

## Mech 2821

### *Chapter 2821 - Competitive Biomechs*

The biomechs owned by the Roving Hunters all possessed flight capabilities.

This was good. Flight translated to mobility, and mobility was essential to flee the most dangerous areas of Veoline quickly.

Each biomech stood silently while locked within braces extending from the walls. The braces supported the biomechs while at the same time keeping them in place so that they wouldn't be able to go out without authorization.

It turned out that one of the reasons why the Roving Hunters failed to get their biomechs out of the braces was because they didn't have the right codes to unlock them! Competitive teams were only allowed to bring their mechs out if they received permission from the arena.

"As you can see, our biomechs are stuck." Captain Cecil Rivington stated the obvious. "Usually, an arena official will come and unlock the braces for the mechs that are scheduled to make an appearance. The rules are so strict because an incident occurred in the past."

Ves raised his eyebrow. "What happened?"

"There used to be a team that went on a 12-match losing streak. It got so bad that the team risked getting relegated to a lower league. When that happens, you lose your sponsors, mech pilots, fans and a lot of potential income. Suffice to say, the team will pretty much be ruined, and the owner and team leader will lose the most."

"I guess that team leader didn't take his impending relegation too well."

"Correct, sir. The short story is that the team leader went bonkers and started to hop into his biomech. Back then, the braces were still there, but they were under the control of the team, so he easily managed to free his machine. I won't detail all the damage that ensued, but he was able to inflict a lot of damage before internal security intervened."

All of this meant that Ruuzon Arena had become a lot more strict towards rogue biomechs since then! Not only were teams compelled to store their mechs in strong and secure braces, but they also had to implement other locking measures that prevented the machines from being used on an impulse.

Removing all of these locking measures took time, and some of them couldn't be removed without the cooperation of an arena inspector!

Ves' suited form looked up at the mass of bone-like cages that kept the Roving Hunter machines in captivity.

"If this is the case, what was your plan to free your biomechs from these contraptions?"

"We figured we could cut through enough braces to free an arm or something. Once one of our biomechs is able to move a limb, it could use its own strength to break the other braces. It will still take time to unlock the other locking mechanisms, but our mech technicians can handle those aspects."

Ves glanced at the crew responsible for maintaining the biomechs of the Roving Hunters. They consisted of a mix of young interns to seasoned specialists.

While biomechs were famed for their low maintenance requirements, that didn't mean that every problem could be remedied by dumping them into a feeder pool.

Regardless of whether they were made of metal or flesh, competitive mechs frequently incurred damage. Their battle frequency was so high that their wear and tear reached an insane level. And this did not even take into account the battle damage they suffered!

Due to the peculiarities of biomechs, fixing major issues such as missing limbs required a lot of manual intervention. For example, reattaching a new limb and trying to integrate it with the older body not only demanded specialized knowledge, but also lots of practical experience.

Every biomech was unique. Their growth always diverged from the template and as they aged, they became more distinct. Every injury healed in different ways and every replacement part caused the biomech to diverge even further from their starting point.

In most cases, these changes might have detrimental effects on the performance of a biomech, but as long as the problems weren't too exaggerated, the impact was negligible enough.

A competitive team that did not do their best to keep their mechs in peak condition risked suffering many preventable losses!

A team of the caliber of the Roving Hunters actually employed over a hundred specialists to care for their biomechs. Due to the complexity of organic machines, each biomech technician specialized in a narrow field.

For example, there were biomech technicians who only trained in servicing and repairing joints. Others specialized in healing and servicing the biceps of biomech limbs.

It couldn't be helped. The knowledge that someone needed to learn to master every essential aspect about servicing biomechs was too immense! The use of a decent-

quality cranial implant was essentially mandatory to be able to become the highest grade of biomech technicians in the LRA! They had essentially become biotechs experts themselves after they mastered all of this knowledge!

This was one of the many reasons why most people outside of the LRA didn't bother with biomechs. While an ordinary mech was also a complicated product of engineering, mech technicians didn't need to know how all of it worked in order to straighten a piece of armor plating or replace a damaged component.

Therefore, even though the crew answering to Captain Rivington were merely biomech technicians, Ves did not look down on them. As proud as he was in his ability to work with mechs, his expertise in machines made out of flesh and bones was vastly inferior to that of these 'humble' techs!

That said, Ves was not completely useless in this instance.

He might know little about organic machines, but electronic machines were much more familiar to him. The arena systems mainly operated on conventional systems, which meant they were difficult for the biomechs to deal with but familiar enough for Ves to manipulate.

With Lucky's hacking capabilities, the security suite posed little hindrance to Ves. He tore past the blockade and accessed the controls to the mech hall.

"Make way! The braces are coming off!"

The biomech technicians near the machines quickly flew back to a healthy distance. The entire hall rumbled for a tiny moment before the bone-like braces gradually retracted from the organic machines they clutched. The braces smoothly retracted into the wall.

Ves only freed five out of the twelve biomechs. While it would have been nice if he was able to take away the rest, they simply didn't have the means to transport them at a time!

Rather than leave them open for other parties to subvert, it was best to leave them locked so that delinquents wouldn't be able to use them for destructive ends.

Three of the biomechs were reserved for the mech athletes. Captain Cecil Rivington was a swordsman mech specialist. As the team leader, he not only possessed the highest skill, but also knew how to take charge.

His swordsman biomech was the most impressive unit of the twelve. The Taragon's sculpted uncovered muscle drew admiration from Vincent, though he was quite distressed to see that there was nothing between the legs.

A woman called Carlie Jinton was his second. She was a ranged mech specialist but knew her way around if an enemy ever got close.

Since pure ranged mechs were a bit impractical in competitive matches, she usually piloted marauder mechs. The Bluestar was typical of this mech type. The speed-oriented biomech was capable of wielding both a mace and a carbine, though not at once.

The third mech pilot was a younger man called Oliver Vlambeer. He was the rookie of the Roving Hunters and did not possess any exceptional fighting capabilities. His talent might be good, but at this point the 28-year old could not compare to the likes of Venerable Jannzi.

He piloted a fairly sturdy spearman mech called the Optimon. It was a slower, more defensive-oriented mech that carried both a spear and a medium shield.

Ves couldn't do much about it, though. After discussing with Jannzi and Vincent, he set his sights on two spare biomechs.

The first one was a knight mech, of course. Different from the Shield of Samar, the primary defensive mech of the Roving Hunters was a rather speedy and agile biomech.

"Most of the time, ranged mechs are of limited use in group matches." Captain Rivington explained as he gestured towards the knight mech. "The Perringer isn't designed to stay put and absorb damage. In the arena, every mech must constantly stay on the move. It's impractical for a slow and heavy knight mech to be of use in these conditions. Our knight mech therefore serves a peeling function. They have to charge forward, get in the face of another mech and keep it occupied as long as possible, thereby peeling away an opponent that could threaten our more vulnerable units such as the Bluestar."

"I see." Ves murmured. "It's meant to be annoying, then. I'm a bit disappointed by its defensive capabilities, though. I can see why it's classified as a knight mech but to me it's a bit too skinny for my tastes."

Captain Rivington shrugged. "As I said, the current competitive meta favors mobility above all else. The Perringer is damn good at charging, and its slightly-conal shield is great at ramming into other mechs."

"What do you think, Jannzi?"

"I would rather have the Shield of Samar." She grumbled. "I don't like to pilot other mechs, you know that. In fact, if it wasn't an emergency, I wouldn't be willing to pilot another mech at all. I'm sure the Perringer is a decent mech, but I have no bond with it, and it's not even living."

"Just do the best you can. You can get back to the Shield of Samar soon enough once we solve our immediate problems."

Ves turned to Vincent. "Are you ready to pilot your first biomech?"

The crippled expert candidate was hastily browsing through a beginner's guide on piloting biomechs. The more technical explanations all went right over his head!

"I don't know! These biomechs are so different from the mechs I know that I'm not sure whether I can fight with any of them! Isn't there a normal mech around here somewhere?"

"Don't complain. I want to get my hands on a classical mech as well, but there aren't any within range. We have no choice but to make do with what we have, and right now that means you should get ready to pilot the Rotenring."

"That's a stupid name, by the way."

The oddly-named Rotenring was a bit of an oddball among the competitive mechs of the Roving Hunters. It was a striker mech armed with a shotgun that also incorporated a chainsaw.

The Rotenring possessed good protection but lower-than-average mobility. This was fine though as the mech was meant to act as a finisher. Its arsenal allowed it to deal disproportionate damage against damaged opponents. The shotgun was able to inflict considerable damage to open wounds while its wicked-looking chainsaw could grind through entire limbs!

However, its lack of maneuverability meant that it had fallen out of favor as of late.

"The Rotenring might be rusty since it has been months since we last deployed it." Captain Rivington cautioned.

"What does that mean?"

"The biomech should be fine, but the Rotenring might come across as stiff to its mech pilots. Just give it some exercise to loosen it up. Once a biomech gets moving again, it will gradually become more responsive."

As the biomech technicians prepared all five biomechs for deployment, Ves began to study them as well. He referenced the manuals and technical schematics and tried to see whether he could add to their strength.

## *Chapter 2822 - Resist Temptation*

This was the first time that Ves directly worked with biomechs. Before this point, he only viewed them from various distances.

While a part of him felt tempted to learn how to work with them, he eventually decided against expanding his scope.

Biomechs presented a lot of new responsibilities. They opened so many new doors that Ves wouldn't even know what to do with them all! Biomech designers were capable of implementing lots of features that ordinary mech designers could only dream about!

Yet for all of their distinctive advantages, they also came with a host of new problems. On top of that, Ves would have to invest so much in studying life sciences that he would have to scatter his focus to an excessive degree!

Different from other mech designers, Ves had a chance to quickly master all of this additional knowledge. As long as he snuck out of sight, activated the System, receive his recently-earned DP before spending it all on various biomech-related Skills, he may be able to do a lot more with the biomechs that were currently being prepped for deployment!

If Ves managed to escape the city, then he'd be able to work with other biomechs as well. Prosperous Hill VI was dominated by organic machines, and knowing how to work with them would doubtlessly grant more options to him. This might make a huge difference!

He struggled with this dilemma. While learning to work with biomechs sounded tempting, he knew that it wouldn't amount to anything unless he invested in it all the way.

That meant he wouldn't be able to invest his DP in Skills and Sub-Skills that furthered his current focus.

His design philosophy might also shift as a response. Ves was quite afraid of that as he believed his current orientation was already the most suitable for him. He instinctively felt that delving into biomechs might cause him to go astray!

As Ves explored his conflicted feelings, he comprehended why he felt so reluctant to study biomechs.

He didn't want to have anything in common with the crazies of the Five Scrolls Compact!

The massive cult excelled in biotechnology. Their fanatical researchers utilized their extensive understanding of biology as a springboard to harness one of the greater powers of life, which was spirituality!

"I'm a mech designer, not a madman!"

Ves feared that he wouldn't be able to resist the many temptations that biotechnology and biomechs offered. He was already toeing the line at his current state, and that was when he was only able to work with inanimate objects. If he somehow became able to combine his spiritual expertise with an understanding on how living organisms worked, then the horrors he could produce may very well put a dark god like the Unending One to shame!

In the end, Ves resisted the temptation and turned away from this choice yet again. This was not the first time he entered this junction, but he was glad he was able to stay true to his heart.

