame."

While the Fey Fianna's azure energy shields were still at around 50 percent capacity, the Dustweaver was already on the verge of losing its own energy barrier!

The hero mech took more risks and attempted to strike its oscillator hammer against the enemy more often, but none of its effort could change the fact that its mech frame would get exposed first!

If the Dustweaver started to take real damage, then it was highly unlikely that it would last long enough to be able to fire its molecular disintegrator at the naked mech frame of the Elite Fey Fianna!

Would the Dustweaver be able to prevent this cascade?

Chapter 5572 Future Proofed Products

The fourth and final challenge match impressed everyone!

Their attention rested entirely on the two quasi-first-class mechs that struggled for dominance in the mech arena.

Neither machine wanted to give ground in this fight. Their pride, their reputation and the very reason of their existence was on the line at the moment!

The Elite Edition of the Fey Fianna and the Dustweaver both exhibited very different signature technologies as the match progressed.

The Elite Fey Fianna showcased many familiar qualities, but amped up the power level to the point where it could easily crush multiple copies of its lesser cousins with ease!

The huge disparity in performance amazed many people and caused more and more of them to yearn for this amazing machine.

Sure, the Elite Fey Fianna was not comparable to an expert mech or a first-class mech, but its greatest advantage was that it was much more attainable than either of those machines!

An expert mech could only be paired with an expert pilot. So long as anyone had reached this level of strength, there was no reason at all to worry about obtaining a suitable machine. Their employers would be glad to invest in a customized machine so that the demigod in question could properly channel his power.

A first-class mech cost way more money than the mechs in the arena. They could easily cost millions of MTA credits and imposed high requirements on the skills and knowledge of the mech pilot.

The support crew also needed to be insanely qualified in order to maintain and repair these high-tech machines, and the cost of spare parts and materials was already enough to bankrupt many second-class outfits!

The biggest issue to many mech forces was that fielding just a single first-class mech would automatically classify them as first-class organizations!

This was not good development for organizations that lacked the strength and foundation to support their new status.

The greater the power, the greater the obligations. First-class organizations needed to abide by an entirely different set of rules. They also lost the protection afforded to second-raters and third-raters.

In short, it was impossible or impractical for second-class mech pilots to gain control over machines that were way beyond their reach.

Their only realistic chance to take charge of mechs that could overpower other standard mechs was to advance to the rank of expert pilot.

An innumerable number of pilots chased after apotheosis, but only a small minority of them managed to succeed.

Even if the frequency of breakthroughs mysteriously rose over time, it was impossible for everyone to advance to expert pilot.

Many mech pilots despaired and gave up on their pursuit of godhood as they grew older.

Anyone who reached the age of 50 and higher usually developed their piloting skills to such an extent that they were more than qualified to pilot better mechs.

However, the bitter irony was that older mech pilots usually lost the fire and vigor that made it easier for them to break through to the rank of expert candidate.

If these pilots failed to exceed their mortal limits by the time they were 50, the statistical probability that they could become expert candidates and expert pilots dwindled to almost zero!

Researchers came up with many theories in order to explain why this was the case. Willpower was a key variable. It was simply easier for younger and less jaded mech pilots to exhibit the extreme emotions needed to produce miracles during stressful situations.

As such, aside from a handful of outliers, all of these aging pilots had no future in this desirable progression trajectory. There was virtually no chance that any of them could pilot an expert mech for the remainder of their careers.

That did not snuff out their desire to pilot stronger mechs, though.

As the Elite Fey Fianna and the Dustweaver both displayed distinctly different styles of mechs that pressed against the limit of second-class mech combat, many veteran mech pilots began to feel a calling for one of the two machines on display.

WOOOOM!

The Dustweaver was a marvel of powerful and exotic offensive technologies.

Though nobody knew how all of the advanced alien-derived tech worked, that did not stop them from dreaming about what they could do if they piloted such a cool and thematic quasi-first-class mech.

WOOOM!

WOOOM!

WOOOM!

From the transphasic hyper oscillator hammer to the medium-range hyper molecular disintegrator, the Dustweaver adopted the form of a hero mech that had turned into a rugged but determined champion.

It didn't look as gleaming and heroic as the other models of its archetype, but that was precisely why so many veteran pilots felt drawn to the Dustweaver.

Most hero mechs tended to be inspired by the brightly colored machines piloted by the youthful protagonists of popular action dramas. These machines matched the tastes of younger prodigies and descendants of powerful groups that had the luxury to pilot such difficult but dashing machines.

The Dustweaver did not align with this trend. Its faded, rusted color scheme along with its strong alignment with the power of decay was like a nightmare to younger mech pilots. Few of them possessed the desire to pilot a machine that already made them feel older just by staring at this hero mech!

This was clearly a mech designed for the older pilot demographic. Master Xieliq Quan was a centuries-old veteran of his craft, and he knew his customers far too well.

"I feel sad for the Dustweaver. It probably would have been able to show off its strength much better if it was fighting against another mech. The decay attribute doesn't seem so effective when used to attack mechs that are filled with life."

"I wonder whether I can buy the Oscillator Hammer as a standalone weapon. It is absurdly effective at breaking through transphasic energy shields. The Molecular Disintegrator is also powerful, but it has too many limitations."

"Where can I order copies of the Dustweaver? I have been searching up and down the galactic net, but there is no sales page for this model. Is the hero mech still in development, or is it only available to restricted clientele?"

While a small group of older mech pilots started to ask about obtaining the Dustweaver for themselves, a much greater collection of people had set their eyes on the Elite Fey Fianna.

The quasi-first-class drone mech clearly managed to gain the upper hand in this fight!

Its brighter color scheme, the power and versatility of its fey along with the absurd ability to derive power from the image of Poseidon turned the Elite Fey Fianna into a product that looked incomparably strong!

Numerous individuals even felt as if the Elite Fey Fianna possessed the potential to match the grandeur of an expert mech!

The potent luminar crystal cannon fey had consistently drained the powerful azure energy shield of the Dustweaver from the beginning of the match.

The plasma bayonet was a pleasantly powerful weapon at close range, giving the Elite Fey Fianna a much better chance to overpower melee mechs than its standard counterparts.

The additional azure energy shield fey provided an invaluable defensive buffer that practically gave the mech a second life.

Meanwhile, the highly effective space suppressor fey turned out to be a nemesis against any adversary that relied on phasewater technology for protection.

All of these combinations and more firmly cemented the Elite Edition of the Fey Fianna as one of the most innovative and powerful mechs attainable to second-raters!

Many people who previously decided to order a batch of Standard Fey Fiannas changed their mind or updated their orders.

Although it was a bit more troublesome to purchase the Elite Fey Fiannas, this was not a hindrance to anyone with enough power, wealth and status!

"The Elite Fey Fiannas can be used to form a guardian unit for mech regiment. They are powerful enough to blunt enemy advances and versatile enough to troubleshoot tricky problems. They are expensive, but the thousands of MTA credits that we spend on them will save us tens of thousands of MTA credits in future losses. I can think of no stronger or better mech for our specific purposes that we can buy at this time. This is a truly cutting-edge mech model."

Orders started to pour in at an increasing rate. The price of quasi-first-class mechs made these people feel pained, but none of them wanted to suffer any accidents while they participated in the Red War.

The power of the Elite Fey Fianna not only set a new standard of hyper mechs in the second-class market, but also served as a harbinger of the future!

More and more mech models that would get released in the coming months and years were bound to match or exceed the performance of the Elite Fey Fianna.

The lastgen mechs that so many mech forces still made use of to this day became increasingly less viable on the battlefields of tomorrow.

The Fey Fiannas might not maintain their ranking at the top for long, but it was unlikely that they would tumble all the way to the bottom in the next 10 years!

Investing in them was never a truly bad idea. The Fey Fiannas were so advanced and performed so well in difficult circumstances that they were much more future proofed than other hyper mechs.

"Buy buy buy!"

"I would love to purchase more Elite Fey Fiannas, but I don't have the drone mech specialists that can properly make use of these powerful machines."

"Damn, how long is this waiting list?! It will take over a year before I can receive my mechs. This is outrageous! A lot of other new hyper mech models will become available at that time. Why should I pay an enormous premium for mechs that are a year too late?"

The difference in popularity roughly reflected the disparity in results between the two quasi-first-class mechs.

The Dustweaver tried to block and resist the incoming attacks as much as possible. It even had to give up opportunities to slam its oscillator hammer against the enemy's azure energy shield in order to deflect the Elite Fey Fianna's plasma bayonet strikes!

This was incredibly difficult as the plasma bayonet burned so hot that it could damage the solid structure as well as the vital electronic components of the oscillator hammer!

Even if the Dustweaver managed to redirect or evade the plasma bayonet attacks, the machine could do nothing to stop the luminar crystal fey from pummeling its faltering azure energy shield!

The Dustweaver jerked backwards as its heavily strained and suppressed energy barrier finally collapsed from all of the pressure!

Its transphasic armor plating immediately began to take hits, which they managed to endure for the time being.

The exposed Dustweaver did not dare to let the plasma bayonet strike its relatively thin armor plating, so it started to look a lot more desperate as it was put on the defensive!

The hero mech's flaws became more evident. Not only was its armor system not as good as its weapon systems, but its power reactor clearly did not have the capacity to supply enough energy to all of its demanding functions.

Even so, its skilled mech pilot managed to do a remarkable job in maneuvering the mech in the air.

The Dustweaver did not show much grace, but it demonstrated enough thrust power to evade the most damaging strikes from the Fey Fianna while making it a lot more difficult for the offensive fey to land their shots on any of its weak points!

Unfortunately, there was no way this could last. The Dustweaver failed to breach the opposing mech's azure energy shields, and so long as this was the case, it was unlikely for the mech to gain the upper hand in this intensive duel!

The only question now was whether this was the extent of what the Dustweaver could do. Was the mech hiding a trump card?

The observers would soon have their answer.

Chapter 5573 Ineffective

While more and more potential customers yearned to purchase one of the two amazing hyper mechs, none of them spared any time to glance at the designers responsible for realizing them in the first place.

This was fairly normal as few if any people had any reason to stare at a bunch of boring mech designers in the middle of an exciting mech duel.

Those who did stare at the pair of mech designers did not see anything unusual. They occasionally talked about the work they put into their respective mech designs, which did not exceed people's expectations.

Ves had talked shop with the previous three challengers that came before. Why would his talk with Master Quan be any different?

The only oddity was that the young and old mech designers had moved awfully close to each other. They even lowered their voices to the point where they were whispering to each other.

Ves looked like a diligent grandson accompanying an aging grandfather who had entered his twilight years.

