

## The Mech 6151

### Chapter 6151 The Power of Curses

Consuming the Introduction to the Withering Curse Enlightenment Fruit was one of the best decisions that Ves had made as of late.

It contained knowledge on everything that Ves needed the most at the moment.

It granted Ves a clear and succinct introduction on the wood element. The information contained in the rotted fruit went beyond the other basic sources that he had absorbed in the past.

Ves originally did not intend to delve into the intricacies of the wood element so quickly.

According to his original plan, he should have invested more time into developing a solid understanding of the water element. He had already started on it for a while, and he hated to leave this job unfinished.

Not only would increased comprehension allow him to better incorporate the water element into his hyper tech and E-tech applications, but it should also allow him to utilize some of his phase lord abilities more effectively than before.

He then planned to familiarize himself with the fire element next. He already gained a head start in this field after helping the Dominion of Man transcend into the very first Bloodfire vessel of her kind. He could use the scattered insights he acquired during this legendary ordeal and quickly complete his familiarization of this volatile element.

The timing of it was also convenient. Ves did not only intend to upgrade and convert the heavily damaged and disabled Promethea into a first-class ace mech, but also reshape her into the first proper Bloodfire Carmine mech of her kind.

The more he understood the fire element, the easier it would be to develop what may possibly be the most dangerous elemental Carmine System!

Ves had yet to formulate any plans after completing these goals. He did not have a strong preference for tackling elemental Carmine mechs based on wood, earth and metal, so he decided to postpone his decision until he finally reached this point a few years later.

Current events had overtaken him, though. How could he have known that Task Force Solus would build their foothold on Reticula Corein V next to a powerful calamity plant. The Emperor Tree provided so much materials and research value on the wood element that Ves would be a fool to ignore the benefits!

On top of that, the Elegant Rage's mutation into a half-wooden mech made it extremely convenient for Ves to extrapolate her transformation and turn her into a Woodsap mech.

While Ves did not regret the detours that he had made, he could not deny that he completely made a mess out of his development trajectory. He deviated so far from his original plan that it had practically turned worthless by this point.

All of this meant that before he ingested the enlightenment fruit, he lacked a solid foundation in the wood element. The lessons he learned from the Emperor Tree was not enough for him to gain a systematic understanding of an element that was closely aligned with his life domain.

These shortcomings hindered him from making the Elegant Rage stronger. Now that the Introduction to the Withering Curse had addressed this shortcoming, Ves knew much more clearly that he had missed several opportunities to make his Woodsap mech stronger and more in tune with the wood element.

"I feel so stupid." He grumbled.

As a mech designer, he hated it when any improvement in his design capabilities forced him to look at his older works in a worse light.

It was especially painful for him to recognize a lot of flaws in the work that he completed earlier today!

Intellectually, he knew that he couldn't have done any better at the time. He had yet to absorb the Introduction to the Withering Curse Enlightenment Fruit before this hour, so how could he have possibly done any better?

Emotionally, he couldn't accept this argument. He felt stupid and incompetent for developing and releasing his first Woodsap mech without bothering to master the basic foundation of the wood element. There were so many aspects about the Elegant Rage that he had left criminally underutilized!

Ves resisted the urge to smack his head with his palm and tried his best to think forward.

"I still have a chance to remedy this mistake."

His new comprehension of wood was not particularly deep or profound, but it still gave him a few tips on how to increase the efficiency of the Elegant Rage's inherent regeneration capabilities.

For example, Ves could teach the Elegant Rage how to take control over her own restoration process by concentrating a lot more wood energy at the parts that needed to be repaired first.

By moving away from equal distribution and allocating more wood energy at more essential parts, the Woodsap mech should be able to last a lot longer in combat!

"A third order living mech like the Elegant Rage can probably learn this trick on her own over time, but it is better if she masters this technique in advance."

Ves did not linger too long in his newfound understanding of the wood element.

What interested him even more was all of the insights related to curses.

Since the enlightenment fruit was called 'Introduction to the Withering Curse', it went without saying that it offered Ves a true introduction into the subject of curses.

From what Ves was able to learn from the knowledge package imparted by the fruit, curses had very different definitions, forms and meanings for as long as cultivation existed.

Traditionally, curses possessed a lot of religious associations.

They were so mysterious and poorly understood that people often regarded victims as those who had been cursed by gods.

Perhaps there was an element of truth to these beliefs depending on the definitions, but it did not take a True God to cast a curse on others.

According to the unknown group who developed the withering curse contained within the enlightenment fruit, curses were often regarded as a more covert means of weakening a target.

In many cases, curses worked too slowly for them to be useful on a battlefield. They were much more useful when employed as a means to sabotage or assassinate key personnel without alerting anyone.

Good curses could be cast covertly and over a long distance, thereby achieving the goals of minimizing exposure and reducing the risk to the culprit.

That did not mean that curses could be cast on the battlefield in order to debilitate an opponent up close, but this was a more advanced application of curses that was not covered by the Introduction on the Withering Curse.

An enlightenment fruit worth 77 Ascension Points could only cover so much theory.

"There's no need to learn how to cast more advanced curses."

With better theory and techniques, a curse master could gain the ability to bestow an affliction onto an unsuspecting victim that was many light-years away.

A curse master could also cast a powerful curse onto a powerful adversary in the middle of a duel without giving away any clues!

There were many possible ways to apply curses, and Ves felt incredibly tempted by all of the possibilities.

However, the talent and effort required to go deeper into this field was too much for Ves. Unless he was willing to spend a lot more AP into mastering more advanced curses, it would take decades if not centuries for him to master all of these methods!

Ves did not fall for the temptation of curses despite their usefulness. He was a mech designer first and foremost. Learning how to attack others in a sneaky fashion was not only a waste of time, but completely unnecessary.

If he wanted to get rid of a powerful opponent, he would spend a lot of money or bestow powerful mechs to people who could do this job on his behalf. This was the correct way for a mech designer to fight.

That said, there was one aspect about curses that intrigued Ves a lot.

"Many curses can be amplified through the use of rituals."

Due to their religious origins, a lot of curses could not be separated from rituals. By setting up specific conditions in a ritual, a practitioner was able to harmonize with the power of heaven and channel much greater power into a curse!

Ves understood that the method of rituals was the key to enable the Elegant Rage to quickly drain the energies of a forest.

He already thought of a few ways to allow the Elegant Rage to perform a ritual in battle.

Rituals could enable the casting of many different curses, but the enlightenment fruit only focused on the withering curse.

There were actually many different variations of withering curses, each of which should be applied to different circumstances.

Most of the withering curses were meant to be cast on to plants, but there were also others that should only be cast on exobeasts or humans.

No matter the target, the effects were roughly similar, which was the draining of vitality and other energies.

Some curses produced a relatively strong effect, but only lasted for a short duration.

Other curses could last for months, but this was by design as the probability of detection was not high.

All in all, Ves gained a comprehensive understanding of the basic variations of the withering curse.

"The biggest issue is that none of these curses are particularly strong." Ves muttered.

The best curses could theoretically enable a mortal to cripple a True God!

Of course, in order to achieve such an exaggerated effect, the weaker cultivator had to compensate for the huge gap in strength by concocting a grand ritual that likely drained several life-bearing planets of all of their energies!

Even then, the True God may still be able to resist such a curse as long as he was prepared or possessed stronger spiritual defenses than usual.

Although it was impossible for Ves to pull off such an insane ritual with just an introduction on curses, Ves still gained a lot of inspiration from the mere mention of this possibility.

"This may be a way for the Elegant Rage to quickly drain an entire forest!"

Ves initially bought the enlightenment fruit with the assumption that he would have to teach the Woodsap mech how to cast a modified withering curse that possessed an energy drain effect.

Now, he understood that it was not necessary for him to reverse engineer the withering curse.

It was much easier if he modified one of the existing rituals so that the Woodsap mech forcibly treated the surrounding trees as sacrificial vessels to fuel a powerful withering curse!

Of course, Ves had no intention of letting the Elegant Rage cast the curse.

Basic low-level curses were generally ineffective tribulation manifestations such as the alien swordsman.

Even if the four-armed alien was fighting against the Elegant Rage in the flesh, ordinary curses should never be able to take effect on such a highly trained and disciplined warrior.

"It's better to remove the actual curse component and replace it with another effect."

Ves suddenly came up with an inventive idea.

"Withering is the process of weakening a target and more specifically a plant. What if I can do the opposite? What if the Elegant Rage sets the target of the 'reverse curse' on herself and attempts to strengthen herself?"

This was exactly what Ves wanted to accomplish when he decided to enter the System Space!

Even though the Introduction to the Withering Curse did not contain any knowledge on how to reverse the withering curse, Ves was confident he could figure it out by relying on his existing foundation in cultivation science.

"The opposite of a curse is a blessing. Perhaps the Elegant Rage may become known as the first living mech that can bless herself in combat!"

Ves briefly frowned. He had already utilized the word blessing in a different context related to design spirits.

In order to avoid confusion, it was best if he coined another term for reverse curses.

"I'll figure it out later."

## Chapter 6152 Sacrificing Nature

When Ves exited the System Space, his entire demeanor drastically changed.

In reality, virtually no time had passed. Neither Major Jankowski nor the Elegant Rage noticed that Ves had secretly spent hours inside a completely different space.

Enlightened by knowledge related to withering curses, Ves had painstakingly deconstructed one of them and made many alterations based on other theories and reasonable inferences.

His work was anything but clean or elegant. Ves lacked the immense knowledge and experience of his mother, so he encountered many difficulties in trying to rework a mysterious means of attack that he only understood on a shallow level.

It didn't matter. Ves was a good improviser. This was not the first time that he tinkered with cultivation techniques. He possessed a broad enough understanding of cultivation science to be able to see through the surface of most techniques and dissect them as if he was studying the source code of a software program.

Although the 'programming code' of cultivation techniques was a lot more complicated, any professional software engineer should be able to understand them and change their operations much easier by relying on familiar methods.

As a mech designer, it was essential for Ves to know how to program his own mechs, so he was able to work on dissecting the withering curse before repackaging it into a completely different technique.

Ves had no idea whether it would work. There was no way for him to try it out for himself as he completely tailored the improvised technique for the Elegant Rage. No other mech or individual was able to perform a similar reverse curse because they lacked the unique conditions of the first Woodsap mech.

This was why he did not waste too much time in the System Space. There was little point in lingering when he did not have a solid goal to work towards.

Ves immediately became immersed in battle again. Elegant Rage was on the verge of losing one of her tonfas, and the other one was not too far away from breaking apart either.

The momentum of this bout had shifted so much in the alien swordsman's favor that Major Jankowski looked as if he was already starting to think about pulling the ejection lever!

"I am sorry, professor. My skills are not enough to outfight this alien sword wielder. Your mech..."

"It's okay." Ves quickly replied with a confident grin. "You have fought well so far. You managed to buy enough time for me to figure out a way to boost the Elegant Rage's performance. Sit tight and be prepared to cooperate with the mech when she begins to show initiative."

There was no time for explanations. Ves ignored Major Jankowski's confusion and instead began the vital process of enlightening the Elegant Rage to an entirely new method of drawing power.

"Elegant Rage, accept my data transfer!"

Ves utilized his cranial implant to transmit a long and very detailed text document that contained a lot of theory and instructions.

As a machine, the Elegant Rage was able to read and understand most of the contents of this document in just a fraction of a second.

Although she was not as intellectually strong as a true scientist, the Elegant Rage's inherent information processing capabilities were not weak. The sapience of a third order living mech also enabled her to gain true comprehension of all of the easy insights that could only be understood by other sentient beings.

The Elegant Rage immediately began to regain a lot of confidence.

"What did you share with her, professor?!"

"You'll find out soon enough. Give the Elegant Rage time to process the information that I have sent."

"PROGENITOR. THIS TECHNIQUE IS AMAZING. CAN I TRULY USE IT TO BECOME MORE POWERFUL?"

"I can't say for sure whether it will work, but we may as well try it out." Ves responded. "Be aware that trying it out on a wide scale will have grave consequences for yourself. The more you damage the environment, the more you are at risk of provoking a backlash. I am only teaching you this because your survival is at stake."