No matter how far he went or how often he broke the rules, in his heart he always held on to a noble image of what a mech designer should be. All of his innovations and all of his accomplishments had to tie into his main ambition.

His ultimate goal was to change the way that the current mech community treated mechs!

He wanted to introduce a new paradigm to everyone that presented them with an alternative approach to handling mechs. His focus laid specifically on classical mechs because they were the most widely-used machines in human space.

"I can think about expanding my design philosophy to biomechs another time." He muttered. "First, I need to worry about realizing my design philosophy, and that is already a difficult task. Spreading myself too thin will only bog me down."

He only planned to reconsider this matter when he became a Master. At that point, he not only attained his main goal, but hopefully reached a level of maturity and development that allowed him to keep his urges in check.

Right now, he didn't trust himself to utilize his knowledge on biomechs responsibly.

In fact, he was already plagued with thoughts of trying to design a 'successful' version of the NuMan!

In an attempt to distract himself from these dangerous thoughts, he turned his attention away from the biomechs and on what else he could do to facilitate his escape.

There wasn't much he could do to the biomechs anyway. Since he didn't design them, they lacked spiritual foundations, which meant that none of his spiritual shenanigans

had any effect on them. He would have to spend hours and days with them to change that a bit, but obviously that was not practical under the circumstances.

Ves instead spent his time on studying his surroundings. After gaining access to the systems of the mech hall, he managed to find an incomplete map that revealed the overall structure of the underground complex.

It was larger than he thought. There was room for hundreds if not thousands of mechs. There were so many halls and facilities that over half of them weren't even labeled. Ves had no idea what they held and what their purpose was supposed to be. It seemed way too excessive to prepare so many underground rooms to support the operations of a mech arena.

"Well, that doesn't really matter at the moment."

Ves had no intentions of getting anywhere near the core of the tunnel complex. The frequent rumblings and worrying signals picked up by his Odineye signified that the fight over there was very considerable!

What he had to worry about instead were more immediate threats. Within a range of several hundred meters, his Odineye tracked the movements of hundreds of people.

Most of them moved as if they were lost. They were probably innocent civilians who managed to make it to the tunnels but didn't know where to go from there.

There were also others who moved with greater purpose. They were probably familiar with this section of tunnels and traveled to specific destinations.

Even before the innocent civilians turned the corner, a couple of soldiers had already opened fire!

Though his Odineye was unable to perceive the bloody sight in great detail, Ves nonetheless winced as his imagination filled the blanks.

These armored troops were ruthless!

Despite killing innocent civilians, the group did not even halt their advance. They continued to march forward with their rifles ready to fire upon any possible threat.

Fortunately, their guns were fairly loud, so the other refugees in their path had quickly moved away!

Since Ves was still transmitting the sensor readings to his fellow Larkinsons, his honor guard quickly noticed the incoming threat.



Nitaa voiced her concern. "Sir, the unknown soldiers are marching in our direction. I'm afraid that they may be targeting us. Their direction is very clear."

"They might be going for the Roving Hunters instead."

"Which means we are also under threat."

The aggressive posture by these incoming soldiers was way too threatening. If Ves hadn't seen them gun down civilians, he might have thought he would be able to negotiate with them if he wasn't their primary target.

As it was, he seriously doubted whether he could get a word in before they opened fire!

While Ves didn't feel threatened by these troops, he was already worrying about what came afterwards.

The tunnel complex wasn't safe. Fighting had erupted in many places. The main reason why this section remained calm was because it was situated in the periphery. Only a faltering franchise like the Roving Hunters hung out at these parts.

Yet now, a group of heavily-armored infantry moved further and further away from the center.

"They're definitely on the hunt." Ves judged. "Whether they are targeting us, the Roving Hunters or the biomechs, I can't tell, but I have a way of finding out. LUCKY!"

"Meow?!"

The lazy cat had stopped sniffing around and simply decided to lounge on top of one of the consoles.

"Sneak over to those troops and try to hack into one of their suits. If you can, retrieve any data on their missions or instructions and send it back to me. We need to know what they're up to before they arrive, so you better leave quickly!"

"Meow meow meow!"

Even though Lucky complained about the task, he nonetheless moved into action. The black-clad cat phased through the floor and quickly 'swam' towards his targets.

Ves was very confident that Lucky would be able to retrieve useful intelligence. The incoming troops moved with such purpose that he felt it was unlikely they were merely wandering around.

It didn't take long before Lucky returned. His head poked out of the floor next to Ves.

"Meow."

Ves received a rather haphazard data burst. It not only contained a more complete map, but also other scattered data that seemed only partially useful.

What Ves paid attention to was both the allegiance of the soldiers and their current orders.

"Who the hell are the ultralifers?" He frowned.

He quickly approached Captain Rivington to inquire what he knew about this strange-sounding group.

The team leader g.r.o.a.n.e.d. "Those guys are nuts. They're nationalists who think the LRA can do no wrong and that everyone must embrace biotechnology to a greater degree."

"Doesn't that sound similar to the conservatives?"

"You're partially right. Originally, they used to be quite close to the conservatives, but the ultralifers eventually proved to be too extreme to remain in polite company. They are one of the most strident warhawks who want the LRA to go to war against its neighbors in order to impose biotechnology onto their people!"

If the ultralifers had their way, then the LRA would have already turned into a ruined mess after all of the destructive wars it went through!

Ves grimaced. "That explains why they have been ordered to track me down and kill me. I knew that people would become pissed if I managed to defeat Dr. Navarro, but this overreaction is a bit extreme!"

"That's the ultralifers for you. While they used to refrain from coming to blows, the civil war must have loosened their restraints!"

Since Ves knew that the approaching soldiers were unquestionably hostile, he no longer felt any qualms about plotting their demise!

The data retrieved by Lucky also included equipment specs. While he didn't understand every parameter due to the biological nature of all of the gear, he could already ascertain that they possessed a lot of power.

Several of them carried heavy weapons that were capable of inflicting heavy damage. Even mechs wouldn't be able to escape unscathed!

"Well, that will just preoccupy me a bit longer."

He did not ask for help from the Roving Hunters. They were better served with working on the biomechs instead!

"It's fourteen against fifty-two if we count Lucky and I." He stated to Nitaa. "We'll have to prepare the terrain in order to eliminate these ultralifers without a loss."

Nitaa pressed a heavy gauntlet against his shoulder plate. "You're wrong, sir. It's thirteen against fifty-two. You'll be sitting out this battle. With all of the data we've obtained, we can defeat the hostiles ourselves!"

"What?! I can fight as well, you know! My Unending Regalia is practically invincible against their weapons!"

"Be that as it may, let us do our jobs, sir. We are your honor guard, so every time you have to intervene in person, our honor becomes more tarnished. Please don't hollow out our purpose. I know you can handle yourself in a fight, but that is still a distance away from being able to fight like a soldier. Let the professionals handle this. We won't let any of the hostiles step inside this hall."

"...Very well." Ves glumly sighed. "I'll be waiting here. If anyone slips past your net, don't blame me for taking action."

#### *Chapter 2823 - Outclassed*

Since the aggressive troop of ultralifers had already covered a lot of ground, Ves' honor guard didn't have much time to prepare for battle.

Nitaa immediately signalled them to exit the mech hall and meet the approaching hostiles in a more favorable location.

"Lucky, come with us as well. We need your claws."

"Meow!"

This time, Lucky was much less reluctant to obey orders. He happily jumped on top of Nitaa's thick helmet and perched on it as if he was sitting on a throne!

One honor guard remained behind as an insurance. As powerful as the Odineye turned out to be, Nitaa didn't trust it to detect every possible threat. If some stealthed infiltrator managed to avoid its gaze, Ves might easily get attacked when he thought he was safe!

For this reason, the remaining honor guard hovered very close to Ves. Even though he felt this was a bit excessive, the alternatives were worse.

It took less than a minute for the honor guard to pick their battlefield. They chose a relatively large space that was interspersed with various cargo containers. It was

evidently used as a secondary loading hall, so it was both large and full of objects to hide behind.

However, the ceiling was fairly high so anyone who flew upwards would enjoy a commanding view of the loading hall.

As Ves tracked the positioning of his honor guard, he found it curious that they chose to spread out and take cover by themselves.

Barely twenty seconds passed before the soldiers entered the hall. They did so quickly and professionally. Not only did they avoid clumping up too much as they passed through the entrance, a couple of them also started to launch grenades that released a lot of sensor-blocking particles upon impact.

The hostiles detected the presence of the honor guard in advance!

"Damn. I guess they're not that easy to fool." Ves observed.

It wasn't difficult to detect the suit signatures of his honor guard. Their medium and heavy suits of combat armor were designed for frontline combat, not for preparing ambushes. Their energy signatures simply couldn't be hidden!

Despite detecting enemies up ahead, the ultralifers refrained from storming forward. Even if their sensors told them that there were only eleven armored enemies ahead, they did not assume their superior numbers would avail them in a fight.

At the very least, they had to be careful enough to prevent unnecessary casualties!

Different from the honor guard, the ultralifers still kept their fireteams together as they spread out. Four to six troopers stuck close to each other as they moved as a single unit.

That made them a lot harder to deal with. Each member of a small fireteam possessed a different specialty and responsibility. One carried a heavy weapon while another specialized in treating the wounded.

No one opened fire yet. No one stuck out their necks. While the sensor-blocking particles prevented the enemy from detecting their presence from a distance, the ultralifers suffered from the same problem, if to a lesser degree!

Their suit sensors were already configured to bypass the blockage to the best of their abilities. This allowed them to maintain a firm picture on the positions of the honor guard.

As the fireteams distanced themselves from each other, they seemed poised to close the net. Once they confirmed that there were no other enemies besides the eleven unknown soldiers, the ultralifers would definitely take action!

Yet before their commanding officer could issue any orders, Lucky took action first!

Without anyone noticing it, a black blur shot out from beneath the feet of one of the soldiers and directly clawed the man's brains!

This time, Lucky didn't hide his phasing powers. The sensor-blocking particles that inhibited sensors also inhibited communications, which meant that he was much more free to unleash his powers!

Before the remaining members of the fireteam could turn around and respond, Lucky dove into the crate that the fireteam had pressed up against and disappeared!

Seconds later, a black blur emerged from another cargo container. Two different armored troops lost their lives in an instant as the insides of their heads turned into sliced ham!

As more soldiers died in an inexplicable fashion, the ultralifers did not choose to retreat.

Instead, they threw all caution to the wind and stormed forward!

"KILL THE FOREIGNERS!"

"LRA FOREVER!"

"LIFE IS SUPREME!"

Heavily-armed soldiers covered with bone-like plating coated in green jumped out of cover and surged forward heedless of the tiny terror that was harvesting their lives at a steady rate!

Yet as deadly as lucky could be, he did not excel at group attacks!

It was at this moment where the difference in gear became evident.

The energy and physical attacks that struck the exposed armor sections of the honor guard either bounced away or only inflicted minor damage. While the Breyer alloy that covered their forms was not the most resilient second-class material, it was still a notch above what the locals utilized!

In contrast, the heavy assault rifles wielded by the Larkinson troops achieved good results against the bone armor worn by their opponents.

While the ultralifers possessed an abundant amount of passion, their funding was not as high! They were just a fringe group that attracted modest support from fellow sympathizers. While their elite units might be better equipped, an ordinary strike force like the current one was equipped with much more standard gear!

The disparity in quality quickly became evident as the well-trained honor guard managed to gun down numerous opponents despite their relatively tough shells.