The only difference was that their discussion was entirely centered around mechs and the technologies that made them powerful.

"I am incredibly interested in the tech behind the oscillator hammer of yours. How does it work? Are you willing to share a few details, or is this confidential information?"

"It is nothing." Master Quan shrugged. "When you reach my age, there is little reason to hoard technology anymore. I can share with you the principles of the oscillator hammer if you wish. However, there are contributors to these experimental weapon systems. You will have to obtain the rights to learn their tech and make use of their proprietary solutions first. If you are not particularly interested in deepening your understanding of their specialized fields, then I suggest you resort to simpler and more practical solutions. As far as I know, one of your mech models makes use of stormblade technology. The principles of stormblade technologies are different, but the results are similar."

Ves shook his head. "I am aware of that, but stormblade technology is mainly suitable for low-end mechs. The more we try to scale up the tech, the more it begins to show its limitations. Your oscillator hammer is completely different in this regard. It is clearly a form of high technology that has a much higher ceiling than the alternatives that I know of. If I can arm a bunch of melee mechs with oscillator hammers, they can probably shatter any transphasic field, especially if they are equipped with space suppressor modules."

Though Ves looked as if he was engaged in a discussion about the fascinating technologies used to make the Dustweaver, a more shocking conversation took place on a spiritual level!

The 'gentle' grandson that looked as if he was eager to learn from his elders was actually feeling increasingly more disgusted at the cosmopolitan goals and ideals espoused by this madman!

"...Faith is a powerful force. It has been abused by many demagogues in the past who sought to divide populations and engender hatred. It has also been used to unite different groups of people who otherwise have nothing in common with each other. Our Indigo Cell plans to do the latter, because only religion has a reasonable chance of uniting both humans and aliens together at this point. If we cannot convince our enemies that our race is led by gods that they are willing to recognize, they will always treat us as heretical demons. You must step forward and demonstrate your capabilities as a phase lord in order to disabuse them of this notion. Only when we are able to

convince the aliens that we are a people led by gods of our own will we be able to bridge the gap between our races and negotiate a lasting peace!"

I! II

Ves had met many delusional people in his life. Fanatics tended to be the most crazy and illogical individuals of all, and right now the cosmopolitans sounded exactly like the other crazies that he had met in the past!

These fools believed so much in their cause that they simply could not entertain any thoughts that contradicted their own beliefs!

Not even a 300-year old Master Mech Designer was exempt from the corrosive effects of embracing an extreme ideology.

The Master Mech Designer began to grip Ves' forearm a little tighter. After he explained so much, he wanted to obtain a more concrete answer from the first human phase lord.

"Forgive me. I got carried away. I have told you enough about our great movement. Far too many enemies have sought to twist our words and tarnish our reputation, so I felt it was necessary to correct your misconceptions about our cause. Now that I have enlightened you to a small part of the greater truth, it is time for you to make your stance clear. Are you willing to cooperate with our Cross-Species Pantheon Plan?"

Ves did not hear anything that convinced him that this insane scheme would work. There was no way he could throw his support behind such a delusional venture, particularly when that meant he would have to collaborate with a bunch of human traitors!

"Master Quan." Ves responded over the spiritual connection. "You have explained the motivations behind your plan, but you have not described anything about the actual process. How can I have any confidence that you will be able to make your words come true when you haven't explained what I am supposed to do? I am willing to help with saving red humanity from extinction, but I do not want to become a hunted rat in the process."

Master Quan gave a reassuring smile to Ves. "Our Indigo Cell has lurked within human society for centuries without being uprooted by the arrogant mechers and fleeters. We can induct you into our ranks without exposing your true information. It is not unheard of for individual members to become exposed, but we practice strict information control in order to limit the impact of getting caught. Just as cells are isolated from each other, the cosmopolitans who hail from the cell do not necessarily know each other's identities. Even I am not privy to the identities of more than half of my compatriots."

That sounded like cells within a cell. These cosmopolitans had been persecuted for such a long time that they had to be extremely good at limiting the damage of information leaks.

Even if their paranoid security measures damaging the efficiency of their organization, they considered this to be a better choice than allowing for a single interrogation to uproot an entire cell!

It seemed unlikely that Ves would be able to learn the identities of the other members of the Indigo Cell. That was a shame, because he could have earned additional MTA credits if he surrendered the names to the mechers.

Ves had no confidence that the Indigo Cell would be able to keep his involvement with the cosmopolitans a secret. His escort force paid way too much attention to him and his actions.

He released a mental sigh. "What about rewards? If I am willing to parade myself around as a human phase lord so that we can convert a lot of alien believers, I expect remuneration."

"You do not need to be concerned about that, Professor Larkinson. Our movement has developed close ties with both human and alien organizations. Funding is not a problem, and we can also supply you with larger quantities of phasewater that you can use to strengthen your position in our heavily flawed society. It is in our best interest to facilitate your growth. The stronger you become, the more you can facilitate our goals."

None of this sounded compelling to Ves. Was he short on resources? No!

The expeditionary fleet was able to plunder hundreds of kilograms of phasewater on a good run. The release of the Fey Fianna line already transferred millions of MTA credits into his accounts.

Perhaps a more typical mech designer might become overtaken by greed when they learned about the support the cosmopolitans could provide, but they had picked the wrong target this time!

"I am not convinced, Master. I am really sorry. I have tried my best to understand your perspective, but I am not a cosmopolitan nor do I have any desire to become one. You believe in your own cause, but what does that have to do with me? I applaud your courage for seeking me out and revealing your hidden identity to me, but you have approached the wrong person. I am a mech designer, not a god and not a cosmopolitan. I suggest you look elsewhere if you want to use a human phase lord as a figurehead. The mechers are working hard to figure out a way to produce more phase lords among their trusted people. I am sure that one of them may be receptive to your ideas."

Master Quan's mood dropped when he received an unequivocal rejection from Ves.

This was a risky turn of events. Ves had no idea how the older man would react. Would Master Quan go crazy and spout forbidden cosmopolitan slogans?

That seemed unlikely. There was no reason for him to go through such extremes.

The primary objective of the Indigo Cell was to find a human phase lord and gain his cooperation.

There was no proof that other people were able to become phase lords. Ves had become one by accident. His own evolution could not be replicated by others, so there was no guarantee that they could get started in this special form of body cultivation.

So long as this was the case, Ves was irreplaceable!

The cosmopolitans did not want anything to happen to him because he may still be their only hope of realizing the Cross-Species Pantheon Plan.

After Ves figured that out, he relaxed to an extent. He did not sense that Master Quan held any particular malice at being rejected.

He would be happy so long as this day ended without any incidents.

Just as Ves thought that the older Master Mech Designer would accept this outcome and let go, the hidden traitor began to grip tighter!

"We were afraid you would reject our truth. I had high hopes for you, Professor Larkinson. Let me be honest with you. We originally did not intend to approach you and request your cooperation for our plan, but a number of my fellow cosmopolitans believed that you should be flexible and open-minded enough to support our goals. It is regrettable that we are wrong on this front. If we cannot gain your cooperation, then we will have to look for a different human phase god."

The air between the two mech designers grew tense. Even Lucky started to raise his vigilance towards Master Quan.

"Meow..."

Ves narrowed his eyes. "I think that you guys were better off if you looked elsewhere from the beginning. I do not want to get involved in your sordid business. I just want to resume my work as an honest mech designer and sell my mechs."

"If this is the case, then so be it." Master Quan responded as his mentality began to experience a profound shift. "If you are not willing to cooperate with our plan, then we shall make our own human phase lord!"

An abrupt change occurred at this time!

A huge burst of malice emerged from Master Quan's mind at this time!

Ves became startled by this and started to sense a huge amount of danger!

His eyes widened as he suddenly figured out the greater meaning behind the other man's words.

"The bounty!"

Ves had overlooked the bounty on his head! According to Red Cabal, anyone who managed to engineer his death would receive as much help as needed to become a greater phase lord.

This was a much better choice for the cosmopolitans as it would not only allow one of their own to become the god that was essential to the Cross-Species Pantheon Plan, but would also allow them to develop a close relationship with the ancient phase whale responsible for mentoring the lucky bastard!

"HELP!"

Chapter 5574 Irresistable Temptation

No wonder Master Quan was so bad at persuading Ves.

The hidden traitor never staked everything on winning over the only known human phase lord from the beginning!

As far as the cosmopolitans were concerned, converting Ves to their cause was just an optional bonus objective.

It would definitely be nice if Ves saw the light and joined the Cosmopolitan Movement on his own accord, but it had never been an essential component to their plan.

The cosmopolitans did not really suffer a loss if their target failed to cooperate with their initiatives.

This was because their original plan called for taking matters into their own hands!

Rather than trying to cooperate with a foreign and unreliable element, wouldn't it be nicer if Master Quan or another trustworthy cadre of their movement became a phase lord?

The Red Cabal's recently announced bounty program attracted many people, but no one was more enthused about the rewards for claiming the top bounties than the cosmopolitans!

Claiming the head of a tier 3 galactic citizen granted the killer or any other designated human the opportunity to become a lesser phase lord.

Killing a tier 2 galactic citizen gave the responsible party a direct pathway to becoming a greater phase lord!

These rewards were enough to stoke the greed in many people's hearts, but the meaning of these bounties were different to the cosmopolitans.

They had lived much of their lives working to bring humans and aliens together. Yet they never managed to make much progress because it was far too difficult to earn the trust of hostile aliens.

No matter what the cosmopolitans did to prove their goodwill to the aliens, the other humans always ruined it all. The greedy and destructive behavior of most of humanity made it impossible to lower the hostility between the two sides!

This was why this opportunity became so important to the cosmopolitans. As long as they killed any tier 2 or tier 3 galactic citizen, they could directly assimilate into alien society and earn the genuine trust and appreciation of their phase whale mentors.

The aliens of the Red Ocean had never shown as much open-mindedness to humans in the past. They showed universal revulsion towards the invaders from another galaxy and never put much effort into distinguishing between different human groups.

All of that had changed recently as the Red Cabal took the threat of red humanity a lot more seriously.

Though the cosmopolitans hated the Red Two for pulling off Operation Night Jazz and making it much more difficult to reconcile the two sides, they were also secretly grateful for the emergence of the new bounty program.

Every cosmopolitan wanted to become a bounty hunter after they heard all of the rich rewards!

Not only would they have a chance to attain biological immortality by becoming a powerful phase lord, but they would be able to develop a friendship with a powerful phase whale and integrate into the core alien power hierarchy!

This was an unprecedented opportunity! The members of the Indigo Cell and the other radicals had never managed to get close enough to the aliens.

