

The Mech 5871

Chapter 5871 Malleable Cat

What Ves attempted to do next was the final and arguably the most crucial part of the puzzle.

Success could make a huge difference in this wave and the subsequent ones.

Failure would force the Dominion of Man to violate the unwritten rules of the ritualistic combat setting that had formed between the two sides.

Borrowing the power of spirits was a time-tested technique to Ves. He had done it plenty of times in the past, but he had never done so during a lightning tribulation!

The storm clouds raging from above produced a lot of interference that vastly reduced his connection to other spiritual entities.

Ves was pretty sure that he wouldn't be able to borrow the power of the Superior Mother or Gaia because he had a strong feeling that the tribulation storm would smite him for the act of borrowing power from an external source!

The only exception to this rule was the Golden Cat. Not only did Ves maintain an active spiritual bond with the ancestral spirit of the Larkinson Clan, but he also had the Larkinson Mandate close at hand.

However, Ves instantly dismissed this option. What could Goldie do in this situation? There weren't any other Larkinsons on the Dominion of Man, and she never excelled in combat in the first place. She also lacked the strength to overpower the lightning insect formations.

The only viable option was the ancestral spirit that Ves modeled after Supreme Marshal Caramond Perle.

Enough time had passed by now for the newly created spiritual product to reach a much greater stage of maturity.

Despite his extremely rapid and messy growth surge, Caramond smoothly reached the threshold to True God and began to overcome this major bottleneck by relying on brute force.

The efforts of the Red Fleet to publicize Caramond across human-occupied space succeeded!

A huge number of third-raters and second-raters had his name in the forefront of their minds. No matter whether they revered him or not, even a slight amount of respect was already enough to contribute to Caramond's initial growth and formation!

Even though the newborn ancestral spirit was wholly unqualified in every other way, the sheer amount of spiritual feedback pumping into his malleable form was already starting to induce qualitative transformations!

This was an extremely crucial step because Caramond began to get into contact with faith energy for the first time.

The transitioning entity was barely able to harness the power of faith energy at this point, but just a little bit was already enough to supercharge his evolution and perfect many flaws generated by his rapid growth process!

At this stage, Caramond was bound to become a True God so long as no outside factors attempted to interfere with his ongoing transformation.

Ves was previously content to leave Caramond alone, but no more.

"Caramond! Wake up! The Dominion of Man needs your strength!"

The ancestral spirit was no longer as ignorant as before. He had matured rapidly as a huge amount of focused human thoughts poured into him. Every individual who thought about the Supreme Marshal contributed their impression of this historic human hero to the ancestral spirit.

Combined with the personality template that Ves had programmed into his spiritual product beforehand, Caramond already developed a relatively stern and strong-willed personality!

"Progenitor." The spirit spoke for the first time. Since he was modeled after a human, he preferred to speak like one as well. "I would like to aid you, but I am... preoccupied. I am also in pain. Furthermore, I am not proficient in the combat methods that you require from me. I may not be able to meet your expectations."

It was difficult for a spirit modeled after a fearless and indomitable human hero to admit weakness, but it took true courage for a proud personality to be frank with his shortcomings.

Ves could already sense that Caramond's evolution was anything but perfect. There was always a price to pay. Gaia had been in the exact same position in the past. She was still attempting to correct her glaring defects to this day.

"I am aware of your difficulties, but this is exactly why you must work together with me. This lightning tribulation is not only a test for the Dominion of Man. It is also a test for you. Further delays won't improve your situation. In fact, it is better for you to enter the fight right away. You have many defects that can still be fixed or reduced by baptizing you with tribulation lightning. Besides, these Dread Marines need your power. Each of them are fighting on behalf of the human race one way or another. The least you can do is to join their side. This is what the real Supreme Marshal would do if he was in your place."

Caramond did not offer any words in response.

His answer came in the form of deeds.

When Caramond began to open himself up to cooperation despite his relatively flawed and fragile state, Ves smiled and commanded Blinky to channel the newly created spiritual entity.

This was the first time he performed this particular technique with Blinky. It was a lot different from his usual modus operandi, but there was no reason why it shouldn't work.

Blinky was a direct extension of his own Spirituality. It was capable of performing the exact same spiritual techniques as himself.

The difference was that Blinky's own nature would result in substantially different effects.

What happened next blew Ves away.

Unlike the instances where Ves called down different design spirits when he needed to borrow their power, Blinky proved to be a lot more accommodating to the foreign spirits.

It helped that he was a pure energy-based life form who excelled at energy manipulation.

His sense of self was also much weaker than that of Ves.

Whatever the case, when Caramond began to descend onto Blinky, the 'body' of the companion spirit began to stretch into a shape that deviated enormously from a cat!

Blinky's form gradually morphed into one that looked incredibly iconic to Ves and every modern human.

Of all of the changes Ves anticipated when he decided to let Blinky channel the ancestral spirit, he never expected his companion spirit to outright take on Caramond's form!

The ancestral spirit had chosen to embody Caramond in his most iconic appearance when he was at the peak of his power.

He wore a ceremonial navy blue dress uniform with golden epaulets and stars twinkling on the spotless fabric. A gilded saber that bore the name 'Nikara' hung from his belt. There were rumors that the weapon used to belong to a mythical human hero from the past, but most people treated this story as one of the many embellishments invented during the most glorious period of the Age of Conquest.

The most iconic feature that instantly enabled everyone to recognize Caramond Perle from a distance was his hat.

He wore a peaked officer's hat that featured an emblem of the Vitruvian Man.

Compared to the archival depictions of the Supreme Marshal in the distant past, the ancestral spirit literally looked larger than life.

The historical hero had always been fit and athletic, but the current Caramond had clearly bulked up to an extent.

The ancestral spirit also looked a lot more handsome and authoritative, especially when combined with his human-centric domain.

The only clear break from his past image was the black scepter in his hand. This was a special addition from Ves in order to serve as a much more distinct symbol for the present Caramond.

This was because Ves did not want to fully recreate the Supreme Marshal as he was depicted in all of the history books.

Ves wanted to create a living symbol of human superiority and domination. Caramond needed to embody humanity's desire to win, conquer and rule over the cosmos!

From what Ves could observe and feel from Blinky, he had done a good job this time!

As soon as Caramond settled into Blinky's surprisingly pleasant and accommodating 'body', the guest brought a huge amount of power.

A spiritual shockwave erupted from Blinky's position as Caramond channeled a significant portion of his newfound strength!

While his control over his energies was anything but impressive, the raw power was so much more than Blinky was able to disgorge from his Blinkyverse!

"Rejoice, soldiers of man! Your god is here! Let it be known that I, Caramond, has led his soldiers to victory for the first time since my rebirth!"

"..."

Ves grew speechless. His latest creation certainly developed a strong ego. All of the praises mixed into the spiritual feedback must have gotten over Caramond's immature head.

Still, they had work to do. Since Caramond did not possess the right technique to absorb and channel fire energy, Blinky would have to do it in the ancestral spirit's stead.

"Don't resist. Try to play along."

Even though Blinky seemed to have disappeared, he was still present in other ways. It was not that difficult for the companion spirit to draw in fire energy once again.

This time, there was no rejection reaction. No matter whether Blinky tried to manipulate it or absorb portions of it into his Blinkyverse, the fire energy remained fully docile!

It worked!

Ves began to grin. His theory was correct! The spiritual imprint on the fire energy belonged to the living spark.

This normally meant that only the entity stuck inside the Spark Reactor was able to freely manipulate this energy.

However, Caramond happened to form a Bloodfire Pact with the living spark with fire energy as the predominant medium!

In this circumstance, fire energy was no longer hostile towards Caramond. Even if he was not its original owner, he was able to leverage it almost just as well as its original source!

A wonderful synergy formed between Caramond and Blinky.

Caramond's form became increasingly more red until flames radiated from his position!

A large and powerful corona of fire surrounded his form like the flame barriers of the Fallen Heralds of Akshi!

Caramond became so infused with the power of the Spark Reactor that he quickly became intoxicated!

He raised his flaming black scepter in a dramatic fashion!

"Rally to me, my loyal men!"

The summoned spirit pointed the ball of the scepter towards the nearest lightning insect formation and released a concentrated ray of fire energy that struck the protective barrier with great force!

An explosion of fire and power occurred on impact that inflicted serious harm. The metallic energy barrier clearly struggled a lot more to restore its integrity.

Though Caramond in his summoned form was able to cooperate with Blinky to launch further attacks, this was not a one man show.

The lightning baptized Dread Marines had received new instructions that caused them to come to Caramond.

Each and every Dread Marine felt a lot more invigorated by the higher concentration of fire energy in the environment.

On top of that, they also felt a strong connection to Caramond himself!

The ancestral spirit smiled at his strongest subjects. "The power of fire shall forge your units into a flaming fist. Together, we shall crush these aliens and cleanse them with the power of our spark! For Humanity!"

"FOR HUMANITY!"

It only took a few words for the Dread Marines to resonate with Caramond and form a spiritual network that was blessed with fire energy!

Though Caramond appeared to be in charge, Blinky was doing all of the heavy lifting in forming spiritual connections and channeling fire energy into the Dread Armors in a controlled and organized fashion.

The companion spirit had to struggle a lot to make sure that the injected fire energy properly empowered the armaments of the Dread Marines. It was impossible to exert any fine control, but it was already possible to produce better results with a slight amount of effort.

Every Dread Marine connected to Caramond or rather Blinky all began to erupt in flames as well!

The illusionary fires had returned as each Dread Armor became a lot more connected to the Spark Reactor!

"Arise, my very first Bloodfire Legion! Burn our enemies to ashes with the power that binds us together!"

Chapter 5872 Cooperative Spirit Combat

From the moment Caramond began to inhabit Blinky as if the companion spirit was a shell, the entire battle changed forever.

For the first time since the lightning tribulation began, the output of the Spark Reactor finally found a somewhat worthy user.

The Dominion of Man was a well-constructed starship in every aspect as far as the fleters were concerned. The best minds, technologies, materials and care had been put into making her and her sister ships the pride of the Common Fleet Alliance.

Though the CFA's initial experiment with dreadnoughts ultimately failed to justify the insane amount of resources investing into her development and construction, she still served as one of the 8 mobile bulwarks of the Red Ocean.

Unfortunately, the dreadnoughts of the Red Fleet suffered from the same flaw as any piece of hyper technology.

Red humanity had a spotty track record with cultivation.

The vast majority of cultivators and scientific experts on this subject remained behind in the old galaxy. While the big players made sure to bring plenty of copies of historical archives and such, having access to all of that obscure knowledge did not mean that there were enough people who understood all of the esoteric theories.

The Dominion of Man may have received more attention than most other warships, but her integration of hyper technology was ultimately far from reaching her full potential.

The good news was that more and more researchers and developers worked to increase the effectiveness of hyper technology. They were making constant progress every month.

That did not help the Dominion of Man in her current state, however. The ship could not wait for future improvements to upgrade her powerful systems to another level. The Dread Marines who fought on her behalf all had to do their best with the imperfect hyper technology integrated into their Dread Armors.

All of this meant that before Caramond descended onto Blinky, the Dread Marines working to overcome the communal energy barriers of the strange metal-attributed insects had been squandering much of the fire energy flowing in their direction.

No more.

As Caramond gained command over the nearby fire energy that was flowing at an increasing rate due to adjustments made to the energy transmission system of the dreadnought, Blinky was finally able to ensure the Dread Armors harnessed this power in a more effective manner!

It was difficult. Blinky had to split his focus to an insane degree. If not for the fact that he was an incorporeal entity who cultivated his own internal universe, it would have been much harder to pull off the mental gymnastics required to help the Dread Armors channel more fire energy into their attacks.

Ves had worked on plenty of hyper technology to know how it worked. The fleeters clearly utilized the best hyper materials in more advanced technological systems, but he was a good enough mech designer to understand the basic gist of most of the tech incorporated in a Dread Armor.

His knowledge as a mech designer augmented Blinky's ability to figure out better solutions and enhance the power of every hyper weapon.

The problem was that there were too many different models of Dread Armors.

There were Light Dread Armors that relied on stealth to land painful blows at unsuspecting targets.

There were Medium Dread Armors that were equipped with emergency smart metal repair tools that could fix most forms of battle damage within seconds.

There were Heavy Dread Armors that were equipped with lots of missile launchers and advanced targeting systems.

Each of them harnessed E energy in different ways. What was interesting was that the fleeters overwhelmingly tried to utilize fire hyper materials, so Ves did not have to worry too much about attribute clashes.