"Employ kinetic attacks! Their bone armor is much less capable of withstanding physical damage!"

The bone armor was much more capable of dispersing the energy of incoming laser and positron beams. While they broke eventually, the time it took to do so was too long.

Loud impacts sounded from both sides as the soldiers pummeled each other with their heavy rifles. As they drew closer, they also started to employ other weapons.

Each honor guard was capable of launching grenades from the shoulder of their suits. At a certain point, they simultaneously launched their payloads in order to achieve as much surprise as possible.

The grenades issued to the honor guard were laced with higher-quality exotics. Their explosive fury was much greater than regular consumables!

While the ultralifers mostly managed to survive the blasts due to the protection of their combat armor, they did not come out of it unscathed.

Of course, the enemy utilized grenades as well. The honor guard frequently had to reposition as their cover and their surroundings got blasted by explosives with various effects!

The ultralifers appeared to be fond of acid grenades. Whenever they exploded, they spread highly corrosive substances onto every nearby surface.

Even Breyer alloy was unable to withstand the corrosion! The armor of the honor guard sizzled as the upper layers began to dissolve.

While the acid alone wasn't enough to penetrate their armor, the affected sections had been weakened to such a degree that a strong attack might be able to punch through!

This was exactly what happened as one Larkinson honor guard moved backwards in order to avoid getting surrounded. As he moved, a soldier happened to fire a powerful positron beam that bore straight through a weakened section located on the left leg.

"AHHHH!"

"No!"

While Lucky was steadily killing hostiles left and right, the ultralifers advanced so quickly that more honor guards sustained considerable damage.

This was especially when the ultralifers whipped out their more unconventional attacks!

One soldier that was weighed down by lots of gear began to open some containers. Strange lizards emerged from them and raced towards their targets remarkably quickly.

While many of the odd lizards got shot before they reached their destination, their hide was tough and covered with enough scales to withstand a couple of attacks. Once a surviving lizard managed to get close, the beast jumped and crushed the rifle held by an honor guard with its jaws!

The crushing force of the lizard was so high that the weapon was already beginning to crack!

Even though it was still able to fire, it was much harder to aim and turn with a hefty lizard hanging over the weapon.

The honor guard threw away the bitten gun and pulled out a pistol with one hand and unfolded an axe with the other hand!

Elsewhere, Nitaa achieved a much greater impact. Instead of hiding behind cover, she jumped out of it. Many attackers couldn't resist and fired their weapons at the enemy that was stupid enough to appear in the open!

However, none of their attacks had any effect as the Unending alloy that Ves had personally applied to the exterior remained unaffected!

Nitaa was aware of the advantages of her gear. Her tall form stormed forward as her heavy rifle blasted every enemy that attempted to shoot at her. Gauss round after gauss round flung out of the kinetic portion of her weapon and cracked through bone plating with considerably greater force than the shots fired by the rest of the honor guard!

Even though her rifle was achieving a good effect, Nitaa quickly holstered it once she drew closer to the enemy. Instead, she withdrew a foldable sword that was similar to the ones issued to the other Larkinson guards.

Yet as her armored bulk slammed into the form of one bone-suited ultralifer and cut the sword across the armor of another enemy, it became clear that this was no ordinary sword!

Although it took considerable force to cut the blade through solid bone plating, the fact that it was capable of doing so at all took many ultralifers by surprise!

"Avoid that sword!"

"Don't get close to this monster!"

Her close proximity along with her thundering approaches didn't produce too many kills, but that was because the ultralifers desperately wanted to avoid a close confrontation. Their fireteams quickly lost cohesion as they were forced to run away in order to stay out of the range of Nitaa's Unending alloy-reinforced sword!

Two ultralifers wielding hammers eventually approached. These melee champions wore a different model of bioarmor that provided much greater muscular enhancement. Not only did they run faster, but they also exerted more force as they swung their hammers at Nitaa from two different directions!

At the same time, the soldiers who were further away fired their weapons at Nitaa's helmet. They tried to do their best to distract the deadly honor guard and prevent her from concentrating on the attacks up close!

Their plan worked to an extent. The hammerheads glowed at the last second, causing their kinetic impact to become several times heavier.

**BANG! BANG!**

Even though Nitaa's combat armor miraculously remained untouched, her body nonetheless bent and flipped over because her suit wasn't able to mitigate the displacement force!

One of the hammer-wielding soldiers attempted to swing his weapon towards her helmet while the other attempted to pry the unnaturally powerful sword from Nitaa grip.

"MEOW!"

Fortunately, Lucky had come to her aid! A black blur managed to bypass all of the bone armor and instantly destroy the brain of the soldier who attempted to swing his hammer again.

This gave Nitaa enough of an opening to kick at the enemy attempting to steal her weapon before closing in to stab the would-be thief in the faceplate!

Soon enough, the battle ended. Despite their superior numbers and despite their weird methods, the ultralifers attempting to hunt down Ves had met their end.

Nitaa looked dissatisfied as she took stock of her injured men. This was the first test of the honor guard, and it became clear that their performance was anything but satisfactory!



"We only managed to get this far due to a cat." She sighed.

He was the most prolific killer of this battle. Over half of the enemy soldiers had died to his claws!

"Meow..."

Even though he looked a bit exhausted due to all of the phasing he performed, Nitaa felt ashamed that a cat managed to outclass her entire unit!

The honor guard had to obtain better gear!

#### *Chapter 2824 - Fog of War*

When the honor guard returned to the underground mech hall, they dragged a couple of limping and infirm comrades.

Against the onslaught of the ultralifers, the newly-formed and equipped honor guard performed quite decently.

After all, it was not easy to fight against opponents who outnumbered them several times over. Although the Larkinson soldiers mainly had Lucky to thank for their quick victory, they did not come out unscathed during the entire incident.

Ves remained impassive as he saw the varying states of his own men. Some had lost limbs. Others suffered internal injuries after an attack penetrated their combat armor.

One body didn't move at all. The honor guard had suffered its first casualty when the soldier that initially got struck through the c.h.e.s.t suffered several gunshots to his head. The enemy troops managed to pierce the helmet and deal irreversible damage to the head.

There was no going back after that.

Fortunately, it didn't seem that count would go any higher. One of the honor guards also qualified as a medic. Together with the high-tech treatment capabilities of their armored suits, none of the injured clansmen risked dying anytime soon. No matter what damage they suffered, as long as the head was intact, everything could be fixed or replaced once they returned to safety.

Nitaa looked disappointed as she marched up to Ves. "Sir, we successfully repelled the hostile infantry, but half of us have lost combat effectiveness."

"I know. I tracked the battle. You performed quite well against second-class opponents, I think. You killed 52 enemy troopers while only losing one of your own in return. That's an excellent ratio. There is no need for you to feel ashamed of yourself."

"You don't need to be gentle to us. Our performance is not up to par. We need to do better in order to live up to the expectations of our role. We cannot remain dependent on Lucky all the time."

"Meow." Lucky nodded his head.

The gem cat didn't want to fight all the time either. Taking action was tiring, risky and not even his main purpose. Just because he had become good at it didn't mean he wanted to kill people left and right whenever Ves encountered trouble!

Ves knew that Nitaa made a very good point. Up until recently, Ves invested much of his attention to strengthening the Larkinson Clan's mech forces. His constant efforts paid off and his mech forces had become much stronger as a result.

He thought about what he had done to foster the growth of the Avatars of Myth, Living Sentinels and so on. He designed Larkinson-exclusive mechs that possessed unique advantages. He developed prime mechs that allowed his expert pilots to exert their strength to a greater degree. He invented battle networks to allow his mech pilots to pool their strengths and exert greater power than ever before.

On top of that, he also directed the attention of his clan to strengthening his mech forces. Many Larkinsons endeavored to expand and improve these vital troops since the founding of the clan. The leadership and institutions of the clan had become so fixated on strengthening the Larkinson Clan's mech forces that other priorities didn't get as much attention!

The lack of development of the Larkinson's infantry forces had become more acute than ever now that Ves ended up in this situation. In a place where his own mechs were far away and where many indoor spaces only allowed the entry of human-sized combatants, he began to feel awfully exposed!

"I'll allocate more resources and attention to strengthening my guard forces." Ves promised to her. "Considering my growth in status along with all of the dangerous areas we might enter, my threat level will only continue to rise. I'm already satisfied with the trajectory of our mech forces, so I don't need to invest as much attention to them. Providing you with better gear is already on my list."

There were many more aspects that his honor guard and his other infantry forces had to work on besides acquiring stronger equipment. However, it took time and lots of continuous effort to raise the standard of his infantry from an afterthought to a reliable and powerful combat asset.

Ves thought about one of the discussions he held with General Verle. Considering how little attention his infantry received so far, he felt it was better if they stepped outside the shadows of his mech forces.

Even if the division complicated security matters, his infantry should nonetheless gain their own identities! Only in this way would they be able to take pride in their service!

Ves quickly studied the sensor readings from his Odineye to figure out what happened, but aside from seeing lots of people fall over or run around like headless chickens, he failed to spot a threat.

"I need to supply more power." He concluded.

Being able to observe several hundred meters in every direction was very valuable, but it left him dangerously ignorant of threats lurking beyond! The area outside of the Odineye's current detection range was completely shrouded in darkness as far as he was concerned, and that was a very major deficiency!

While the underground mech hall he was in right now was not as well-equipped as a proper mech workshop, it still offered several useful amenities meant to make it easier to service giant machines.

Power supply was one of the most essential functions. Some tools and equipment required lots of power to function, and it would be inconvenient if they couldn't be used because there wasn't a source of secure and stable power output nearby!

Ves looked around and quickly marched over to the side. He reached out and peeled away a biometal panel that hid an industrial power outlet.

Such outlets were present in pretty much any area where mechs were being worked on. The only complication was that the outlet in this case was organic in nature!

"Well, electricity is electricity. It doesn't matter if it's being channeled by a regular cord or an organic cord."

Despite not knowing too much about biotechnology, the design of the power outlet mirrored that of a conventional one. After a few seconds, he roughly understood its operation and pressed a few buttons.

He performed some diagnostics and experimentally channeled external power to some inconsequential modules. After confirming that the external power source worked normally enough, he cautiously directed more and more power to the Odineye.

Due to its relative size, Ves had little choice but to mount it to the back of his combat armor. Right now, the orb glowed brighter and brighter as Ves received more sensor input.

In the vision provided by his implant, it was as if the surrounding retreated at a steady pace, revealing people, spaces and assets that were previously obscured.

"Amazing!"

Ves knew he couldn't sustain this condition for long, though. The Odineye was remarkably energy-efficient so it did not warm up due to waste heat generation, but the story was different for the power management system of his Unending Regalia!

Parts of his suit were steadily warming up. Even though its heat management system was not a slouch, it was not designed to deal with power levels that were more usually seen in mechs than infantry suits!

Still, as the fog expanded, Ves managed to observe a lot of interesting activity!

Most of them weren't immediately relevant to him. The refugees wandering around, the arena personnel using their privileges to hole themselves up into boltholes, the invaders moving in to attack their enemies and so on didn't interest him as long as he wasn't involved.

Soon enough, he found out where the massive explosion came from. It turned out that a mech squad that consisted of nine biomechs had forcefully breached a large hangar hatch two kilometers away!

The hatch was heavily armored, so a single large explosion wasn't enough to break it completely. Several melee biomechs carefully applied force in order to expand the breach they made.