They were always treated as unwanted guests at best. No matter how many technologies and important human secrets they passed on, the cosmopolitans never even received any thanks for their vital contributions.

This was different!

The cosmopolitans had studied the aliens and their leadership long enough to know that the rewards were all legitimate.

The phase whales were truly willing to treat humans with sincerity in order to keep the bounty program effective.

It was impossible to stir up human infighting if the Red Cabal was not even willing to honor the promised rewards to the fullest.

With that thought and motivation in mind, Master Xieliq Quan fully became invested in the plan to enable one his fellow cosmopolitans to earn the trust of his phase whale tutor.

It would have been great if he was able to earn this fantastic opportunity, but even he was not delusional enough to know that he could get away from this planet alive.

The mechers had taken many security precautions. All forms of teleportation and warping were jammed. Lots of mechs and other assets constantly patrolled or remained on guard so that they could respond to any incidents. Powerful warships and well-equipped defensive installations blockaded much of the space around the planet.

Master Quan did not have the means to escape Bortele III with his life intact!

Since it was impossible for him to live after he had made his move, he simply accepted his fate without any procrastination and sought to make his sacrifice as worthwhile as possible!

The old Master Mech Designer was confident that one of his fellow members of the Indigo Cell would make good use of his final efforts!

His eyes grew crazed and focused on his prey with overwhelming conviction and determination.

Ves had to die in order for the cosmopolitans to advance their cause!

No other outcome was acceptable!

From the moment Ves tried to pull away while calling for help, multiple different events took place at the same time.

"MEOW!"

Lucky had already been poised to make his move.

The gem cat had spent years with Ves, so it was not surprising that the two could understand each other to this extent.

Yet before Lucky's energy claws had a chance to shred Master Quan's head, the entire man's body heated up as all of his implants and modified organs started to initiate a lot of complex processes while overheating!

All of these augmentations possessed fairly normal functions on the surface. It was only after Master Quan flipped a mental switch that they completely abandoned their original jobs and assumed new ones!

"Ahhh!"

The Master Mech Designer screamed in pain as his entire body started to break down as his insides became unrecognizable.

Previously innocent technological augmentations turned into much more dangerous devices after they spontaneously combined and rearranged themselves.

This happened so quickly that by the time that Lucky was halfway into killing the old man, the would-be assassin released a powerful electrical shock that not only blasted the gem cat head-on, but also pushed the victim away!

"MEEEEEEEEOOOOW!"

The powerful shock immediately burned Master Quan's chest and inflicted catastrophic damage to his health, but the effect was good!

Lucky's archemetal body possessed a high resistance against electrical currents, so the cat did not actually receive any crippling damage.

The furious cat shook his shocked body and tried to fly forward again.

Yet before he could get close enough, the complex alien metal garment worn by the old man unfolded and started to envelop both Ves and Master Quan!

In fact, the metal construct did more than that. Parts of it actually started to fuse with Master Quan's body, producing a horrendous fusion between flesh and machine.

The formation of this thin but surprisingly resilient metal curtain isolated Ves from his protectors!

By the time the mechers responded to the crisis, they found that it was impossible to teleport Ves away or form a protective energy shield around his body.

They weren't able to see through or affect the thin metal cage through multiple means.

"What is this device?!"

"None of our scanners are able to identify either mech designers."

"Lock down the entire arena and call for reinforcements!"

The closest first-class multipurpose mechs had already begun to move. It was unthinkable for them to rescue their principal by opening fire on the strange metal sphere, so they all moved forward at the highest possible speed in order to physically break it open!

All of this took time, however.

This was a crucial distinction for Master Quan. He never expected to be able to hold back the mechers for long. He just had to delay them for a few crucial moments in order to pull off his dangerous plan.

"Surrender your life so that a more deserving human can become a phase lord!"

"Never!..."

A huge amount of power erupted from this bizarre metal cage. An abnormally strong and weird space suppression field came online.

Ves was familiar with space suppressors, so he immediately felt that this one was considerably different than normal.

His body felt a lot heavier. His control over his body had also become a lot worse. Ves did not know what was going on. The sense of danger continued to increase as Master Quan continued to activate one extreme measure after another.

Ves needed to be more proactive!

If he did not break this situation straight away, the highly prepared Master Mech Designer would surely find a way to kill his target!

"Don't...underestimate...my...strength...!"

When Ves decided that it was no longer important to protect his dignity during a live broadcast, he let go of his restraint and tried to unfold his true body.

Phase lords were known for their physical prowess! Their resilience far exceeded almost any other life form.

If Ves wanted to overcome this crisis, it was essential for him to rely on his superior physique.

Just as he was about to unfold his true body right away, Ves experienced a wave of pain that ran across his entire form!

"What?!"

The oppressive field prevented Ves from unfolding his true body!

He could feel as if the existing spatial folds had been strengthened to the point where they became solid and permanent fixtures.

Though Ves could feel that he could break this temporary state as long as he exerted enough power, he was too weak at this time!

Master Quan smirked. "We already know your weakness! The bulk of your powerful physique shall remain locked as long as you have lost control over the space that occupies your form!"

Ves felt a lot more alarmed at this development! Though he was still a lot harder to kill in his current state, he became a lot more afraid of what other measures Master Quan prepared.

The man might be insane, but he was also a highly knowledgeable mech designer. Since he had chosen to go through with this radical measure, then he had to have taken Ves' vastly superior physical condition into account.

The only question was where Master Quan expected to gain all of the power needed to inflict fatal damage onto a phase lord.

Whatever actions the crazy cosmopolitan pulled off so far only isolated Ves for a brief amount of time.

The strange metal curtain was overloading its advanced and alien systems so hard that it already started to melt and fry from all of the excess load.

Suppressing a phase lord with such a small contraption was far harder than it looked!

Ves could already feel that the abnormal space suppression field had begun to weaken.

He became confident that he could forcefully unfold his true body just a couple of seconds later!

However, Master Quan knew this as well. The dangerous conspirator never intended to give Ves anymore time!

During the time that Ves and Master Quan became entangled with each other, the situation in the arena had changed drastically.

Alarms had begun to ring while many spectators only just started to realize that something had gone terribly wrong.

In the middle of Phoca Arena, the Dustweaver no longer fought against the Elite Fey Fianna. The battered mech abruptly began to overload and transform its systems in record time!

The mech pilot of the Fey Fianna grew confused, but suddenly received instructions to restrain the Dustweaver as quickly as possible!

Unfortunately, the drone mech was not able to respond in time.

It only took a few seconds for the Dustweaver to transform into a radically different machine!

It no longer looked as charming and proportionate as before. A large amount of parts had molded into the arms and the weapons of the Dustweaver.

Just as the arena's security system started to box the aberrant machine inside a cage of strong transphasic energy shields, the mutated Dustweaver abruptly threw out its transformed oscillator hammer!

W000000000000000M!

The energy shields did not break, but their formation got delayed long enough for the Dustweaver to lift and aim its radically upsized molecular disintegrator straight into the direction of the metal curtain!

Even though there were numerous other energy shields in the way, the machine did not seem to take them seriously!

Just before the overloading machine was about to open fire, all of its decay energy abruptly transformed into pure destruction energy!

The stability of this energy attribute was so poor that it accelerated the breakdown of the transformed Dustweaver!

The mech might not even last more than a second before it malfunctioned and broke down, but it didn't seem to matter because it was able to remain functional enough to pull the trigger.

KRHRAAAAAAAAAA!

An incredibly loud and indescribable noise exploded from the Dustweaver as it fired a destructive energy wave from its abnormal molecular disintegrator!

The extraordinarily powerful attack passed through all of the transphasic energy shields in the way as if they did not exist and struck the metal curtain in an instant!

"NOOOO!"

Chapter 5575 Unthinkable

When people attended the challenge matches on the day after the product reveal, they never expected trouble to occur.

Why would they?

Phoca Arena was the largest and most well-equipped mech arena on Bortele III. It had finished construction only a few months ago and made use of near-modern technologies.

Aside from the lack of hyper technology due to the unreliable nature of the tech and the relative scarcity of high-grade hyper materials at the time, the enormous facility was more than equipped enough to protect people from various dangers.

The Red Association also put a lot of effort into bolstering the security of the venue. Much of the surrounding blocks had been closed off from any form of traffic and intrusion.

The millions of people who attended the event on the first or second day had to subject themselves through rigorous and occasionally invasive tests.

Over a hundred first-class multipurpose mechs patrolled the entire site and the entire Bluejay Fleet constantly provided support from orbit.

Anyone who dared to launch an attack from a distance or tried to storm into Phoca Arena from any angle would doubtlessly get crushed by all of the abundant security measures!

However, as much as the mechers focused their attention on outside threats such as the launch of a city-killing laser superweapon or the surprise invasion of a powerful phase whale, they paid less attention to threats from within.

Ves and Master Xieliq Quan had been hovering high in the air besides one of the enormous transphasic energy shields that prevented the fighting within the arena ground from threatening the audience.

Both of them held this central and exposed position in order to increase their presence. After all, no mech designer wanted to be forgotten. They had to present themselves in order to make sure that people knew who had designed the machines that had managed to capture their hearts!

Neither mech designers should come to any harm. The mechers were not stupid and imposed high control over the entire arena. They carefully monitored everything that took place in every side and corner. Any observer that exhibited suspicious behavior of any kind would immediately receive a visit from a nearby patrol in order to verify that everything was in order.

Multiple highly transparent transphasic energy shields discreetly partitioned all of the seating blocks. Most people did not even realize that they had all been locked into their separate group cages, making it so that any explosive weapon or other dangerous measures would not be able to spill over and threaten other areas!

While the mechers had not pulled out all of the stops, they were so confident in their security measures that they failed to account for every possible angle on this crucial day.

They had made two grievous oversights.

First, they never expected that a 300-year old veteran Master Mech Designer turned out to be an enemy.

The old man had gone through the same stringent security checks as everyone else. In fact, the extreme quality and sophistication of his weird and self-developed augmentations even prompted the inspectors to call in additional experts to thoroughly verify that Master Quan did not try to smuggle in a hidden weapon of mass destruction or anything.

The fact that the old Master Mech Designer managed to make it through indicated that the mechers mistakenly saw no harm in his implants and genetically modified organs!

Of course, even if the mechers detected a few self-defensive measures that could pose a certain threat to people, they did not think that anything was amiss. Such surprises were common among the upper echelon.

The most important reason why the Red Association never considered Master Quan to be a threat was because it was unimaginable!

The renowned Master Mech Designer had made many contributions over the years. Despite his many setbacks and limitations, he managed to complete enough research and design enough mechs with added value to earn the status of a tier 5 galactic citizen.