"THANK YOU. AS MUCH AS I WANT TO MAKE USE OF IT RIGHT AWAY, I AM NOT CONFIDENT I CAN EXECUTE IT. THERE ARE MANY STEPS IN YOUR INSTRUCTION THAT REQUIRES PROFICIENCY THAT I DO NOT POSSESS." "Don't worry. I already thought of that. Let me give you a small upgrade."

"Mrow"

Blinky emerged from Ves' head and began to release a ball of wood energy that the Star Cat had prepared beforehand.

The ball was actually a spiritual construct that Ves had specifically designed for easy absorption.

As soon as the Elegant Rage swallowed the ball of wood energy, the living mech's spiritual foundation changed and became a little more complex.

The Woodsap mech integrated a handful of the core operations of the new technique, allowing her to execute it a lot easier and with less chance of accidents!

There was nothing stopping the Elegant Rage from applying what she just learned!

"GET READY!"

The fight outside continued to push the Elegant Rage back. The power of fire and ice intermittently slammed towards the battered living mech, making it seem as if she was on the verge of getting engulfed by a firestorm and an ice storm all at once.

Crack!

One of the tonfas of the Elegant Rage finally snapped! The resilient ebony wood could no longer handle the alternating exposure to high heat and extreme cold. Although the living mech was put at an immediate disadvantage, the machine made a surprising move that interrupted the alien swordsman's rhythm and temporarily forced him back.

The thorns on the Elegant Rage's exterior abruptly began to glow as the living mech concentrated a lot of wood energy into the abnormal growths!

At the same time, the aura of the Woodsap mech changed as the living mech began to conduct a ritual that she had only recently learned.

The mech made a few incomprehensible movements that somehow seemed oddly sacred.

Surprisingly enough, the grace imparted by the Lobis Fragment gem happened to help the Elegant Rage during this critical moment!

If the mech was forced to perform a ritual dance by herself, then she would have moved like a malfunctioning bot.

Yet with the help of the elegance of a different existence, the living mech instantly knew how to perform the ritual dance in a way that greatly harmonized with the surrounding environment!

Once the dance reached a key moment, the Elegant Rage suddenly opened a port and began to spill Emperor Tree Sap into the air!

This sacrificial step raised the Elegant Rage's harmonization with the power of heaven to a peak, allowing her to empower her thorns with greater wood energy!

"FEEL MY PAIN!"

The thorns suddenly launched in every direction, causing the immediate air around the Woodsap mech to turn into a killing field!

Most of the thorns ended up hitting nothing but empty air, but a handful of them soared straight forward and threatened to penetrate the alien swordsman!

However, the alert lightning manifestation responded quickly. The alien warrior

rapidly swung his two sword in front of his body, causing the fire and ice energies to form two protective layers of energy curtains!

The thorns that threatened to impale the alien first began to get exposed to a huge amount of heat, causing the wood energy attached to them to burn and shrink.

The half-burned thorns then struck a rapidly solidified ice curtain.

This not only caused the thorns to encounter a physical obstacle, but also cooled them so rapidly that many of them already started to shatter! Although the alien swordsman successfully defended himself against a costly area attack, trying to poke the tribulation manifestation with thorns had never

been the point.

Thunk.

Thunk.

Thunk.

Thunk.

Many thorns soared at different heights and angles, but all of them eventually obeyed the call of the planet's local gravity and fell from the skies.

A lot of thorns struck different trees, causing them to punch straight through their fragile trunks before slamming into the soil.

As soon as the thorns dug themselves into the ground of the surrounding forest environment, they began to glow brighter as they tried to influence the trees in their surroundings!

If the trees were mutated plants that developed rudimentary sapience, then they would have figured out that they were under attack. Any intelligent individual would have been able to put up active resistance against the weird effect propagated by all of the thorns.

However, the story was different for trees that were just ordinary in many aspects. Each of them may have been exposed to energy E energy radiation to grow a little stronger and more remarkable, but without undergoing a promotion in life, they did not have the capital to resist!

The glowing thorns easily overcame the weak and instinctual resistance of the trees and began to siphon their wood energy at a steady pace.

The thorns acted as makeshift totems at this junction. Each of them became vessels of an ongoing ritual that required the absorption of a huge amount of wood energy from 'unresisting sacrifices'!

The technique imparted by Ves did not have the power to force unwilling subjects to cooperate with the ritual, but trees had no wills in the first place!

As such, the entire forest began to age and dry out at a rapid speed. Many sections of the forest visibly began to change as hundreds if not thousands of plants started to grow weaker at once.

Their leaves turned yellow and brown. Their bark started to crack. Their trunks started to droop and dry out. All of the green and vitality that characterized this forest were disappearing at a rapid rate.

The thorns grew more and more vigorous in the meantime. They became so

flush with mixed wood energy that glowing runes even began to appear on their surface!

It turned out that one of the ways the Elegant Rage prepared her thorns for the new technique was to 'carve' them with a handful of runes!

Ves only designed a modest alteration to the thorns to selectively boost their

intended functions. Adding a couple of runes was the limit to what he could do for the time being.

It took a lot more expertise in traditional crafts as well as more specialized knowledge in withering curses for him to be able to apply more relevant runes

to the thorns!

However, the simple meanings associated with the runes that Ves happened to be familiar with already made enough of a difference.

As the trees all around the Elegant Rage began to die in large numbers due to

overdrafting their energies, the Woodsap mech rapidly started to accumulate a lot of power!

With each second that passed, the Elegant Rage increased her resemble to the once-mighty Emperor Tree!

The Woodsap mech felt as if she had almost gone back to the time where Venerable Lanie broke through and managed to empower her battle partner with forced resonance!

Although the effect this time was nowhere near as strong in many aspects, the Elegant Rage at least enjoyed one overwhelming advantage. She commanded a lot more wood energy than before!

She became flooded with so much power that a lot of excess wood energy

started to spill into the environment and disperse at a rapid rate!

It appeared that there was a limit to how much wood energy the Elegant Rage could control at any one time.

Even so, this was already enough!

The Elegant Rage immediately started to wrangle some of the borrowed wood energy by concentrating them onto her broken tonfa.

The ebony wood shaft magically started to stretch and grow until the entire

tonfa grew whole again!

It only took up to a dozen seconds at most to make the weapon whole again!

Although the newly grown portions looked a lot cruder, darker and imperfect than before, this did not change the fact that the Elegant Rage successfully utilized the power of the forest to enhance her own performance!

The momentum of the Elegant Rage began to grow. The living mech felt a lot stronger and more confident than before!

"LET NATURE'S BENEDICTION GRANT ME THE POWER TO SMITE THIS FOE.""

## Chapter 6153 Profligate Energy Spending

As the thorns spread across the forest environment sucked the energies of all of the surrounding trees to the point where they had nothing left to donate, the Elegant Rage became drunk with stolen power!

Aside from repairing her broken tonfa, the Elegant Rage also expended a lot of wood energy to spontaneously grow a lot of new thorns across her mech frame.

The ones made of improved ebony wood grew the fastest, while the ones that were meant to be made out of second-class alloys took a lot more time to take on their final shapes.

Regardless, as soon as the Elegant Rage managed to regrow most of her thorns, she immediately launched them out with far greater force than previously!

Even though a lot of thorns ended up crashing into areas that had already been drained of life, there were still a lot more thorns that managed to traverse much longer trajectories before they landed on the ground.

Once these distant thorns took root, they began to drain all of the trees and plants of all of their energies, causing the entire terrain to look as if the area had become affected by an apocalypse.

The Elegant Rage already regrew her third set of thorns, though she was not in a hurry to launch them anymore. She already gained access to far more wood energy than she could reasonably harness.

She had so much energy in her reach that her control over it all had rapidly degraded!

It couldn't be helped. The Elegant Rage was not that strong, and she did not possess the support of true resonance that she could only gain when being piloted by Venerable Lanie Larkinson.

Even so, the Woodsap mech was still capable enough to perform a number of crude operations.

For example, her tonfas along with her entire mech frame became fully rejuvenated!

Just like the Emperor Tree when it was at its height, the Elegant Rage inherited the same insanely effective regeneration factor. As long as she had access to enough wood energy, there was no limit to her ability to restore from battle damage!

One of the reasons why the Elegant Rage fell behind during the start of this bout was because she already accumulated a lot of damage across her mech frame from previous exposures to tribulation lightning.

Now that the Elegant Rage managed to repair all of the damage that the living mech previously did not have time to remedy through the normal process, the machine practically returned to her peak condition!

Major Jankowski almost moaned as he experienced this reversal. He truly felt as if he could defeat any opponent so long as the wood energy remained abundant!

Though Ves was glad to see that his efforts successfully allowed his creation to finally live up to her potential as a Woodsap mech, he did not miss the sequelae of utilizing demonic means to gain more power.

The regenerated components of the Elegant Rage looked darker and less perfect than the other parts of the mech.

It was as if the wood energy plundered from the trees was tainted.

From the moment the Woodsap mech utilized the energy that was stained with the lives of so many plants, it absorbed all of the taint and negative karma that came with it! Guilt literally stained her mech frame!

Ves was already able to figure out a few consequences to this mutation. The Elegant Rage had started to sink into darkness, making her less compatible with positive energy.

Nature also started to repel her more actively. She was no longer a mech that could peacefully get along with plants anymore. She had proven herself to be a predator who did not hesitate to destroy ecosystems in order to gain a combat advantage.

Fortunately, the stain was not too great this time. The forest that she destroyed was still very young and artificial to boot.

The heavens did not really think much about unmaking trees that were just a few years old at most.

Perhaps there might be ways for the Elegant Rage to gradually get rid of the stain in the future.

It all depended on what Venerable Lanie used the Woodsap mech for and whether she took the initiative to drain another forest of power.

For now, the Elegant Rage still had a bout to win!

Major Jankowski did not want to let all of the overflowing wood energy to go to waste, so he quickly boosted his mech back into the fray!

Crack!

Crack!

Crack!

The Elegant Rage began to assail the alien swordsman with so much force and fervor that she immediately gained the upper hand!

Major Jankowski had completely thrown aside any notion of defense and decisively committed to attack!

Was the alien swordsman attempting to block? Attack!

Was the alien swordsman trying to conjure a fire and ice curtain? Attack!

Was the alien swordsman making a risky attack that could inflict serious damage to the Elegant Rage's chest? Attack!

A more skilled and transcendent fighter like Venerable Lanie would have been able to employ this aggressive strategy so well that her adversary would not be able to launch a counterattack.

Major Jankowski did not possess her extraordinary skills and reflexes. His dual wielding ability was just as poor as before.

Gaining access to a lot of wood energy did not affect the considerable disparity in fighting skills.

The alien swordsman was still able to block many strikes and launch clever counterattacks that neatly exploited the Elegant Rage's obvious openings.

So what?

Each time the Elegant Rage got struck by a fire or ice sword and incurred varying degrees of damage, a lot of wood energy instantly surged to the scarred sections and restored them whole again!

The restoration process was sloppy and inefficient, but it was quick!

Speed mattered the most. As the Elegant Rage continued to batter the alien swordsman's guard with a pair of tonfas that almost never dipped below their peak conditions, the Woodsap mech periodically got struck by swords that Major Jankowski was not able to intercept with his skills.

However, it was already enough for him to be able to contain the offensive Dower of the tribulation manifestation.

As long as the alien swordsman was not able to assume a fully offensive posture

and inflict heavy damage at a rapid rate, the Elegant Rage was always able to restore herself to full condition before the enemy had a chance to exploit any gaps in her defenses!

Not too long ago, a few Larkinson expert pilots became frustrated by how they were unable to get any closer to killing the Emperor Tree and its ebony mechs due to the inability to compound on any damage.

In order to kill most large enemies, a mech needed to start small and focus on weakening different sections of an enemy. Crippling the limbs, breaching armor plating and disabling specific modules were all established methods to defeat giants who could not be killed in an instant.

However, this strategy had little chance to succeed when the enemy regenerated too damn quickly to allow any of these gaps or faults to persist! Right now, the alien swordsman was put in the unfortunate position of trying and failing to attack a wooden opponent that seemingly had access to an endless supply of vitality!

"My mech is immortal! She can't be killed!" Major Jankowski exclaimed! The expert candidate recklessly squandered the wood energy harvested from the entire forest. He acted like a lottery winner who had just switched from extreme poverty to extreme wealth and couldn't wait to spend much of his

windfall!