Ves grew a bit suspicious towards these biomechs. Why would they expend so much effort to create an entrance?

He instructed his Odineye to resolve more details from this unknown mech force.

There was a risk involved with doing so. Active scanning always allowed the target to pick up something unusual. Fortunately, the situation was so chaotic right now that Ves doubted that his scans would attract too much attention.

After his Odineye strained to gather more data, Ves finally learned who they belonged to and what their mission might be. "Damn! We're in trouble!"

He recognized a couple of signs that reminded him a lot of the deceased infantry that had attempted to work their way to this hall. It turned out that the unit that his honor guard had fought was merely a reconnaissance unit!

Once the ultralifers confirmed Ves' current position, they quickly decided to send in the big guns!

"What is the matter?" Captain Rivington asked.

"You guys need to hurry up! A hostile mech squad has just entered the tunnel complex some distance away. They're likely going to make their way here to kill us all before we can evacuate."

"How soon?!"

"A few minutes, maybe ten. It depends on how many obstructions they encounter and how much they insist on fulfilling their mission. Regardless, we need to get all of the mechs up-and-running in 5 minutes at most!"

The team captain cursed. "Boys! You heard the man! Rush your work and don't pay any attention to the details. Skip every check and steps that aren't crucial. Mr. Larkinson, can you assist?!"

"I won't be of much use, but I will do what I can."

"Thank you! I'll be entering the c.o.c.kpit."

All five mech pilots entered the c.o.c.kpits of their respective biomechs. Captain Rivington, Carlie Jinten and Oliver Vlambeer did so with practised ease and familiarity.

It was different for Venerable Jannzi and Vincent. Even though they both read through a crash course in piloting biomechs, these organic machines possessed so many different nuances that it was impossible to master their use in a single sitting.

Not even expert pilots were capable of doing so despite their superhuman learning capabilities!

At least the former possessed a tough stomach. "Ugh, the things I do for the Larkinson Clan."

Vincent on the other hand was shaking in his hover chair again. Ves had to approach him and push him forward in order to get the wavering expert candidate to move.

"Aren't you a man? Then go pilot this mech already. You'll feel much better once you have the Rotenring's formidable power at your disposal."

"It's a biomech, Ves! Don't you think it's icky for mech pilots to interface with a giant fleshy body? It's like piloting a human suit!"

Ves firmly clapped Vincent's back. "Don't think so much and go! A biomech may be different from a normal mech, but its role is still the same! Hostile mechs are on the way and it's likely they have it out for us. You can either choose to fight them in this useless hover chair or yours or you can man up and fight our hunters with your full strength!"

Vincent reluctantly entered the c.o.c.kpit of the Rotenring.

While the mech pilots seated themselves and got ready, Ves quickly checked the progress of the biomech technicians. They had sped up their work enormously after hearing that hostile mechs were on their way, so much so that they didn't even bother to fix obvious faults!

Soon, the biomechs woke up. The ones piloted by the Roving Hunters booted up without a problem, but the other two were experiencing some difficulties.

It was not that simple to interface with a biomech!

### *Chapter 2825 - Sneaky*

While Ves and the Roving Hunters were trying to bring a number of biomechs online in order to defend themselves against an approaching threat, elsewhere in the area the fighting still raged as hot as ever!

The conservative faction lost a lot of credibility after losing the design duel and having their dirty laundry aired by Master Brixton. As a result, their leaders and authority figures no longer held sway over their organizations.

Many subordinates either ignored the instructions from above or even rebelled against the current order! With so many people acting outside of the established pattern, the leaders lost so much control that their orders no longer conformed to the situation on the ground!

This was why communication had turned into a mess. With leaders unable to determine whether their underlings were traitors and vice versa, trust in both sides of every relationship had dropped to the lowest point in the history of the LRA!

Due to this breakdown, many units had to fend for themselves. They no longer transmitted information to each other or requested orders. This caused many contested planets in the LRA to enter a period of darkness where chaos reigned.

While the more rural and monolithic regions of the state were spared from the violence, the citizens there were watching in horror as the more developed and more fractured regions were becoming more engulfed in the fires of war!

The situation had gone out of hand!

The glorious and righteous revolution that impatient leaders like Master Brixton had envisioned in their plans had morphed into something much uglier! It seemed that as soon as the rebels tore down the veneer of civility that had long suppressed their society, all kinds of shady interest groups popped up to pursue their own vendettas!

After so many centuries of peace and stagnation, a lot of rot had built up in the LRA. Now that this filth gained license to do whatever they wanted, they pursued their own goals without any restraint!

A pushback was inevitable. All of these troublemakers not only tarnished the noble cause, but also made the state vulnerable to outside intervention.

No matter whether the conservatives or the opposition won in the end, neither side wanted the neighboring states to take advantage of their weakness!

Fortunately, the core military of the LRA remained staunchly neutral. While not every military unit was clean, it helped that both sides formed an unspoken pact to leave the main military forces out of the conflict. While some went on to squash the various fires that had broken out in important star systems, most mech divisions remained stationed at the border.

Due to this vigilant posture, the neighboring states refrained from taking action. Their best option was to stand aside, because the LRA was already doing a very good job at wrecking itself.

Once the revolution came to a close, the LRA would definitely be weakened! The only important variable was to what extent it diminished.

While the fighting at Ruuzon Arena intensified for reasons that no one understood, at a certain area, a number of damaged mechs were stashed.

Everyone seemed to have forgotten about the damaged and broken mechs that had just starred in the design duel that precipitated the revolution. Their importance had faded the moment they fought in the matches and achieved victory or defeat.

The Lifers generally weren't interested in Dr. Navarro's dueling mechs. They already had plenty of biomechs and they could have bought one from his mech company if they happened to be fans of his work.

As for the mechs prepared by Ves, the fact that they were mechanical limited their attraction to the locals. Only foreigners and a small number of Lifers comprehended their value and uniqueness, but few were in a position to do anything about it. The site where the arena personnel stashed the dueling mechs was largely inaccessible!

The arena took the security of its dueling mechs seriously. There were too many instances in the galaxy where saboteurs and hackers managed to tamper with competitive mechs just before they participated in a match.

This was why many competitive venues employed tight restrictions surrounding mechs that were employed in a recent match. Everytime something happened under their watch, the arena would receive a lot of blame!

Of course, at this time, hardly any arena employee could spare any attention towards safeguarding any dueling mechs. In fact, with all of the killing and destruction going on, they probably abandoned their posts and holed up in the nearest stronghold or bolthole from their positions!

Strange glows enveloped one of the ten mechs. The Valkyrie Redeemer, which had previously fought a thrilling battle against the Frokyn, disappeared in a matter of seconds.

A moment later, a shimmering glow began to envelop the Ferocious Piranha before taking it away.

The two Bright Warriors soon followed suit before it was the turn of the Transcendent Punisher!

Only a minute passed before the mechs had been whisked away. Whoever was responsible for the theft did not even let up the broken parts and debris that had been piled in a corner!

The entire space fell dormant again. No unusual glows or disappearances occurred again. The five damaged and broken biomechs of Dr. Navarro was left alone as if they were unwanted children.

Several kilometers away, Ves was completely ignorant of what had happened to his work. In fact, he had long forgotten about his five dueling mechs as he was currently too far away to reach them and put them to use. Rather than dream about resources and assets that he would never be able to reach, he felt it was much more useful to focus on the more immediate situation!

"The enemy mechs are rapidly closing in!" Ves shouted as he eyed the progress of the nine invading biomechs. "You need to move out now! This space is too small for you to fight and exert your strength!"

It was highly unfavorable for the Larkinsons and Roving Hunters to fight the hostile mechs when bottled up in this mech hall. With only a single exit, the enemy would be able to blockade those inside and wait for reinforcements.

It was much more preferable to take the fight to a more open space such as the loading hall where his honor guard had recently fought against the invading footsoldiers.

The heroic-looking Taragon piloted by Captain Rivington walked out first. The floor thundered as multiple tons of dense exotic-reinforced flesh walked from one end of the hall to the other end. The swordsman mech already held out a thick blade in anticipation of imminent combat.



The Bluestar piloted by Carlie Jinten followed suit. The marauder mech held a carbine for now, but its mace was within easy reach if it ever needed to whack an enemy mech up close!

The Optimon piloted by Oliver Vlambeer followed at a more hesitant pace. The rookie that the Roving Hunters recently took on not only lacked dueling experience, but also felt apprehensive about fighting his first 'true' battle.

Unlike the veterans of the competitive team, Oliver hadn't built up the accumulation of fighting experience required to face the battle head-on. He had never killed an enemy mech pilot in his life, but the situation he was thrust upon might force him to do so in order to defend his life!

While Ves wasn't able to observe everything the mech pilots felt, he was still able to pick up some signs as he observed the three biomechs moving out.

"Mr. Vlambeer is the weak link of this team."

He couldn't do anything about it. Captain Rivington should doubtlessly be aware of the younger mech pilot's nervousness, so Ves didn't feel the need to intervene.

He focused on his own mech pilots instead.

The Perringer was a mech that diverged substantially from the current and future incarnation of the Shield of Samar.

Compared to his first original mech design, the Perringer was many times more refined. As a second-class mech, the mech was not only capable of flight, but also resisted a lot more damage even when it faced other second-class mechs!

"Maybe I should design another offensive knight mech as well." Ves idly muttered. "The Aurora Titan is still important, but it's just too slow to participate in offensive actions."

That was something left for later. For now, Ves wanted to make sure that his mech pilots were able to get a grip on their first biomechs.

As an expert pilot, Venerable Jannzi's adaptability was much better than ordinary mech pilots. The reading materials she skimmed through had taught a lot of basics to her, so she easily managed to get past the oddities and gain functional control of her biomech.

The Perringer moved forward. Its steps were shaky and its posture wobbled a bit. Some of the nearby biomech technicians frantically moved backwards in order to stay well out of the way if the biomech ever lost balance!

Fortunately, nothing of the sort happened. Knight mechs were some of the easy mechs to pilot, and the Perringer did not possess any complicated gimmicks or unusual modules that complicated Jannzi's life.

The only significant shortcoming that displeased both Ves and Jannzi was that the mech lacked a shield generator. Aside from that, the mech possessed solid and relatively balanced specs, which allowed the mech pilot to adopt any approach they wished.

"How are you doing, Jannzi?"

"It's odd. The Perringer is... an entirely new experience. It feels wrong for me to pilot it. I'm not used to fighting such a light and fast knight mech, but I can handle it. I am getting more and more accustomed to its operation with each passing second."

One of the greatest shortcomings was that the biomech was silent. As her powerful mind interfaced with the Perringer, she constantly expected the machine to welcome her presence and respond to her mental impulses.

Instead, she fell into a void where nothing happened outside of the programming of the mech.

While the mech obeyed her instructions well enough, it didn't convey anything extra. The mech didn't tell her whether it was worried, lonely or anything. The Perringer didn't even have the capacity to remember its own mech pilot on an emotional level, which prevented it from forming deep relationships with anyone!

Since Venerable Jannzi was so used to working together with the Shield of Samar as a living partner, her discomfort with her current mech never abated. She didn't know how that would affect her performance in the upcoming battle, but she hoped that her strength as an expert pilot would be enough to make up the difference!

This was also why she didn't share any of her concerns and irritations to Ves. She didn't want him to assume that she would fail to do her part.

Even if she was forced to pilot a biomech, she was still a far better mech pilot than anyone! Her pride did not allow her to admit her weakness to lesser mech pilots!