This was just a single step before the more critical threshold of tier 4 where he would be able to talk with RA Master Mech Designers as equals!

If that was not enough, Master Quan also happened to be a long-time associate of the Mech Supremacist Faction.

"The mech supremacists vouch for him. He has contributed to many research projects over the years."

Much of the reason why he was able to access and experiment with so much alien and exotic technologies was because he regularly cooperated with numerous friends within the ranks of the Association.

When Masters tended to operate in the mech industry for such a long time, they inevitably became more entangled with the mech designers of the Association.

Naturally, the mechers never ceased to monitor and inspect Master Quan once in a while. They might not suspect that the old and revered second-rater held any subversive thoughts, but they at least had to make sure that the man had not been replaced by a clone or whatever.

Naturally, Master Quan passed all of these tests with flying colors. He even entered the Saint Kingdoms of numerous ace pilots over the years. This was one of the most difficult tests of all as ace pilots were sensitive to even the slightest hint of malice or ill will!

Yet despite the apparent depth of Master Quan's betrayal to the current human order, he never managed to trigger any suspicion!

The Cosmopolitan Movement had managed to stay afloat for multiple millenia. Its members spanned across all of human society and beyond. They managed to accumulate a lot of advanced human and alien technologies, and also became proficient at combining them together to produce all manner of exclusive hybrid inventions.

The cosmopolitans dedicated much of their research towards technologies that allowed them to remain hidden and unnoticed!

When they combined all of this tech with specially developed mental training programs, every qualified cosmopolitan gained the capability to circumvent all intuition-based detection measures and avoid drawing any excess suspicion onto themselves!

While it was possible for low-ranked cosmopolitans to betray their true allegiance due to flaws, an old and high-ranking cadre of the movement such as Master Quan would never show any vulnerabilities!

The mechers had erred in assuming that the long-time associate and meritorious contributor was on their side!

Not only did they fail to connect the dots concerning Master Quan's actual loyalties, the inspectors also made an erroneous judgment about the Dustweaver!

The mech designers responsible for inspecting the Dustweaver prior to the start of the challenge match never suspected any foul play.

They thoroughly inspected every nut and bolt of the machine. None of the components contained anything that looked incongruous or exceeded the limits of a quasi-first-class hero mech.

The only complication worth noting was that the inspectors did not fully understand all of the principles of the alien-derived tech used to make the molecular disintegrator.

Master Xieliq Quan always claimed that he had never been able to fully reverse engineer the alien tech that formed the central basis of his design philosophy. Around 20 percent of the alien components remained indecipherable.

If even the most knowledgeable and authoritative specialist in this alien tech did not understand all of these weird parts, then how could the inspectors and the remote first-class mech designers acting as consultants know any better?

All of these mechers had made a massive error in hindsight!

When the Dustweaver's weird and exotic mech parts shifted and reorganized themselves in a completely different configuration, the inspectors all made the horrible realization that they had missed the fact that the hero mech was actually an exotic killing machine!

Numerous mech designers could not imagine how Master Quan was able to design an exquisite mech that not only functioned like a powerful quasi-first-class transphasic hyper hero mech, but could also transform into a single-use superweapon!

"The entire mech has transformed into an upscaled hyper molecular disintegrator!"

Nothing was left of the original design! The Dustweaver had completely lost its identity as a mech in order to increase the power and other parameters of its supercharged molecular disintegrator as much as possible!

The bizarre contraption was unstable and already started to collapse as soon as it had taken shape. The reckless energies coursing through its system along with the extreme settings used to amplify the attack power of the transformed weapon meant that the Dustweaver was just a single step away from total collapse.

It didn't matter so long as it did its job!

Master Xieliq Quan had cleverly designed his explosive assassination tool to expend as much energy that it could possibly muster and release all of that excessive power through a single discharge of the molecular disintegrator!

The crackling noise that pierced into the ears of every spectator was a testament to the destructive output of this single-use superweapon.

The conventional form of the Dustweaver had already touched upon the limits of a first-class mech.

Transforming it into an alternate form and employing many special solutions to channel all of its power in a single overwhelming attack essentially enabled the Dustweaver to reach the performance of a true first-class mech for just a single instant!

What was important to note was that the lethality of the Dustweaver did not reach the level of a marginal first-class mech, but actually managed to rival the firepower of a medium or even high-tier machine!

"NOOOO!"

"Professor!"

The combined use of all of the alien, exotic and cosmopolitan-exclusive technologies resulted in an attack that broke everyone's cognition of what was possible.

The additional injection of lots of pure destruction energy transformed the nature of the molecular disintegrator discharge into an extraordinary attack wave that passed through all of the transphasic energy shields in the way as if they were nothing but air!

"How is that possible?!"

"Why do these traitors keep this tech for themselves? We could have armed many of our forces with shield-penetrating weapons if Master Quan took the initiative to share his proprietary tech."

No one could explain the exotic and indigenous technological principles that enabled the Dustweaver to launch such an insanely destructive attack.

Only the most hardcore nerds spared any attention towards the Dustweaver's amazing tech at this time.

The unstable contraption had already exploded and fallen apart after launching its final attack.

The nearby Elite Fey Fianna did not have the time to do anything to prevent the Dustweaver from completing its suicide mission!

As alarms continued to ring throughout the entire arena, everyone's attention rested on the two mech designers who previously got along as if they were friends!

"Is he... dead?"

"A conventional molecular disintegrator is already powerful enough to collapse 10 to 20 percent of the mass of a typical second-class mech. The one that just opened fire was at least an order of magnitude bigger and more powerful. There is no way that any human could survive a direct hit, especially when not a single energy shield had managed to do anything to stop and weaken the attack."

The first object to disintegrate and crumble into tiny particles was the strange metal curtain that isolated the target.

The metal sphere that was made out of Master Quan's transformed coat completely failed to withstand the destructive energies.

The second object to collapse was Master Quan's horrifying-looking body that had completely transformed and merged with his former coat!

A gleeful and fanatic smile adorned his face even as his skin and flesh had slowly begun to collapse.

The man seemed to possess the ability to resist the powerful molecular disintegration effect, but it only kept his body cells together long enough for him to see the results of his masterful plot.

His expression suddenly froze when he saw what had become of the Senior Mech Designer with a massive bounty on his head.

Instead of seeing the total disintegration of the first human phase lord, he saw that Professor Ves Larkinson had remained completely unharmed!

He and his gem cat shouldn't have been able to defend against the extremely destructive effect of the most powerful molecular disintegrator to exist.

Despair ran through Master Quan's volatile mind as he quickly saw the reason why Ves and Lucky managed to survive the assassination attempt unscathed.

The energy manifestation of a giant flaming cat had wrapped her form around the two in the final moment before the destructive energies had arrived!

"MIEW."

Chapter 5576 Lost Control

It took a long moment for people to realize what had happened.

The entire mech arena turned from a hive of activity into a silent chamber.

Everything froze from the moment the results of the bold and inventive assassination attempt became clear.

Millions of people sitting in the many seats of the mech arena became astonished as they beheld the arrival of an iconic existence.

Many more people who were watching the live broadcast in their homes or workplaces needed a few seconds more to realize what had happened.

"That... that is the cat of a god pilot!"

"Emma! I can recognize her anywhere! No human dares to steal her image. The only person who openly makes use of her is the Destroyer of Worlds!"

"Did she... did she travel to the Bortele System?"

There was a reason why the entire mech arena looked as if it was frozen in time.

The alarms that blared in everyone's ears just a moment ago had completely fallen silent.

The voices of all of the people who had previously expressed their shock at the rapid turn of events had all disappeared as every single individual had lost control over their bodies.

Even the security officers and all of the powerful first-class multipurpose mechs moving to rescue their principal had lost total control over themselves.

Nothing was allowed to move under the powerful and oppressive will that appeared from nowhere!

All of the people that had fallen under the control of a powerful god kingdom could do nothing else aside from breathing and thinking.

Every other action was prohibited by the overbearing will of a legendary god pilot!

Under these extraordinary circumstances, three notable individuals received special treatment.

"Meow..." Lucky felt an incredible degree of intimacy towards Emma.

In the face of the highly destructive attack launched by the transformed single-use hyper molecular disintegrator, the companion spirit of the Destroyer of Worlds easily neutralized the destructive attack without expending any significant effort.

An attack that was theoretically powerful enough to disintegrate the molecules of a lesser phase lord posed no threat against one of the living incarnations of the power of destruction!

Of all of the powerhouses operating in the Red Ocean, no one embodied the concept of destruction better than the Destroyer of Worlds!

She was a master of destruction and ruination. Her Ragnarok had broken more planets than any other god pilot in their lifetimes. The alien lives that perished at her hand could not be counted.

In the face of such supreme power, the inventive Dustweaver was like a toy.

"Meow..."

The care provided by Emma went beyond negating the attack. The supremely powerful companion spirit instantly got rid of all of the remnant energies and forces that debilitated Lucky's operation and enabled his archemetal body to initiate its restoration process without any hindrance.

"Emma..." Ves whispered.

As the primary object of protection, Ves immediately felt as if he was completely safe and secure.

Emma might look ferocious most of the time, but she was more than just an engine of destruction!

As an extension of a god pilot, Emma managed to destroy the exotic space suppression effect that interfered with Ves' body and cognition.

In fact, Emma did more than that.

Ves expressly recalled that when the treacherous cosmopolitan had systematically restricted his true body and hindered the operation of his personal energy shield generator and emergency teleporter, he had been thinking about entering the System Space.

No matter what, he hadn't run out of options!

It only took a small moment of thought to activate the current iteration of the Mech Designer System.

Even if he did not want to expose anything related to the System, he could have tried to borrow the power of one of his design spirits.

It might be difficult for him to draw on their power on short notice, but it might have been possible for him to loosen the restrictions or reduce the damage of the incoming super attack that he had sensed from a distance!

The weaker design spirits probably wouldn't be able to help him out, but there were numerous entities that had transitioned into true gods.

There was no way the Superior Mother would stand by and allow her son to die!

Gaia might also lend a hand to keep him alive.

If time was too short, then Ves had even been willing to squeeze his Jutland organ and release as much Worclaw energy as possible!

Ves had never done anything like it before. He could not predict what would happen other than the fact that the results would inevitably be explosive.

That did not sound so bad when he was trapped inside a bizarre metal sphere.

Breaking the metal curtain from within sounded like a much better option than just letting Master Quan have his way with Ves!

Yet before he could make up his mind and resort to one of these extreme measures, his mind blanked out for a short but crucial moment of time.

He only managed to realize what had happened when he noticed that Vulcan and Veronica still experienced the passage of time while he and Blinky temporarily lost total awareness!