The stolen wood energy surrounding the Elegant Rage continued to deplete at a rapid rate, but all of it was worth it as the Woodsap mech's seemingly suicidal offense finally pushed the alien swordsman to the brink!

Crack!

Bang!

The swords wielded by the tribulation manifestation lost much of their elemental power as the Elegant Rage exhausted much of fire and ice energies at her enemy's disposal!

The alien swordsman had tried to harness his power over the opposing elements to fend off one attack after another, but the repeated blunt force strikes had finally caused the four-armed alien to bottom his reserves!

"Hah! Not so tough now, huh?!"

The threat level of the tribulation manifestation instantly plunged now that it was running out of fire and ice energy.

The alien swordsman was only able to draw upon the relatively paltry amount of E energy radiation that was constantly radiating from Messier 87, but this was far from enough to make up for the gigantic disparity in energy levels!

The alien swordsman still managed to hold on by relying on his exquisite sword skills.

Even if he was not able to perform any dazzling elemental techniques with his blades, he was still able to rely on solid swordsmanship to block and deflect a

lot of incoming tonfas. Unfortunately, the alien swordsman's skills and physical strength alone was not enough to fend off the Elegant Rage's reckless assault!

Major Jankowski was forcing the Woodsap mech to overstrain her mechanical parts and pull off moves that would have torn or damaged her internals, just to be able to hit the enemy faster and harder! Normally, it was completely counterproductive to perform these self-destructive moves, but Major Jankowski clearly realized that he could get away with his actions because the mech would regenerate all of the self-inflicted damage anyway.

Faced with such an unreasonable mech, the increasingly more exhausted alien swordsman could not avoid instances where the tonfas managed to strike his body with hard and punishing blows.

There was no particular elemental reinforcement to these blows

Ves could have taught the Elegant Rage how to expend wood energy in order to produce a withering effect that could promote the decay of any enemy struck by a tonfa.

He declined to do so because it wouldn't be effective against all but the weakest tribulation manifestations. He also did not want to overwhelm the Elegant Rage by forcing her to perform multiple techniques at the same time. The current results were already satisfactory enough!

Even if Ves' solution had only increased the Elegant Rage's effective energy level and did nothing to improve her energy utilization, it did not matter so long as the Woodsap mech could get by with simply smashing enemies by

relying on brute force!

Bang!

Bang!

Bang!

Major Jankowski may be mad with power, but he was still professional enough

to focus on how to negate the threat posed by his adversary as quickly as

possible. Any tonfa strike that broke past the alien swordsman's increasingly feeble guard went on to strike the limbs of the creature.

All four arms suffered repeated impacts!

Soon enough, the arms began to snap, causing them to lose the strength to

wield a sword!

Though the alien swordsman managed to prolong his resistance by relying on the fact that he had four arms to hold a sword, the Elegant Rage repeatedly bashed her tonfas like clubs until her adversary had no arms to spare anymore!

Before the Elegant Rage rushed up in order to deliver the coup de grâce against a swordsman who had lost the ability to hold his weapons, the tribulation manifestation made a surprising move.

The crippled swordsman bent his knees and made a formal alien gesture that conveyed respect towards his adversary.

"This... is an honorable swordsman... or at least the simulation of one." Simon

Jankowski calmed down from his adrenaline rush. "As one soldier to another, this alien fought honorably and sincerely. I like his species."

Ves didn't care about martial sentiments. He patted the side of the wooden piloting chair with his hand.

"Finish this bastard off and prepare for the next and final bout. Make sure to fly to a different forest. The one underneath the Elegant Rage has already been depleted and can no longer serve as an energy reservoir."

The end of the lightning tribulation was in sight. The Elegant Rage only needed to overcome one more challenge.

## Chapter 6154 The Power of Earth

The Elegant Rage vanquished the alien swordsman.

The Woodsap mech successfully managed to defeat an opponent that was previously objectively superior in every way that mattered. It did so by gaining an entirely new ability that had massive consequences.

Every observer of the ongoing lightning tribulation became amazed at how much more powerful the Woodsap mech had become!

In terms of performance, the Elegant Rage still performed like a well-made second-class mech in most aspects. Her parts did not mysteriously increase the strength, speed or even the defenses of her cybernetic mech frame.

The mech pilot also did not become a lot more skilled and capable. The intense duel may have polished his fighting skills to an extent, but Simon Jankowski never managed to outfight the alien swordsman that obviously dedicated a lot more time and effort in advancing his swordsmanship.

In the end, the spontaneous improvement applied by Ves made all of the difference.

Even though few outsiders had a way of understanding what was happening inside the cockpit, it was fairly obvious that the Elegant Rage suddenly gained an entirely new ability.

From the moment she launched her thorns into the surrounding forest, everything changed.

The surrounding air grew dryer, colder and increasingly more devoid of life. Every tree, plant and critter that got caught under the influence of a nearby thorn began to lose their lives at a rapid pace!

When people started to notice that an entire forest was getting drained, they began to grow frightened.

This was especially the case when all of the clues identified the Elegant Rage as the culprit of this ecological extinction event!

Even though the damage was merely confined to a forest that the terraformers working for the Devos Ancient Clan planted with little effort, people were still concerned about the implications.

The damage done by a single mech to an entire region was too great. A second-class mech shouldn't possess the capacity to inflict so much collateral damage.

What if more strange mechs like the Elegant Rage became available?

What if more powerful first-class versions of such a mech became common?

If each of these partially wooden mechs possessed the capacity to drain all of the energies that sustained life on the surface, how many planets would get utterly ruined by machines that initially looked as if they were guardians of nature?

Nobody expected that the thorns of the Elegant Rage possessed such a diabolical purpose!

Many discussions broke out among certain circles. These members of high society grew a lot more concerned about Ves had been doing as of late. Why did he invest his time, resources and effort into developing such a destructive machine? Did the Red Association truly condone the development of a mech that had already proven to be an ecological weapon of mass destruction? However, there were also those who believed that the end justified the means. "Mr. Neumann."

"Yes, Madame Gloriana?"

"Please contact the Devos Ancient Clan and tell them that our clan will compensate for the damage done by one of our mechs. We will fully reimburse the cost of replanting new trees and restoring a thriving ecosystem."

"I will get on it, madame. Personally speaking, I believe that the Devosans will not mind the damage. We did not put actual people at risk, and no one outside of the ancient clan holds a claim to these lands."

"I agree with you, but our clan must send a message that we are not damaging the environment because we can." Gloriana explained to Ves' personal assistant over the comm. "We must assume a stance that unambiguously explains that we do not support widespread destruction. The damage is only occurring because one of my husband's experimental projects has met with an accident. The appearance of the lightning tribulation should serve as sufficient proof."

"I see. Very well. I shall convey this sentiment to the Terrans." "Oh, before I forget, tell them that this incident is not over yet. The Elegant Rage may be forced to destroy more flora and fauna in the next wave. Please ask for a list that designates which nearby forests the Elegant Rage is allowed to damage. We do not want our new mech to stumble into an area that holds secret bases or has turned into a hiking destination."

The Devos Ancient Clan graciously hosted the Premier Branch of the Larkinson Clan on the capital planet of their host system.

If New Constantinople VIII belonged to the Larkinsons, then Ves could do nearly anything he wanted on his own planet without needing to account for himself.

However, the Devos Ancient Clan not only had a legal claim on the planet, but invested a huge amount of money, resources and manpower to transform it into a thriving Old Earth-like planet that could serve as a prosperous living space and trading hub for Terrans in the Agamemnon Upper Zone.

It was extremely rude and also illegal for any guest who settled in the territory of another to recklessly damage the ecological landscape of a planet on such an exaggerated scale.

Even if Ves' high status and immense value allowed him to get away with these deeds, his reputation was bound to take a hit after this incident came to an end. The only thing the Larkinsons could do was to engage in damage control.

While Gloriana concerned herself with the negative impact of this incident, her husband held no concerns about the many negative repercussions of the Elegant Rage's plundering behavior.

As far as he was concerned, the modifications made to the Woodsap mech resulted in a complete success!

"You did it, Jankowski! You finally managed to beat that dual-wielding bastard!"

Although the expert candidate clearly looked jubilant, he did not delude himself into thinking he earned much credit for this victory.

"I am not responsible for this win. The Elegant Rage deserves much of the credit, and so do you. Even a third-class mech pilot should be able to defeat the four-armed lightning manifestation after having so much energy at his disposal. There was so much power under my command that I developed the impression that I was piloting a quasi-first-class mech. The Elegant Rage simply

could not run out of energy. My greatest frustration was that the mech did not possess the corresponding equipment to channel most of the excess energies." Ves looked thoughtful as Major Jankowski shared his earnest feedback on what he experienced as a pilot.

There were good reasons why the Association primarily paid attention to energy level to determine the class of a mech.

Sure, superior materials and tech also played major roles in distinguishing third-class, second-class and first-class mechs from each other, but none of them would be able to stand out if their power supply could not keep up with the rest of the mech frame.

From the moment the Elegant Rage deployed her thorns across the environment, she and Major Jankowski were no longer fighting alone anymore. The alien swordsman, with the support of the lightning tribulation as well as a fraction of the power of heaven, had actually entered into a fight against the Elegant Rage and the local environment!

In cultivation terms, the energy and resources derived from a planet and whatever was present on it used to be called the power of earth.

In other words, the last segment of the previous bout could actually be

regarded as a contest between the power of heaven and the power of earth! The situation was a lot more complex in reality. The sources of all of that excess wood energy did not voluntarily support the Elegant Rage. The living mech's plundering behavior was an abuse of the power of earth.

The consequences were many, but not all of them were obvious. The most

obvious sequela was that many of the parts of the Elegant Rage that got repaired in haste had become tainted with dark stains that reeked of sin. The evil committed by the Elegant Rage even went on to stain her spiritual foundation, causing her personality to distort a little further.

As Blinky carefully studied the Elegant Rage's physical and spiritual condition, the cat saw other clues.

For example, it became harder for the Elegant Rage to harness the power of

heaven. By engaging in behavior that violated the rules set by the heavens, the Woodsap mech began to get repelled by the energies with heavenly origins. Of course, the effect was not too noticeable since the Elegant Rage only massacred a lot of plants for the time being.

Ves frowned as he stared upwards. He could feel that the tribulation storm had grown a little stronger and more hostile than before.

Regardless of the severity of her transgressions, the Elegant Rage had crossed a line, and did so when under the full view of an active lightning tribulation! This was a clear provocation that caused the tribulation to become more upset with the living mech. The storm clouds grew stronger and more active. The ninth and final tribulation manifestation was bound to become more powerful as a reaction to the Elegant Rage's desecration of nature!

Though Ves knew that the next and hopefully final wave would become even more difficult to overcome than before, he grinned as he felt a lot more confident about his Woodsap mech than

Imparting a new technique that Ves had designated as 'Nature's Benediction' had successfully expanded the Elegant Rage's potential!

It made Ves understand the usefulness of treating life as a resource. By giving the Elegant Rage the capability to draw upon the power of earth as fuel to all of her hyper tech, she was finally able to give full play to her advantages of a partially organic mech!

The performance of the Elegant Rage during her wood energy-saturated state was completely different from before.

What stood out to Ves was the incredible display of tenacity and endurance.

The Woodsap mech might not be invincible, but she was able to take a lot of hits and keep going without any concern due to her insane regeneration factor. As far as Ves was concerned, endless tenacity and endurance should be the defining trait of all Woodsap mechs, not just the Elegant Rage.

So long as similar living mechs fought on lush planets with plenty of greenery, these machines should all be capable of demonstrating combat power that was at least half a class beyond their conventional levels!

A cheap second-class Woodsap mech should be able to compete against an expensive quasi-first-class mech!

A quasi-first-class Woodsap mech should be able to fight a low-tier first-class multipurpose mech to a standstill!

In fact, the Elegant Rage could have performed at an even greater height if Ves had made the corresponding preparations.

The Elegant Rage lacked modules and features that possessed high energy scalability.

For example, if she was armed with an energy sword, it would have been possible for the Woodsap mech to dump an astronomical amount of wood energy into the weapon.