Still, there was way too much stuff for Ves and Blinky to keep track of. There were too many Dread Armor models, too many complicated hyper parts and too many individual Dread Marines to keep track of. Mortal minds were simply not equipped to handle so much work.

Fortunately, they had a True God on their side.

Caramond may still be in the middle of his ascension process, but his capabilities had already grown to such an extent that he was easily able to keep track of thousands of moving parts at the same time!

It did not take much for them to cooperate with each other. There was no need for explanations as Blinky and Caramond were in a fused state at the moment.

Their teamwork also proceeded without issue. Caramond had formed a spiritual network out of fire energy with a couple of thousand Dread Marines. Their Dread Armors had practically become extensions of his own body.

As the seconds passed by the Dread Marines that looked as if they were on fire started to dim. Their impressive Dread Armors no longer looked as if they were on the verge of melting into slag.

This was an evolution rather than a devolution.

The illusionary flames were a manifestation of wasted energy. The bigger the spectacle, the more energy went to waste.

While the Dread Armors did not look as impressive as before, their auras had grown hotter and more intense.

It was impressive how much progress Ves, Blinky and Caramond made over the span of a single minute. Each of them pooled their own advantages together to produce a result that truly empowered the Dread Marines that the ancestral spirit had claimed for his first Bloodfire Legion!

The fire-blessed Dread Marines that had given in to the control of Caramond took full advantage of their superior firepower. Each of them struck the metallic energy barrier protecting the metallic insects with greater fervor. Every attack wave produced noticeable results as the energy barrier shook increasingly more despite all of the effort put into restoring its integrity.

The leading insect champion exerted greater effort into reinforcing the barrier. More and more mysterious runes started to light up on the surface, but these measures failed to compensate for the damage produced by more potent fire-empowered attacks.

"The energy barrier has lost half of its integrity!"

"Some of our most penetrating transphasic attacks are starting to get through!"

"Concentrate our attacks on two opposing points. The energy barrier can only reinforce one direction, but never two or more at the same time!"

After so many frustrating minutes of attacking an energy barrier that simply wouldn't go down, the Dread Marines felt exhilarated when they finally produced concrete results!

Caramond was clearly having the time of his life. He swung his black scepter like a conductor of an orchestra and continually utilized his expanding multitasking ability to keep his Dreadfire Legion operating at a higher state of efficiency.

The work was strenuous to every party involved, but the rush of combat motivated each of them to keep up their collaborative efforts.

The energy barrier eventually endured so much damage that it was on the verge of breaking.

"Fire cleanses all! No alien can withstand the might of humanity!"

The barrier shattered, causing every tribulation manifestation to suffer a momentary backlash!

This exposed the insectile lightning soldiers to the fiery attacks of the Dreadfire Legion!

"Burn the aliens! Teach them the folly of resisting the human race! Each alien you kill will save at least ten times as many human lives!"

The Dread Marines hardly needed any encouragement to slaughter tens of thousands of disoriented and exposed lightning soldiers.

Thousands of Melee Dread Marines crashed right into their foes and crushed the insects despite the fact that they were no slouches in melee combat. Without any energy barriers in the way, the human soldiers proved why they were the best of what the Red Fleet had to offer.

With the blessing of fire energy and the enhanced coordination bestowed by Caramond, each and every Dread Marine demonstrated considerably greater skill and power that already transcended their old performance levels.

Many Ranged Dread Marines coordinated their firepower and strategically bombarded key sections of the enemy formation. While they slaughtered plenty of lightning insects, their main job was to disrupt enemy coordination and hinder them from launching an effective counterattack.

They adopted the right actions and completely managed to suppress the lightning insects. No cluster of alien soldiers received enough of a reprieve to perform a communal cultivation technique. Every tribulation manifestation had to fend off the relentless alien troopers by themselves!

The rewards were magnificent. Each eliminated lightning insect released an explosion of tribulation energies that damaged but also upgraded the Dread Armors across a fairly generous area.

When thousands of explosions took place in quick succession, all of the units of the Dreadfire Legion got upgraded in real-time!

Even Ves benefited from the bounty as he had decided to move closer despite all of the risks it entailed. His Unending Regalia, his true body as well as his various gadgets sucked in all of the juicy destruction and creation energies to work away their various imperfections and restore everything to a better state than before.

However, the opposition did not go down without a fight.

"Ahhh!"

"The alpha insect is too strong!"

"I need an emergency evacuation!"

A storm of lightning-infused blades erupted from the center of the enemy formation!

The alpha insect uttered a silent cry that went lost in vacuum before it began to rampage through the nearest squads of Dread Marines.

Its two limbs ended up in sharp and penetrating spears that never failed to penetrate the Dread Armors and puncture the flesh underneath!

While the alpha insect was only one of many lightning soldiers, the champion's cultivation was at least an order of magnitude better than its brethren.

The difference in strength was so huge that none of the Dread Marines could outduel the powerful alien!

"Concentrate our firepower!"

"Keep your distance from this threat!"

"Engage expert mech protocols!"

The Dread Marines had never fought against such a powerful cultivator before, but the Red Fleet already possessed an existing template on how to fight against such a threat.

Every Dread Marine in the vicinity distanced themselves from the alpha insect.

This not only prevented the alpha insect from eliminating so many Dread Marines at a time, but also exposed the alien champion to massed attacks from a distance!

Explosions and energy beams engulfed the immediate area surrounding the alpha insect! So many attacks swamped the site that all of the other lightning soldiers got obliterated without mercy!

Yet as the attacks started to abate, the alpha insect turned out to be fine!

The champion had managed to avoid serious harm by conjuring up his own metallic energy barrier!

Before the Dread Marines could unleash another salvo of concentrated attacks, the alpha insect whipped forward and instantly skewered two different Dread Marines!

Though the Rubican Spatial Transfer System managed to teleport the humans inside the Dread Armors away at the last second, it was still humiliating for the Dread Marines to get taken out without any opportunity for resistance.

More attacks lanced in his direction, but the alpha insect moved too quickly!

In the past of half a dozen seconds, the alien powerhouse had managed to wipe off 16 Dread Marines off the board!

"It's too fast!"

"Our ranged weapons cannot land a hit when it is constantly on the move."

The alpha insect showed how individual powerhouses had the ability to turn an entire battle around by themselves.

Before the alien champion was able to jump into a formation of Heavy Dread Marines and crush them before they could unleash another salvo of missiles, a fiery shape dove down like a comet and crashed against the fast-moving enemy!

"You shall terrorize my soldiers no more, alien!"

Much to Ves' surprise, Caramond chose to challenge the alpha insect in person!

More and more fire energy from the Spark Reactor engulfed his energy manifestation. Much of it started to concentrate into his scepter.

Just as the alpha insect dashed forward with unnatural speed, a ray of fire energy struck the creature with pin-point accuracy!

A blast of flames knocked back the alien champion and inflicted severe damage to the personal energy barrier that it had activated at the last instant.

Before the alpha insect could launch another attack, Caramond preempted this sequence by charging forward while thrusting out a lance made out of fire energy!

"Death to the aliens!"

The concentrated fire energy was too powerful for the alpha insect. The metallic barrier broke. The exoskeleton of the powerful alien cultivator failed to hold back the power of a True God-like entity and succumbed to the penetrating attack.

The alpha insect had been felled!

"Humanity reigns supreme!"

"HUMANITY REIGNS SUPREME!"

The Dread Marines quickly capitalized on the outcome of the duel to eliminate the remaining lightning insects, each of whom behaved as if they had lost a central pillar of their faith!

Chapter 5873 Redefining Combat Power

Caramond and his Bloodfire Legion wiped out the remaining lightning insect formation with ease.

Now that the first domino stone had fallen, the freed up troops quickly moved to reinforce another division of Dread Marines that was locked into a stalemate with a nearly identical formation of lightning insects.

Even without Caramond's involvement, the lightning insect formation would have fallen anyway.

With twice as many Dread Marines attacking the same metallic energy barrier, the tribulation manifestations sheltering underneath did not stand a chance!

"Cleanse the aliens with flame!"

Caramond once again eliminated the insect champion that had managed to fell a few Dread Marines before a blast of flame wiped it out in an explosive fashion.

All of the lightning baptisms that took place strengthened a lot of new Dread Marines. Caramond did not hesitate to commandeer the ones that had just become empowered by fire and lightning and added them to his network.

Though Ves and Blinky had to do even more work than before, Caramond had become powerful enough that he could easily micromanage the new connections.

Soon, the remaining lightning insect formations got rolled with greater ease. Their dispersion made it easy for the human troops to defeat them in detail.

In the end, just a little under 100,000 Dread Marines had fallen under the banner of the Dreadfire Legion!

Each and every marine felt proud to be fighting under the 'revived' Supreme Marshal.

Even though nobody knew whether Caramond was a reincarnation of the real deal or just an elaborate imitation, it ultimately did not matter.

Caramond's network connected their hearts and minds together into a collective that was fully dedicated towards defending the human race.

They felt proud and fulfilled each time they advanced their common cause. Their differences did not matter anymore as the fire energy along with Caramond's growing domain made them feel as if they had become founding members of an elite order of human protectors!

Caramond himself felt fulfilled as well. He not only acted according to his own nature, but also got rewarded for each. Every victory against the lightning soldiers fed him with tribulation energies that constantly destroyed his weaknesses before reinforcing what was left.

Defeating the champion insects especially facilitated his evolution. The stronger cultivators possessed much more aliens that inflicted greater pain but also produced superior gains.

Blinky and Ves also gained a lot from these victories, even if Caramond claimed most of the bounty.

Regardless, they had become considerably more capable than before. The next wave of enemies was bound to challenge them even further, but they were confident that their growing strength would see them through.

Caramond already started to pump up his footsoldiers.

"We have overcome a decent challenge today, but do not rest on your laurels. Every human who is dependent on our protection has invested their hopes and dreams onto us. Death or slavery awaits us all if we fail to step up to the occasion. We are the vanguard of humanity's second rise. From the moment you have been baptized by fire and lightning, each of you have become the physical embodiment of human superiority on the battlefield. Take pride in your gains, but do not forget what you are fighting for. So long as red humanity stands, the Dominion of Man shall conquer the stars!"

As the newborn ancestral spirit already started to put his inherent leadership skills to work, Ves took the time to reflect on what he learned.

Ves had grown thoroughly impressed by the teamwork that he had established with his ancestral spirit.

The notion of letting Caramond descend into Blinky was an inspired idea that had opened up a lot of new possibilities.

Ves was quite satisfied with the huge boost in direct combat power.

Right now, Blinky had turned into a threat that was powerful enough to defeat at least some first-class mechs in his current state!

The only issue was that the conditions needed to replicate Blinky's current state were too demanding.

Much of the power wielded by Blinky and Caramond came from the Spark Reactor. The two spirits hadn't really contributed any of their own energies. They predominantly relied on the raw power of fire energy to punch above their weight.

Even so, Ves actually had high hopes for this new method. If he ever got himself into another fight where his guards couldn't handle the problem, he could actively weaponize Blinky by borrowing the power of his more powerful design spirits.

While this technique was not capable of mustering the full power of strong entities such as Qilanxo, the Superior Mother, Helena, Gaia and now Caramond, it was better than anything he could do in the past.

Ves actually wanted to smack his head due to how he overlooked this possibility for so long. He had Blinky for many years, yet not once did he think about letting his companion spirit merge with his other entities.

He felt rather grateful that the current lightning tribulation had pushed him into developing another way to fight against his enemies.

In hindsight, it had been a good idea to restrict him from fighting like a phase lord. Ves may have grown a little too reliant on it. While it was not a bad idea to rely on his inhuman physique to resist his enemies, it had clear weaknesses and vulnerabilities that many enemies could exploit.

It had become well-known that he had managed to become a phase lord. He couldn't treat it as a trump card anymore as his enemies would definitely take his abnormal physique into account when they made another attempt at his life.

He needed to develop new trump cards, and what better way to do so than the better leverage the advantages bestowed by Blinky?

Ves rarely considered Blinky to be of much help in combat. While he was fairly strong against spiritual opponents, he was mainly brought to life to serve as a living alternative to the Grand Dynamo.

In other words, Ves mainly treated Blinky as a complement to his design work rather than a proper combat asset.

It was therefore strange for Ves to adjust to the reality where Blinky had suddenly become a powerful qi cultivator.

The companion spirit hadn't suddenly become strong in his own right, though. He still had a long way to go before his Imaginary Universe Method had reached an advanced stage of cultivation.

What Ves truly valued was Blinky's cheat-like ability to channel other entities a lot more effectively than any other alternative!