It was as if Ves and his companion spirit temporarily entered into stasis.

Ves felt extremely uncomfortable about losing total control over himself. As he felt the oppressive god kingdom impose near-absolute control over him along with the rest of the mech arena, he felt more vulnerable than he had in years!

It was profoundly disturbing for him to realize that the Destroyer of Worlds completely had him at her mercy!

She could do nearly anything to him without giving him any chance to resist!

Ves used to believe that he had amassed a lot of strength.

The System, his design spirits, the Unending Regalia, the Oceancaller, his phase lord cultivation and even the Worclaw energy coursing through his true body all granted him the means to defy ordinary threats!

However, Ves discovered that when he fell into the palms of an all-powerful god pilot, none of these means made any difference.

Their hard power was simply too insufficient inside a god kingdom where the transcendent will of a powerful god-like entity reigned supreme!

At this moment, neither Ves, Blinky, Master Quan, the mechers or anyone else retained any agency.

The only individual that held all of the power was the Destroyer of Worlds!

"How... how could Her Holiness be here...?"

Master Quan's eyes shook with pure panic as his charred and half-broken throat barely managed to squeeze out a rasping voice.

From the moment Master Quan fell into the sphere of control of a god pilot, his body no longer belonged to him anymore.

Even though Master Mech Designers were much more powerful and capable of resisting these kinds of intrusions, the difference in strength was simply too much at this time!

Not only did the god kingdom deprive Master Quan of control over himself, it even halted the collapse of his body!

The god kingdom effortlessly destroyed the molecular disintegration effect and took other measures to stabilize Master Quan's unusual physical state.

The extraordinary domain field of a god pilot had deprived Master Quan the right to take his own life!

Utter despair and desolation filled his unhinged mind when the intelligent Master Mech Designer figured out what that meant.

"This is a catastrophe!"

If everything went according to plan, then Master Quan would have died and crumbled into dust particles.

He would leave nothing behind for the mechers to salvage!

Without any intact implants or an intact brain, it should have been impossible for the mechers to extract all of the hidden secrets and memories related to the Indigo Cell and the Cosmopolitan Movement.

The problem was that this did not happen!

"Kill me!" He gurgled from his deformed and misshapen mouth. "End my suffering..."

There was no way the Destroyer of Worlds would ever oblige to his request.

The exposure and capture of a high-ranked cosmopolitan and traitor was an exceedingly rare and valuable accomplishment!

Time after time, the cosmopolitans had embedded themselves into the core power structure of major human organizations. They continually spread their rot from within and deceived many earnest humans into embracing their virulent ideology!

Even if cosmopolitans got caught from time to time, the captives usually knew far too little due to their lack of seniority.

The cosmopolitans were one of the masters of information control!

They understood the importance of secrecy better than any other organization!

This may be the first time where a high-ranked cosmopolitan not only exposed himself by engaging in a risky action, but also managed to get caught alive!

The intelligence value from such a captive was astronomical!

When the giant figure of Emma stared directly at Master Quan's warped and frozen body, she grinned.

A few more seconds passed before many people steadily regained control over their bodies.

The god kingdom still remained active, but it no longer pressed down onto people as if they had been completely subjugated.

"She's here!"

No one noticed the arrival of the Ragnarok. The large and bulky god mech had appeared in the exact center of the mech arena. It occupied an open position that no one was able to ignore!

"Your Holiness!"

Now that millions of people were able to move again, they immediately bowed their heads and lowered themselves to their knees whenever possible.

Few if any of these spectators were Rubarthans, but that was not relevant. Every human felt compelled to show their utter respect and obeisance towards one of the eight supreme protectors of their fragile civilization!

This was the respect that every human owed to their god pilots!

No one became more affected by the appearance of the Ragnarok than Ves!

The god mech was not in combat mode, so it did not look so threatening at the moment.

Nonetheless, it was one of the physical forms of the Divine Irene Mox, so this was the first time that Ves directly met with one of his past Mastery experience hosts!

Though Ves had already managed to enter into an accord with General Axelar Streon, this reunion was much more stressful to him because the power difference was much greater this time!

He had been able to play to Axelar's overwhelming desire to trigger his ultimate apotheosis and become the latest god pilot to grace the human race.

The same approach would not work this time! The Destroyer of Worlds had already realized her greatest desire. She had become more powerful than nearly every other human alive and had reached the top of human society.

How could Ves ever hold any leverage towards this overpowering being?

The Destroyer of Worlds could completely disregard the wishes of the Red Association and squash his true body into mulch if she desired!

"Miew." Emma uttered in a more reassuring manner.

Ves' expression darkened. He definitely sensed that Irene was able to pick up on his fears and distress.

It was impossible for him to keep his thoughts hidden when he was completely in her grasp!

The only consolation was that he only sensed goodwill from Emma and the Destroyer of Worlds.

Ves was just being paranoid.

In any case, the crisis had passed. Nothing could possibly threaten his life now that an actual god mech had made an appearance.

The god kingdom of the Destroyer of Worlds was too large and powerful. It not only encompassed Phoca Arena, but also spread its reach across the rest of the capital city of Bortele III!

Fortunately, the Destroyer of Worlds restrained her search in order to minimize disruptions. It wouldn't cause mechs to crash or people to botch their work assignments.

The god pilot could extend her god kingdom even further if she wished, but that was too excessive.

It was enough for the Destroyer of Worlds to detect any accomplices or other would-be assassins lurking in the vicinity!

After Divine Irene Mox quietly transmitted a list of suspicious individuals to the mechers, her god mech no longer remained in view.

"The Ragnarok is gone!"

Ves, Lucky and Master Quan had disappeared from sight as well!

Chapter 5577 Power Difference

The challenge matches had come to an abrupt end!

A day after Professor Ves Larkinson revealed his latest and most ostentatious commercial products, few people could have imagined that anyone would actually dare to assassinate such a rising star.

The identity of the assassin shocked the public even more!

Nobody could remain calm when they learned about this disturbing incident.

"How can an honored Master Mech Designer go so far astray?"

"When did he become a cosmopolitan? It would be outrageous if he always turned out to be a traitor from the beginning! How many more sleeper agents have proliferated throughout our society?"

"I never realized that Master Quan held cosmopolitan sympathies in the past. I collaborated with him on so many projects that I was convinced that he was a sincere mech designer. He has managed to fool all of us! If he did not expose his treachery today, he would have been able to do more damage while he operated in our society unchecked!"

Not everyone paid attention to the Fey Fianna's high profile product reveal, but that had changed from the moment the news had spread.

Even the snobbish first-raters had been forced to pay attention to this incident!

The importance of Ves and the unthinkable betrayal of a 300 -year old Master Mech Designer were already enough to attract their attention, but it was the identity of the savior that truly made them care about what had happened!

"The Destroyer of Worlds has reappeared."

"Every god pilot has already returned from the core regions of the Red Ocean. I know for a fact that the Fist of Defiance has shown up in Bridgehead One."

"Why did such a powerful Rubarthan god pilot decide to visit an insignificant second-class port system of all places? There are many more vital strategic locations that urgently require her protection. The Spacelock cannot cover the frontlines of the Rubarthan Pact by himself. Why did she make a detour to the Red Ocean Union?"

"Isn't the answer to those questions obvious? She definitely took a special trip to see Professor Larkinson! I heard a rumor that the quirky professor has developed a deep friendship with the Rubarthan god pilot."

"How? The two should have nothing in common with each other! They belong to two completely different worlds."

"I don't know either, but if I had to make a guess, it is probably their shared love for cats that has brought them together. The Larkinsons are crazy for cats, and the Destroyer of Worlds also has a soft spot for felines. Maybe they intend to start an association for cat lovers..."

Rumors continued to circulate throughout red humanity. God pilots were eminent heroes that few people ever had the pleasure to meet in person.

The people who attended the challenge matches on that fateful day felt extremely lucky to be able to experience a fraction of the power of the Destroyer of Worlds!

This was an honor that they would cherish for the rest of their lives.

Yet none of this could come close to receiving the personal care and attention of such a powerful figure!

More and more people wondered why the Destroyer of Worlds sought the tier 3 galactic citizen out and what exactly brought them together.

Only a few people knew where Ves and the god pilot had disappeared to. Inside a secret stronghold that was buried underneath the surface of the Bortele III, Ves sat down on a plain metal chair while inspecting Lucky's damaged condition.

"Meowww..."

The gem cat had suffered a lot of damage after getting struck by Master Quan's inexplicable lightning strike.

While the properties of this attack were not comparable to tribulation lightning, it still managed to exceed the defensive parameters of a gem cat that had upgraded his body many times!

Ves never imagined that such a surprise attack would be able to inflict significant damage to Lucky's archemetal construction.

After all, archetech happened to be particularly strong at controlling electric energy!

"Are you fine? Will you be able to recover your systems, or do you need any manual repairs?"

"Meow meow..."

"Ah, so you just need a lot of extra food. Got it. I'll ask the mechers if they can fix up a bowl of high-grade exotics."

Before he could make his request, two new beings had abruptly appeared in the middle of the empty metal chamber.

"Meow...!"

"Miew."

Both Ves and Lucky shrank as they came into close proximity with the most powerful transcendents in the Red Ocean!

No one who had witnessed the assaults on the so-called Tide Stations could ever think that the god pilots were weak!

The broadcasts at the time had done a good job at conveying a fraction of the immense power that the god pilots had at their disposal.

Yet those remote recordings could never match the sheer power that made up the ruinous willpower that formed the basis of a god pilot!

The Destroyer of Worlds far exceeded the likes of the Mace of Retaliation or General Axelar Streon. No ace pilot could ever pose a serious threat against a genuine god pilot that had managed to survive the ultimate test.

Ves found it difficult to maintain his composure in the face of so much pressure. His Spirituality actually started to suffer damage as the close proximity to the Destroyer of World's harmful willpower became intolerable.

He had a hunch that the god pilot could crumble the minds, bodies and spiritualities of every human on Bortele III if she wished!

It wasn't even necessary for her to open fire with the fearsome main cannon of the Ragnarok. Her god kingdom alone was enough to destroy the lives of anyone who wasn't strong enough to resist her overbearing willpower!

Suddenly, the pressure receded.

Though the Destroyer of Worlds still retained an undeniably strong presence, Ves no longer had the illusion that he was just a few steps away from bathing in the heart of a nuclear explosion.

"Miew."

Emma leisurely flew forward and stopped in front of Lucky.

Though the legendary manifestation of Irene Mox's power had shrunk her size by an enormous extent, she still remained as large as a tiger.

The Herald of Destruction was much scarier than a typical big cat!