As long as the melee weapon was capable of containing so much wood energy, then it had the potential to unleash an empowered strike that inflicted as much damage as a first-class weapon!

Unfortunately, the Elegant Rage lacked such a feature. The closest piece of equipment that came to mind was the Sprout Rifle, but the alien swordsman never gave the Woodsap mech enough room to draw a ranged weapon. Ves already decided to make sure he remedied this shortcoming for his future

Woodsap mechs.

All future Woodsap mechs and maybe other elemental Carmine mechs for that matter had to be designed with high energy scalability in mind.

They were no longer confined to the power supplied by their static energy

reactors and fixed rate of exotic radiation anymore.

As long as these elemental Carmine mechs possessed the ability to absorb the power of earth from the local environment, they all gained the potential to succeed in winning leapfrog challenges!

The best way to verify this assumption was to witness the Elegant Rage's performance against the next lightning manifestation.

The overall threat posed by the final wave should far exceed the tolerance of mech and mech pilot in isolation!

Only by taking advantage of Nature's Benediction did Major Jankowski and the Elegant Rage possess a realistic chance of overcoming the tribulation!

Chapter 6155 The Need for Withering

The exaggerated performance of the Elegant Rage during the last bout made Ves appreciate the conditional power of Woodsap mechs.

However, he reminded himself that not all Woodsap mechs could fight as exaggerated as the Elegant Rage.

The living mech had already existed for a few years and experienced a lot of growth. The machine also absorbed a lot of breakthrough energies while undergoing a strange mutation that fundamentally altered her character.

Ves was doubtful that he could design a mass production model that possessed the same properties and advantages as the Elegant Rage.

The thorn-covered machine was a product of growth and evolution. Unless Ves mastered the same concepts and mechanisms that made the Elegant Rage so unique, he did not have the confidence to design a mass production version of this machine.

This meant that Ves needed to be more careful about making assumptions about Woodsap mechs. He could not blindly consider the Elegant Rage to be an accurate representation of this specific classification of Carmine mechs.

Ves estimated that more general Woodsap mechs probably wouldn't be able to harness so much power at once.

They may also be unable to tolerate the accumulation of negative energies as well as a mech that had already experienced the deepest despair of her mech pilot.

Ves needed to conduct more tests on Woodsap mechs in order to verify all of these guesses and assumptions.

"Still, even if other Woodsap mechs aren't as strong as this one, they should still be a lot harder to defeat due to their amazing tenacity and endurance."

Woodsap mechs seemed tailor-made for attrition warfare. Ves already figured that they were the perfect machines to use for planetary defense and assault missions. So long as they fought in any environment that was rich with life, they would undoubtedly be able to bully other opponents by their ability to draw upon the power of earth!

However, Ves became a little worried when he thought about how to defeat these annoying mechs.

If every Woodsap mech became nearly as unkillable as the Emperor Tree, each of them would become a nightmare to fight against!

There was nothing more frustrating than to put so much effort into attacking a Woodsap mech, only for the organic or partially organic machine to heal the damage in an instant.

This made Ves more concerned about how to defeat in the most effective way possible.

Even he couldn't guarantee whether Woodsap mechs would be arrayed against him and his clan one day.

The most obvious way to remove the advantage of Woodsap mechs was to confront them well outside any life-bearing planet. They should possess no advantage in deep space, so that was the best environment to ambush these resilient machines.

If a confrontation on a life-bearing planet could not be avoided, then the difficulty became much greater. Woodsap mechs could always enjoy a bonus from the environment to display greater combat effectiveness than typical hyper mechs.

This should be the case even if they did not resort to extreme measures such as forcibly draining the energies of nearby plants!

How should Woodsap mechs be countered?

"Wait. Maybe this is why the withering curse exists."

The Introduction to the Withering Curse did not explain the underlying reasons why such methods were needed, but Ves was able to connect the dots easily enough.

Wood-based cultivators possessed an abundant amount of life and wood energies. They were so filled with vitality that it was much more difficult to harvest their lives than usual.

The best way to counter such unreasonably healthy opponents was to target the source of their strength!

"Perhaps... the withering curse is the most targeted method a wood cultivator can employ against another wood cultivator."

Whether the withering curse was applied to an enemy wood cultivator or the flora that served as his basis of power, the effectiveness of this method should be quite high!

"Woodsap mechs should also be vulnerable to this kind of attack." Ves surmised.

By undermining the abundant vitality and wood energy that sustained a Woodsap mech, it was possible to weaken them to the point where they became just as easy to defeat as an ordinary mech!

Though Ves did not expect for the native aliens or other enemies to employ such methods against his Woodsap mechs anytime soon, it was a possibility that he could not ignore.

Every mech possessed weaknesses. Ves did not obsess too much over the potential vulnerabilities of his Woodsap mechs. They were not yet even released, so it was way too premature for him to worry about these issues.

"The storm is about to send its final manifestation." Major Jankowski stated, pulling Ves out of his theorizing. "The energy levels generated by the storm clouds have risen above expected levels."

"THE TRIBULATION IS DISGUSTED BY US." The Elegant Rage spoke with greater energy and fervor than before. "IT WILL PUT GREATER EFFORT INTO GETTING RID OF US. BE READY FOR A TRUE CHALLENGE."

Major Jankowski pressed his lips into a line. "That is why we are moving to another forest as quickly as possible."

During this temporary lull, the Devos Ancient Clan permitted the Larkinson Clan to destroy the environment of multiple nearby forests that were located on the same continent.

The Elegant Rage received a transmission that detailed this agreement and pointed out several forests where the Elegant Rage could fight without restraint.

This was why the Woodsap mech had been flying away from the area that it had previously drained of life as quickly as possible. Her flight speed was quite high due to her good condition and relatively slim frame.

Of course, the storm clouds followed the living mech no matter how fast she moved. There was no escape from the tribulation.

By the time the Woodsap mech had reached the edge of a larger and denser forest, the storm clouds finally dispatched the final foe!

When Ves saw the alien form that descended from the angry storm, his eyes widened and his blood almost froze.

"Has that bastard come back again!? No! He shouldn't be this weak or idle. This... this is a different guy."

Ves almost gave in to despair when he thought he saw the return of the Subjugation King!

The slaving bastard had developed a strong animosity towards Ves. As a God King, his means were unfathomable, so it was very much possible for him to hijack the tribulation storm in order to ruin the Elegant Rage's right to exist!

Fortunately, Ves quickly figured out that he was looking at a different member of the krelion species.

The proportions looked a bit different, though the bipedal alien was covered by an exoskeleton that looked a lot plainer and less sophisticated than that of the Subjugation King.

This lightning manifestation was based on a weaker and much less overbearing member of the krelion race.

Yet despite this crucial difference, Ves did not dare to take this opponent lightly!

Just like the Subjugation King, this krelion that unmistakably exuded the vibe of warrior radiated a lot of light.

Ves felt repulsed by the harsh and merciless light of the krelion's aura.

The alien did not appear to channel any other E energy attribute, but that caused Ves to become even more wary towards this adversary.

"We're in trouble, major." Ves stated. "I don't know how much intelligence you have access to, but I have encountered a simulation of this alien race in the past. According to the limited information

that we have available, the krelions are one of the top races of Messier 87. Even if this tribulation manifestation is based on a low-ranking grunt, a race that is able to gain dominance in the supermassive galaxy has an exceedingly strong foundation. It is just how even the most mediocre first-raters are still far superior to excellent third-raters in almost every aspect."

Major Jankowski already turned grim when he instinctively sensed the much greater threat posed by this light-blessed alien, but he became even more wary after hearing Ves' words.

"What can you tell me about their strength and abilities?"

"Not much. The krelions are qi cultivators that are likely obsessed with light. They have studied this E energy attribute so well that none of their light-based abilities are weak or flawed. I think that the krelions are also strong enough to fight up close or from a distance, though I am not sure if every member of this race can fight well under any circumstances. Aside from that, I can't make any more generalizations. We'll just have to find out during the fight."

As the krelion manifestation floated above the forest, the alien's radiance began to grow stronger. It became harder for observers to view the krelion with the naked eye.

"SO BRIGHT." The Elegant Rage complained as she automatically lowered the sensitivity of her optical sensors. "BE CAREFUL. I FEEL GREATLY THREATENED BY THIS ALIEN'S LIGHT."

The krelion spent a few more seconds getting in tune with the light of the local environment. It was still daytime on this hemisphere, so the alien also seemed to draw strength from the local star that was located in the center of the New Constantinople System.

The alien finally lifted one of his arms and conjured up a staff that possessed an intricate design.

The krelion proceeded to point the tip of the staff towards the Elegant Rage before unleashing a powerful light beam that instantly struck the Elegant Rage!

Crack!

"AHHH! IT BURNS!"

The opening strike shouldn't have dealt so much damage to the Elegant Rage. The enemy light beam was powerful, but Ves estimated that the Woodsap mech should have been able to take it without suffering too much harm.

He was partially correct. The mech's physical defenses were able to withstand the attack. Only a moderate hole that was rapidly regenerating was proof that the light beam had struck the Elegant Rage.

However, the light beam did more than that. It also attacked the Elegant Rage on a different level.

Her incomplete descent towards darkness just happened to make the Woodsap mech a lot more vulnerable to light-based attacks!

That was not all. Ves sensed something weird and profound from the light beam attack. It felt rather familiar to him, but the krelion already launched his second strike!

This time, the glowing staff released a lot more energy! An entire cage of light energy spat out and sought to envelop the Elegant Rage!

There was no way for the Woodsap mech to evade the strange light cage. It closed the distance and enveloped the Elegant Rage in the blink of an eye!

"So fast!"

Once the cage fell into place, the bars made out of light began to contract and press against the cybernetic mech's physical form!

No matter whether the cage pressed against solid surfaces or one of the many thorns covering the machine, the harsh exposure to this merciless light was inflicting significant harm to the machine!

"Shake off this cage!"

Even as the Elegant Rage started to get burned by the cage, she did not delay too long in launching as many thorns as possible.

Numerous thorns failed to launch as they were captured by the cage, but many more managed to pass through the gaps before landing across the surrounding forest.

A huge amount of wood energy steadily arrived and infused the Elegant Rage with a potent injection of power!

The Elegant Rage not only regenerated the damage inflicted by the cage of light, but also managed to shatter it by channeling an overwhelming amount of wood energy!

"We're free again!"

Yet just as Major Jankowski intended to retaliate by firing the Sprout Rifle at the krelion warrior, the alien had briefly turned into a streak of light before quickly arriving in front of the Elegant Rage!

The mech barely had enough time to lift her ebony wood tonfas before they got struck by powerful staff strikes!

Bang!

Bang!

Bang!

Each collision caused the staff to generate explosions of light, which not inflicted greater damage onto the tonfas, but also began to make the Elegant Rage feel pained!

"This light... is burning the Elegant Rage! It is as if this alien is passing judgment on us and declaring us guilty!"

The judgmental qualities of this light were too strong. It seemed specifically made to fight against anyone tainted by darkness!

"This is not a mere warrior. This is a judge." Ves whispered. "The lightning tribulation specifically sent out this manifestation to target all of the Elegant Rage's weaknesses. The fight is only going to get much tougher!"

Chapter 6156 Repercussions of Evil

The fight rapidly heated up when the two fighters came closer enough to exchange blows with each other.

The krelion judge wielded a single ornate staff, but possessed enough skill and might to suppress the Elegant Rage despite the fact that she was wielding two weapons.

This was not because the alien possessed powerful weapon skills. His attack moves were not particularly brilliant or clever.

Rather, the alien relied on other advantages to gain the upper hand.

The krelion struck hard and fast, allowing him to exert greater pressure onto the Elegant Rage than the alien swordsman!

Not only that, but the krelion was even better than the four-armed alien in leveraging the power of his element with every strike.

During a particular instance, the lightning manifestation's entire body exploded with light, which not only caused the surface of the Elegant Rage to burn, but also blinded the mech for a time!

The Woodsap mech almost lost grip of her tonfas as a glowing staff smacked them aside before punching a hole through the chest plate that almost managed to penetrate the cockpit.

The krelion had already come close to killing the mech pilot and thereby ending the Elegant Rage's chances of surviving this tribulation!

Major Jankowski immediately felt the pressure of death and began to burst out his potential!