As her conviction grew firmer, her force of will enveloped the hardy flesh and bone of the Perringer. The effect of this was rather minor as the competitive mech did not incorporate any resonating exotics, but it nevertheless allowed Jannzi to gain a greater feel over her temporary new biomech!

Seeing that Jannzi managed to get to grips with the Perringer, Ves no longer doubted her combat ability.

When he wanted to see how the Rotenring was doing, he turned his gaze just in time to see the striker mech lose its balance and fall to the floor! A loud and earthquake-inducing impact rattled the underground mech hall as the entire biomech fell flat on its face!

### *Chapter 2826 - Disadvantaged*

On the surface, the condition of a mech pilot's body was unrelated to the individual's ability to pilot a mech.

In theory, as long as a mech pilot's head got cut off from his body, he would still be able to interface with a mech!

In the early days of the Age of Mechs, some pioneering mech designers wanted to test if this was actually the case!

The problem was that these research-obsessed scientists and engineers didn't want to wait for a mech pilot to suffer an injury that was so heavy that his or her entire body below the neck would have to be scrapped.

The early-generation mech designers captured mech pilots belonging to an enemy state and cruelly separated their heads and stuck them into containers to keep them alive!

When these body-less heads were mounted into mechs in a twisted attempt to create 'semi-permanently active mechs', the results failed to meet the expectations of the mech designers.

Leaving aside whether the test subjects were even willing to fight on behalf of their tormentors, their ability to control the mechs encountered significant issues!

Deeper studies revealed numerous issues that contributed to the drop in performance.

The simple answer was that the mech pilots simply weren't comfortable enough. Piloting a mech was like replacing a human body with a mech frame, but not quite. For reasons that only the most knowledgeable neural interface specialists were able to understand, a mech pilot ideally had to possess a complete and healthy body.

This was mainly based on the mech pilot's perception. It didn't matter if the mech pilot had heavily augmented his body. Regardless of whether he was carrying cranial implants, cybernetic organs or regrown limbs, as long as the mech pilot was comfortable in his own skin, then he wouldn't experience too many hindrances in piloting mechs.

Those who suffered physical debilitations all encountered problems when piloting their mechs. The technical reasoning behind this was complicated and too profound for Ves

to understand, but the bottom line was that people who thought that something was wrong with their bodies always performed less than optimally!

Considering Vincent's personality and frequent complaints about his infirm state, it shouldn't have been a surprise to see the Rotenring trip on its feet as if it was a baby that was just learning how to walk!

The consequences of a mech tipping over was quite severe. Their weight was so great that Ves would have lost balance if he wasn't wearing an armored suit!

Plenty of tools and objects shook from their positions and the sudden displacement of air even pushed them away!

The biomech technicians had fortunately retreated far enough to remain unaffected, but they all looked incredulous at what had happened.

Maintaining the balance of a mech was one of the first lessons that every mech pilot learned! Even if Vincent was infirm, he should have been able to maintain at least that much control over a new mech!

"I hate this biomech!" Vincent transmitted to Ves over a comm channel. "I can't stand this mech. It's so different from the Adonis Colossus that I can talk all day over what is wrong this stupid lump of flesh."

Ves grew annoyed. "I don't care. Get your mech back on its feet and go out! The enemy mechs are already closing in and they'll soon bump into our own mechs! If you aren't out there by the time the fighting starts, Jannzi and our new allies will have a very hard time holding back more than twice their number of opponents!"

"I know, I know! It's just.. I can't figure out this damn biomech! Do you know how disgusting it is to pilot a mech that is like a giant version of a neutered man? It doesn't help that this mech is balanced differently than my precious Adonis Colossus!"

Despite his complaints, Vincent was already trying to recover. He knew the stakes as well as Ves so he tried his best to get the mech back up its feet.

He succeeded, but not as gracefully as Ves had hoped. The Rotenring moved as if it was drunk and under the influence of other substances. Its shaky arms hesitantly pressed the mech to a sitting position. After a bit of scrambling, its legs finally managed to bend and balance in a way that allowed the striker mech to get back up its feet.

It had to pick up the shotgun that it had dropped to the ground, and that was another difficult test of Vincent's control.

Fortunately, the biomech came with plenty of auto-balancing systems that assisted Vincent in keeping the Rotenring on its feet. Once the mech grabbed the heavy shotgun, it began to move out just as sounds of fighting echoed from beyond!

"Our side has just made contact with the enemy! Hurry and repel the enemy!"

"I'm trying, I'm trying!" Vincent complained. "I can't risk moving too fast!"

The Rotenring waddled forward at a manner that ensured greater stability but cut its speed by at least 30 percent. Though Ves was frustrated at the sight, there wasn't much he could do at the sidelines.

If Vincent was piloting an LMC mech like the Bright Warrior, then there were many ways for Ves to manipulate the mech.

The Rotenring wasn't his work, though. The biomechs utilized by the Roving Hunters were all designed by several Seniors who partnered up with the competitive team.

Several hundred meters away, the two sides had already started to come to blows.

The enemy not only brought more biomechs, but also a greater quantity of ranged firepower!

Two rifleman mechs fired a steady frequency of positron beams. Venerable Jannzi had arrived just in time for her to utilize the Perringer's medium shield as a barrier against the attacks that were aimed towards Bluestar.

The slimmer marauder mech excelled in mobility, but right now the large loading hall was not conducive to its operation!

A random distribution of crates, vehicles and other objects were loosely spread across the entire hall. They were large and solid enough to hurt any mech if it attempted to walk through, but they were also too low and fragile to serve as functional cover!

All of this meant that the invading biomechs immediately assumed superiority!

The enemy mech squad happened to consist of a balanced mix of biomechs.

Two knight mechs with thick tower shields steadily advanced from the front.

Two spearman mechs were huddling right behind the knight mechs, ready to poke their spears past the shields or turn around to respond to any threats from the rear.

Two swordsman mechs circled around the flanks. They weren't in a hurry to engage just yet. They were capable of inflicting the most damage when their opponents became locked in battle against the frontal components of the mech squad.

Two rifleman mechs positions at the rear were already inducing a steady degree of pressure towards the four, now five opposing mechs.

One auxiliary mech remained close to the ranged mechs. Its role wasn't entirely clear, but its slim size suggested that it wasn't too powerful.

All in all, the numbers and tactics utilized by the ultralifer mechs showed that they definitely knew their business!

When Ves patched into the feed of the Perringer, he tried to gauge the strength of the enemy biomechs.

"Ugh. What makes a good biomech?"

He didn't understand biomechs nearly as well as classical mechs. They were like alien parodies of metallic mechs to Ves. He could only form his judgement on other details such as mass, density and other properties.

Soon enough, he formed some reasonable estimates.

The good news was that the quality and cost of an individual enemy biomech was lower than that of any of the five competitive mechs.

The bad news was that their quality was still serviceable enough to make them stronger when factoring their superiority in numbers!

Of course, he also witnessed situations where the opposite happened.

Right now, his judgement and intuition told him that his side was heavily disadvantaged!

"Lucky! I need you to go into action again! Can you phase into the c.o.c.kpits of those mechs and assassinate the enemy mech pilots?"

"Meeeeeoow!" The tired gem cat yowled.

"Oh come on, you have succeeded in phasing through plenty of solid material. What makes mechs different?"

"Meow meow meow!"

"Are you kidding?!"

"Meow!"

Ves frowned. What Lucky told him was deeply disappointing. While his cat was capable of phasing through mechs, there was something about them that made it very tiresome.

For example, the strong resonance and force of will of an expert mech plainly made it impossible for Lucky phase through its frame!

In the past, this problem didn't bother him too much. The recent battles he and his clan fought these days encompassed hundreds of if not thousands of mechs. With so many machines on the battlefield, it was extremely dangerous for Lucky to wander around! Besides, the influence he would be able to exert was extremely marginal.

"Can't you do something? I just need you to kill one enemy mech pilot. As long as you can do that, our odds of achieving victory will be much greater!"

"Meow... meow...."

The cat eventually acquiesced. When Lucky moved to the loading hall, he didn't immediately phase or turn invisible. He had to ration his remaining strength as much as possible in order to achieve a good effect!

As Lucky moved out yet again, Ves observed the progress of the battle.

Not much had happened since the two sides confronted each other. The ultralifers were content with adopting a slow and steady approach. Their ranged capabilities were much better. With two rifleman mechs at their disposal, they had the luxury to adopt a defensive posture. The enemy mechs essentially taunted their opponents into attacking their prepared formation!

Captain Rivington had encountered similar situations in the arena and knew that it was a trap. As soon as his five mechs moved forward, they would probably get locked by the 'anvil' in front while their sides and rear got assaulted by the flanking swordsman mechs!

If his side had a couple more mechs, then he would have been able to counter this approach. As it was, going forward spelled certain doom!

"Are we just going to stand here and let them shoot at us?!" Vincent complained as a positron beam seared across the surface of his mech. "I'm getting cooked over here!"

"Be patient, pilot."

When Ves studied the situation, he knew he had to pitch in as well. He increased the power of his Odineye and began to perform active scans on the enemy biomechs.

At this point, it didn't matter if the enemy was able to detect what was going on. It was more important for Ves to gain a detailed understanding of their inner structure and expose their weak points.

"I knew it! Biomechs have flaws as well!"

Ves worked alongside Gloriana so many times that he had picked up plenty of tricks and insights about identifying flaws. The deep scan readings he received helped immensely as nothing on the surface of the biomechs could be hidden from the power of his Odineye!

He focused his attention on the enemy knight mechs first as they happened to be the most difficult enemy machines to handle. Even if their offensive threat wasn't as high, their ability to lock up their opponents was one of the biggest reasons why Captain Rivington didn't dare to go into action!

"Captain, please take a look at the data I've transferred. I've just scanned the enemy knight mechs and discovered a major weakness..."

#### *Chapter 2827 - Exploits*

Positron beams seared across the loading hall. The energy splashed against the biomechs of the Roving Hunters, causing them to incur increasingly more damage.

In response, the Bluestar fired back with a kinetic carbine. While the weapon packed quite a punch despite its size, it was clear that it could not exert any pressure towards its targets!

The main element of the ultralifer squad formed a double column behind the shields of the two knight mechs in front. The oversized bone shields were so broad and thick that they practically served as impenetrable barriers!

Whether this tight formation was attacked from afar or up close, every frontal assault would undoubtedly fail!

This caused the defenders to fall into a difficult dilemma. Due to the positioning of both sides, it was impossible for the Roving Hunters and the Larkinsons to flank the hostile main element. Their only choice was to attack from the front or slightly to the sides, but that was useless as the knight mechs could simply reorient themselves.

With those sturdy knight mechs in the way, the only outcome of an attack would be to get bogged down. The knight mechs would find a way to entangle their opponents and the spearman mechs would either prevent a breakthrough or help with containment.

The swordsman mechs that were hovering at the sides would subsequently close the net and demolish the defenders from the rear!

This was why Captain Rivington and the rest did not dare to advance. Every path forward led to certain defeat.

Yet what else could they do?



Staying in place would cause their mechs to get whittled down from range. Retreating back to the underground mech hall where the biomechs were originally stashed would not only endanger Ves and the rest of the Roving Hunter crew, but also force them to fight a cramped frontal battle in which the enemies enjoyed a huge advantage!

It all came down to lack of numbers. With 4 mechs down, the defenders were at a huge disadvantage. Even if their competition mechs performed better, it was too difficult to overcome a balanced and all-encompassing squad composition!