Ves' close relationships with his spirits along with Blinky's amazing affinity and compatibility with spiritual energy resulted in a game changer that had many implications.

It completely changed his perspective on Blinky's combat power.

Whenever he employed his companion spirit in battle, he shouldn't treat the Star Cat as a fairly weak qi cultivator.

Whatever the case, Blinky was undoubtedly able to defeat many more opponents that he would have struggled against if he was by himself!

It would have been ideal if Ves was able to replicate Blinky's current state.

As long as Blinky successfully summoned another powerful entity, his actual strength would fall somewhere in between.

Whatever the case, Blinky was undoubtedly able to defeat many more opponents that he would have struggled against if he was by himself!

It would have been ideal if Ves was able to replicate Blinky's current state.

The main reason why the combination of Blinky and Caramond was able to smash the powerful insect champions was because they relied on an external source of power to fuel their attacks.

This meant that once Ves departed from the Dominion of Man, there was no way for him to tap into a readily available source of fire energy again.

Ves grew disappointed at this realization. The potent energy generated by the living spark was amazingly powerful yet also highly responsive due to the Bloodfire Pact.

A part of him began to feel greedy towards the Dominion of Man. He wanted to claim the powerful dreadnought for himself and utilize her as his permanent flagship.

How glorious would it be for him to have one of the most powerful warship in the Red Ocean at his disposal!

Unfortunately, there was no way the Red Fleet would agree to surrender control of one of its most strategic assets.

Even if Ves managed to be promoted to a tier 1 galactic citizen one day, he seriously doubted that he could take over the Dominion of Man just by asking nicely. The powerful dreadnought would have grown even stronger if she managed to survive this lighting tribulation, so that was an even greater reason for the fleters to cling to their evolving treasure.

"I need to build my own power source." He concluded.

It was not necessary for Ves to construct a massive and insanely expensive dreadnought like the Dominion of Man.

There was no need to limit himself to constructing any starship.

What truly mattered was that he needed to have a mobile power source on hand that he could tap into whenever he wanted to supply a huge amount of energy to Blinky.

The power source could be integrated into a mech, a shuttle, a mechanical pet or even a backpack module that could be slotted into his Unending Regalia!

Ves was spoiled for choice. He could realize all of the aforementioned options if he wanted to. The added redundancies would be helpful in case he found himself in situations where he wasn't able to bring his own mechs along.

The real issue was the properties of the power source.

The Spark Reactor was the most impressive power generator he had ever seen. Ves could scarcely imagine anything better.

Ves could make do with smaller and weaker power generators, but what he could not miss out on was a source of E energy.

There was no way Ves could get his hands on anything comparable to living spark.

This mysterious True God-like entity likely had close relations to the stolen Fire Scroll or the inscrutable Five Scrolls Compact.

Ves needed to find another alternative.

"How can I get my hands on an extraordinary power source?"

The Red Ocean was big and diverse, so Ves was pretty sure that he could find a viable solution if he looked hard enough.

He already came up with three promising possibilities.

The first one was to exploit powerful mutated beasts. So long as he captured one that possessed the right attributes, he could stuff them in a cage and prod the prisoner to output E energy on demand.

Suffice to say, Ves quickly deemed this option to be far too dangerous for him to try. Mutated beasts were difficult to subdue as they were constantly involved and grew stronger based on environmental pressures.

There was a high chance that the imprisoned beast would explode in strength and tear apart the 'E energy generator' at the worst possible time!

The second idea was to create a pale and weak imitation of the living spark. Ves could create a specialized spiritual product that deliberately lacked a personality so that it remained docile while stuffed inside an E energy generator.

The issue here was that such an entity would take a long time to grow into a more formidable source of E energy.

The third option required Ves to collaborate with another mech designer.

Now that he thought about it, Master Benedict Cortez's design applications appeared to be well-suited to supply Ves what he needed to make this work!

His Original Energy Bridge System and to a lesser degree the Endex System were capable of generating varying amounts of energy by themselves.

This included E energy!

Master Benedict Cortez had become obsessed with this as of late. He recognized the advantages of supplying his mechs with more E energy than what background radiation could provide, so he specifically experimented with new technologies and materials to transform his Endex System into a highly efficient E energy reactor!

"This sounds perfect!"

The only issue was that the Endex System was not powerful enough as of yet, but that was partially because it had only ever been utilized in second-class mechs.

Ves wondered how much stronger the Endex System would be if Master Benedict developed a first-class version of his signature technology?

Chapter 5874 Cresting Momentum

Ves always got his best ideas for mech design when he was in the middle of a battle.

This time was no exception as he recognized the huge potential for synergies between his design philosophy and that of Master Benedict.

The powerful combination that he had managed to produce with the help of Blinky opened up his eyes for a much more potent mech, one that was not only powerful enough to defeat mundane opponents, but also metaphysical ones!

The key was energy.

Ves specialized in E technology. He was good at empowering mechs. More specifically, he was able to make them alive and allow them to leverage E energy in much more efficient ways.

The longer they existed, the stronger they became. Every living mech possessed the capacity to learn new techniques, advance their cultivation and develop stronger affinities with familiar E energy attributes.

Yet for all of their growth potential, it took a huge amount of time before any of his living mechs reached the level of the Ouroboros.

The painful truth was that most of his living mechs weren't strong to boost their direct combat power by a large enough margin.

A second-class living mech was still a second-class living mech. There was practically no hope of elevating their combat power to the point where they could pose a credible threat to a first-class mech.

Granted, the same could be said for machines developed by other mech designers.

What was different this time was that Ves saw much greater hope of being able to bridge this enormous gap.

He just needed to get Master Benedict onboard his plan.

The former Skull Architect possessed the right solution to complement his living mech.

The Mars that both of them had collaborated on already showed a semblance of that. It was a pity that Patriarch Reginald Cross ultimately did not appreciate a living mech with an attitude and wiped out all traces of independence.

The current iteration of the Mars had become a powerful second skin mech that perfectly suited the Cross Patriarch's inclinations, but the loss of an independent personality had deprived it of other possibilities.

If not for this unfortunate turn of events, Ves would have been able to make his current realization a lot sooner.

Witnessing Blinky and Caramond blast powerful insect champions with fire blasts was an exhilarating experience. Ves could clearly see the parallels between Blinky and his living mechs.

Ves became so fired up that he felt tempted to drop everything and contact Master Benedict Cortez right away in order to propose a possible collaboration!

Of course, he quickly resisted this silly impulse as this was not the time for him to think about mech design.

As much as he wanted to give in to his mech design urges, it was a lot more important to ensure the survival of the Dominion of Man.

Ves grinned. "It's a good thing that Caramond has forged a real legion of supersoldiers this time."

After vanquishing over 100,000 lightning insects, the Bloodfire Legion had already taken shape

Each and every Dread Marine that took part in the fight had transformed in many different ways.

What Ves valued the most was that every Dread Armor was able to channel a lot more fire energy before reaching their safety thresholds. This meant that they could hit harder, resist more damage and move faster.

There was a noticeable difference in performance between the Dread Marines that joined the Bloodfire Legion at the start and the ones that joined afterwards.

This was good news as there was plenty of room for growth. The current iteration of the Bloodfire Legion was only in its initial growth stage.

Soon enough, the storm clouds launched another series of lightning bolts that deposited another army of lightning soldiers across the surface of the hull!

"Damn, these are elites!" Ves cursed.

The 5th wave of lightning soldiers reminded Ves a lot of the Fallen Heralds of Akshi. The biggest difference this time was that the aliens resembled shark-like creatures that were clearly aquatic in nature.

Each of them appeared to be powerful water cultivators. Many of them had already summoned massive bodies of water that not only offered excellent resistance to fire-attributed attacks, but also corroded any metal they came across!

"Eliminate them as quickly as possible! Their corrosive water is wreaking havoc on the hull plating and the gun batteries! The Dominion of Man cannot afford to lose her offensive arsenal!"

"These aliens must burn!"

The Bloodfire Legion was forced to split up in order to prevent the latest tribulation manifestations from wrecking the exterior of the dreadnought.

In order to cope with all of the shark cultivators, the Rubicon Spatial Transfer System teleported 50,000 fresh Dread Marines across multiple critical areas.

The battle did not start off well for the defenders.

The aliens were smaller in number, but each of them exuded power that was only a bit less than the insect champions.

With thousands of them spread across the hull of the Dominion of Man, they could clearly do a lot of damage if left unchecked!

The water summoned by all of the sharks functioned as a thick and resilient protective barrier. It took far more heat and energy to remove them than plain water. The strong water-attributed E energy infused in the water bodies continually made it a pain to boil it all away.

What was worse was that the shark cultivators swam so fast that they were able to catch up to all but the fastest Dread Marines!

Accompanied by their large bodies of dangerous water, the shark cultivators loved to engulf entire formations of Dread Marines and corrode their thick metal shells.

"Don't get trapped in the water! Any Dread Marine that falls into the unnatural water will not only lose access to fire energy, but will also be surrounded by enough interference to prevent a teleportation lock. In other words, anyone who can't get rescued in time will die!"

The Dread Marines started to suffer hundreds of casualties in quick succession as the shark cultivators proved to be highly capable of inflicting mass casualties on the battlefield.

The only units that were able to defeat the shark cultivators a lot faster than the other ones were the Dread Marines of the 34th Assault Regiment, the 88th Bombardment Regiment and the 6th Giant Trapper Division.

Many Dread Marine units were forced to concentrate their firepower to quickly boil away large bodies of water in order to rescue their trapped compatriots in time.

However, the corrosive effect was so strong that many Dread Armors fell apart in less than a minute!

The only units that were able to defeat the shark cultivators a lot faster than the other ones were the Dread Marines of the 34th Assault Regiment, the 88th Bombardment Regiment and the 6th Giant Trapper Division.

They glowed much hotter and easily channeled twice if not thrice as much fire energy than the more junior members of the Bloodfire Legion.

"Let our fire boil the seas!"

"Humanity shall prevail!"

"I will not let a shark melt my Dread Armor!"

Though the shark cultivators still inflicted casualties by the thousands, none of the Dread Marines shirked their duty.

Instead, they felt honored that they were selected to fight on the Dominion of Man's behalf and felt as if they were fulfilling a sacred duty for the betterment of their race.

As fire and water continued to clash across the exterior of the Dominion of Man, Blinky and Caramond made sure to boost the Bloodfire Legion while also leveraging their growing command of fire energy.

"Boil!"

The descended Caramond pointed his black scepter at the nearest body of water and unleashed an enormous firebreath!

The shark cultivator clearly recognized the threat and attempted to change direction, but Caramond did not give his opponent enough time to make a getaway.

A huge quantity of corrosive water boiled away in a matter of seconds! Stripped of protection, the shark cultivator soon burned to the point of exploding, releasing a large amount of tribulation energy in the process.

While Caramond received less of a reward than when he eliminated the champion insects, there were so many shark cultivators that he was bound to reach an entirely new tier of strength once he was done!

Ves found himself forced to move at higher speeds in order to move Caramond close enough to eliminate the shark cultivators with simple, raw fire energy attacks!

There was so little sophistication and nuance in the way that Blinky shaped the fire energy that even Caramond was able to master the techniques after a short amount of time!

However, there was no need to employ more complicated attacks as the water bodies could only be neutralized by boiling them all away.

Shark cultivator after shark cultivator fell in rapid succession due to Caramond's eager hunting effort.

More Dread Marines got freed up after eliminating a bunch of shark cultivators. Each of them reinforced their beleaguered compatriots and relied on a growing numbers advantage to eliminate the shark cultivators.

Once around a third of the shark cultivators got put down, the Bloodfire Legion received a lot of new members while taking much less time to steamroll over the remaining lightning soldiers.

That did not mean that Caramond took it easy.

Since all of his firepower was supplied by the Spark Reactor, neither Blinky nor Caramond expended a lot of energy during this entire sequence.

The only issue was that Blinky experienced increasing strain. The effort required to maintain a partially merged state with Caramond grew increasingly more cumbersome, so they couldn't maintain this state forever.

This pushed Caramond to fight even harder. Not only did he want to harvest more destruction and creation energy, he also wanted to complete the final wave of the 5th round as soon as possible.

"That's it for the corrosive sharks!"

"The hull has received heavy damage, and we have lost much more Dread Marines than before."

The Dominion of Man incurred serious damage to her exterior this time. Many tertiary and secondary gun batteries had received so much damage that repairing them during this incident was unthinkable.

The corrosive water had also dug fairly deep trenches into the hull. The dreadnought spun her hull 90 degrees in order to prevent the next wave of enemies to complete the job and invade the interior of the massive warship.