A huge infusion of wood energy channeled into the tonfas before the Elegant Rage smacked them towards the alien!

The krelion did not bother to retract his staff as a shield of light energy intercepted the tonfa strikes.

Bang!

Bang!

Each weapon strike released a large burst of wood energy, generating enough force to separate the two combatants from each other.

The Elegant Rage and the krelion judge briefly paused in order to evaluate the first exchange of blows.

"The tribulation manifestation is able to keep up with the Elegant Rage when she is saturated with plundered wood energy." Ves immediately noted. "This is bad, because once our mech is no longer draining any wood energy from the environment, it will not be able to keep up anymore."

"Then we will have to win this fight before we run out of forests to drain." Major Jankowski declared.

The man had already fought a long and exhausting duel against the alien swordsman. The krelion judge exerted even greater pressure towards him, but Simon Jankowski was determined to perform better rather than worse!

His qualities as a first-class mech pilot and his considerable combat experience made it easier for him to maintain his fighting spirit. Even if he was at a disadvantage, he should never allow himself to get discouraged. The lower his morale, the quicker his defeat!

The Elegant Rage was in the worst mood out of the three. The mech not only suffered a lot of burns after getting struck by different intensities of light energy, but her wounds were also recovering slower than usual.

"THE ENEMY'S LIGHT AURA IS INHIBITING MY REGENERATION." The Elegant Rage warned. "THE ALIEN'S LIGHT IS BURNING THE WOOD ENERGY GATHERED BY MY THORNS. THE LIGHT SOURCE IS MUCH MORE INHIBITING TO ME AT CLOSE RANGE."

Both Ves and Major Jankowski frowned. The Elegant Rage was most comfortable fighting up close, but the light-emitting alien appeared to be expressly designed to counter this advantage!

The Elegant Rage tried to create more distance from the alien judge, though it was not entirely certain whether this would work.

The krelion judge had demonstrated amazing speed earlier, but perhaps there was a restriction that prevented him from moving so quickly all of the time.

Whatever the case, as the Elegant Rage flew closer towards the center of the dying forest, the mech began to launch a second salvo of thorns, enabling her to drain the energies of trees located much further ahead.

Once she had managed to prolong the supply of stolen wood energy, the Elegant Rage finally turned around and aimed at the distant tribulation manifestation with the Sprout Rifle.

Ves did not dare to call Gaia to ask for another blessing. Fortunately, the Elegant Rage was able to make up for the absence of this boost by channeling a lot of wood energy into the weapon.

The ebony wooden seed began to grow in both a qualitative and quantitative fashion. Once the organic projectile had reached its limit, the Sprout Rifle quickly launched it towards the enemy!

"Feel the wrath of nature!"

Major Jankowski half-expected for the alien judge to evade the shot, but he instead remained stationary, allowing himself to get hit by the empowered seed.

Bang!

The impact was not particularly powerful, but that was not the purpose of the seed.

Instead, the seed rapidly began to sprout. It quickly absorbed all of the wood energy infused into it and began to grow dark and ominous vines that were covered by thorns!

The thorn vines grown from plundered wood energy were not only steeped in negativity, but also exuded a depressing atmosphere!

However, the krelion judge appeared to be incredibly resistant against the dark vines.

His light shield not only did a perfect job at keeping the vines and their sharp thorns at bay, but also negated all of their ominous properties!

When light and darkness intersected with each other, the weaker of the two often suffered an immediate disadvantage.

This was most definitely the case this time as the powerful light generated by the krelion judge overpowered the thorny vines!

The tribulation manifestation's command over energy was better than the Elegant Rage in her empowered state!

Major Jankowski did not leave it at that. The Elegant Rage continually fired one ebony seed after another.

The mech did not spend any time to create any more sprouting seeds, so the organic projectiles only inflicted a lot of kinetic damage upon impact.

Each strike sapped the light energy shield a little further, but it remained so bright and whole that it didn't appear as if the repeated impacts were accomplishing anything useful. Instead of showing signs of distress, the krelion judge glowed brighter and brighter until an illusionary vision appeared behind his back.

A complex circular symbol appeared behind the alien! It was at least ten times taller than the krelion judge and exuded a sense of sacred duty towards justice.

"What is that?!" Major Jankowski reacted with shock!

"THE TRIBULATION MANIFESTATION HAS GROWN BRIGHTER AND MORE POWERFUL THAN BEFORE. THE DARK VINES ARE ALREADY BURNING UP AS WE SPEAK. I TRULY DO NOT WANT TO GET TOO CLOSE TO THIS ENEMY IN THIS STATE."

Ves grew more serious as he caught sight of this mysterious occult-like symbol. He could already tell that it was far more than an artistic doodle.

The light from the local star seemed to brighten in the direction of this giant light symbol. It was as if the star suddenly decided to play favorites and bathe the krelion judge with an extra strong dose of light!

The aura of the tribulation manifestation grew stronger, sharper and more heartless than before. The Elegant Rage immediately became suppressed to the point where she was unable to harness stolen wood energy as smoothly as before.

Ves immediately frowned when he formed a guess of what was happening. "This is probably a method employed by qi cultivators. What you are seeing is a representation of the krelion's artistic conception. Perhaps it is a logogram that holds the meaning of both light and justice. Whatever the case, this outward expression of an artistic conception has allowed this alien to amplify his domain in combat."

"Wait, are we facing an ace mech-like opponent? Is this why we have fallen under a suppression effect?"

"I don't think our opponent has reached the equivalent rank of an ace pilot, but that does not change the fact that he is powerful. His command over light is too exquisite, and it doesn't help that this element happens to counter the Elegant Rage especially well."

This was just the beginning. Now that the krelion judge had entered into his most serious combat state, he no longer limited himself to probing strikes and began to launch much more fervent attacks!

"Watch out!" The krelion pointed his decorated staff at the Elegant Rage and began to release a sustained light beam that struck the Elegant Rage and continued to drill into her armor despite her attempts to evade the attack!

The Woodsap mech was not only suffering constant damage from the active energy beam, but also began to suffer mental torment as the attack violently punished the living mech for giving into evil!

Major Jankowski experienced the Elegant Rage's pain as well, but the neural interface separated him from his machine just enough for him to make the correct move.

The Elegant Rage flew deeper into the forest before hiding behind a low hill!

The sustained light beam struck the ground and began to burn through a lot of worthless soil.

Since the krelion judge was no longer able to strike at the mech, he cut off the energy beam and started to move closer.

Major Jankowski was not in a hurry to move the damaged mech again. Much of her exterior had become scarred by burn grooves. The sustained energy beam might not have been able to pierce through the armor, but the areas that got burned were very slow to recover!

"The light has both a purifying and punishing property." Ves commented. "The former makes it harder for the Elegant Rage to recover. The latter causes the light to inflict more direct damage. The combination of the two is quite lethal." "Our mech needs more wood energy." Major Jankowski said. "This forest is

already halfway to getting drained. We need to move and spread thorns into another forest."

"Then move. Focus on replenishment rather than offense." Ves advised. "It is okay to fall into a temporary disadvantage. Woodsap mechs should always be able to win a battle as long as they can last long enough. Do your best to keep

the mech alive."

The Elegant Rage did not dare to stick around any longer. The machine jumped

from his location and blasted away towards a different forest that had been designated for use by the Larkinson Clan!

The krelion judge advanced faster and began to pursue the Elegant Rage!

With the giant representation of his artistic conception hovering behind his back, the powerful tribulation manifestation not only radiated light that continually stung the Elegant Rage, but also fired energy beams that unerringly

struck the mech!

The rear of the Elegant Rage began to accrue more and more holes that were slower to regenerate.

The mech was forced to channel a lot more wood energy to these damaged parts in order to boost their restoration rate as much as possible.

The action was effective, but the Elegant Rage ate through her excess wood energy reserves considerably faster than before.

By the time she reached another forest, her surplus had already dwindled to almost nothing!

"Nature's Benediction!"

Many thorns flung from the Elegant Rage and spread across a forest that was filled with a different variety of trees.

Stolen wood energy began to gather in and around the cybernetic mech once more. Her Sprout Rifle began to fire considerably more powerful seeds, only for the projectiles to burn and weaken before even managing to strike the alien's light energy shield!

The retaliation from the glowing enemy was much more effective. As the krelion judge's staff continued to strike the Elegant Rage with judgemental light beams, the mech suffered considerably greater damage than before!

"The alien has grown stronger!"

"That's not true." Ves shook his head. "The energy levels of the tribulation manifestation has not increased any further since he unveiled his giant artistic conception. What changed is that his light attacks are inflicting at least 20 percent more damage to the Elegant Rage. I am afraid that the mech is the reason for the difference. The more she plunders from the environment, the more guilty she becomes! Not only that, but all of the parts that are restored with the help of stolen wood energy become tainted with darkness and other nasty stuff. That makes the mech frame increasingly more vulnerable to the alien's light attacks.""

Major Jankowski looked shocked. "If that is the case... then our mech will become increasingly more disadvantaged over time. It's impossible for us to win by attrition!"

Ves realized this as well. His heart sank as he realized that the krelion's more

developed domain and exquisite artistic conception provided him with an absolute advantage in this battle!

## Chapter 6157 The Suppression of Light

More and more high-level observers interrupted their schedules and tuned in to the restricted feeds that displayed the ongoing fight that had overtaken New Constantinople VIII.

They had good reasons to pay close attention to this special occasion.

The battle between the krelion judge and the Elegant Rage represented a struggle between two completely different combat systems.

The Elegant Rage fought like a living mech endowed with experimental hyper tech and E-tech. Even though the cybernetic mech diverged a lot more from ordinary mechs that people were accustomed to seeing, the Woodsap mech was still a product of human technology. There was a good possibility that mechs like her may turn into the mainstays of human civilization in the future.

The tribulation manifestation that took the form of an exoskeleton-covered humanoid alien fought completely differently. The only recognizable 'tech' utilized by this powerful fighter was the staff in his hands. The lightning-forged appearance of the staff did not do a good job at reproducing its details, so it was unclear how much of its power was based on engineering rather than material quality.

Nonetheless, the krelion judge fought in a way that was similar to all of the other tribulation manifestations that had shown up in similar events since the start of the current age.

Almost every alien warrior relied on their bodies and their extraordinary cultivation to fight. They only made rudimentary use of external technologies such as simple-looking weapon artifacts.

Of course, many people theorized that the fighters simulated by lightning tribulations were much more restricted than their actual counterparts. Perhaps the storm clouds were unable or unwilling to reproduce all kinds of other auxiliary equipment such as medicines, combat armor, combat vehicles, subordinate soldiers and so on that was part of their comprehensive strength.

However, the amazing combat power displayed by Messier 87's qi cultivators already presented enough clues to conclude that the inhabitants of the energy-rich galaxy prized their personal combat ability over every other factor!

Therefore, the fight between a low-to-mid ranking alien official from Messier 87 and an experimental second-class mech from the Red Ocean represented a rare but incredibly valuable comparison between two completely different civilizations!

Master Laila Rebecca Devos frowned as she stood in front of a large projection. As one of the high-ranking Devosans on the planet, she not only had access to all of the visual feeds transmitted by hundreds of cloaked observation bots, but also kept an eye on highly informative data readings.

"The damage to the regional ecosystem is escalating quickly." An unknown exobiologist spoke over a secure communication channel. "The damage to the forests will reach a point where the climate is severely disrupted. Preliminary examinations of the dead trees and soil have painted a disastrous image. Nothing less than digging out the nutrient-deprived soil and filling the terrain with fertile soil imported off-planet will allow us to restore the planetary ecosystem as soon as possible. The

expense is not too great at the current scale, but if that mech continues to drain more forests, the urgency will become greater, thereby giving us less time to take corrective actions."

"Cost is not an issue." Master Laila Devos calmly spoke as she continued to track the performance of a very curious mech that was made of both metal and wood. "The Larkinson Clan has already offered to compensate us for the damage their experimental mech is doing to the planet-wide ecology."

The planetary governor sounded relieved. "That is good news. This gesture indicates that the Larkinsons are aware of their responsibilities and wish to maintain good relations with us. We can answer with our own gesture of goodwill. The attention that this incident has attracted from a wide range of circles will stimulate our trade and commerce activities in the next months or year. Our budget will not become strained if we extend them a discount on the total bill."