Captain Rivington was so used to fighting fair matches that he became indecisive at this moment.

Unlike league matches where rules ensured that both sides started on a level playing field, there was no fairness on the actual battlefield!

Even though his side possessed a great advantage with an expert pilot by his side, he knew that there was only so much the young woman could accomplish with an ordinary mech, let alone a biomech!

This was also why he listened carefully to the analysis provided by Ves. He knew that the only way to overcome such a difficult challenge was to resort to other solutions.

"The enemy employs different models that look commercial in nature. These mechs tend to be eccentric. They have pronounced strengths and obvious shortcomings due to the limitations of their individual mech designers."

"We can handle the other mechs if it comes down to it, but tell us how to defeat the knight mechs." Captain Rivington urgently requested.

"...Knight mechs are tough to take down regardless of their quirks. It's practically their job to outlast their opponents." Ves responded over the comm channel. "The model employed by the ultralifers are actually much more optimized for aerial combat. They're slow and unwieldy when stuck to the ground. Their turning speed is abysmal, so as long as you can outflank them, you stand a good chance at striking a heavy blow to their flanks and rear."

"Their backs are covered by those spearman mechs! Besides, their formation is too difficult to deal with! The enemy biomechs are all covering for each other. I can tell that the mech pilots have trained and fought together for a long time. The teamwork they exhibit is too similar to long-lasting teams."

"I'm aware of that, but I may have a solution for that. Please get ready to move out regardless of what happens. I anticipate that the enemy will react very strongly to what is about to happen."

"What are you talking about, Mr. Larkinson!?"

"I'm transmitting my analysis of every enemy biomech's weak points to you and your comrades. While I can't guarantee the veracity of my analysis due to my unfamiliarity with biomechs, I think that you'll be able to achieve a good effect if you can strike these places. No matter what form a mech takes, much of their engineering principles remain the same!"

The five mechs of the Roving Hunters received a surprisingly large and detailed data burst. As a competitive mech pilot, Captain Rivington was very familiar with receiving weak point analyses from his staff.

In order to increase the odds of victory as much as possible, it was essential to study the enemy's mechs and identify how they could best be taken down!

Of course, the competitive teams all knew that their mechs would be scrutinized in this fashion. If they deployed the exact same mechs time after time, then they would definitely get destroyed in an instant as all of their properties were transparent to the enemy.

This was why it was essentially to modify competitive mechs a bit after every match. Changes to their armor scheme, modules, weapon loadout and more ensured that they would always keep their opponents guessing.

Right now, Captain Rivington and his teammates all felt as if they were in the rare position of knowing every weakness of all nine enemy mechs!

Even though Ves only had a limited time to examine every mech with his Odineye Omni Sensor, the quality of sensor readings along with all of the lessons he learned from his wife allowed him to pick out every glaring weakness in a matter of seconds!

Anyone who received this analysis would have a lot more confidence in facing their opponents, but it was different for the Roving Hunter mech athletes.

They most of all had trained extensively in exploiting the weak points of their opponents! In a close match where every tiny advantage could mean the difference between victory or defeat, mech athletes were accustomed to making the most out of every scrap of relevant information!

Another mech pilot who could make excellent use of the analysis was Venerable Jannzi. Even though she was still acclimatizing to the Perringer, her control and battle prowess had already reached a level unreachable by ordinary humans.

As for Vincent, he was still too distracted by trying to get a grip on the Rotenring to care about the new overlay that pointed out the areas where he should focus his attacks!

Just as four of the five defending mech pilots formulated a strategy to attack and exploit the weak points of all of the enemy mechs, an abrupt change took place.

Underneath the feet of one of the knight mechs, an invisible form shot up and entered the frame of the mech.

Several seconds later, the knight mech f.o.r.c.i.b.l.y shut down!

While it didn't slump or tip over, it was very obvious that the defensive mech suffered some kind of issue that caused it to shut down on its own accord.

"What's going on?!" Captain Rivington asked in shock!

Of the five mech pilots, only one of them was clear what had happened.

Only Lucky could have achieved this result!

The sudden turn of events completely interrupted the rhythm of the ultralifers. According to the telemetry transmitted by the downed knight mech, its pilot had abruptly died by getting cut!

The manner in which the pilot died was too mysterious. How could an enemy possibly sneak into the c.o.c.kpit of a closed mech that was completely intact?

The lack of answers along with the possibility that it might happen to the other mech pilots as well caused the ultralifer mech pilots to falter for a few seconds.

It was one thing to be defeated by an enemy mech in frontal combat. Whether they won or lost, every mech pilot was trained to embrace honorable combat.

Death by assassination was another matter. Not only was it dirty as hell, it also prevented mech pilots from employing their strengths.

What the enemy mech pilots didn't know was that Lucky's invisible form sneakily flew away while looking awfully exhausted.

Therefore, the remaining eight ultralifer mech pilots were worrying about their lives in vain. Lucky simply didn't have enough energy to perform his phasing ability again in this battle!

"The time to strike is now!"

Captain Rivington and Venerable Jannzi keenly grasped the disruption caused by Lucky's intervention. The Taragon and the Perrigner surged forward in unison, which quickly triggered the other three friendly mechs to follow suit!

Even though the Rotenring lagged behind due to its slower speed and Vincent's control problems, the other four mechs moved with inherent coordination.

Venerable Jannzi explicitly took the lead. The Perringer charged at the sole working knight mech and slammed its scorched and damaged medium shield against the enemy's tower shield!

Even though the Perringer was lighter than the enemy knight mech, its running start pushed the defending machine back so hard that it almost lost balance!

Just as the Perringer recovered from the heavy crash, its sword swung in a moon shape, causing it to divert the spear stab that threatened to poke a hole in Jannzi's borrowed biomech!

This granted the Roving Hunter mech athletes a great opening! The Bluestar surged forward first and began to assault the surviving knight mech's flank with its mace. Its blunt weapon bashed against the fingers of the enemy biomech, causing it to drop its sword!

At the same time, Cecil Rivington's Taragon dashed forward and stabbed the knight mech's side. The swordsman mech's sword penetrated deeply into the exposed enemy knight mech because it pierced straight through a small weak point that Ves had identified beforehand!

As this was happening, the Optimon piloted by the rookie performed a similar charge to that of the Perringer.

The only difference was that its shield collided against the knight mech that had just shut down!

Due to its inactive state, the knight mech failed to brace or perform any corrective measures, causing it to fall backwards and disrupt the tight column formation adopted by the enemy.

The enemy spearman mech that had previously huddled behind the dormant knight mech had to dash backwards in haste, causing its rear to collide and press against the rifleman mech that was positioned behind!

This was one of the biggest disadvantages of a packed formation!

Though it took the Optimon a bit of time to recover from its violent collision, the biomech piloted by the rookie valiantly attacked one of the spearman mech, forcing it to focus on parrying and blocking the incoming blows.

At this moment, the Rotenring hefted its heavy shotgun and fired a powerful blast of pellets that peppered the uncovered flesh of the spearman mech!

A large portion of the pellets bounced uselessly off the enemy mech's shield, but a significant portion still sank into any exposed flesh within reach, causing these areas to bleed!

The Rotenring was about to fire at its current target again, but Vincent suddenly noticed that the swordsman mechs that had previously positioned themselves at the flanks were rapidly closing in from the sides!

"Do you think you can ambush me? Think again!" Vincent spat back.

His Rotenring slowly turned around before firing its shotgun continuously at the charging swordsman mech at close range!

### *Chapter 2828 - Mental Block*

The squad of ultralifer biomechs should have been able to defeat any frontal assault. Yet the single disruption that occurred when one of its knight mechs suddenly shut down not only caused the formation to expose a flaw, but also leave the rest less prepared to receive the charging mechs!

Right now, the double column formation entered into complete disarray as the more agile and tricky Roving Hunter mechs employed their strengths to the best of their ability!

"Finish off this knight mech first!" Captain Rivington shouted as his swordsman tried to thrust its sword through another weak point. "Don't let it catch a break!"

Mech athletes were very s.e.n.s.i.t.i.v.e towards displays of weaknesses. After getting slammed into and losing grip of its weapon, the remaining enemy knight mech came under so much pressure that its wounds rapidly increased!

Amazingly, it still held up. The mech even tried to grab and entangle the weapons that struck its frame. The mech pilot was so determined to occupy the attackers that it didn't seem to matter if the knight mech incurred more damage!

There wasn't any good solution available to the Roving Hunter mech pilots. They knew they wouldn't be able to attack the more vulnerable enemy biomechs if this large and intractable obstacle was in the way. Even if they were aware of its weak points, since the most critical ones were positioned at the rear, it was impossible for Captain Rivington and his second to take the enemy knight mech out in an instant!

Due to the disrupted formation, the spearman mechs positioned in the rear needed some time to get into action. Yet just as one of them attempted to stab at the Taragon, the Perringer surged forth and slammed its shield against the enemy's shield!

Different from Oliver Vlambeer's shield charge, Venerable Jannzi charge was not only stronger, but exerted its force at such an angle that caused the stricken spearman mech to disrupt its stance, causing it to lose its balance for a moment!

The Perringer took advantage of the opening to stab its sword through one of the weak points on the c.h.e.s.t of its current foe.

Although Ves had identified the area in the front as a weak point, in fact it was still quite strong and resistant against damage. It was just weaker to a relative degree.

This didn't seem to faze Jannzi though. She attacked so hard and fast that the Perringer's sword sank deep enough to inflict substantial internal damage!

Even though the spearman mech retaliated remarkably quickly, its short spear bounced against the Perringer's shield.

This allowed Venerable Jannzi to press her offensive knight mech forward and launch numerous stabs at a range that was too close for the spearman mech to utilize its primary armament!

The enemy mech pilot was aware of this. The spearman mech dropped its weapon in order to pull out a backup knife, but Venerable Jannzi already predicted this move and commanded the Perringer to kick at the reaching arm!

As the spearman mech failed to pull out its secondary weapon, the Perringer plunged its sword at the holster that held it, causing it to rupture and drop the knife to the floor before it could be used!

In an attempt to relieve the spearman mech of its dire condition, the two rifleman mechs overloaded their weapons and fired a pair of extraordinarily powerful beams at the Perringer!

However, the mech piloted by Venerable Jannzi quickly lifted up its damaged and dented shield. Due to all of the attacks it absorbed and the collisions it endured, the supercharged beam shots blasted the shield apart!

Though the Perringer incurred moderate damage due to this event, everything was already within Venerable Jannzi's calculation. The blunt of the attacks had been blocked.

Now that the Perringer lost its shield, the offensive knight mech became even faster and more agile. Even though the expert pilot wasn't accustomed to piloting such a fast mech, she was not a slouch.

Even though the blow failed to sever the arm that was carrying the shield, the wound weakened the limb to such an extent that its hold became shaky!

"That's mine now!"

The Perringer's free hand grasped the side of the shield and forcefully attempted to pry it away from its current owner. Since the spearman mech still hadn't been able to grasp a weapon, its weak punches and easily avoidable kicks failed to deter Venerable Jannzi from stealing its shield!

With another expertly-aimed stab, the spearman mech was no longer able to hold on to its own shield, thereby allowing the Perringer to pull it away and appropriate it for its own use.

This was a shameful outcome! Losing one's weapon or equipment to an opponent was one of the worst humiliations that a mech pilot could suffer!