Caramond did not seem to care all that much. His Bloodfire Legion had become a lot stronger and more numerous than before.

His own strength had undergone a considerable evolution as well as he found himself able to channel and control fire energy a lot better.

The ancestral spirit even had a feeling that the tribulation energies had somehow improved the Bloodfire Pact itself!

The next few waves presented greater and greater challenges to the defenders.

Caramond and his Bloodfire Legion did their best to advance their strength and stay ahead of the curve.

The lightning soldiers brought greater numbers, deadlier abilities and more confounding tricks.

Tens of thousands of Dread Marines fell in battle or permanently lost their precious lightning-baptized Dread Armors as they faced a multitude of fearsome opponents from Messier 87.

Yet as the defenders of the Dominion of Man vanquished each and every wave without showing any signs of falling behind, everyone became convinced that it was inevitable for them to vanquish the 5th round!

That was when the 9th and last wave arrived.

A single, titanic green lightning bolt struck the hull!

When the flash abated, every Dread Marine momentarily froze as they beheld their next opponent.

A tall figure that could tower over several mechs stacked on top of each other greeted their sight.

The vaguely insectile creature possessed a body that shone and crackled with both tribulation lightning and flashes of brightness.

The vaguely humanoid alien exuded a huge amount of power, far more than any individual lightning soldier that appeared in the previous waves.

The cultivation strength of this final opponent was insanely high, but that was not the scariest part about this adversary.

What truly frightened Ves and the others was that the head of this tribulation manifestation was identical to the giant head of the imperious three-eyed alien peering down from above!

"It's... it's a clone of the Subjugation King!"

Chapter 5875 Not Fair

This was the final opponent of the 5th round.

Instead of fielding a gigantic army of alien cultivators like Ves expected, the lightning tribulation presented a more frightening adversary.

The storm spat out a clone of the Subjugation King.

There was absolutely no doubt that the powerful alien leader was related to the tall and glowing manifestation that had appeared in the middle of the hull.

For a moment, everyone froze in shock and incredulity.

It was one thing to fight against an army. The tribulation energies got dispersed across many different lightning soldiers, thereby making them manageable enough to get defeated in detail.

Anyone smart enough would understand if all of that power got concentrated in a single cultivator, the entity in question would be able to wield all of it in a concentrated manner!

No barrier would be able to withstand the powerhouse's might. No amount of firepower would be able to get through the monstrous figure's defenses. The clone of the Subjugation King simply exuded far too much power for anyone to believe they could defeat the tribulation manifestation with ease.

"We are in big trouble." Ves spoke as he observed the giant figure from a distance that was far too close for his liking. "This guy is most definitely a clone or a copy of the Subjugation King. Even if he's not even close to matching the power level of the real thing, this wave will still be far more difficult to overcome than it should."

"Explain." Dread Captain Volkert Argile spoke over the communication channel.

"The previous 8 waves all consisted of a diverse selection of alien soldiers that most definitely originate from Messier 87. Yet for all of their unique talents and abilities, the intelligences that control their actions and shape their cultivation techniques are modeled after their originals. What I mean by that is that if an alien soldier used to be as strong as an expert pilot, then his copy will have the fighting consciousness that is comparable to that of an expert pilot."

The dread captain was not stupid. He instantly understood the point that Ves was trying to make.

"This 'Subjugation King' is far more powerful than any opponent we have seen before. We have at least determined that he is stronger than any individual god pilot. According to our energy readings, his clone is roughly equivalent to a first-class ace mech in power. That fits the power scaling pattern that we have already calculated based on the energy readings of the preceding waves of enemies. He is not strong as a god mech, thankfully, but he can still inflict a great amount of damage even if he fights like a mindless brute."

Ves pressed his lips as he continued to look at the powerful adversary. "I wish. This matchup should have been fair as long as the clone of the Subjugation King possesses the fighting consciousness and mastery over the elements equivalent that of an ace mech. However, I am afraid that the big alien above is able to control the actions of his clone. Do you understand how unfair that is? Even if the clone is only limited to the power of a formidable ace mech, he is effectively being 'piloted' by the equivalent of a god king pilot!"

"God king pilot?"

"That is the proposed name for the theoretical and not-yet-realized rank of whatever comes after god pilot!"

"...If that is the case, the improvement in control and understanding is too great. It may be safe to say that if the previous enemies were able to leverage 50 percent of their full potential, this adversary can utilize at least 95 percent of the full potential of his clone."

"That's about right." Ves said as he grew more depressed at the thought. "This is why... I think that you should go all-out this time."

"We are already prepared to field all of the Dread Marines that are in good fighting condition." Dread Captain Argile said. "The only reason why you haven't seen them all is because they would only get in each other's way if they appear on the hull at once. We also need to have sufficient

reserves in case this clone is able to wipe out all of our Dread Marines in sight with a wide-area attack."

That was a very real possibility given how much power and control this clone possessed!

"That is not going to be enough." Ves spoke. "I do not doubt the combat capabilities of your Dread Marines, but there is a point where throwing a million ants at a large enough opponent won't really produce any useful results anymore. This is precisely the case at the moment."

"Then what do you suggest, professor?"

"We need you to use everything the Dominion of Man has at her disposal, captain. Use all of your gun batteries. Activate every azure energy shield. Target the clone with weapons of mass destruction as long as it won't wreck your entire ship. You cannot afford to give this enemy any reprieve!"

This was a heavy demand, one that would break the ritualistic combat that had governed the previous engagements.

Caramond and the Dreadfire Legion had done a good job at managing the fights up to this point, but that was when the enemy was playing fair.

This was clearly not the case anymore. The Subjugation King exploited the conditions of this format and pulled off a move that utterly broke the balance without being too obvious about it. Given that Messier 87 had a very strong hostility towards the natives of the Red Ocean, there was no chance that its heavenly authority would crack down on this abuse.

All of that meant that the Dread Marines and the Dominion of Man were in for a world of hurt if they proceeded to fight according to the old rules.

While Ves was willing to take a gamble every now and then, even he recognized a sucker's bet when he encountered one. This was definitely a risk that he was not willing to take!

Unfortunately, Dread Captain Argile did not see it that way.

"Violating the rules will reduce our gains." He stated. "We cannot afford to miss out on an opportunity to provide the greatest possible power boost to our Dread Marines. As bloody as the ensuing fight will be, we are willing to accept up to 70 percent casualties if the survivors can boast of fighting against a god... and win. As callous as it may sound, we have ample reserves of elite soldiers that replenish our Dread Marine Corps at any time. The loss of hundreds of thousands of tribulation-empowered Dread Armors is a much greater sacrifice, but we hope that allowing the survivors to absorb the immense rewards for defeating the clone will more than make up for the reduction in numbers."

"THIS IS NOT A FIGHT THAT YOU CAN WIN!" Ves practically shouted! "There is a very real chance that the clone will wipe out ALL of your Dread Marines and tear a huge hole in the side of the Dominion of Man before you finally bring out the big guns!"

A short pause ensued before the fleetier let out a sigh.

"According to our analysts and outside consultants, your suggestions have great merit. Yet... those very same consultants believe that there is still a chance to win this bout without suffering excessive losses. Every test is supposed to be harsh, but fair. No matter what this so-called Subjugation King

has done to subvert this tribulation storm, it is doubtful that he can override the fundamental essence of this phenomenon."

Ves wanted to smack the head whoever gave that idiotic advice!

"I don't see a path to victory that does not entail releasing our restraints!"

"Our consultants do. Caramond is the key. He is the strongest variable that is in our favor. The Red Fleet has already negotiated with the Red Association and other major stakeholders. Each of them have agreed to publicize Caramond Perle. In fact, they have just decided to announce a new civilization-wide holiday to commemorate the hero and the savior of the human race. That is a surefire way to make the masses grateful towards the Supreme Marshal."

That actually sounded like a clever idea.

However, Ves still did not think it was enough!

"That will help, but it won't tip the balance. Caramond's strength is only part of the equation. He has mostly been fighting by relying on my control and the energy output of the Spark Reactor. We have already reached the limit to how much we can leverage these variables in a battle."

"We are undertaking measures to increase the supply of fire energy to Caramond." The dread captain quickly explained. "As for control, we can only rely on your ingenuity to carry the day."

"So that's it? You still want to fight this match according to the rules even when it is obvious that the Subjugation King is blatantly cheating?!"

"We are soldiers, Ves! We do whatever it takes to serve our ship, our organization and humanity as a whole! This is not a matter of stroking our egos. We are being strategic here. I have been told that any intelligence we can gather on the Subjugation King's fighting methods, power expressions and personality traits is worth more than the survival of all of our Dread Marines."

"What?!"

"We have been given a priority mission. We are tasked with trying to wring out every piece of intelligence, no matter whether it is relevant or not, out of the Subjugation King, or at least his clone. Anything we learn from this encounter may save trillions of human lives down the line. The very survival of the human race may be secured due to all of the specialized counters we have developed in the years ahead."

The fleeters, no, the Red Two treated this upcoming match as the culmination of the information war.

The bigshots evidently decided that allowing the Dominion of Man to suffer excessive losses and possibly even getting wrecked in her entirety was worth the tradeoff of gathering crucial intelligence about an incoming God King!

The worst part of it all was that Ves did not necessarily agree with this cruel and heartless reasoning!

Ves briefly closed his eyes. "Don't you want the dreadnought to survive and remain in good shape? Considering how many crew members have developed a strong bond of fire with the Spark Reactor, I would have thought that you would have insisted on preserving your command."

"A life of dishonor is a life not worth living." The scion of the Argile Spaceborn Clan said with a serious voice. "The Dominion of Man must prove her superiority by demonstrating strength, not weakness. The Subjugation King wishes to challenge her directly. She, along with the rest of us, must overcome this challenge if she definitely wishes to cement her status as the strongest dreadnought."

Idiots!

These fleeters had gone utterly mad!

Their idiotic notion of honor and their interpretation of what was best for the Dominion of Man was completely skewed!

Before he could say anything else, a powerful pulse of energy shocked him into silence!

Ves suddenly felt a powerful being gazing directly at him. He became frightened out of his wits when the clone of the Subjugation King directly gazed in his direction!

"%\$#\$&#."

"I HAVE GIVEN YOU THE GRACE TO ENGAGE IN DISCOURSE WITH OTHERS, BUT MY PATIENCE IS EXPIRING. MOVE CLOSER, LITTLE CREATOR."

DAMN! The Subjugation King spoke directly to Ves!

"Uh, I am okay, Your Majesty or whatever I am supposed to call you. I am not the person in charge here. I can interpret your messages to the captain of this ship if you wish."

The alien began to exude greater power. This was not a good sign.

"IRRELEVANT. WHEN I ISSUE A COMMAND, I EXPECT YOU TO OBEY."

Before Ves could offer an excuse, he suddenly yelped as he felt his new soul mark turn into an anchor of a translucent chain!

The clone happened to hold the other end of this bizarre line. The powerful tribulation manifestation yanked it once, causing Ves to fly into the dangerous entity's direction!

"Ahhhhh!"

Chapter 5876 Alien Motivations

Ves did not want to have a direct conversation with the Subjugation King.

The alien God King evidently entertained different thoughts.

That was how Ves found himself yanked before the feet of the tall and enormous tribulation manifestation.

While the clone of the powerful alien leader was shorter than most juggernauts, his current form easily towered over mechs.

Combined with all of the raw power packed inside his glowing form, Ves felt incredibly nervous.

This was a powerhouse that could probably beat him up and crush his true body, especially when he went all-out! The difference in combat power was just too great to imagine any other outcome.

Still, given that a soul chain or whatever had already yanked him out of his hiding spot and brought him before the feet of this alien powerhouse, Ves did not think it was a good idea to turn tail and run as far as possible.

The clone of the Subjugation King peered down at his relatively tiny form with ominous glowing eyes.

Those three eyes were eerie as hell. When Ves gazed up at them at this range, he felt as if he was being pulled into a pit of despair. Impressions of chains, enslaved aliens and broken empires flashed through his mind.

This was an alien tyrant who never bothered to hide his true nature. Deception was beneath him because he always tried his best to be the oppressor rather than the oppressed. This was an ambitious leader who did not hesitate to ruin countless people's lives just to satisfy the incessant need to enslave people.

There was no way Ves could weasel himself out of a confrontation. Since that was the case, he might as well stand and hear what the Subjugation King had to say.

"\$#\$**\$#&@."

"YOU ARE AN INTERESTING MORTAL."

"I have been called that way."