Master Laila Devos shook her head. "Money is one of the most dispensable assets in the Red Ocean. We will not demand repayment in the form of cash. We can generate it ourselves well enough. We have an opportunity to gain access to new and cutting-edge mechs and tech from the Larkinson Clan. If we can set the repayment terms to give us access to similar mechs as the experimental machine that is currently damaging our ecosystem, then the Larkinsons are free to destroy as many arboreal habitats as they want. At worst, we can temporarily dome all of our colony settlements to guarantee that our guests and citizens can continue to breathe the most optimal air mixture."

The Devos Ancient Clan was not the only group that developed an interest in the first Woodsap mech. Many other ancient clans as well as foreign organizations expressed similar degrees of interest.

However, before they could make any further inquiries, they soon learned that the Red Association had already dug their tentacles in Professor Larkinson's secret project. The Survivalists and the Transhumanists both used various means to make it clear that the tech behind this highly destructive but also absurdly effective cybernetic mech was not yet ready for large-scale use!

While all of these leaders grew interested in getting their hands on the new mechs or the tech to make them, the creator of the current iteration of the Elegant Rage had no time to think about the future.

He was very worried about the present!

Many of his hopes and dreams related to Woodsap mechs were tied to the Elegant Rage. If the living mech fell in battle today, then that would be a major setback in his plan to develop and propagate similar mechs!

More than that, but the fall of the Elegant Rage would also deprive Venerable Lanie Larkinson of her best battle partner.

For the sake of his trueblood cousin, Ves tried to do his best to figure out a way for the Woodsap to gain the upper hand!

Unfortunately, Ves couldn't think of a practical solution. He had already exhausted his strongest option.

The Elegant Rage had become more and more proficient in drawing in the power of earth to amplify all of her moves.

Yet instead of making the Woodsap mech stronger, it only made the machine more vulnerable against her opponent!

The Elegant Rage had been struck by light beams and irradiated by the krelion judge's radiance so many times that much of the exterior of her mech frame had been damaged and restored multiple times.

This caused the Elegant Rage's exterior wood-and-metal exterior to take on an increasingly darker tint. Her negative karma continued to pile up, causing the living mech to become more susceptible to her opponent's attacks!

It took more and more plundered wood energies to forcibly restore the damaged components quickly enough before the krelion judge had time to take advantage of the gaps in the mech's defenses.

Yet doing so required the Elegant Rage to fly to other forests before subsequently launching a lot of thorns to drain the trees of all of their vitality.

This cycle could not persist!

So long as the Elegant Rage had fallen below a certain threshold, Ves had no doubt that the Woodsap mech would get scorched entirely by the punishing light of the krelion judge!

"We need to go on the offensive." Ves spoke. "We are only prolonging our defeat if the Elegant Rage continues to fly away all of the time. She is completely disadvantaged in ranged combat. The ebony seeds have failed to shake the enemy's light energy shield, and any thorn vines spawned from charged projectiles always burn up before they can do any significant damage. Only the mech herself is strong and resilient enough to get close and exhaust the enemy's defenses."

Major Jankowski gritted his teeth. "We can't get close. We already tried, but we got our butts kicked by this tribulation manifestation. The constant light released by the alien will burn the Elegant Rage even stronger than before now that she has become burdened with greater guilt. I am already apprehensive at the thought of fighting the enemy at point-blank range. Furthermore, the alien's light energy shield has never shown any sign of collapse, and his staff fighting skills are more than adequate to block my tonfas."

In other words, whether it was specs, skills or energy, the krelion judge effectively enjoyed an advantage in every aspect!

What was worse was that the enemy alien's advantage was only growing over time!

The existence of this lightning manifestation completely negated the Elegant Rage's advantage in attrition warfare.

This was also why Ves urged the expert candidate to no longer bother with dragging out the fight.

Ves grew depressed when he thought about how terrible the Elegant Rage looked from an outsider's perspective.

If people didn't know any better, they would have thought that the Elegant Rage was the evil villain that had committed reprehensible crimes, while the krelion judge was the hero that enforced justice on behalf of the heavens!

The fact that the latter could actually be taken literally added an extra layer of absurdity in this setting!

Ves turned away from all of the projected graphs and data readings and placed his hand on Major Jankowski's shoulders.

"Believe in the Elegant Rage. This living mech had almost died, but managed to recover from that ordeal. She is no stranger to suffering. Where do you think her thorns come from? Pain is a punishment as well as a source of power to her. As long as you can ensure that the Elegant Rage does not get destroyed or crippled in an instant, she still possesses the capital to resist. Fighting up close is the most reliable combat approach for this mech. Only then will she be able to utilize her thorns according to their original purpose."

Though Major Jankowski was rational enough to agree with Ves' logic, emotionally he felt anything but confident.

"I... am sorry, but I do not think it will work. The alien's light will burn up all of the Elegant Rage's thorns before they can do much stinging. The entire mech frame will burn from the outside, making it increasingly harder to attack and defend against this opponent. I... I will try if there is no other choice, but I strongly advise against this course of action."

Ves inwardly shook his head after hearing this. He had faint hopes that the intensive combat so far may have allowed Simon Jankowski to experience an explosive amount of growth.

Perhaps he did grow a lot further as an expert candidate, but it was clear that not all of his aspects had reached the standard!

At the very least, an expert candidate not only needed to feel incredibly desperate, but also possess great courage and mental fortitude in his ability to overcome a seemingly impossible challenge!

Major Jankowski completely failed this test, so Ves could completely forget about hoping that he would break through somehow.

It wasn't his fault. Not entirely.

The krelion judge's overall combat capabilities resembled that of a weakened version of an ace mech!

An expert candidate that was nowhere near as strong as an actual expert pilot could not escape the fate of feeling suppressed by the enemy's aura.

If Venerable Lanie was piloting the Elegant Rage, then many of the advantages such as the alien's oppressive domain would never be so effective. Her willpower should be strong enough to resist a lot of qi cultivator shenanigans!

Ves frowned as the Elegant Rage continued to evade confrontation as much as possible.

Was there a way to reduce or negate the krelion judge's insane suppression effect?

As long as the Elegant Rage was able to resist the pseudo-domain field of the tribulation manifestation, she would be able to brawl with much fewer scruples than before!

There had to be a solution. Ves refused to accept the fact that he had exhausted every possible option to upgrade the Elegant Rage further.

"What can I do?" Ves frantically wondered.

#### Chapter 6158 The Hidden Potential of Wood

Ves was put in the same position as last time when the Elegant Rage struggled against the alien swordsman.

The krelion judge was thrashing his Woodsap mech. The disparity in strength was obvious to everyone.

The only reason why the Elegant Rage had yet to fall entirely was because she had already drained through half-a-dozens on the surface of New Constantinople VIII.

Although the planet still offered many more forests for the Woodsap mech to drain, continuing this pattern was not a viable pathway to victory.

The tribulation manifestation this time precisely punished such behavior. The greater the excessive harm to the environment, the greater the sins of the Elegant Rage!

A qi cultivator that gained strength from light and justice gained a massive bonus whenever he fought against a genuine evil-doer!

In fact, the existence of such a profession among the krelions caused Ves to wonder whether their alien civilization was as evil and tyrannical as he initially thought.

The Subjugation King had made an awful first impression. Might was clearly right in a galaxy as rich and prosperous as Messier 87. It was not difficult to think that most of the krelions living under the reign of such a bastard of a leader would end up as bastards as well.

It was difficult for Ves to judge the truth. The krelion judge was just a lifeless simulation. He was not a clone possessed by an actual alien powerhouse. There was no way to communicate with this temporary manifestation.

"There is still too much we do not know about Messier 87." Ves sighed.

He quickly shifted his mind from this subject and tried to think on what he could do to help his Woodsap mech win.

There had to be a way. If he had to return to the System Space and make a gamble by drawing his radiant lottery ticket, then he was willing to do so. The main reason why he kept it in reserve last time was because he had no pressing need for any goodies.

This was not the case anymore.

The Elegant Rage might not be a valuable mech in absolute terms, but her growth and the sentiments attached to her had made her irreplaceable.

The mech was partially responsible for saving Venerable Lanie's life. Ves also took advantage of her strange mutation to skip a huge amount of research effort and easily develop his very first elemental Carmine mech in existence.

These reasons and more all encouraged Ves to double down and massively increase his investment in his latest work so that he could save her from the brink of annihilation!

Having made up his mind, Ves was just about to scurry back into the System Space until the Elegant Rage made a surprise announcement.

"I HAVE AN IDEA ON HOW TO WIN THIS FIGHT."

"Explain." Ves asked as he shifted his interest back to the present.

"I DID NOT REALIZE THIS PLAN BEFORE, BUT NOW THAT I HAVE FOUGHT LONG ENOUGH TO ESTABLISH A CLOSER CONNECTION TO MY WOODEN HALF, I DISCOVERED THAT IT CAN DO FAR MORE THAN ACT AS A REPLACEMENT TO MY METALLIC MECH PARTS."

"Are you suggesting that we use the ebony mech that makes up much of your mech frame for other purposes?" Ves quickly guessed.

"I THINK IT IS POSSIBLE. THE MORE I EXERCISE MY WOOD, THE MORE I UNDERSTAND WHAT IT IS CAPABLE OF. THIS WOOD IS NOT LIKE THE METAL THAT MY MECH WAS INITIALLY MADE OF. THERE ARE EMOTIONS... MEMORIES... AND INSTINCTS BURIED IN THE EBONY WOOD. ONLY FRAGMENTS REMAIN, BUT IF I TRY TO DRAW THEM OUT, I THINK I CAN DO WAY MORE THAN FIGHT LIKE A MECH. I... MAY BE ABLE TO TRANSFORM INTO A MUCH LARGER EBONY WOODEN MECH, ESPECIALLY IF I ABSORB ENOUGH WOOD ENERGY."

Both Ves and Major Jankowski reacted with shock at this suggestion!

The idea sounded crazy!

It also sounded plausible!

Ves quickly thought about the suggestion. He recalled that the wooden parts of the Elegant Rage were made out of an improved version of ebony wood.

The ebony wood was derived from the Ebony Everchanger, which in turn was a clone of the Emperor Tree.

All of this meant that the Elegant Rage inherited at least a part of the legacy of the calamity plant!

It was therefore quite possible for the Elegant Rage to induce a state of 'ancestral reversion' where the living mech deliberately let go of her original form and activate whatever heritage was buried inside her organic components!

Ves immediately came up with a number of doubts.

The Elegant Rage did not sound certain whether she could control this transformation process. There was no guarantee that she would grow strong enough to gain an advantage against the krelion judge. What if her wooden components fell apart? She would basically cripple herself as a result!

Another concern that bothered Ves was whether this would bring back the Emperor Tree in any way. What if the clever calamity plant had deliberately laid a trap in order to bring itself back to life again?

Even if the Emperor Tree could not be resurrected in full, there was a high chance that the Elegant Rage would get contaminated by whatever remnant that was buried inside all of the ebony wood!

Still, if everything went right and the Elegant Rage managed to win the final fight, what next? Would she be able to reverse her transformation and turn back into a recognizable mech, or would she remain permanently mutated in a much more monstrous form?

If the latter was the case, then she may no longer possess the qualifications to be piloted by Venerable Lanie!

As Ves continued to think about all of the possible ways the mech's proposal could go wrong, the Elegant Rage adopted a firmer tone.

"I CAN DO THIS, PROGENITOR. BELIEVE IN ME. I CANNOT GUARANTEE THAT I WILL BE ABLE TO MAINTAIN CONTROL, BUT I AM CONVINCED THAT THIS ACTION WILL MAKE ME STRONG ENOUGH TO BEAT THE TRIBULATION MANIFESTATION. THIS HIDDEN ABILITY IS A PART OF MY DESIGN. WHETHER YOU INTENDED TO OR NOT, THIS WOOD CONTAINS THE SEED OF POWER OF THE EMPEROR TREE. ALL I NEED TO DO IS TO FEED IT WITH ENERGY, WHICH I HAPPEN TO POSSESS IN ABUNDANCE."

"Are you... are you aware that this may be a one-way trip? If you are unable to return..."