As long as the performance of the mechs didn't diverge too much, then an incident like this meant that the victim was completely outclassed!

"Who the hell am I fighting against?!"

It was too bad that Venerable Jannzi wasn't in a talking mood. After gaining a new shield, she faced the enemy's ranged attacks with greater confidence. The hijacked bone shield provided the Perringer with another buffer to block the ranged attacks.

Since the rifleman mechs exerted no pressure towards Jannzi at the moment, she felt free to finish off her wounded and weaponless opponent!

This time, it was too much for the poor spearman mech. Even though it was still able to put up a fight, its performance had dropped to such a degree that Jannzi easily struck its back and caused it to shut down.

While Venerable Jannzi wanted to move on to attacking the rifleman mechs and the odd auxiliary mech at the rear, she noticed that her fellow mech pilots were having a hard time dealing with their current opponents.

While Jannzi downed the second enemy mech, the Taragon and the Bluestar attempted to finish off the sole remaining enemy knight mech.

They had actually accomplished quite a lot since they were able to gang up on the isolated enemy defensive mech. Yet soon enough, one of the flanking swordsman mechs had arrived to come to relieve the pressure.

The Bluestar was forced to turn around and use its mace to block an incoming sword chop!

At this time, the enemy knight mech seemed to have gained a second life. Without the need to face off against two opponents at once, it began to entangle the Taragon even harder, preventing Captain Rivington from pooling his strength with other friendlies.

Not too far away, the Optimon faced off against the other enemy spearman mech.

Unlike Jannzi, Oliver Vlambeer was much less skilled in combat. Even though his fit with the Optimon was high, his inexperience along with the pressure of actual combat affected his combat performance.

His opening moves had been strong because he employed set piece moves that were in the playbook of the Roving Hunters.

The ultralifer mech pilots weren't inexperienced. This allowed the second enemy spearman mech to perform a lot more even against the Optimon!

The best Oliver could do was to match blow for blow against his current opponent. "I need help over here! I can't beat this spearman mech alone!"

No one was able to come to his aid, sadly.

Vincent was particularly in dire straits! Although the powerful shotgun blasts inserted a lot of painful pellets in the uncovered frame of the enemy biomech, the weapon ran out of shells before it could finish the job!

This meant that even if the swordsman mech was in a bad shape, it still retained enough battle effectiveness to pose a threat against his striker mech!

"Damnit! I don't know how to fight up close with this biomech!"

The Rotenring moved slower than Vincent had wished. The biomech attempted to raise its shotgun so that its chainsword was able to grind into the flesh of the incoming enemy.

Unfortunately, the swordsman mech was able to sidestep the obvious attack with and slash its blade deeply into the Rotenring's side!

If the striker mech wasn't covered with thick bone plating, this strike could have inflicted severe damage to a limb!

In fact, if the enemy swordsman mech wasn't so damaged, it could have pierced through this layer of protection. Unfortunately for the ultralifers, the continuous shotgun attacks weakened the biomech to the point it was only able to muster up 60 to 70 percent of its strength and speed!



This merely caused the performance of the enemy swordsman mech to fall in line with that of the current Rotenring.

"Damn! Why are biomechs so difficult to work with? Whoever came up with this stupid idea?!"

Vincent barely managed to lift its combined weapon in time to block the continuous sword strikes.

However, once his enemy figured out that the Rotenring wasn't able to move quickly, the swordsman mech started to flank and attack from tricky angles.

Soon enough, the Rotenring began to get more and more beat up! While its bone plating was very helpful with mitigating incoming damage, they were not as tough as knight mech armor.

As long as the enemy swordsman mech attacked the same plate several times, it would definitely crack or split!

Blood began to pour from various points of the Rotenring as Vincent continually failed to leverage the full strength of his borrowed mech.

It didn't even seem to matter whether he was an expert candidate! His unfamiliarity with the Rotenring, his discomfort with biomechs and his missing limbs all contributed to such an awful performance that Vincent failed to hit anything with the chainsaw attached to the Rotenring's attached shotgun!

When the enemy swordsman mech attempted to perform a powerful chop, Vincent urged the Rotenring to lift its weapon to block the incoming attack from above.

As a slow mech that moved even slower due to the deficiencies of its mech pilot, the lower half of the mech became an obvious target.

"Ahh! You bastard! You just had to hit the leg!"

While the devious sword chop wasn't capable of amputating a leg with a single blow, it pierced through the bone plating with such force that it cut a decent portion of organic muscle.

When the swordsman mech pulled out its blade with a bloody splash, the Rotenring almost fell over because its damaged limb wasn't able to support its entire weight onto it anymore.

The swordsman mech darted in against and attempted to land an identical blow to the other leg. As long as both legs sustained severe damage, the hefty striker mech would no longer be able to support its own weight!

The fear of getting his legs cut off again frightened Vincent to no end. Even if it was just the legs of his mech, in this situation he was so caught up in the battle that his fears inadvertently caused his immersion to deepen.

As someone who suffered the misfortune of losing his legs, Vincent never wanted to relive this experience again.

Due to his trauma and urgency, several mental blocks that previously prevented him from piloting the Rotenring to a deeper degree melted away.

His eyes seemed to burn as the mech under his command moved substantially faster!

"I WON'T LOSE MY LEGS AGAIN!"

Even though Vincent wasn't able to prevent the swordsman mech from sinking its blade into the other leg, the Rotenring still managed to whip its chainsaw out fast enough to cause it to sink into the c.h.e.s.t of the enemy mech!

Once the chains began to whirl, a large quantity of blood and flesh began to tear away!

#### *Chapter 2829 - Traumatic Trigger*

Biomechs differed from classical mechs in various ways. Aside from the obvious differences in composition, biomechs also demanded a different piloting approach to their users.

Vincent Ricklin didn't know what he was getting into after he interfaced with the Rotenring. The quick lesson he received before did not prepare him at all for all of the changes he experienced.

The first and most obvious difference was that biomechs didn't make use of electronic processors. Instead of performing all of their thinking on precise and highly-controlled ch.i.p.s, biomechs performed all of their processing tasks through special tissue that resembled brain matter.

While they were designed to operate as similar to electronic processors as possible, they nonetheless exhibited several distinct differences due to their growth-based production method.

Since every organic chip had to grow into shape on its own, these biological processors exhibited substantial copy to copy variation!

Every brain was unique, and that applied to these organic ch.i.p.s as well. What was even more interesting was that the organic ch.i.p.s grew in unison with the rest of the mech. This meant that they weren't produced in a separate facility and installed onto a biomech.

Instead, the organic processors already played a central role in regulating the growth of a biomech from the moment a seed began to grow!

This caused the connection between the two to be substantially more intimate, which in turn exposed a mech pilot to both greater and different data input.

All of this made Vincent feel as if he was stuck in an alien mech. Many other factors played a role as well as biomechs introduced plenty of changes that caught ordinary mech pilots off-guard.

While Jannzi was able to roll with the changes due to her powerful will and superhuman capability to adapt to different mechs, Vincent possessed only a shadow of her capabilities.

In fact, he wouldn't have been able to get the Rotenring to walk if he wasn't an expert candidate to begin with! His lack of familiarity with biomechs was so bad that he had hardly managed to increase his fluency with his biomech as time went by. He was just as bad at piloting the striker mech as before, up until his current opponent crossed a line that Vincent never tolerated.

From the moment the enemy swordsman mech attacked the Rotenring's legs, Vincent suddenly snapped.

If there was one affront that Vincent couldn't tolerate, it was crippling his lower body!

Even though his current opponent was frantically hacking its sword against the Rotenring, as a striker mech it could never be taken down with a few simple attacks.

The cruel-looking chainsaw mounted on the underside of the heavy shotgun finally showed its purpose. Although it was extremely difficult to hit an opponent with the serrated blades, once it sunk into flesh, its cutting and tearing potential was extremely high!

By the time the enemy swordsman mech pilot commanded his mech to fall and roll away, a large and ugly wound had been left on its c.h.e.s.t.

Due to the savage nature of the attack, the wound not only affected a large portion of the mech, but also continuously leaked blood with few signs of abating.

This was one of the secondary dangers of the chainsaw. As long as it was able to eviscerate a large portion of flesh, the wounded biomech in question would continually bleed out as time went by. The swordsman mech urgently needed treatment or else it would certainly collapse over time!

The effect of the chainsaw explained why it was mainly employed against biomechs. The effect was significantly weaker against classical mechs. Their excellent

compartmentalization and lack of blood meant that this kind of bleeding would never occur.

Right now, Vincent thought that chainsaws were quite exciting. No weapon complemented his fury more than a weapon designed to brutalize a biomech!

"I don't know who you are or why you're attacking us, but you've messed with the wrong man! No one touches my legs!"

As the damaged swordsman mech launched an all-out assault in order to make the best of the situation, Vincent's Rotenring quickly moved to batter aside the incoming sword slash.

While the shotgun-chainsaw combination was slow to handle, when swung its momentum was incomparable to that of an agile sword!

After batting aside the sword, the chainsaw revved up again just as the Rotenring surged forth at a greater speed than it had shown before.

The swordsman mech pilot was still unaccustomed to the changed in Vincent's battle effectiveness. This caused his mech to suffer a serious blow to its shoulder!

"Where are you going?! Come back here, coward!"

Even though the swordsman mech was continually stepping back, the Rotenring tilted forward and advanced at an even greater speed!

Even though its precarious sprint could easily cause the Rotenring to trip to the ground, Vincent was somehow able to exert such great control that the mech still retained its balance by the time it swung its chainsaw at the injured shoulder of the enemy mech.

WHRRZZZZ!

An awful tearing and scraping sound spread out yet again as the Rotenring's chainsaw tore through the flesh and bone that comprised the shoulder.

Even though the enemy swordsman mech succeeded in sinking its blade into the side of the Rotenring, Vincent didn't even notice anything. His mech still exerted enough force to sink the chainsaw deeper into the body of the enemy mech, and that was all that mattered!

After a considerable exertion, the chainsaw successfully tore off the left arm of the enemy swordsman mech!

After losing this limb, the heavily damaged biomech sustained so much damage that its responsiveness and fighting capabilities had dropped below a level was able to resist the Rotenring.

The mech pilot chose to eject from his damaged biomech!

A fleshy pod separated from the back of the swordsman mech and flew through the tunnel it came from. What was left fell over and bled out as if it was the victim of a gruesome murder!

The abrupt flight of the opposing mech pilot irked Vincent to no end. He wanted cut apart the enemy swordsman mech some more!

Fortunately, there were plenty of enemies left. Vincent briefly swept his attention across the remaining enemy mechs. The remaining enemy melee mechs tried their best to keep the Taragon, Bluestar, Optimum and Perringer occupied while the ranged mechs tried to weaken them at range.

What gave the attackers an edge was that the auxiliary mech had finally gone into action. Even though it acted too late to save the mechs that had been downed, its capabilities quickly changed the dynamic of the remaining clashes!

Everytime the Roving Hunters or Venerable Jannzi attempted to launch an attack that was bound to inflict serious damage, their weapons bounced against an energy shield.

The most peculiar aspect about this shield was that it was both localized and incredibly strong. Unlike large area shields which enveloped an entire area in a protective dome, the auxiliary mech was able to project small energy shields that not only minimized energy consumption, but also concentrated its remote shields so that it could withstand more serious blows.

"This mech needs to be taken out!"