Lucky's damaged body shook as he completely felt that he was outclassed this time.

"Meowww..."

"Miew miew miew."

Emma disregarded Lucky's fright and flew forward until she managed to pull the hapless gem cat in her grasp!

The most powerful companion spirit that was currently in existence behaved no different from a tiger mom giving her cub a bath. Her flaming hot tongue began to lick Lucky's metallic body without any care!

"Meow! Meow! Meow!"

It was a pity that Ves completely ignored Lucky's distress. From the moment he locked eyes with one of his past Mastery experience hosts, he felt as if he got caught with his hand in the cookie jar.

There was no compelling reason why he should feel guilty in her presence. He had done her a massive favor over 2 centuries and indirectly gave her the conditions to advance all the way to her eminent rank.

Still, Ves felt more and more uneasy as he continued to face those bright and burning orbs that were currently casting judgment at him. The huge gap in power made him feel utterly helpless and at the Destroyer of World's mercy.

"Calm yourself, boy. I owe you a debt of gratitude. I have not forgotten about all you have done for me and humanity as a whole."

The voice of a god pilot in close proximity was much stronger and more all-encompassing than that of any peak ace pilot.

Even though Ves had been prepared for this, his mind still blanked out for a time when that overpowering voice filled up his entire mind!

Divine Irene Mox looked familiar to Ves. God pilots were beings who were predominantly made up of pure willpower, so their human forms were mostly constructs that they could completely mold according to their own desires.

The female god pilot purposely retained an appearance that resembled how she looked when she first gained her companion spirit.

It evoked a lot of nostalgia from Ves.

The only major difference was that the Destroyer of Worlds wore a specially designed outfit that consisted of an elaborate Rubarthan military uniform, complete with medals and other symbols.

An extravagantly long and flowing red cape that bore her personal emblem flowed from her back.

He could stare at Divine Irene all day.

Ves shook his head in order to keep himself sharp. He could not afford to collapse to his knees and worship the Destroyer of Worlds as a god like all of those other weak-willed individuals!

"So... you have finally come." He lamely said.

The god pilot smiled back at Ves.

"It has been over two centuries since we last came so close to each other again." The god pilot spoke as she did a better job at controlling her presence this time. "Is that all you can say?"

"Eh, you didn't exactly schedule a meeting in advance! How am I supposed to know that you would come straight to me after you have returned from alien space? Don't you have more important things to do over at the Rubarthan Pact?"

The Destroyer of Worlds scoffed in a very human fashion. "This reunion is more important. The Rubarthan Pact will not collapse in the short term. Camden is enough to deter the most powerful alien forces from launching an offensive."

Unlike the Terran Alliance, the Rubarthan Pact just happened to benefit from the protection of two god pilots.

This put the latter first-rate colonial superstate in a much more secure position!

Even though the presence of two god pilots also caused the political divide in the Rubarthan Pact to worsen, this was a trivial price to pay in order to obtain greater protection!

The god pilot stepped closer. "You are... familiar, but also different. You have experienced many changes since you first visited two centuries ago. How long has it been since you have crossed the chasm of time?"

There was no way that Ves could lie when he was in the heart of Irene's god kingdom!

Ves shrugged. "Around a year. I have grown a lot since that time."

"The Red Ocean has gone through enormous change in the last year." Irene affirmed.

Now that he had essentially confirmed that the Rubarthan god pilot did not come in order to take revenge or anything, Ves started to relax.

It was impossible for him to truly let down his guard in the presence of an absurdly strong powerhouse, but he figured that he was safe for the time being.

Since the Destroyer of Worlds wished to hold a conversation with Ves, he might as well relax and go with the flow.

"Can I ask you a question?"

"Speak."

"You clearly did not arrive at Phoca Arena at the final minute. You had to have arrived in advance, right?"

The god pilot wordlessly nodded. This was an easy guess to make.

"You arrived on Bortele III early but deliberately hid your presence." Ves explained his thoughts.

"Almost no one knew you were present. That enabled you to be in the exact right position to intervene when Master Quan revealed his true intentions. Was this all a trap?"

"Yes." Irene confirmed without any hesitation or obfuscation. "We knew that there was a high likelihood that people with malicious intentions would act against you. It could be a phase whale. It could be a hidden alien infiltration force. It could even be an opportunistic human traitor. I hid in order to draw out these threats. The results exceeded my expectations."

While that sounded nice, Ves felt anything but good at the moment!

His expression darkened when he realized the greater plot behind this incident.

"You used me as bait. You cast me out in an attempt to entice enemies such as Master Quan into action!"

"It worked. You were never under threat, Larkinson. No one can lay a hair on you while you are under my protection. This is absolute."

Ves was not as confident as Irene about this. God pilots might be the most powerful true gods that he knew of, but no one was infallible!

A lot of stuff could have gone wrong earlier. Ves never wanted to put his life in the hands of others like this again!

Chapter 5578 True Friends

After exchanging a few words with one of the most powerful warrior gods in the Red Ocean, Ves calmed down from his initial state of fear and apprehension.

He had never come so close to a god pilot before.

Ves was no stranger to True Gods. He breathed life into Gaia and the Superior Mother. Veronica talked with Cynthia Larkinson on a regular basis. He met and talked with two incredibly knowledgeable Star Designer fairly recently.

Hardly anyone outside attendants and direct subordinates had so much frequent contact with post-divinity entities!

The vast majority of people never even resided in the same star system as one of these eminent figures, let alone catch their personal attention!

Ves had truly managed to climb from obscurity and established several cooperative relationships with the top powerhouses of both galaxies.

Yet for all of these accomplishments, Ves never deluded himself into thinking he had become any of their equals.

He learned more than enough about True Gods to realize that there was a huge world of difference between pre-divinity and post-divinity entities.

The former could always get squashed by the latter!

Even the weak and deficient Gaia was able to leverage her transcendent qualities into building up a rapidly expanding power base among the cults that worshiped Old Earth!

None of these figures were easy to deal with. They all had their own goals, and their expansive power and influence granted them a much greater chance at accomplishing their objectives than others!

That made them far scarier than other people. Even peak ace pilots and highly accomplished Master Mech Designers had to bow their heads due to the restraint imposed by society.

God pilots were different because their personal power had become so exceedingly high that they could break any opposition with violence or just the threat of it! They were so imposing that people would already take the initiative to surrender to them just because they were so awesome!

Ves was already experiencing this up close. His high spiritual sensitivity had become a burden rather than a boon at this time.

He possessed a much more comprehensive understanding of the difference between himself and Divine Irene Mox. The gap was so immense that a part of him already felt it was futile for him to catch up with such an impossible powerhouse.

The Destroyer of Worlds was not just a god pilot.

She was a god pilot with a companion spirit!

This not only granted her additional powers or capabilities, but essentially gave her another life!

A god pilot and a god mech combination could basically be treated as a merger between two True Gods.

Adding a companion spirit on top of that turned the Destroyer of Worlds into a fusion between three True Gods!

If Ves's suspicions were correct, then the Destroyer of Worlds was probably the most powerful god pilot among her peers in the Red Ocean!

The only god pilot that might be able to challenge her dominance was the First Flame. The man was 600 years old and had been piloting mechs long before they had begun to define an entire age!

Though his biography did not mention anything of the sort, Ves was convinced that Divine Harald Genoa had to be a former member of the Five Scrolls Compact!

Given his elemental proclivities, he had to have been in touch with the Fire Scroll once upon a time.

His extreme age and his extraordinary background gave him the capital to rank at the top of the power ranking.

Perhaps the Destroyer of Worlds did not live long enough to accumulate her power over time, but the existence of her companion spirit had doubtlessly increased her future potential by a huge extent!

How could Ves possibly maintain his composure in the presence of such a top figure?

It was only because Irene presented herself in a similar fashion to how she used to be back when she was just a humble second-class expert pilot that Ves was able to speak with her in a more normal fashion.

Even though only a year had passed since Ves completed his last Mastery experience, so much had happened to him during this period that his memories of his latest time jaunt had faded to the back of his mind.

It took a considerable amount of effort for him to dredge up the memories of his interactions with Irene Mox.

"You have come a long way." He said with a complex tone in his voice. "You've traded your Iron Hedgehog for the Ragnarok, which you have turned into your second body. How does that work, exactly? Is your machine made of the same solid matter as it had originally been built, or did you convert it into energy, thereby turning you into a complete energy-based life form?"

An amused smile appeared on her face. Irene's mood was easy to sense given that her god kingdom clearly broadcasted all of her emotions in the open!

"So this is who you truly are. It is much more interesting to know the person behind the disembodied voice. Let me make you feel more comfortable."

The entire chamber changed into a completely different setting all of a sudden.

Ves only felt the god kingdom flare in power before it physically generated an observation compartment that was situated aboard a Rubarthan starship!

The air, the deck, the bulkheads along with the lounge-like interior looked and felt completely authentic.

However, Ves still understood that this entire setting was false. For one, the view through the transparent window displayed a top-down perspective of the Red Ocean Dwarf Galaxy!

This was an impossible sight as a starship would have to travel tens of thousands of light-years away in order to produce such a magnificent vista!

The plain metal chair where Ves rested before had transformed into a soft and luxurious cushioned contraption.

It even started to massage his back in an attempt to relieve the tension in his body!

Unfortunately, his phase lord physique rendered this practically useless. He shut down the setting and waited for the Destroyer of Worlds to settle down in her own seat that had appeared next to the expansive window.

The god pilot did not speak up. Instead, her burning orbs continued to stare at Ves as if she had encountered an interesting toy!

"Meow..."

"Miew."

In the meantime, the two cats had settled down to an extent. Lucky objected to being treated as a kitten, but Emma was too big and strong for him to resist.

The gem cat had eventually decided to give up and allow the supremely powerful companion spirit to give him a bath!

Emma was not doing this for nothing. Somehow, her licks not only soothed the damaged cat's pain, but also sped up his repairs to an extent!

When Ves noticed this effect, he grew even more intrigued about Emma's properties.

"Your Holiness..."

"Call me Irene." The Destroyer of Worlds. "No titles. No honorifics. I tire of formality. I am not as stiff and obsessed with status and etiquette as the Spacelock. I have too few people who I regard as my true friends. I do not want you to abide by the social structure that separates us from each other. Do not be afraid. I know you have secrets. I will not insist that you share them with me. However you managed to travel back in time and intervene with my life, your answers are of no consequence."

She truly sounded sincere about wanting to form an equal relationship with Ves. He could feel the yearning and sincerity in her overpowering aura. God pilots disdained lies. As the most honorable warriors in existence, their words always reflected their deepest and most honest desires!