"@%&#\$. "

"YOUR SOUL IS TAINTED WITH SIN BEYOND RECKONING. YOU HAVE NO RESPECT FOR RULES. YOU DO NOT EVEN HESITATE TO VIOLATE THE MOST SACRED OF TABOOS."

Ves nervously smiled back. "With all due respect, I cannot agree with your assessment. Perhaps we are divided by cultural differences, but I can assure you that I am an upstanding member of my civilization."

"%#\$. "

"FALSE."

"Let's just agree to disagree, shall we? Why... why have you called me over?"

"\$#&\$#&."

"YOU HOLD SO MUCH POWER AND POTENTIAL, YET YOU ARE SQUANDERING IT BY PRETENDING TO BE A COWARD."

"I am not a soldier!" Ves retorted. "I am a creator, as you yourself have obviously recognized! My role is not to fight enemies directly! My job is to support the ones that do! This is why my companion spirit over there is doing the fighting in my stead."

The clone of the Subjugation King briefly glanced towards the fusion between Caramond and Blinky.

"#\$\$%&@#."

"INTRIGUING ATTEMPTS AT SOULFORGING. THIS IS FAR BEYOND WHAT A MORTAL SUCH AS YOURSELF SHOULD BE CAPABLE OF. YOU MAY BE CREATOR, BUT THAT DOES NOT EXCLUDE OTHER POSSIBILITIES. YOU ARE A FIGHTER. YOUR BODY HOLDS POWER THAT FAR EXCEEDS THE REST OF THESE MORTALS."

Damn, it was too much to hope that the Subjugation King would overlook his phase lord cultivation.

"I may possess the raw strength, but I have not earned it by myself. It was given to me by multiple lightning tribulations. I do not have the training that allows me to leverage my strengths effectively. I do not have the time or motivation to train in combat when my main vocation is to create products for my fellow humans."

The 'mouth' of the powerful alien began to move in a more agitated fashion. An explosion of anger erupted from the clone, forcing Ves to step backwards while trying to fend off disorienting illusions that made him want to go mad!

"A&#;%@!"

"NO VALUED SLAVE OF MINE IS ALLOWED TO SHOW SO MUCH WEAKNESS! EVERY SLAVE THAT BEARS MY MARK MUST MEET MY STANDARDS, OR SUFFER THE CONSEQUENCES FOR THEIR INCOMPETENCE! I HAVE RECOGNIZED YOUR WORTH, LITTLE CREATOR, SO YOU MUST SUSPEND YOUR CRAVEN BEHAVIOR AND DEFEND WHAT LITTLE HONOR AND PRIDE THAT YOU ARE ALLOWED TO POSSESS!"

Ves continued to step back until the alien finished his furious tirade!

"I... am not your slave!"

The clone that was clearly driven by a God King that was located hundreds of thousands of light-years away suddenly swapped his anger with amusement!

"&#\$\$\$@."

"THAT IS A MORE ACCEPTABLE RESPONSE. NO VALUED SLAVE DESERVES TO HOLD MY APPRECIATION IF HE HAS SURRENDERED TO HIS SUBJUGATION. I WILL ENJOY BREAKING YOUR RESISTANCE ONCE I HAVE RETRIEVED YOU. I EXPECT YOU TO DEFY ME TO THE BEST OF YOUR ABILITY. IT WOULD BE BETTER IF YOU HAVE NOT SURRENDERED IN FULL."

What kind of sicko was this Subjugation King?! The more Ves listened to the ugly alien speech of this God King, the more he became certain that it would be better for him to commit suicide than let the powerful alien capture him alive.

"So you expect me to fight against you? I can't. The difference in power is too great. Your tribulation manifestation is too strong, and your true comprehension is far too high."

"##&\$@."

"NOTHING IS FAIR. YOU WILL FIGHT DIRECTLY, OR I WILL BREAK YOUR BODY AND CRUSH THIS ODD BUT INTERESTING SHIP OF YOURS. SHOW ME WHAT YOU CAN TRULY DO. PROVE ME RIGHT BY DEMONSTRATING THAT YOU ARE A VALUED SLAVE."

"I... will fight you to the best of my ability, but only if you reply to my questions with truthful, sincere and relevant answers." Ves said as he summoned a lot more courage than he possessed.

It was not easy for him to confront a God King! Even if the alien in question was only able to channel a fraction of his enormous power to this distant location, that was still far more than Ves wanted to confront by himself!

The reason why he suddenly issued this term was because he remained in constant contact with Dread Captain Volkert Argile at this time.

It might not look like it, but he had been using his cranial implant to discreetly relay a transcript of his conversation with the Subjugation King.

That would hopefully get passed on to the tier 1 galactic citizens who most definitely had to be paying attention to this ongoing tribulation event.

Though Ves had taken an awful risk by issuing a request when he was in no position to bargain, the Subjugation King did not grow angry again.

It looked as if he remained amused by the antics of his latest 'pet'.

"&#@\$##%@"

"YOU AND YOUR PATHETIC RACE OF PRIMITIVES WISH TO LEARN MY SECRETS IN THE HOPES OF RESISTING MY INEVITABLE SUBJUGATION OF YOUR TINY GALAXY. I ADMIRE YOUR COURAGE, IF NOT YOUR WISDOM. IT IS BETTER FOR YOUR RACE TO RESIST THE INEVITABLE THAN TO SURRENDER WITHOUT A FIGHT. IF GIVING YOUR RACE INFORMATION WILL INSPIRE FALSE HOPE, THEN I AM WILLING TO INDULGE YOU, BUT ONLY BRIEFLY."

That actually worked?!

Ves hadn't actually been sure about this gambit, but he did not expect the Subjugation King to be so arrogant and full of himself that he would actually be willing to supply a few answers!

Of course, the alien God King's willingness to do so only lasted until he wanted to start the next bout.

"Are you the only God King from your native galaxy sent to subjugate our galaxy?"

"@#\$\$@\$&%#."

"THE EMPIRE THAT ILLUMINATES THE COSMOS IS RESPECTED AND FEARED ACROSS OUR GALAXY. NO OTHER KRELION KING WILL VIOLATE MY PREROGATIVE. ONLY A SINGLE KING OF MY STATURE IS ENOUGH TO SUBJUGATE YOUR DIM SEA OF STARS. THE OTHER TRIBES SHOULD KNOW BETTER THAN TO DEPRIVE ME OF MY SLAVES. IF THERE ARE ALIEN KINGS WHO ARE UNINTELLIGENT ENOUGH TO CLAIM YOU FOR MYSELF, I SHALL SQUEEZE THE LIFE OUT OF THEIR MISBEGOTTEN SOULS."

That was good news if it was true! Ves knew that a lot of bigshots gained a lot of relief after learning that the Subjugation King likely wasn't accompanied by any other God Kings.

Of course, there was always a chance that the alien powerhouse lied. Ves did not think so. Despite the immense power gap, he still sensed that the Subjugation King truly meant what he said.

That still left open another possibility, though. Another God King may be trying to sneak to the Red Ocean anyway, but he had evidently managed to hide his presence so well that not even the Subjugation King had a clue.

"What are your strengths and weaknesses in combat?"

"#\$&@."

"YOU WILL HAVE TO DISCERN THAT FOR YOURSELF WHEN WE ENGAGE IN BATTLE."

Oh well.

Sensing that the Subjugation King's had lost almost all of his patience, Ves quickly asked his remaining questions.

"Are you the strongest leader of your empire, or do you answer to a higher authority?"

A wave of anger erupted from the powerful clone!

Ves took a few more steps back as his mind became disoriented with bright flashes of light!

"#\$#\$&#@@\$%!"

"THE GREAT LIGHTHOUSE SHOULD HAVE BEEN MINE! I WAS FATED TO BECOME THE BRILLIANT LORD! IT IS ONLY THROUGH CHANCE AND THE MACHINATIONS OF MY ENEMY THAT I HAVE STUMBLERD ON THE CUSP OF VICTORY! ANOTHER OF MY KIND MAY HAVE CONQUERED THE GREAT LIGHTHOUSE, BUT I SHALL CHALLENGE IT ONCE AGAIN ONCE I HAVE REDEEMED MYSELF. YOUR PITIFUL GALAXY IS TOO SMALL FOR MY LIKING, BUT IT CONTAINS UNIQUE RESOURCES AND INTERESTING SLAVES THAT MAY PROVE USEFUL IN MY NEXT ATTEMPT. YOU ARE DESTINED TO BECOME A SMALL PART IN A GREAT PLAN TO SUBJUGATE MY GALAXY!"

This alien was a complete megalomaniac! It was difficult to determine his place on Messier 87's totem pole, but Ves guessed that he was actually blowharding to an extent. The Subjugation King had to be subordinate to a more powerful leader, or else he wouldn't have been assigned to this chore.

Nevertheless, that still did not provide much comfort to Ves. If the Subjugation King did not completely fabricate his story, he must have been a candidate for ascending to the highest seat of his empire.

The fact that he almost managed to claim it meant that he probably ranked closer to the top.

The fact that he ultimately failed and left in disgrace meant that there was an even stronger krelion God King!

There might even be a possibility that the true leader of the Krelion Empire had reached the 5th major cultivation rank!

In any case, Ves was supposed to ask another probing question at this time, but the clone made a cutting gesture that was easy to interpret.

"#\$#\$&@\$%!"

"SILENT, SLAVE! I EXPECT YOU TO FIGHT RATHER THAN TO ENGAGE IN DISCOURSE. PROVE YOUR WORTH AS MY POSSESSION AND I MAY GRANT LENIENCY TO YOU

WHEN I HAVE ARRIVED TO SUBJUGATE YOUR ENTIRE RACE. THE PUNISHMENT FOR FAILURE IS THE DESTRUCTION OF THIS ENTIRE SHIP AND THE ELIMINATION OF ALL MORTALS INSIDE."

Ves felt a lot more nervous at the thought of engaging in direct combat against an enemy whose cultivation was far superior to his own!

"How is this fight fair?! You are too powerful and too proficient in manipulating energy to give me a realistic chance at winning!"

The krelian God King directed a feeling of contempt towards Ves.

"\$#&\$#@&\$#."

"IF YOU AND YOUR MORTAL MINIONS FIGHT AS YOU HAVE PREVIOUSLY DONE, THEN IT IS TRUE THAT VICTORY SHALL REMAIN OUT OF YOUR REACH. YOU MUST HOLD NOTHING BACK, BUT EVEN THAT IS NOT SUFFICIENT. YOU MUST COMBINE YOUR EXISTING ADVANTAGES AND SUMMON THE STRENGTH TO DEFEAT THIS LESSER IMITATION OF MINE IN OPEN COMBAT. PASS MY CHALLENGE, AND YOU WILL BE RICHLY REWARDED."

Ves could easily believe that. The tribulation storm may have bent to the Subjugation King's demands, but that had already provoked a counter response. It should be impossible for the heavenly authorities to remain ignorant of this hijacking. The least they could do was to offer greater compensation in return.

"I... will fight you, but not because I want to prove that I am your valued slave. I will fight because you are an enemy of the human race. That is all. I will never accept the authority of an alien such as yourself while red humanity stands!"

Chapter 5877 Cataclysmic Power

As the fight was about to commence, Ves quickly prepared his equipment. He had made sure to stash away all of his redundant gadgets and tools inside the Vault of Eternity.

The only pieces of equipment that he dared to carry was the Unending Regalia and the Flower Parasol.

As shameful as it looked, Ves prized safety over dignity, so he firmly gripped the handle and made sure to cover most of his body behind the embroidered pink fabric.

He made sure to remember the various tools he could quickly pull out of his Vault if the situation called for it. Due to prior incidents, he already stocked his Vault with a multitude of spare nanosuits in case his current one fell apart for whatever reason.

If the clone of the Subjugation King forced out his true body, It would be embarrassing to fight in this pivotal battle when he was completely naked!

Despite his claim that he would be going all-out, he did not want to fight like a phase lord.

This was not a fight he could win by relying on physical force or spatial tricks. Unfolding his true body would be counterproductive as he would just turn himself into a bigger target.

For now, Ves wanted to rely on maintaining the merger between Caramond and Blinky.

A lot of time had passed since Caramond came to life. The ancestral entity had not only absorbed a lot more faith and spiritual feedback, but also managed to correct a lot of congenital defects by bathing himself with a bountiful amount of tribulation energies.

The previous two waves had been especially rewarding to Caramond! He was in a much better shape than before, and it showed in how much he expanded his Dreadfire Legion.

With hundreds of thousands of empowered Dread Marines at his beck and call, Caramond had become the effective leader of the most powerful elite infantry force in the Red Ocean.