"THEN TELL LANIE THAT I AM SORRY THAT I CANNOT ACCOMPANY HER ANY FURTHER." The living mech said in a melancholic tone. "PLEASE DESIGN A GOOD REPLACEMENT MECH FOR HER IF I CANNOT BE HER PARTNER ANYMORE. THAT SAID, I HAVE NO INTENTION OF LETTING ANOTHER MACHINE TAKE AWAY MY BIRTHRIGHT. I SWEAR I CAN BEAT THIS LIGHT-OBSSESSED ENEMY. WHAT I AM NOT TOO SURE OF IS WHETHER I CAN GO BACK TO NORMAL. I THINK I WILL NEED YOUR HELP AT THAT TIME, PROGENITOR."

Ves adopted a determined expression. "You can count on me. Hopefully, my intervention won't be necessary, but if this scenario unfolds... I promise I will bring you back, if not physically, than mentally."

"THAT IS ALL I WANT TO HEAR. LET ME PROCEED WITH UNLOCKING THE POTENTIAL OF MY WOODEN PARTS. PILOT, PLEASE BRACE YOURSELF AND COOPERATE HOWEVER POSSIBLE. I FEAR I SHALL NEED YOUR MIND TO KEEP ME GROUNDED."

"I am glad to serve." Major Jankowski spoke in a reverent tone.

Ves began to develop the idea that the Elegant Rage's idea may be the true defining feature of a Woodsap mech.

The true power of an elemental Carmine mech made out of Emperor Wood was not its impressive tenacity and endurance.

A Woodsap mech certainly scored high on these criteria, but wood was capable of doing more than make the machine last longer in battle.

Perhaps the true reason for such an unusual mech to exist was to impart the machine with the ability to expand her wooden parts and turn into a much more formidable combat machine!

As long as the environment was favorable enough, the resulting transformation may have the potential to increase the combat power of such a mech by an order of magnitude!

Of course, there was no certainty whether the Elegant Rage could produce such an exaggerated result.

Ves and Blinky paid extremely close attention to the Elegant Rage's physical and spiritual condition. If there was any sign that the transformation would go off the rails, they would definitely intervene without hesitation!

"It is starting, professor." The expert candidate stated.

The Elegant Rage began to unleash the potential hidden within her ebony wood. It was as if the Woodsap mech removed a lock that previously kept her wooden parts contained.

It was as if a beast inside the living mech woke up. The activated ebony wood instantly started to absorb a huge amount of plundered wood energy!

The Elegant Rage quickly had to launch another volley of thorns at the surrounding forest environment in order to feed the voracious demand of her own ebony wood!

The organic components of the Woodsap mech immediately started to squirm and expand in a monstrous fashion. Her volume started to increase at an escalating rate, causing her to grow heavier and less balanced than before.

The krelion judge did not stand by while all of this took place. He actively assaulted the Elegant Rage with harsh and punishing light beams.

Although the continuous strikes inflicted heavy damage to the Elegant Rage, the out-of-control ebony wood rapidly recovered the damage and continued to grow in mass and volume!

At some point, the unconstrained growth of all of the ebony wood started to envelop the flight system of the Elegant Rage. This had severe consequences for the machine in flight!

"We are losing altitude!" Major Jankowski warned! "Elegant Rage! Please slow down!"

"I... CAN'T...!"

The Woodsap mech rapidly lost thrust power and quickly began to fall to the ground. The massive wooden monstrosity that was constantly squirming and expanding in size smashed through a large amount of leaves and slammed onto the soil with massive force!

Ves and Major Jankowski briefly shook as the inertial dampeners found themselves unable to fully compensate for the impact!

Even though the transforming Elegant Rage incurred damage from the fall, the mech actually began to grow faster now that she had landed on proper soil.

The Woodsap mech was actually taking root!

As a large amount of roots began to burrow deep into the ground, the mutating machine began to accelerate her growth, causing the ebony wood to expand so much that the Woodsap mech had already tripled in size!

The Elegant Rage's chaotic growth did not slow down in the slightest. Dark wood continued to squirm and expand with every passing second. Practically nothing related to mechs was visible anymore. The original mech frame had become fully covered by an expanding mass of wood!

As wood energy and other nutrients continued to pour into the transforming Elegant Rage, the living mech eventually began to adopt a completely different appearance.

"Is that... is that a tree?!" Gloriana gasped as she watched the live feed with growing astonishment.

"It is..." Alexa Streon spoke. "The wood is entirely made out of a weaker version of ebony wood, but the volume is massive. The Elegant Rage is beginning to resemble a smaller and darker version of the Emperor Tree."

She was not exaggerating when she said that! Even though the transforming Elegant Rage was nowhere close to matching the Emperor Tree in terms of height, mass, spirituality and more, her new state was still a lot stronger than her original form!

As the Elegant Rage's transformation into an ebony tree finally started to slow down, the entire 'mech' made a completely different impression from before!

Although the Elegant Rage had completely lost all of her mobility, her size and ability to resist attacks had increased by a huge margin!

This became evident as the krelion judge's attacks that previously inflicted heavy damage onto the blackened mech only inflicted light damage against the ebony tree!

Chapter 6159 Unequal Confrontation

The situation on the ravaged battlefield completely turned around when the Elegant Rage suddenly transformed into a tree!

Many observers grew perplexed as the Woodsap mech completely let go of her original form and mutated into a giant ebony tree that radiated both vitality and power.

"This is impossible! Biomechs can never grow so quickly!"

"Has the mech lost control?!"

"The mech has turned into a mutated plant!"

As many observers reacted with shock, the growth of the latest form of the Elegant Rage began to abate.

As Ves observed what was happening in total shock inside the cockpit of the mech, he noticed that the mech still wanted to grow larger, but had reached the limit of what she was able to control.

Her spiritual foundation was nowhere near as strong as the Emperor Tree when it was at its height!

Since she was unable to control a 'body' that was taller than the current ebony tree, she had no way of making herself larger.

That did not mean that her new form was short by any means!

The tree that comprised her enhanced tree form was much thicker and taller than her original self. Her new body had already reached an overall height and mass that was equivalent to that of a small juggernaut.

That was already a completely different kind of combat unit!

Now that her mass and volume became equivalent to that of a small warship, the Elegant Rage was no longer as weak and fragile as before.

Even if nothing else about the Elegant Rage had changed, the simple increase in size made it a lot harder for the krelion judge to inflict meaningful damage!

The tribulation manifestation did not give up, though. He wielded his staff like an artillery cannon and began to shoot out a sustained light beam that carved into the bark of the ebony tree like a mining laser!

The Elegant Rage suffered a lot of pain as the sustained beam continually tried to pierce a hole through the ebony wooden trunk.

The sins accrued by the living mechs caused the ebony wood to receive greater damage from the persistent light element attack, and the lack of movement made it trivially easy for the alien enemy to stay on target.

Yet despite all of these adverse conditions, the Elegant Rage was no longer afraid of the light attacks of her opponent!

Even as the krelion judge's powerful artistic conception attempted to suppress the 'demonic' living mech, the Elegant Rage's tree form had become so large and massive that she was finally able to properly utilize all of her excess wood energy!

In addition, the growth of an enormous hidden root network had caused her regeneration capabilities to grow even more exaggerated than before.

A huge amount of minerals buried far beneath the surface were getting drained at a rapid rate.

The additional metals and other materials helped to strengthen the trunk and enable it to grow a large amount of thorns!

The ebony tree in its current form resembled the Emperor Tree even less after her trunk became covered by so many sharp and ominous growths.

As the thorns began to absorb a lot of wood energy as well as the Woodsap mech's anger and indignation for getting attacked so many times, the ones facing the floating enemy finally launched in the target's direction!

The krelion judge reacted quickly. He no longer tried to attack, but quickly used his staff to conjure a wall of light that formed an additional layer of defense.

Crack! Crack! Crack! Crack! Crack! Crack!

Dozens of thorns struck this light wall and exhausted its defensive capacity!

The krelion judge quickly spun his staff and blocked numerous more thorns from getting through, but he was still unable to prevent a lot of thorns from crashing against his light energy shield!

Unlike the previous attacks of the Elegant Rage, this time the thorn projectiles struck so many times that the alien's primary defensive measure finally collapsed!

"Yes! We did it, Elegant Rage!"

Not that many thorns were left to puncture the alien's body, but each time they struck, the mech and her pilot gained a little more satisfaction.

Over a dozen different thorns ended up piercing through the alien's exoskeleton!

Even though the krelion's hard outer shells successfully drained the momentum of the projectiles and prevented them from digging any digger, the thorns still inflicted a lot of harm!

Not only did the krelion judge suffer a lot of shallow flesh wounds, but the extraordinary thorns also induced a large amount of pain, causing the tribulation manifestation to falter and lose his rhythm!

While the powerful alien tried his best to recover from this grievous blow, the Elegant Rage was already starting to grow a second set of thorns on her trunk!

Ves became more and more gobsmacked as he witnessed the performance of the transformed Elegant Rage from the cockpit.

"KILL! PUNISH! LET HIM EXPERIENCE MY PAIN TENFOLD!"

"Whoa, whoa, calm down, partner!"

The Elegant Rage had undoubtedly contaminated herself as she activated the hidden power of her ebony wood, but it didn't matter so long as she became strong enough to turn this battle around!

Major Jankowski desperately tried to rein in the out-of-control mech, but his mind and will were far too weak to rein in the much more powerful machine!

Since the Elegant Rage's current tree form had completely subsumed her original mech form, the role of a mech pilot had pretty much grown redundant.

Simon Jankowski had practically no control over the actions of the Elegant Rage anymore. The Woodsap mech had taken full control over herself and began to fight against the tribulation manifestation on a completely autonomous basis.

This was a nightmare scenario to everyone that was paranoid about machines taking over!

Though Ves held a lot of concerns about how easily the Elegant Rage made her own mech pilot irrelevant, he became incredibly impressed by how much stronger she became.

Her increased size and her ability to control her much more massive form to a reasonable degree had practically turned her into a juggernaut in truth!

Other than the loss of her legs, she truly performed no different from a hyper juggernaut!

"Amazing!"

If every mech made out of Emperor Wood possessed this trump card, then that would completely transform their value!

His Woodsap mechs were finally able to justify their own existence!

In fact, this was only the beginning. Ves had never thought about this possibility when he converted the Elegant Rage into a Woodsap mech.

Now that he knew, he could design his subsequent Woodsap mechs to deliberately take advantage of this capability!

What excited Ves even more was that the lack of control might not be that big of an issue.

The greatest flaw of the Elegant Rage was that she was currently being piloted by a conventional neural interface.

Once the Elegant Rage formed a Woodsap Pact with Venerable Lanie or any mech pilot for that matter, the strong connection should give the living mech a much stronger anchor to another mind. It should become much easier for her partner to keep the mechs in tree form under effective control.

At this time, the battle had taken another turn as the krelion judge no longer thought about keeping his distance.

"He's advancing! The enemy wants to burn the Elegant Rage's enlarged form with his light!"

The krelion judge's manifestation of his artistic conception became much more oppressive and scorching up close!

So much light shone onto the darkened tree that the bark and leaves were already starting to dry up and burn!

However, the enormous size of the Elegant Rage's tree form meant that it was much more able to withstand this damage!

A large amount of wood energy and minerals transported by tree sap moved to restore the damaged exterior and prevent the tree form from losing any further integrity.

In the meantime, the Elegant Rage never let up on her attacks!

When the krelion finally came too close to launch a lot of thorns at the tribulation manifestation, the Elegant Rage began to imitate the Emperor Tree in a different way by whipping her many branches at the enemy!

Whip!

Whip!

Whip!

Many branches missed the fairly nimble and mobile opponent.

Other branches ended up getting parried by the alien's light staff.

However, it was still difficult for the krelion judge to avoid damage as there were too many branches attacking on a repeated basis!

Each strike inflicted considerable damage to the alien's exoskeleton. Smaller thorns had grown onto the exterior of every branch, thereby making sure that the krelion judge could not shake off the attacks so easily!

The alien did not turn himself into a whipping boy for no reason. Once he got close, his radiant light began to scorch the Elegant Rage's enlarged form a lot more effectively than before!

So much of the Woodsap mech was vulnerable to the punishing light of the krelion judge that the living mech was eating her way through a huge amount of energy and minerals with every passing second!