That reassured Ves a lot. He became so taken by her offer of friendship that he made an impulsive decision.

"I do not mind explaining to you how I am able to travel back in time." Ves said. "Since this environment is completely under your control, I don't have to be afraid that others might eavesdrop on our conversation. I can tell you outright that my power is derived from a fragment of the Metal Scroll."

"I suspected as much." Irene did not sound surprised. "Your relationship with the Polymath is... unusual. The New Rubarth Empire's secret archives have recorded a large amount of information about the Five Scrolls Compact and the powers ascribed to the Metal Scroll. I do not know how accurate the records are, but there are many gaps that have made it difficult for anyone to gain a clearer understanding of what went on during those times. It is troubling to confirm that your relic enables you to travel back in time. It makes me wonder who else has made use of the same power?"

That immediately made Ves feel uncomfortable. The timeline of human civilization clearly wasn't as simple and one-directional as he thought. The Metal Scroll was able to bring him to the past and enable him to make real changes that would permanently induce changes that affected the present time!

The miraculous rise of the Destroyer of Worlds and his meeting with the powerful god pilot was a direct consequence of his last attempt to meddle with the past!

Who else traveled back in time to enact changes, and how often did this happen?

Had any time travelers attempted to intervene with Ves' life directly or indirectly?

None of these questions offered him any reassurance!

"Calm yourself, Ves. No one will threaten you while you are under my protection. I will not allow anyone to torment a friend of mine. Let us leave the matter of time travel for another time. It is clear that you are unable to supply any meaningful answers on this subject. You are a user, not a mastermind."

The topic clearly concerned the Destroyer of Worlds a lot. It was not difficult to imagine why. She was right that Ves could not offer any useful answers, though. It made him feel useless.

An awkward silence ensued. Ves had been caught off-balance ever since the Destroyer of Worlds first appeared. He had yet to regain his composure and constantly found himself flat-footed.

This was not good. A meeting with a god pilot was a rare opportunity to get in touch with a top powerhouse. Ves would never forgive himself if he squandered his chance to form a genuine friendship with the Destroyer of Worlds!

He struggled to think about what they could talk about. They were people who belonged to completely different generations.

To Ves, he last spoke to her only a little over a year ago. Much may have happened, but if he were to meet with Irene again, he should have expected her to appear as an up-and-coming expert pilot.

Seeing her appear so soon yet also wielding the strength of god pilot was jarring to say the least!

Irene did not see a problem with this meeting, though.

"You made me, Ves. I owe my life, my strength as a god pilot and the companionship of Emma to you. Without your intervention, our race would not have gained a god pilot. Nobody around me has truly understood how many years I have spent while thinking about you and why you appeared that day. Everyone always believed that I am solely responsible for developing my talents and breaking so many limits. I always wanted to correct them, but they simply did not believe me. I will not deny the truth now that I have reunited with you again."

"That sounds like a major burden. It must have weighed heavily on your shoulders all of these years."

The god pilot responded with a genuine smile. "I am happy today. I have finally met the only person in the Red Ocean who knows where I truly came from. You are my creator. As far as I am concerned, I am your greatest work. None of your mech designs have contributed to our civilization as much as setting me up for ultimate success. My friendship is only the least of what you deserve for everything that you have done."

Chapter 5579 No Distinction

Referring to the Destroyer of Worlds as Irene rather than her cumbersome and intimidating title did much to dispel the awkwardness in the air.

The illusionary observation compartment provided a soothing and calming environment. Though Ves could still feel the power of Irene's god kingdom, her control over her power was pretty good.

He figured that this compartment was probably one of her favorite places to relax and decompress.

"You must be really busy all of the time. Everyone must be clamoring for your help and protection. I am sure you are capable of fulfilling your duties, but it must be tiring for you to work and fight all of the time without spending time on other activities. Is it difficult for you to cling to your humanity?"

This was a rather invasive question, but Irene had done much to convince him that he could treat her as an equal.

Even though both of them knew that it was impossible for Ves to speak with her on the same level, he had improved considerably compared to how he was before.

Irene continued to sit beside the window and stared out into the distant view of the Red Ocean from above.

The galaxy appeared small and unthreatening from this distance. Its red nebulas and its many twinkling stars made it look picturesque.

It was only when people actually resided among these stars that they experienced the many dangers of living in this divided and contentious dwarf galaxy!

"I am not able to give you a straightforward answer." Irene replied in a softer and more controlled tone than before. "No one aside from my fellow god pilots understands what we have become. On one hand, we are more human than ever, far surpassing those Star Designers that have turned their knowledge into the core of their existences. I cannot share too much about this, but I consider myself to be more human than ever. My willpower is human from its root. That hasn't changed after I have strengthened and amplified it to an enormous extent. Out of all the humans that have reached this stage, I believe that god pilots have become the most ideal form of human."

That meant that Irene considered Star Designers and the True Gods of the Five Scrolls Compact to be a lot more inhuman.

This was a valuable insight. Irene might not be as smart as the Star Designers, but she possessed her own profound perspectives on various subjects. Her understanding and views could shed a lot of light on topics that Ves had always wondered about!

"What about your god mech? Is it... alive, and does it consider itself to be a human?"

Irene smirked and glanced in his direction. "I knew you couldn't resist. It is not surprising for you to wonder about this considering the kind of mechs that you have designed. The answer is... complex and touches upon one of the core secrets of god pilots. All I can say is that every god mech initially starts as a collaborative work between 5 top mech designers who are usually Star Designers. Each of them are brilliant in their own right, but when all of them join forces to create a single machine that surpasses all of their individual efforts, a miracle may be born."

The Ragnarok was a powerful machine beyond comparison. Its ranged offensive power was unmatched among all god mechs. None of the other too known god mechs possessed the capability to unleash so much planet-wide destruction after launching just a single fully-powered shot!

"So every god mech has developed an independent life because that is part of the characteristics of a grand work?" Ves guessed.

"You can understand it as such. It varies from mech or mech. I have seen many ace mechs that have possessed a stronger spark of life, but never really amounted to anything more because their ace pilots are unable to make the jump. Each machine of this level will become shaped by the willpower of their pilots. If any of them consciously wants to strengthen the life of their mechs, then they can do so. It is just that few ever held this desire. Living mechs did not really exist as a separate concept before you came along."

Ves nodded in understanding. The only notable pilot that matched this description was General Axelar Streon, and he was clearly an outlier.

"You haven't answered my question. When you merged with your god mech, did the two of you fuse into a single composite entity, or maintained your separate personalities while occupying the same 'body'?"

Irene shook her head. Of all of the questions an eager mech designer could ask of her, Ves fixated on this topic the most.

"What is the fourth step of the Mech Body Merger Process?"

"Total union. The mech and mech pilot have already reached an advanced stage of fusion at this point. The mech pilot only needs to shed the remaining vestiges of his mortality, whatever that actually means, in order to fuse the remaining parts of himself with his machine."

"The fourth phase is called total union for good reasons. Everything must become one. Body, mind, spirit and will must all be formed into a single pool that signifies the existence of a god pilot who is also a god mech. Do you understand now, Ves?"

Her answer caused Ves to frown. She was undoubtedly right about this step, but it sounded very disconcerting to him. It was not the ideal outcome that he imagined when he became serious about living mechs.

"I... understand. If I am getting this right, the line that separates you from the Ragnarok has disappeared entirely. It is not possible anymore to distinguish where the pilot ends and the mech begins. It is meaningless to make this distinction as the pilot is also the mech and vice versa."

"Correct." Irene nodded in satisfaction. "If you think about it, you are not just addressing myself as a god pilot, but also the Ragnarok as a god mech. I am both a human and a machine at the same

time. I have become so much more than the sum of those two parts. I truly cannot describe to you how much different I have become because only my fellow god pilots are able to experience this special state of life. What life the Ragnarok used to possess has become a part of me. Neither of us consider this to be bad. The Ragnarok did not lose its personality, and I have not lost my humanity. Both of them continue to live on inside my very being. It is just that my personality as a human is stronger, so that has remained the most noticeable to the outside cosmos."

This had major implications for the future of his living mechs.

For example, if General Axelar Streon was able to fulfill his greatest ambition and trigger his ultimate advancement, he would completely absorb the Ouroboros and everything that made it alive.

While the fusion granted the resulting amalgamation between the two a titanic power boost, both of them had lost the ability to maintain their own separate existences!

Separation was both unthinkable and impossible.

In this regard, a living mech had to be willing to make a sacrifice and allow itself to permanently lose the ability to live a separate existence from its mech pilot.

This was a heavy price for certain living mechs as well as mech pilots.

Ves was not unfamiliar with these permanent bonds. The Carmine System actually shared a few common traits with the Mech Body Merger Process, but the permanent bond fell short of fusing the two parties together.

The answers provided by Irene gave Ves a more specific direction for improvement. For example, he could purposefully develop upgrades to the Carmine System that sought to merge the personalities of the mech and mech pilots a lot sooner!

This would allow a living mech to experience what it was like to be a human. It would also enable the mech pilot to gain a much more comprehensive understanding of his mech!

Of course, now was not the time to delve too deeply in these kinds of ideas.

"Do you think that living mechs will bestow any advantages to ace pilots looking to advance to the next rank?"

"I cannot say." Irene shrugged her shoulders in a very human fashion. "I have never piloted one of your living mechs, so I do not exactly know what will happen if they fuse with their pilots and turn into god mechs."

"Wait." Ves suddenly paused. "Is it possible for you to pilot other mechs as a god pilot!? Can you pilot other god mechs?"

What an incredibly banal question!

God pilots were already paired with the ultimate mechs that had been designed and built with their characteristics in mind. There were no other mechs that can serve them better than their own god mechs!

Irene directed a slightly more intensive stare at Ves. The power of her irritation was so strong that Ves experienced a painful sting to his Spirituality!

"Enough with these silly questions. I may have told you to treat me as a friend, but my patience is not limitless." Irene rebuked Ves. "Let us talk about matters of substance. I originally wanted to wait until you had settled your nerves, but now I think it is better to direct your attention to more important purposes."

Ves agreed with her sentiment. He was not one for small talk at the moment. Too much had happened for him to return to a state of calm. The failed assassination attempt made it impossible for him to relax for the being.

"Let's talk about what happened earlier. I understand now that the Red Association used my product reveal to lay a trap. Were you involved in it from the beginning, or did you just agree to help when you arrived and noticed what the mechers were doing?"

Irene smiled. "The latter. The mechers originally stationed one of their ace pilots at Phoca Arena, but I can do a much better job at protecting you from danger. I hope you understand why we did not inform you of our plan. The surprise must be total in order to attract enemies who are highly cautious and observant."