Almost every Dread Marine that had spread out across the hull of the Dominion of Man had already taken advantage of the delay to quickly swap out their configurations and repair any damage.

Once they were qualified to get back into the fight, they got teleported at one of many strategic positions.

As Ves quickly swept his gaze around him, he minutely nodded in approval.

Even the fleeters recognized the futility of engaging in melee combat against the giant tribulation manifestation.

Many of the Dread Marines had all swapped to full ranged weapons loadouts. The remainder adopted a variety of defense, recovery and support loadouts in order to make the Dreadfire Legion last longer.

As Ves turned back to the Subjugation King, he suddenly went on guard when he sensed a sharp buildup of power.

His intuition sensed an acute threat, so he did his best to brace himself while bracing himself behind his Flower Parasol as best as possible.,

A thundering light crashed into him and released so much energy that Ves immediately bounced backwards!

"AHHH!"

Not only did Ves receive such an overwhelming lightning blast that it managed to break past the protection of the Flower Parasol, it also launched him back to the point where his armored figure crashed against the side of a primary plasma cannon battery!

"My armor!"

The Subjugation King's strike was too powerful!

Not only did it sing the Flower Parasol, it also fried dozens of surface components of his Unending Regalia! His combat armor transmitted several alerts about broken parts and systems.

It had been too long since Ves last upgraded it. His trusty suit of combat armor had fallen behind the times.

As Ves tried to recover from this brutal opening strike, his connection with Blinky made him aware that the fighting had already intensified.,

"Open fire!"

"Do not let up the pressure!"

"Spread out as soon as the target looks in your direction!"

The Dreadfire Legion had opened fire as soon as the clone of the God King had made his opening move.

An innumerable amount of missiles, plasma bolts, energy beams, explosive shells, kinetic rounds, gas clouds, burning propellant and other attacks struck the tribulation manifestation!

So many Dread Marines had opened fire with their best arsenal that the sheer amount of attacks directed towards the clone should have overwhelmed his defenses in seconds!

Ves did not believe that any ace mech could withstand an entire army's worth of firepower!

Many of the best weapons at the Red Fleet's disposal piled onto the clone and attempted to take the singular enemy out before he could launch another destructive attack.

None of the attacks seemed to make any difference.

The sheer quantity of attacks made by the Dread Marines should have been enough to overwhelm the Saint Kingdom of any ace mech, but the clone remained safe and sound as he relied on the protection of an extremely powerful energy shield!

The energy shield crackled with tribulation lightning but also carried an implacable quality to them. Not once did it show any sign of weakening. It looked as if the Subjugation King could keep it up forever!

However, the alien tyrant clearly did not have the patience to allow his clone to get wailed on for such a long stretch of time.

"\$\$#@&@."

"INFERIOR CREATURES. YOUR SOULS ARE TOO WEAK."

The clone of the Subjugation King exploited this vulnerability by summoning tens of thousands of translucent chains before dispatching them towards all of the Dread Marines in closer proximity than others.

"Avoid the chains!"

"They are too fast!"

"Evacuate!"

"We can't! The alien is generating a spatial interference field that is blocking all forms of teleportation! Even the Rubicon cannot teleport anything in and out within a certain range from the clone!"

Many of the Dread Marines had been caught off-guard by the fact that the clone of the Subjugation King had suddenly taken away their greatest form of assistance!

There was no escape from the soul chains. Once they came close enough, they crashed against the transphasic hyper armor plating of the Dread Armors and pushed through with moderate effort.

Once the chains sunk into the bodies of the human soldiers, the compromised Dread Marines immediately turned around and began to open fire at their fellow brethren!

Many targeted Dread Marines quickly fell in battle as they did not expect the Subjugation King to subvert so many of their brothers and sisters in such a short span of time!

"Emergency override!"

"Shut down their weapon systems!"

While it was not wise to program safeguards into a combat asset that could activate at the worst of times, the fleeters evidently trusted them just enough to implement them into their strategically important Dread Armors.

Whatever means the Subjugation King used to subvert the Dread Armors did not extend to their programming. Their weapon systems abruptly fell silent as they refused to accept input of their brainwashed users!

That seemed to irk the Subjugation King. Power began to coalesce around the giant as he prepared to charge a powerful attack.

"\$%@\$!"

"YOU SHALL NOT DENY ME OF MY SLAVES!"

The clone unleashed a powerful blast of tribulation lightning that exploded with great force along the length of the hull!

The entire Dominion of Man shook as her structure suffered a massive penetrating attack that inflicted a lot of damage!

When everyone recovered from the cataclysmic strike, they became horrified at what the Subjugation King had done.

Tens of thousands of Dread Marines got wiped out in their entirety! Only ashes or scraps of their Dread Armors remained as the overwhelming attack proved to be too strong for them to fend off by relying on their ordinary defensive means.

What the clone did to the hull was worse. The Subjugation King had purposefully targeted a section of the hull that had already been weakened by successive attack waves.

What the latest attack had done was to finish the job and create a major breach that broke through the final layers of exterior hull plating!

The Subjugation King continued to repel all incoming attacks as he raised one of his limbs to perform another charged lightning strike.

"Do not let the enemy breach the Dominion of Man any further!"

"Take flight! Do not stay rooted to the hull. If the alien seeks to introduce more vulnerabilities to our dreadnought, then we should at least be able to persist in this fight!"

It was rather insulting for the Dread Marines that the Subjugation King did not consider them to be a credible threat.

While that would allow the Dread Marines to fire their weapons continuously without worrying that they would get slaughtered en masse, it was frustrating to realize that they had become inconsequential in this fight.

It was as if there was no way that mortals could pose a threat to an actual god!

Not even Caramond and Blinky were able to reverse the tide. Their ability to channel fire energy had grown stronger than ever, but they were still far from reaching the power level and the mastery of the elements as the Subjugation King!

While everyone scrambled to figure out a proper countermeasure against this alien tyrant, the Subjugation King stared at Ves directly again.

"#\$&%@."

"RISE UP, MY SLAVE. DEFEAT ME IF YOU WISH TO PRESERVE THIS ARTIFACT SHIP OF YOURS. IF YOU REFUSE TO MEET MY CHALLENGE, I SHALL TEAR IT APART!"

The Subjugation King released his second cataclysmic lightning strike to illustrate his point!

The hull shook again. The Dominion of Man gained another breach! This time, it was larger and had managed to chew through an entire primary cannon battery!

These were the most potent direct weapons mounted on the dreadnought. They were practically irreplaceable as it was difficult to reproduce them without access to exclusive exotics that were only available in the Milky Way.

The loss of all of this high-end hardware was lamentable, yet the Subjugation King was already charging up to unleash a third devastating attack.

Ves gritted his teeth. This was a clear message that he needed to go on the attack!

"Dread captain."

"Professor?"

"I do not think I can abide by the promise of limiting my phase lord capabilities."

The captain of the Dominion of Man let out a sigh. "Do what you must. Despite their latest improvements, our Dread Marines... have proven to be incapable of defending our dreadnought. Only a champion can defeat another champion."

This was a familiar adage in the mech community. Expert mechs, ace mechs and god mechs had a well-deserved reputation for dominating the battlefield and demolishing a lot of mundane opposition.

The proper way to prevent these enemy champions from tearing everything apart was to field your own champions.

Ves just felt upset that he had to play this stupid role. The Dominion of Man utterly refused to field a single mech. Even if it did have a few expert mechs or ace mechs on retainer, it was more important to keep every piece of intelligence related to them out of the alien tyrant's reach.

Whatever the case, it was clear that the only way to proceed was to meet the Subjugation King's demand.

He stowed away his Unending Regalia as well as his singed and damaged Flower Parasol. It was a pity that he wasn't able to leverage his equipment better, but it was clear that they were not suited for a clash between giants.

Left in his nanosuit, he began to unfold his true body.

The sight was so interesting that the Subjugation King slowed his movements. The powerful being directed all three glowing eyes at Ves while his full body emerged from a dimensional space.

Ves did not feel surprised when he managed to surpass his previous maximum height. He hadn't been hanging around the battlefield for nothing.

As he continued to grow taller, he eventually reached a height that was roughly 1.5 times as tall as a typical mech!

That was not as big of an improvement as it sounded. His body may have grown bigger and stronger, but his phasewater organs remained the same for the most part. The lightning baptism clearly did not do anything to evolve them in any fashion.

Chapter 5878 Diamond in the Rough

The battle unfolded like one of those dramatic boss battles of the action games that Ves used to struggle with when he was a kid.

Back then, the only apparent purpose for all of the mechs and soldiers that participated alongside the player character was to showcase the destructive prowess of the big bad guy.

Right now, Ves felt like he had been put in the exact same situation.

The difference was that real lives and expensive hardware were at stake!

Unlike in the games that his much younger self played with gusto, the soldiers who bravely risked their lives to fight a being that was pretty much a god had real lives.

To see them die whenever a chain lightning bolt coursed through their Dread Armors as if their impressive armors only worked as conductors was painful to Ves.

It was one thing for these soldiers to die in a meaningful fashion, but they hardly accomplished anything despite their huge numbers!

The Dreadfire Legion had undergone an incredible growth trajectory throughout the prior waves of lightning soldiers. Starting with the 34th Assault Regiment, the rapidly expanding army had grown in both quality and quantity.

Motivated by the ideals of Caramond and powered by the fire energy supplied by the Spark Reactors, the empowered Dread Marines had become far stronger than they used to at the start of the battle.

Each of these elite infantry units could easily defeat ten times if not a hundred times their regular counterparts!

To realize that all of that effort and investment was going to waste whenever their final adversary was flinging chain lightning bolts every once in a while frustrated Ves immensely.

The Subjugation King clearly did not bother to show any respect towards the valiant Dread Marines that irrationally continued to fire their weapons at the massive target despite the lack of obvious results.

They deserved much more. The Dreadfire Legion still committed to a pure 'infantry' battle despite the fact that the clone was as powerful if not more than an ace mech.

Ordinary ace mechs shouldn't have been able to breach the thick and resilient hull plating of a dreadnought with such ease. The Subjugation King was clearly utilizing his superior grasp of energy manipulation and the elements to optimize his destructive attacks to an insane degree.

The Dominion of Man had already gained a couple holes, but the Subjugation King had shown no signs of abating.

This was why the Dreadfire Legion had to keep fighting despite becoming increasingly clearer how badly the human troopers were outmatched.

Caramond tried his best to pump more fire energy through the spiritual network that bonded them all together, but there were limits to everything. The network was too crude, the Spark Reactor did not supply enough fire energy and the Dread Armors were not optimized for this mode of combat.

Ves inwardly shook his head. Everything was too haphazard and improvised. The haste in which he and the others had embarked on this overly ambitious ritual had led them ill-prepared to face such a stupendous challenge.

A part of Ves had already begun to quail. How the hell was he and the Dreadfire Legion supposed to defeat the clone of one of the most powerful cultivators in this galactic cluster?!

Every technique performed by the clone spoke of great control and understanding of E energy and its attributes.

Blinky's exceptional sensitivity towards E energy enabled him to observe how the clone of the God King was able to harness the power of tribulation lightning... and understand none of the advanced working principles.

It was like looking at a processor chip. Just because people could get a glimpse of all of the parts that made up the chip did not mean they could figure out how to replicate it in an instant!

It took a huge amount of science and engineering knowledge to be able to reproduce such an advanced technological product.

Ves had fallen into the same situation. His understanding of cultivation science was far too shallow and spotty for him to be able to understand any of the advanced workings of the God King.

What Blinky did manage to observe was that the Subjugation King cast all of his powerful techniques with the help of invisible runes.

The God King demonstrated incredible proficiency by stringing dozens or even hundreds of them within a blink of an eye!

However, Blinky also noticed that the stronger and more destructive techniques often took a few precious seconds to charge to full power.

Ves had a feeling that the Subjugation King would have been able to cast these spells in a fraction of a time if he was fighting back in Messier 87.

It was fortunate that the tribulation event took place in the Red Ocean. Not even a God King could overcome the inherent limitations of a less energy-rich environment.

Ves narrowed his eyes as his giant nanosuit form marched towards the considerably taller and more intimidating tribulation manifestation. Though he was not a trained soldier or officer, he was

still able to utilize his analytical mind to figure out a possible way for him and the Dreadfire Legion to seek a pathway towards victory.

Though a clear route was nowhere to be found, Ves did manage to determine a way to limit the damage to the ship and the Dread Marine Corps.

Every powerful attack required seconds to charge up. The clone of the God King also did not appear to be able to engage in any other significant actions while he prepared to launch his more destructive techniques.