Furthermore, the krelion judge also attempted to cripple or at least cut the Elegant Rage down to size by striking at the trunk with his staff.

A sharp and long light blade extended from the tips of the tribulation manifestation's staff. Each time these blades cut into the trunk of the Elegant Rage, the living mech suffered a lot of pain!

Yet despite all of the light energy and tribulation lightning ravaging the trunk, the scale of the damage was trivial compared to the total size of the current Elegant Rage!

It was like a mouse trying to kill a human.

Despite the former's best efforts, the massive difference in scale brutally reduced the threat posed by the krelion judge to a barely lethal level!

The only way for the tribulation manifestation to defeat the ebony tree was to exhaust the transformed Woodsap mech's entire supply of wood energy and minerals!

This was why the krelion judge had come close and tried to attack the Elegant Rage as much as possible. The more damage he inflicted, the greater the resource drain!

To be fair, this was not an unrealistic plan. The Elegant Rage's loss of mobility prevented her from moving to other forests that she could tap.

Her enormous roots had grown very large, but their volume was ultimately limited by the Elegant Rage's limited spiritual foundation. There were only so many minerals that they could extract from the underlying soil

The fight had reached an intense state as both sides engaged in a sped-up contest of attrition.

The Elegant Rage tried her best to break the krelion judge's shell-covered body as quickly as possible.

The tribulation manifestation attempted to exhaust the ebony tree's energy and mineral reserves without any other consideration!

It was impossible for this intensive exchange to last for long.

As the krelion judge continued to strike his light blades deeper into the damaged trunk, the Elegant Rage's gigantic form suddenly began to spawn a multitude of dark and thorny vines!

Even though the enemy's scorching light already started to burn these vines, there were so many of them that they successfully wrapped around the body of their target until not a single gap remained!

"Gotcha!"

The alien had become completely trapped!

Although the trapped enemy began to radiate an increasing amount of light in order to break free from this trap, the ebony tree continued to launch more and more vines to strengthen the hold onto the powerful opponent.

Then, the vines started to squeeze in an attempt to constrict their unruly prey!

The forces acting upon the poor tribulation manifestation became so great that the exoskeleton finally couldn't take it anymore.

The krelion judge's manifested body completely collapsed!

From the moment this occurred, the tribulation energies that previously made up his body completely lost control and began to explode outwards and engulfed the Elegant Tree's exaggeratingly large form!

The final wave of the lightning manifestation had finally come to an end in the most dramatic fashion imaginable!

## Chapter 6160 Feeding Negativity

Ves no longer questioned why the heavens saw fit to subject the Elegant Rage to a lightning tribulation.

He severely underestimated the potential of Emperor Wood. The modified ebony wood that made up much of the mech frame of the Elegant Rage apparently retained a lot of possibilities from the former calamity tree!

Even when the Emperor Tree was already dead, his wood still carried his highly mutated DNA and other remnants.

The Elegant Rage only needed to activate the hidden legacies of the calamity tree in order to take on the form of the once-mighty Emperor Tree.

Even if the Woodsap mech was too weak to 'simulate' the full splendor of this powerful organism, the ebony tree form enabled the machine to gain the size as well as the effective combat power of a small juggernaut!

This was an amazing amplification of power that no one expected to witness from what looked like a strange second-class mech on the outside!

If this ability was not a one-time feature but instead a controllable option that could be toggled during every battle, then the meaning of a mech like the Elegant Rage had definitely changed!

Just the fact that the Elegant Rage managed to smack down the krelion judge so easily after her transformation into a tall and thorn-covered ebony tree was clear proof of the potential of a Woodsap mech!

Ves did not delude himself into thinking that the ebony tree form allowed the Elegant Rage to win every battle. Everything had a price. The transformed Woodsap mech had not only lost her mobility, but also drained a huge amount of moisture and minerals beneath the ground.

The ecological landscape of this entire forest was worse than the other ones! Not only had it been drained of life, but all of the minerals underneath the ground had disappeared as well!

This included many low-grade and mid-grade exotics that enriched this planet and made the ground more resistant against orbital bombardment.

Such a consequence would doubtlessly make people reluctant to deploy Woodsap mechs in a defensive capacity!

What was the point of working so hard to defend a planet against foreign invasion when its own protectors had already ruined the environment?

Perhaps the only suitable role for Woodsap mechs was to take part in offensive sieges against hostile planets!

As long as the Woodsap mechs were allowed to desecrate on planets that the attacking force didn't care about, they could give full play to their costly but powerful tree forms!

It would be like fielding an army of juggernauts, but only demanded a fraction of resources and transportation capacity!

However, Ves noticed that Woodsap mechs also acted under another constraint.

From the moment their tree forms took root, they lost the ability to move.

Sure, they derived a lot of power from the resources they could extract from the ground, but when that came at the cost of losing their mobility, they instantly turned themselves into obvious targets!

Ves did not make the mistake of assuming that every stationary object was weak. The Emperor Tree had managed to smack around several expert mechs without incurring any significant damage.

What if stronger enemies came around? Once a sufficiently strong powerhouse such as an ace mech confronted the tree, the latter had no chance to retreat!

In fact, it didn't take a phase lord or an ace mech to slay the Emperor Tree. All it took was heavy bombardment in order to exhaust its defenses and resources!

Unless the tree had a way of attacking far beyond its own position, it was helpless to block out the damage inflicted by orbital bombardment or the massed firepower of lots of heavy artillery mechs!

Ves recognized that an opponent like the krelion judge had lost the last battle a little unjustly.

If he was a real living being and not a manifestation created by tribulation lightning, then he could have made the most rational choice and simply retreat.

There was no advantage in fighting against the Elegant Rage in her powerful ebony tree form. This was especially the case at close range!

The proper way to deal with a strong opponent with a strong stationary advantage was to disengage and move out of the range where the ebony tree could pose a significant threat.

Once the krelion judge moved far away enough, he could either initiate a siege by bombarding the transformed Elegant Rage at an extreme distance, or simply stall and wait until the Elegant Rage could no longer afford to stick around and reverted to her mech form!

Unfortunately for the krelion judge, the rules of the game did not permit it to adopt these shameless tactics. The manifestation was not permitted to move outside of the reach of the tribulation storm that sustained it. He was also not allowed to adopt Fabian tactics because lighting tribulations were all about facing challenges head-on!

Therefore, the Elegant Rage lucked out big time as the krelion judge was essentially forced to fight the monstrous ebony tree on her own terms!

Tribulation manifestations literally could not retreat, so the outcome of such a lopsided battle became predictable.

Real battles should not unfold in such a stupid fashion. Most native aliens were not stupid. Once they learned what Woodsap mechs were capable of, they would definitely make the corresponding adjustments.

The tree form of a Woodsap mech therefore possessed very distinct strengths and weaknesses.

The presence of weaknesses did not invalidate the value of machines like the Elegant Rage. They just made it a bit more troublesome to use them to their full potential.

Combined arms was all about mixing different unit types together to cover for each other's weaknesses. The presence of heavy artillery mechs, light mechs and other supporting units could easily compensate for the obvious shortcomings of Woodsap mechs.

Woodsap mechs could easily act as movable fortresses that could quickly secure solid footholds or forward operating bases in enemy territory. Ves could already envision these machines being put to use in planetary raids and invasions. They were so much cheaper, quicker and easier to deploy than full defensive works!

This made Woodsap mechs especially suitable for use in the upcoming deep strike operations!

If Ves could figure this out, then so could others. He already knew that the Red Association as well as a lot of other observers had definitely taken notice of the Elegant Rage's absurd combat effectiveness under the right conditions. He could already foresee that he would get flooded with inquiries about mechs similar to this machine.

While he certainly had reasons to feel pleased about receiving validation for his hard work, the ongoing crisis was not over.

The defeat of the ninth and final wave of the multi-modal lightning tribulation should have made him feel relieved.

The problem was that the Elegant Rage had paid a heavy price in order to transform into her ebony tree form.

By unlocking the remnant of the Emperor Tree that was hidden inside her own wooden construction, the Elegant Rage became increasingly more contaminated by the calamity tree's powerful imprint!

In other words, the ebony tree not only tried to take on the form of the Emperor Tree, but also tried to revive the mentality of this powerful entity!

As a powerful lightning baptism continued to transform and strengthen the Elegant Rage, Ves quickly realized that this sequence could go horribly wrong!

"PAIN! KILL! SUFFER! GROW!"

Instead of reverting back to her mech form, the Elegant Rage doubled down on her current form and actively tried to grow her ebony tree form!

Ves could sense that the exterior of the current Elegant Rage was steadily growing taller by the second!

The thorns grew thicker and longer, making them look a lot more menacing than before!

Although the lightning baptism was also causing a lot of harm to the ebony tree, the berserk Elegant Rage simply took the pain and channeled her growing rage into shaping a larger and more aggressive form for herself!

The lightning baptism did nothing to improve the Elegant Rage's unstable mentality. Her deep contamination and her loss of rationality had caused her to pursue whatever instincts became dominant at this time, and she just happened to have inherited most of them from the Emperor Tree!

So long as the Elegant Rage wanted to become a more powerful tree from the bottom of her heart, then the lightning tribulation would endeavor to make her wish come true, even if that was not her original intention!

"Damnit!" Ves cursed. "This is not supposed to happen! If this goes on, all semblance of a mech will disappear! Jankowski, can you rein in the Elegant Rage?!"

"I can't!" The expert candidate responded with a desperate voice. "I am trying my best to help the mech regain her sanity, but my mind and will is too weak to get through her suffering. She's in so much pain that it is fueling her descent into madness. I have never experienced anything like this! I am already lucky that she has not seen any reason to lash out against me, but I cannot guarantee that she will stay this way."

The Elegant Rage was losing control, and the damned heavenly authority of Messier 87 deliberately fed this tendency just to screw the humans over within the confines of the rules!

"I see." Ves gritted his teeth. "I can't sit still."

He understood now why the living mech asked him to pull her back to sanity. She predicted that this might happen!

A lot of thoughts went through his mind. He quickly came up with a potential solution, though he was anything but certain whether it would work. He also doubted whether the lightning tribulation would let him get away with this action.

There was no time for doubts. The final lightning baptism was strengthening the Elegant Rage's ebony tree form so much that the process may reach the point of no return!

"Blinky! Bring over Lufa now!"

"Mrow!"

The Star Cat actively tried to reach out to the Angel of Tranquility.

The activity of the tribulation storm made it difficult to form a connection, but Lufa was already waiting to help.

As soon as Blinky formed a connection with the design spirit, the latter immediately began to spiritually possess the companion spirit.

The purple spiritual cat slowly began to morph into a humanoid shape with the wings of an angel!

The aura and glow of the possessed companion spirit also changed to the point where they mirrored that of Lufa!

As Blinky did his utmost to open his own spirituality to Lufa and allow the design spirit to channel as much of his power to this location as possible, the entire cockpit soon became a haven of peace and tranquility!

Major Jankowski immediately relaxed his tense and frayed nerves as he succumbed to the influence of Lufa's soothing presence.

"This glow..."

The miniature manifestation of Lufa maintained a calm and stoic facade as he strengthened his presence inside the cockpit as much as possible.

His aura quickly began to spread outside of the confines of the cockpit and affect the larger tree!

Though Lufa's glow did not appear to be strong enough to force the Elegant Rage to regain her sanity right away, the design spirit had not yet exhausted his options.

He soon began to lift up his finger and press it onto his chin. As Lufa adopted a thinking expression, he began to shift his current manifestation from the Aspect of Tranquility to the Aspect of Rationality!

His glow no longer tried to suppress every mental and spirituality on an indiscriminate basis.

Instead, Lufa left the Elegant Rage's conscious and rational thinking alone and concentrated all of his efforts into taming her rampant emotions!

The effect of the 'rationality glow' was barely stronger than that of the tranquility glow, but every bit of progress mattered!

Meanwhile, Ves tried his best to wake up his Woodsap mech.

"Remember who you are. You are the Elegant Rage. You are not a tree. Venerable Lanie is waiting for you to come to her. Don't you want to reunite with your battle partner? Calm down. Let go. Endless glory awaits, but only if you are able to turn yourself back into a mech. You can do it. I believe in you. Let Lufa bring you back to sanity."