"I see. May I ask what has happened to Master Xieliq Quan now that he has fallen into the hands of the mechers?"

"I care little for what the mechers will do with him. I can imagine that they will utilize all of the tech and more special measures to steal all of the confidential information related to the Cosmopolitan Movement. I can tell you that a captive as high-ranked as him is a massive prize to the Association. The mechers harbor so much hatred against the cosmopolitans because they are so slippery. If they are able to use Master Quan to collapse an entire cell, then that will earn me a few more useful favors."

Ves picked up a certain subtext behind her words. He narrowed his eyes and looked around. This was a useless gesture as there was no way the mechers could possibly eavesdrop a conversation involving a god pilot.

"Forgive me for asking me this, but... are the Terrans and Rubarthans as opposed to the cosmopolitans as the mechers and the fleeters?"

The female god pilot directed a distinctly subtle look at Ves.

"That is a good question. It is also a dangerous one. You are not ready to get involved in matters of this level. No matter what sort of accomplishments you have made, you are only a Senior Mech Designer for the time being. You need to grow up more. What I can say to you is that my personal stance is that the cosmopolitans are better off dead. They have become so greedy for your bounty that they will persistently threaten your life in the years to come. This is an intolerable affront. If not for the fact that the cosmopolitans are so difficult to track down, I would have set out and crushed each and everyone of them with my Ragnarok after they dared to claim your life. No one is allowed to threaten my friend!"

Chapter 5580 Divergent Paths

Ves did not feel so good at the moment.

Though Irene had not given him a clear answer, he was smart enough to read between the lines.

He essentially received confirmation that the Terrans and the Rubarthans definitely provided support to the Cosmopolitan Movement. They may have cooperated with each other in secret as well!

It made a lot of sense. The current hegemony of humanity was the mechs and the fleeters.

Since the Age of Mechs, the Big Two stripped the Greater Terran United Confederation and the New Rubarth Empire of much of their military power and sovereignty.

How could the first-rate superstates possibly bear the indignity of being reduced to this point?!

The enemy of my enemy is my friend.

With this universal adage in mind, the first-rate superstates and the Cosmopolitan Movement had many reasons to cooperate with each other. None of them were strong enough to threaten the dominance of the Big Two in isolation, but together they might be able to make a more substantial difference!

Perhaps the covert support of the Terrans and the Rubarthans was one of the principal reasons why the Cosmopolitan Movement had never been eradicated during the Age of Mechs.

The cosmopolitans remained so strong and numerous that they indirectly triggered the Great Severing!

Ves wondered what the Terran and Rubarthan leaders thought about that outcome. Did they agree with this initiative, or did the cosmopolitans take them all by surprise, and not in a good way?

He turned his attention to the god pilot again. He picked up another clue that attracted his interest. His strategy in dealing with her might change substantially depending on her answer.

"What is your relationship with the Rubarthans, exactly?" He asked. "From what I have read from your biography, you were originally born as a citizen of the Quillim Principality. The Rubarthans eventually assimilated you into their ranks when you demonstrated your strength and talent. They must have given you a lot of help for you to agree to become their guardian. How is your relationship with the Rubarthans these days?"

The powerful woman let out a sigh. "Among the guardians of the New Rubarth Empire, I can be considered as one of the less committed ones. I am not a native of the first-rate superstate. While it has successfully earned my loyalty, I am not a die-hard supporter like the Spacelock. I originally wasn't supposed to be here. I originally ventured to the Red Ocean because I wanted to seek you out. I do not mind that I am trapped on this side of the greater beyond gate. I am much more needed here than back in the Milky Way."

"Do you accept instructions from the Rubarthan Pact, or are you the one that is issuing the orders these days?"

"I had a contract with the New Rubarthan Empire." Irene responded. "I would fight for the Rubarthans in exchange for gaining access to the services of the Star Designers and other rewards. It's not important nowadays as I can get what I want from other places, but I am still grateful to the Rubarthans for supporting me for so long. I particularly have a great amount of respect towards the Star Emperor. He is... a visionary and a great leader. It is regrettable that he was born at the wrong time."

Ves constantly had to remind himself that Irene was a top figure of human civilization. It shouldn't be surprising that she was on friendly terms with the sovereign of the New Rubarth Empire!

"Times have changed, though." He said. "We are cut off from the old galaxy. Not even the Star Emperor can cross the divide between the galaxies. Now that the Rubarthan Pact must stand on its own, what is your relationship to the people under your protection?"

An open look of contempt appeared on her face. "I care little for the politicking that has erupted after the Great Severing. The Rubarthans have the potential to be great when they are led by the Star Emperor. They can also become terrible when this leadership has become absent. There is nobody among the people who are currently jockeying for power in the Rubarthan Pact that has earned my recognition. This is one of the Star Emperor's greatest flaws. None of his sons and daughters have ever come close to matching his qualities."

Ves was sure that a lot of Rubarthans would become devastated if they heard Irene's true opinion towards them! She did not exhibit any restraint at all in front of the man she considered to be her friend!

"Don't you have a good relationship with the Inferno Spear Prince? He is currently one of the strongest contestants in the struggle for power within the Pact."

Irene crossed her arms and snorted in a contemptuous manner. "Is that what you think? The Inferno Spear Prince is a decent Rubarthan. He is willing to work hard to transform himself and has not slackened off at all despite all of the temptations in his life. However, that does not change the reality that he is a pampered prince who has never experienced the true struggle of a mech pilot who was put in a much more helpless situation. His high birth is holding him back from embarking on the road of no return. If he had the conviction to stare death in the face, then he wouldn't have remained stuck at this junction."

Wow. That sounded really harsh.

"Not everyone is cut out to become a god pilot." Ves carefully remarked. "Perhaps Prince Antonius may never become the best mech pilot, but what do you think about putting him in charge of the Rubarthan Pact? Short of putting a god pilot such as yourself in charge, it is much more fitting to appoint an ace pilot as the highest leader."

"I cannot say whether you are wrong, but this is a matter that the Rubarthans must decide among themselves. Frankly, I can think of a dozen people that can do a better job. The original ideal the New Rubarth Empire was based upon was meritocracy. Even a foreign import such as myself could climb up the ranks and attain the highest position. Years of handing over more power and responsibilities to the princes has eroded that principle. Too many Rubarthans blindly accept the premise that they no longer have the right to be in charge of anything important enough."

That caused Ves to raise his eyebrow. "You sound like you want to do away with giving special treatment to the Rubarthan princes."

"What I want and what will happen are rarely identical, Ves. You should know that as well. I may hold a great amount of sway over the Rubarthan Pact, but the Spacelock's voice is even greater among his people. Besides, the Rubarthans have become so dependent on the Rubarthan Imperial Household that they cannot adapt to a state where they are absent. I am not enthusiastic about Antonio, but I think that he is the best out of a range of bad choices. I have agreed to demonstrate

my support to him when he needs it. I do not dislike the Smokestack Prince per se, but I have even less confidence in his ability to protect the lives of ordinary Rubarthans."

He agreed with that sentiment as well. Ves fell silent as he thought about Irene's changing relationship with the Rubarthans. He even began to sense an incredibly profitable opening!

"It sounds like you are not as attached to the Rubarthans as before. You are more concerned with protecting humanity as a whole than the Rubarthan people and state in particular. Does that accurately summarize your current stance?"

The Destroyer of Worlds grimaced. His words confronted her with thoughts and feelings that she did not really like.

"If I remained in the old galaxy, then I would have been more enthused about guarding the New Rubarth Empire and its many citizens. Here in the new frontier, I feel less connected to the Rubarthans. This is no fault of their own. I would have thought about severing my commitments to the Rubarthan Pact if there are multiple god pilots that can cover for my departure."

Ves' eyes grew hotter as he realized how alienated to her current employer Irene had become!

His reaction did not go unnoticed. The god pilot pinned Ves with a more intense and forceful stare!

"Do not even think about it. As much as I am drawn to all of the cats, I will not join the Larkinson Clan. Your people deserve a chance to grow up in their own right. I can do more to help red humanity survive if I continue to maintain my relationship with the Rubarthans."

"You should be able to lead them if you wanted to." Ves pointed out the obvious. "We are not only living in the Age of Mechs, but also an era that is being defined by the Fist of Defiance. The strongest warlords deserve to be in charge. Even if you are not a native Rubarthan, I am sure that all of those people do not mind. You do not seem to care too much about the Rubarthan princes so why should you respect their right to inherit the throne when the very concept of a hereditary absolute monarchy is already in conflict with the latest rules?"

Irene firmly shook her head. "You think too simply. A god pilot should not be a ruler. The duties and responsibilities of a head of state will only slow me down. The main goal of every god pilot is to pursue greater strength and successfully navigate the way ahead. It may be possible for certain god pilots to advance their strength by leading the masses, but that is not the case for me. I think that only the Army of One is suited for this, but he can already play with his battle bots."

The mention of what god pilots did after they had broken through to their current rank caused Ves to become a lot more attentive.

He had always wondered what god pilots actually did after they had overcome the largest hurdles in their lives!

"How do god pilots actually progress, if I may ask?"

"You may. It is relevant to the topic that I intend to discuss with you." The Destroyer of Worlds casually said. "The ugly truth is that god pilots have no clear way ahead. The Progenitors of Mechs who originally conceived of the existence of god pilots never bothered to think past this point. Even if they wanted to, they are not qualified to devise a path that leads to the rank beyond my current one. Every god pilot must figure out their way forward on their own. I have spoken to many of my peers about this, and each of them share the same struggle."

This was bad news as the enemies of red humanity had lots of powerhouses in their ranks. The native alien of the Red Ocean still had scores of ancient phase whales, while the mysterious aliens of Messier 87 were bound to be more dangerous!

The greater the progress of red humanity's god pilots, the greater their ability to defend the red humanity against all of these powerful enemies!

"Are all of you working separately, or are you taking the initiative to pool your efforts together and figure out a common solution?"

"It is not possible for us to cooperate on this matter." Irene shook her head. "God pilots are different from lower-ranking mech pilots. From the moment we have completely merged with our god mechs, we have become unique existences that bear no equal. I may share many traits in common with other god pilots, but our differences are just as large. No single method or approach can satisfy all of our needs. We have already separated from each other. Our only choice is to continue to go down these roads and hope they do not lead to dead ends."

That sounded extremely precarious to Ves. There was a massive difference between the existing mech pilot trajectory that had existed for centuries and the complete absence of guidance that came afterwards!

"I see. If I may ask, how did you decide to develop your power after you have broken through to your current rank?"

Ves grew incredibly curious on what the Destroyer of Worlds had devised to attain greater power in her post-divinity stage!