If Ves was able to close in and lock the big bastard in a brawl, then the clone of the God King should have no opportunity to blast another large hole in the hull of the Dominion of Man!

This was why he urged himself to continue forward despite all of his instincts screaming to him what a monumentally bad idea it was for him to approach a much more superior cultivator by himself.

He knew enough about combat that overthinking at this point would do more good than harm. If he continued to entertain doubts, he wouldn't be able to commit to any of his attacks, which was ultimately counterproductive.

While it was difficult for him to drop the attitude of a mech designer, Ves tried his best to shove aside his many distractions and focus on how to get the alien to take him more seriously.

The height difference was considerable, but it shouldn't matter too much as Ves lifted off from the surface of the hull and maneuvered around by employing the native abilities of his phasewater organs.

The Maracos organ was responsible for generating local gravitic forces that essentially pulled the body of a phase lord from one direction to another. It was not that difficult to do this in space, but the problem was that Ves was lacking in practice. There was no way he could dance in the air as well as a light or even a medium mech. His mobility was much more akin to a heavy mech that clearly needed deep maintenance.

Fortunately, the Subjugation King was so arrogant that he never saw the need to change his position. He continued to stand on the same section of the hull and was content to let Ves approach him first.

When Ves came close enough, he attempted to land a punch.

He knew without a doubt that the attack would not produce any satisfying results, but it should be enough to demonstrate that he was committed to fighting his impossibly strong adversary up close!

His fist immediately slammed against a seemingly indestructible obstacle!

"Ahhh! That hurts!"

It wasn't the physical recoil of hitting the E energy equivalent of a wall that hurt Ves.

The real reason why he pulled back his arm and shook his hand in pain was because the damn energy barrier shocked him with tribulation lightning!

It turned out that this defense also possessed an offensive component!

The reason why the Dread Marines hadn't been shocked like this was because they were smart enough to stay far away.

Only when people like Ves moved closer and punched the energy barrier would it send out a nasty shock.

"\$@#&\$@."

"DISAPPOINTING. YOUR TEACHERS, IF YOU HAD ANY, FAILED TO PREPARE YOU FOR COMBAT."

Even the Subjugation King couldn't help but comment on Ves' pathetic performance!

"I already told you that I am a creator, not a soldier! I do not belong on the battlefield!"

"THAT MAY BE A VALID EXCUSE FOR LESSER MORTALS, BUT NOT FOR YOU. AS MY VALUED SLAVE, I WILL NOT ALLOW YOU TO SQUANDER YOUR TALENTS. IN MY GALAXY, MAKER OF ARTIFACTS ARE EITHER SLAVES OR SLAVE HOLDERS. THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE TWO IS DETERMINED BY STRENGTH. IF YOU CONTINUE TO WALLOW IN YOUR WEAKNESS, YOUR ONLY DESTINY IS TO SERVE AT THE WHIMS OF OTHERS."

"Serving others is the entire point of my profession!" Ves couldn't help but shoot back! "I am sure that there are huge cultural differences between us, but I do not agree that creators such as myself seek to hone our combat strength in order to beat others up in a fight."

The Subjugation King radiated disappointment at Ves.

"##\$&&@."

"PATHETIC. YOUR RACE IS TOO WEAK AND SOFT. THIS ATTITUDE WILL ONLY SEE YOUR ENTIRE RACE ENSLAVED BY SLIGHTLY LESS WEAK RACES. I DO NOT TAKE PRIDE IN SUBJUGATING THOSE THAT DO NOT OFFER ANY CHALLENGE. YOU DO NOT UNDERSTAND THE IMPORTANCE OF BECOMING STRONG ENOUGH TO FIGHT CHALLENGES BY YOURSELF AS OPPOSED TO RELYING ON THE PROTECTION OF OTHERS. AS YOUR FUTURE MASTER, I WILL TEACH YOU NOW, LEST YOU EMBARRASS ME WHEN I PRESENT YOU TO MY PEERS."

What was that supposed to mean?

"AAAAHHH!"

Ves took a few steps back as the Subjugation King had released a moderately powerful shock at his true body!

Though Ves did not enjoy the pain, he did not feel as upset as he should.

This was because the clone had channeled pure tribulation lightning at him. Though the destruction energy inflicted considerable damage at the impact site, the release of creation energies quickly restored most of his wound.

Ves quickly figured out what the powerful alien expected.

If he was reading this situation correctly, the Subjugation King wanted to 'train' Ves through lightning therapy!

Ves was not stupid enough to think that the God King did this out of the goodness of his heart.

The arrogant and condescending Krelion King merely saw Ves as a diamond in the rough.

The valued slave-in-the-making needed to be fattened up in order to justify his status as a valued slave!

A part of Ves felt offended that the Subjugation King looked down on him so much.

Another part of Ves felt relieved that the God King did not think about killing him outright.

This was hardly the only goal that the powerful alien had in mind. While Ves was in the process of launching another attack, the Subjugation King proved he did not forget about the others by launching a blast of tribulation lightning at a distant primary plasma cannon battery!

This was hardly the only goal that the powerful alien had in mind. While Ves was in the process of launching another attack, the Subjugation King proved he did not forget about the others by launching a blast of tribulation lightning at a distant primary plasma cannon battery!

The powerful weapon module that was designed to pummel battleships instantly got crippled as the tribulation attack blasted several enormous holes in the housing!

A large amount of delicate components got blasted or melted from the attack. The infusion of creation energies failed to restore the vast majority of destroyed components.

Nanites and repair bots quickly moved in to control the damage and restore as much functionality as possible, but it did not seem likely that the Dominion of Man would be able to use this gun battery for the remainder of this encounter.

Ves tried his best to speed up in order to prevent the Subjugation King from unleashing another destructive attack.

Unfortunately, his Maracos organ was too damn weak and underdeveloped to boost his mobility any further!

As Ves changed his posture to attack with a flying kick, his feet smacked straight into the energy barrier before getting shocked by tribulation lightning!

The defensive barrier did not appear to suffer any serious harm!

"This is impossible!"

Chapter 5879 Changing Strategies

This wasn't working.

Ves initially thought that the Subjugation King was kind enough to turn his energy barrier into a tribulation lightning dispenser.

As long as Ves was willing to bear the pain of tribulation lightning zapping through his body, he only had to approach and strike the energy barrier in order to receive another dose of tribulation energies.

His body broke down and reformed into a slightly stronger version after every strike.

Ves felt as if he had turned into the lab rat that had learned that pressing a button on the wall would dispense a piece of cheese for him to eat.

Again and again, Ves picked himself up and tried to punch the energy barrier in various ways.

None of his attacks weakened the energy barrier in the slightest.

Neither the Dread Marines firing at the clone of the Subjugation King in the distance nor the various punches and kicks from Ves broke the equilibrium.

That was bad, because Ves could not let this status quo drag out for too long.

The Dominion of Man shook again when the Subjugation King freely struck one of the holes in the hull with a blinding tribulation lightning strike!

While the attack failed to breach the resilient transphasic hyper exterior, it still managed to create a long trench that looked like an ugly scar on the surface of the dreadnought.

Dozens of gun batteries and other exterior modules got blasted to pieces from this powerful attack.

The Dominion of Man continued to suffer greater and greater harm as long as the clone of the Subjugation King remained free to launch his attacks.

Ves gritted his teeth as he tried to shoulder bash the energy barrier, only to get shocked and bounced away yet again!

None of his attacks interrupted the Subjugation King's actions!

So long as the powerful clone continued to shelter inside his extremely powerful energy barrier, he remained immune to any interruption from others.

This left the Subjugation King free to charge up his big attacks and unleash devastation from his stationary position!

Few Dread Marines were able to survive his tribulation light strikes. The clone of the God King outclassed the mortal soldiers to such a massive extent that their defenses simply weren't in the same league.

Despite the helpful feedback gained from punching the energy barrier, Ves was not fighting for himself at the moment.

He was fighting for the survival of his creations.

The continued existence of Caramond and the Dominion of Man were at stake. If Ves failed to figure out a way to hinder and defeat the clone of the Subjugation King, the dreadnought would eventually be brought to her breaking point!

This was the unspoken way in which the God King applied pressure on his valued slave.

Ves needed to shore up his combat abilities and fight hard enough to force the clone to stop wrecking the ship, but that was easier said than done!

He was not a professional soldier!

He was not a combat-oriented cultivator!

The only way he could gain an advantage over the clone was to rely on external factors such as weapons.

It was rather stupid to think that a mech designer like himself could defeat a superior opponent barehanded.

Even if that was not possible, Ves regretted his decision not to develop a few pieces of equipment that he could make use of in his true body form!

He supposed he could summon the Oceancaller and scale it to the size of a polearm, but Ves already concluded that he wouldn't be able to produce any better results.

Unfortunately, his best 'weapons', if he could even treat them in this regard, were the mechs that he designed!

The absence of mechs irritated him a lot. He was a mech designer and poured a huge amount of time and effort into making them strong enough to defeat powerful opponents.

Though he doubted that his second-class expert mechs were strong enough to make his current adversary shake, it would have been nice if he had received enough time and forewarning to prepare a bunch of first-class mechs.

Even if that was not possible, Ves regretted his decision not to develop a few pieces of equipment that he could make use of in his true body form!

He supposed he could summon the Oceancaller and scale it to the size of a polearm, but Ves already concluded that he wouldn't be able to produce any better results.

He lacked the skills to leverage the weapon effectively enough to strike much harder than what he was able to accomplish with a straightforward shoulder bash.

Ves needed to come up with new tricks in order to inflict actual damage to the clone. The Subjugation King himself already told him that. He just did not expect to be put under so much pressure.

There was no reasonable way he could become as skilled in combat as Ketis or any other decent soldier for that matter in the span of half an hour or less.

The best solution he could think of is to create a combat-oriented incarnation on the spot, but this was no time for him to create any new products. He was sure the Subjugation King would strike him with a tribulation lightning bolt if he dared to engage in production rather than actual combat!

What else could he do to get himself out of this predicament?

He could enter the Mech Designer System.

So long as time in the outside reality remained frozen, he could spend a large amount of time on thinking over his problem.

He could also go on another Mission spree and work hard to earn as many Ascension Points as possible to extend his stay in the System Space.

Once he earned enough AP, he could purchase an expensive enlightenment fruit that taught him how to fight like a cultivator.

Ves recalled the time where he gifted Venerable Tusa Billingsley-Larkinson with the Shadow Dance Dagger Style Enlightenment Fruit.

From the moment his cousin ingested the fruit, Tusa instantly became a highly skilled practitioner of the extraordinary fighting style!

Of course, it already helped that Tusa had a strong foundation as a melee fighter. Ves did not expect to turn into an instant master in whatever combat style he learned from an enlightenment fruit, but anything was better than nothing!

This certainly sounded like a viable plan, but... Ves was reluctant to go through with this course of action.

It wasn't because he felt this was a form of cheating. Sure, his pride insisted that he should overcome this challenge by relying on honest effort as opposed to an out-of-context factor.

However, since the Subjugation King already bent or broke the rules when he chose to interfere in this tribulation event, Ves would hardly be at fault if he proceeded to exploit a few loopholes.

The real issue was that Ves was deeply afraid of exposing the Mech Designer System to the Subjugation King.

Ves had no way of telling whether the God King already sensed the presence of the fragment of the Metal Scroll and everything that came with it. This might be part of the reason why the Subjugation King took the effort to plant a soul mark.

It would be safer to assume that the Mech Designer System remained a secret. Ves was not willing to expose this particular secret, especially not when it wouldn't make a meaningful difference.

Ingesting a combat-oriented enlightenment fruit, training in his new combat style and developing a suitable weapon was unlikely to make Ves strong enough to defeat the powerful tribulation manifestation.

The gap in strength was too great.

Better control and technique would certainly be helpful in allowing Ves to leverage his physical strength to a much higher degree, but it ultimately wouldn't make a difference if he still wouldn't be able to shake the defenses of the clone when he was levering 100 percent of his strength!

What he actually needed to do was to increase the amount of energy at his disposal.

Ves soon thought about the Spark Reactor.

At this moment, Caramond and Blinky were still working hard to channel as much fire energy to the Dreadfire Legion.

The mass casualties inflicted by the God King had reduced their number by a noticeable extent, but the Dread Marines bravely fought on without any thought of retreating.

The deaths actually helped to make the Dreadfire Legion more effective. The fire energy wasn't being diluted as much, which meant that every ranged weapon hit a little harder than before.

Yet... for all of their efforts, the base strength of a Dread Marine was still too low for all of this amplification to make a real difference in this fight.

Ves turned his attention back to the clone. The tall and glowing tribulation manifestation did not bring an entourage alone. Instead, he claimed all of the power of the 9th wave, thereby attaining a concentration of power that was so high that lesser opponents no longer posed a threat anymore!

His eyes suddenly lit up as he figured out a promising solution to his problem.

He just needed to copy the method employed by the Subjugation King!

Instead of channeling most of the fire energy generated by the Spark Reactor to the utterly useless and irrelevant Dreadfire Legion, Caramond and Blinky should be channeling all of that juicy power to Ves instead!

The idea had a lot of merit, but also introduced a lot of possible risks.

For one, Ves was pretty sure that it would be extremely uncomfortable for him to contain and direct such an insanely high concentration of fire energy.

Ves already thought back on the time where he paid a visit to the Spark Reactor. He couldn't get any closer because the energies radiated by the living spark was too much for him to handle.

However, Ves did not have any promising alternatives at this time.

The problem wouldn't be as bad as long as he controlled the process and stayed below his limit.

There was no time for second-guessing. Ves quickly committed to this plan. Blinky instantly conveyed the change in strategy to Caramond, who subsequently waved back his Dreadfire Legion.

"You have fought long and hard, but this calls for a god! Pull back and keep your distance, for I shall challenge this alien with the help of my brave progenitor!"

Caramond consciously cut off most of the supply of fire energy through the spiritual network that connected him to his Dreadfire Legion.

The loss of power was incredibly noticeable as the Dread Armors no longer channeled more than a fraction of fire energy that they managed to scrounge from the background.

Few Dread Marines chose to retreat back into the Dominion of Man. Each of them felt obligated to fight for the survival of Caramond and their ship. They simply obeyed their latest instruction by flying further away before they continued to bombard the clone of the God King.

Even if the absence of fire energy weakened the massed attacks, they still exerted a drain on the alien manifestation's defenses.

Meanwhile, now that Caramond and Blinky had rid themselves of a burden, they closed in on Ves and entered his physical body.

The three entities had not quite merged, but gathered so close to each other that they were able to cooperate in a much more effective manner.

"Hit me with fire energy!"

"Mrow!"

A large energy vortex formed around Ves as much of the fire energy directed to this side of the hull suddenly converged on Ves!

The temperature rapidly grew hotter. Ves' true body physically started to heat up while his Spirituality was beginning to roast due to the concentration of so much volatile fire energy!

Ves was pretty sure that he would have blown up already if not for Caramond's efforts to control the concentrated fire energy.

As it was, it would be a bad idea to continue with piling up so much output from the Spark Reactor!

Ves believed he had barely gained the raw power to pose an actual threat to the clone of the Subjugation King.

That still did not mean he was able to harness this power properly.

He and Blinky had learned a lot on how to manipulate fire energy over the course of this lightning tribulation, but they wouldn't be able to manipulate it as well as Ves controlled water energy when he played the Oceancaller.

Caramond gave Ves the equivalent of a spiritual squeeze. The ancestral spirit had grown and matured by quite an extent after all of this time.

"Do not despair, my progenitor. You are not a soldier, but I was modeled after one of the best of one. Let me take control, and I will promise you that I shall vanquish this dreadful inhuman pest. The pride of humanity must not falter to this dastardly alien's scheme!"

Chapter 5880 Unprecedented Teamwork

Ves was doing a lot of unprecedented stuff as of late, many of which entailed a lot of risks.

This was yet another harebrained scheme that he had cooked up in order to solve his latest problem.

As the energy vortex surrounding his true body began to infuse a lot of fire energy into his true body, he quickly began to feel overbearingly hot!

He felt as if he was cooking himself!

His Spirituality was not able to cope with the increasing concentration of fire energy as well as his physical body.

As a phase lord, his organic tissue had already exceeded the limitations of human tolerances.

Phase lords were all capable of navigating in space to an extent. This meant that they were naturally resistant to extreme environmental factors. Even a lesser phase lord like himself was able to fly a bit close to a star and still not worry too much about radiation poisoning.

It frustrated Ves that the tolerance of his own Spirituality was lower than that of his true body, but he had little choice but to make do with his present circumstances.

At the very least, Ves concluded that his latest idea had merit.

"Give me as much control over your body as possible. I have recently acquired a wealth of fighting techniques that should prove useful. Make sure to summon your flute as well. I can strike harder with a weapon."

"I can give you control over my body, but it is not wise to employ the Oceancaller. The artifact is based on the water element. It does not play well with the fire element."

"Then proceed with my first suggestion."

It was already too late for questions and doubts. Ves put his full trust in his own creation. The sensation of getting encroached upon by a foreign spirit, even one he created just a short time ago, was deeply discomfiting.

However, the potential synergies were simply too great for Ves to dismiss. It just took a bit of trial and error to get everything set up correctly.

Ves constantly had to hold himself back from lashing out and repelling the intruder.

Fortunately, Blinky was able to play the role of a middleman of sorts. He provided Caramond with a suitable vessel while also maintaining a strong connection to Ves.

This formed the basis of an unprecedented three-way relationship where everyone pooled their strengths together for the sole purpose of turning Ves into the strongest possible combatant!

Although the concentration of fire energy still imposed a heavy burden onto Ves, he clearly sensed he had become a lot more powerful!

Perhaps... he was able to beat up ace mechs in this special state!

Of course, Ves did not let this go through his head. This was only a temporary state that rapidly wore down his Spirituality and relied heavily on the Spark Reactor to fuel this empowered state.

He would miss this incredible rush of power if he was able to come away from this event.

That only meant that he had to make the most of this unique opportunity.

"Focus. We must align ourselves if we are to defeat this terrible alien foe."

"You are right. Blinky and I will follow your lead. We will focus on energy manipulation while you take charge of my body."

"Mrow!"

There was no need for anyone to say anything. Their cooperation had already reached a state where they roughly understood each other's intentions.

As illusionary flames radiated out of Ves' gigantic form, the clone of the Subjugation King had been remarkably patient about granting his valued slave the time to figure out a more effective combat approach.

"#\$\$#&."

"YOU ARE FINALLY MAKING PROPER USE OF YOUR ADVANTAGES. I EXPECT YOU TO FIGHT BETTER THAN A LOWLY WORM THIS TIME."

Ves raised a defiant fist towards the clone of the Subjugation King!

"I have had enough with your constant belittlement! Neither we nor our race are fated to become your slaves!"

Ves and Blinky took action first.

Having received lots of practice when he facilitated the utilization of fire energy among the Dread Marines, Blinky knew exactly how to shape fire energy into thrust power.

A giant flame plume appeared behind Ves' back, causing his true body to propel forward at a much greater acceleration rate than what he was able to manage in the past!

In addition to that, Blinky began to channel fire energies to Ves' arms and legs, causing their flame coronas to increase in size and intensity.

A lot of fire energy was going to waste, but it did not matter as the trio had monopolized much of the output of the Spark Reactor that was spilling out of the hull!

It became incredibly challenging for Blinky to keep all of the fire energy under control, but it shouldn't be a problem for him to keep this up for a short amount of time.

Ves did not remain idle during his time. He chose to exercise the spatial abilities of his true body as that was an integral part to how phase lords fought.

He stimulated his Kelsis organ to form a spatial barrier that should soften any incoming blows.

He also stimulated his Maracos organ in a way that he had never done in the past.

He tried to warp the surrounding space and add transphasic properties to his limbs. He understood phasewater technology well enough to understand how it was done with transphasic alloys.

Trying to imitate this special condition in his own flesh was an inspired idea, yet it seemed viable enough for him to make the attempt.

One of the observations he made over the course of the 5th round was that the aliens had no experience with phasewater and transphasic technology.

Their attacks failed to inflict as much damage as they should due to the Dominion of Man's luxurious use of phasewater in all of her construction.

Though the Subjugation King clearly made a few adaptations to counter phasewater technology, he clearly hadn't refined his approach at this point.

This gave Ves a window of opportunity where he would be able to make good use of the phasewater flowing through his veins!

As Ves and Blinky continued to do what they did best and provide support, Caramond had consciously taken the lead.

From the perspective of the Subjugation King, the ancestral spirit was absurdly young. The alien tyrant had grown incredibly curious how well Caramond would be able to fight in his current state.

Caramond chose to lead by executing a kick with two flaming feet!

"We shall break your energy shell!"

There was so much momentum behind this strike that the energy barrier finally got struck by a heavy impact!

The simultaneous explosion of fire and tribulation energies blended together and blasted both sides apart!

As the body of Ves quickly stabilized in space, the trio were able to perceive that their strike had successfully weakened the energy barrier, if only to a minor extent.

"It's working!" Ves exulted. "We need to keep up the pressure. We can't give this bastard any reprieve. It is vital for us to channel as much concentrated fire energies at this barrier as possible. No offense, but our physical attacks are doing less damage than the attacks launched by the Dreadfire Legion."

"Understood."

Instead of going for any big moves, Caramond directed Ves' body to close in and unleash a flurry of punches and kicks at the immobile energy barrier.

The way Ves moved and attacked had changed a lot. His actions became a lot faster and more efficient. He also tried to vary his moves to make himself less predictable.

The difference between his old self and his 'new' self was like the difference between night and day!

This was because Caramond directly borrowed the fundamental unarmed combat skills of the Dreadfire Legion!

Since the ancestral spirit had forged a strong Bloodfire Pact with so many elite soldiers of the Red Fleet, there was no question that their martial arts represented the best of what their organization had to offer!

Even though there was nothing extraordinary about their unarmed combat techniques, just the knowledge and the skill of being able to land a proper punch, chain multiple attacks together and maneuver properly in the field dramatically increased Ves' effective combat power!

It was a pity that Ves was too focused on manipulating his true body's phasewater organs to properly focus and memorize all of the sick moves that Caramond pulled off while he was in control.

That was not to say that Caramond delivered the best performance. Theory and borrowed skills could only bring him so far. His nature as an entity that was transitioning into a True God granted him a huge amount of processing ability, but honing a completely different body into a combat machine took a lot of practice and hard work.

Fortunately, Caramond was a fast learner. His domain centered around the superiority of the human race. Even if he was not proficient in a certain area, he pushed himself towards mastering it as quickly as possible, because this was how humanity managed to rise up to become a dominant power in the Milky Way!

Blow after blow struck the energy barrier.

Each time one of Ves' limbs struck the clone's first layer of defense, it triggered a countershock.

This normally should have debilitated Ves' true body, but Blinky made sure to channel a spike of fire energy just before contact!

It took a few tries to dial in the right energy levels, but Blinky had managed to find a sweet spot where a punch or a kick produced just enough of an explosion of fire energies to repel some of the painful tribulation energies seeking to shock Ves' body.

The countermeasure was not able to block the countershock entirely, but whatever managed to pass through only inflicted a moderate amount of pain.

"We are growing stronger. I can feel it." Ves remarked. "We are also making progress at wearing down this energy banner."

The continuous flow of fire energy was making everything hurt, yet the prospect of victory granted Ves enough hope to push him forward!

His true body continued to turn into a more formidable combatant. The modest but continuous growth induced by tribulation lighting paired with Caramond's growing skill and comprehension on how to pilot Ves' true body were producing increasingly remarkable results!

However, the clone of the Subjugation King was not willing to stand still and allow Ves to launch his attacks with impunity.

The tribulation manifestation gathered a large amount of lighting energy in his limbs and suddenly thrust them in Ves' direction!

Fortunately, the trio was able to sense this telegraphed attack well in advance. Blinky generated a fire energy jet while Ves squeezed the Maracos organ just in time to yank his true body away!

"Ahhh! That hurts so much!"

The lightning blast unleashed by the clone was too big for Ves to evade entirely!

His spatial barrier broke in an instant. The burst of fire energy generated by Blinky got pushed away entirely.

Ultimately, a large portion of his side suffered heavy burns that ate into the phasewater-reinforced flesh!

Much of it was starting to heal, but it was clear that it would not return in peak condition for quite some time.

Ves was thankful that he managed to accomplish at least this much. When he was able to observe what the strike had done, he almost shuddered.

The lightning blast had dug another large trench into the hull of the vessel! Numerous secondary gun batteries had become fried to the point where they turned into husks of their former selves.

He could not imagine how his body would look if it took the attack head-on! The specter of death hovered really close to him during this critical interval!

"Keep fighting! The sooner we tear apart this energy barrier, the sooner we can stop him from pulling off any big moves!"

"I agree! This alien should not be allowed to desecrate the Dominion of Man any further!"

"We should position our body higher from the hull surface. If this bastard launches another powerful lightning strike, it should at least get lost in vacuum if it happens to miss."