Vincent didn't even bother to command his biomech to load new shells into his heavy shotgun. Instead, he urged the Rotenring to circle around and make its way straight to the auxiliary mech!

Of course, the enemy noticed the striker mech's obvious approach in advance. Yet due to the fact that it lost several mechs, its numerical superiority wasn't so overwhelming anymore.

To several people's surprise, the two ranged mechs stopped firing their steaming rifles. Instead, they turned around and moved to block the way forward for the Rotenring.

"What can a bunch of rifleman mechs do?!" Vincent contemptuously scoffed.

His mech jumped upwards and engaged its flight system! Even though the Rotenring wasn't the best at flight, it was still enough to allow his mech to leap over the heads of the rifleman mechs.

Yet just as the Rotenring passed over the enemy ranged mechs, Vincent suddenly felt an acute threat from below.

"What the hell?!"

The organic rifles wielded by the rifleman mechs morphed into a different shape. A bayonet knife extended from the front while the overall body of the weapon had become more streamlined.

In an instant, two spears shot upwards in an attempt to impale the Rotenring from below!

That realization triggered something inside him again. His eyes practically turned red as he did something incredibly crazy.

He stopped trying to fly forward and instead tumbled his mech in mid-air until it was upside down!

This not only prevented the Rotenring's legs and underside from getting hit by the spears, but also put it in a good position to counterattack!

"Take this!"

The Rotenring boosted downwards with incredible momentum! The chainsaw batted aside one of the spears but couldn't prevent the other from sinking into a shoulder. However, this injury seemed inconsequential in relation to what happened next!

The striker mech dropped head first on top of one of the rifleman mechs. Even though a small energy shield had formed in its path, the falling force of the mech was far too great for the auxiliary mech to stop!

A violent collision ensued as the Rotenring practically crushed one of the rifleman mechs onto the ground. The converted spear wielded by the latter clattered away as the mech was squashed to the point that its mech pilot died because its c.o.c.kpit turned into a pancake!

Even though the Rotenring sustained severe damage from the fall as well, it was able to scramble back up and hold its chainsaw.

Vincent was really starting to like the Rotenring!

Unfortunately, his latest reckless stunt damaged the biomech so much that its speed and other functionality had dropped to the point where the rifleman mech was easily able to maintain distance.

Yet just as the enemy biomech converted its spear back into a rifle, the Perringer charged from behind and slammed its stolen shield straight into its back!

A few quick sword stabs later caused the rifleman mech to be taken out of action!

"It's over, Vincent! You've done enough!"

It turned out that Venerable Jannzi not only managed to defeat her second opponent, but also help out the Roving Hunters by ganging up on their own adversaries.

The Taragon was already advancing towards the auxiliary mech with its sword ready to slice apart the annoying remote shield generating mech.

The remaining mech pilot wasn't stupid enough to stay while his defenseless mech was being dissected. The c.o.c.kpit of the auxiliary mech flew out. Just as it was about to enter the tunnel in the back, a kinetic round precisely hit the egg-like orb, cracking it apart in mid-air!

The Bluestar lowered its carbine.

Carlie Jinten huffed. "I may be a mech athlete, but I won't show mercy in war."

The crisis had passed, for now. The Roving Hunters and the Larkinsons managed to defeat the ultralifer mech squad! Even though the odds were against them, their unconventional advantages allowed them to win without suffering any casualties!

"Don't be so happy yet." Ves interjected over the comm channel. "My sensor is detecting increasing activity from afar. There are a lot more mechs on the move!"

#### *Chapter 2830 - Not As Lifeless*

Ves and the biomech technicians all stood awkwardly on a floater platform as it smoothly flew through the large tunnels that ran throughout the underground complex.

After the Roving Hunters and the two Larkinson mech pilots defeated the ultralifer mech squad, the victors barely had any time to celebrate their victory.

The Odineye detected more mechs were on the move!

The omni sensor didn't pick up their presences directly. The mechs were still beyond its effective range even after Ves fed it with external power.

Instead, the Odineye managed to pick up the vibrations and other signs that multiple heavy objects were stomping in the distance. While these heavy objects could have been anything, the most obvious candidate was other biomechs.

Sadly, Ves couldn't glean any more solid information from the indirect readings. Vibrations and fuzzy gravitic signals didn't tell him anything about who the biomechs belonged to, how strong they were and whether they had any hostile intentions towards him and his Larkinsons.

With all of the madness taking place in and around Ruuzon Arena, he could take nothing for granted though. There was no way a fanatic fringe group like the ultralifers only dispatched a single infantry platoon and mech squad to the starting point of the revolution.

It seemed that every single faction and interest group had dispatched their forces to this location beforehand! If the Life Research Association was still running properly, then these different groups would have respected the rules and laid low.

Yet now that law and order had broken down, no one exhibited any restraint anymore. Considering how much notoriety Ves had built up among the Lifers, it would be foolish for him to entrust his safety to any of the locals!

Only the Larkinsons, the Glory Seekers, the Crossers and the Infinity Guards could be trusted on this planet. Everyone else belonged to other camps who might very well sell him out in order to obtain other advantages!

"Damn it! Why am I back in my hover chair again?!" Vincent complained. "I was on a roll when I piloted the Rotenring. Did you see the moves I pulled off at the end? The uberlifers or whatever they are called didn't stand a chance when I got serious!"

Ves knocked his gauntlet against the surface of the expert candidate's current seat. "Our job isn't to fight, but to run. We can't stay here any longer. The only way we can make it out alive is if we reach the underground hangar where the Infinity Guards are standing by with our escape vehicle. If you fought well enough, the Rotenring might have been intact enough to keep you in its c.o.c.kpit. As it is, it's too damaged to keep up with our flight."

He had to make a practical choice after the recent battle had ended. While the Rotenring had proven itself to be a powerful striker mech, especially after Vincent managed to discover the knack to piloting a biomech, its condition was anything but ideal.

Even though it was the most armored mech after the Perringer, the Rotenring had not only absorbed numerous telling melee blows, but also got shot at. On top of that, falling head-first into a rifleman mech dealt severe damage to its upper body including its flight system!



Ves estimated that the Rotenring only retained 40 percent of its battle effectiveness. The heavy damage to its flight system was one of the most serious blows of all because the striker mech could have moved faster if it walked at the same time as adding a bit of extra forward thrust with its flight system.

Now that it was wrecked, the mech's damaged legs weren't sufficient anymore. If even the floater platform was able to advance faster than the Rotenring, then it wasn't worth it to take it along!

The other four biomechs of the Roving Hunters also incurred varying degrees of damage, but they were still in a reasonable condition. Their fighting and flight capabilities were still satisfactory enough to serve as his current escort as they made their way through the large mech-scaled tunnels.

If Ves advanced through these areas on foot or on a basic vehicle, then he would have encountered a lot more trouble than now!

Yet at the sight of four battle-scarred biomechs, many bystanders and strange groups willingly moved backwards and allowed the small but powerful group to pass unmolested.

Even other mech squads in the vicinity took the initiative to remain distant!

What helped a lot in this instance was that Ves, Vincent and the Roving Hunters had all entered a modest container before loading it onto the floater platform.

This was exactly the impression Ves wanted to convey to everyone else!

While there were some anarchists and indiscriminate trouble makers who just wanted to kill everyone on sight, the Roving Hunters generally didn't arouse much vigilance from other groups.

After all, compared to powerful factions that wanted to change the LRA in their own image, all the Roving Hunters cared about was making it into the playoffs and ending the competition season on a good note!

"Meow.."

"Hey, it will be okay. We are getting closer and closer to the underground hangar. We'll be out of here in no time.

Ves carefully stroked his armored hand over Lucky's back. The gem cat had draped himself over the shoulder of the Unending Regalia after returning from the latest battle.

Different from before, Ves perceived that Lucky's intrinsic spirituality had dimmed to a considerable degree. For some reason, the cat tired out a lot faster than expected when he phased through a biomech.

This caused Ves to question some of his assumptions on biotechnology.

Previously, he thought that their lack of spirituality and sentience made them no different from clones. After examining many different biomechs, Ves had never sensed the spark of life from any of them. They were quite literally organic machines.

Even if biomechs were ultimately false existences, their proximity to actual life might cause them to inherit at least some remarkable traits.

"This isn't the time to study this phenomenon." He whispered and shook his head. "I should focus on getting out. Veoline isn't safe anymore."

From the scattered news he was able to access, he discovered that the flames of war had raged especially high on Prosperous Hill VI. The population density, the high degree of development, the large amount of interests on the planet along with its central importance as a trade nexus turned it into a very strategic planet.

Whoever controlled Prosperous Hill VI would be able to grasp a large portion of trade, commerce and industry in the region!

Even though it was likely that trade would drop like a cliff due to the outbreak of war, the demand for goods and services never ceased.

In fact, with the outbreak of civil war, the different factions needed to make sure they secured access to enough materials, supplies and combat assets!

Whoever ran low on mechs and sh.i.p.s first would doubtlessly lose speaking rights in how the war would be settled!

As Ves thought about how he could evacuate from the surface under these difficult circumstances, something big softly knocked against the surface of the container. This prompted him to lower the setting on his jammer.

A faint signal managed to reach the antennas of the Unending Regalia.

"Mr. Larkinson, we're almost at the hangar you told us about. We need you to use your scanning capabilities to take a peek of what is going on inside. So far, our most s.e.n.s.i.t.i.v.e sensors have detected plenty of worrying signs such as fires, shockwaves and other concerning indications."

"Understood. Please stand by and remain on guard."

This time, Ves wasn't close to a convenient power outlet anymore, but that didn't hinder him too much. Shortly before he evacuated the underground mech hall, he rummaged through the pile of spare parts and managed to find an organic energy cell.

Even though it looked like an organ that someone scooped out of an exobeast, it functioned exactly like a regular energy cell. Ves just had to mount it to an interface and put some cables together to create a makeshift mobile power supply.

A very dangerous one, but a working one nonetheless. Ves deliberately ignored the risk of explosions, electrocution and other nasty consequences and plugged the jury-rigged mobile power supply to his suit before pumping a lot of power into the Odineye once again.

A strong and strange sensation emerged from the omni sensor and pulsed in every direction.

Even the biomech technicians sitting a short distance away felt the raw power of the Odineye!

Soon enough, Ves received a snapshot of everything within a range of a couple of kilometers.

The immense underground hangar dominated a considerable portion of this picture.

When Ves counted the amount of active and broken mechs inside, he suddenly noticed something alarming.

"STOP!"

The party quickly halted. Everyone was confused why Ves told them to halt. Weren't they close to exiting the tunnel complex? Why stop at this point?

Ves didn't intend to hide anything and transmitted the sensor readings to the four biomechs that escorted the floater platform.

"The original plan is shot. Do you see the four piles of debris surrounding that wrecked transport?"

"Yes." Captain Rivington answered. "What about them? Don't tell me..."

"It's just as bad as it looks. That transport that got sheared in half was supposed to be our escape vehicle. Those four mechs were the guard mechs that had been tasked with protecting me. Now, they're all wrecked, and my long-ranged sensor isn't picking up any surviving. There is no help for us ahead."

There were several different groups of mechs and people in the giant hangar up ahead. They were all scattered in different locations, and from the way the mechs were firing at each other, they weren't exactly peaceful!

Ves didn't anticipate this outcome, though he should have. Last he contacted the Infinity Guards, the situation was still under control. If he had arrived at that time, he would have been able to evacuate smoothly.

Unfortunately, Ves had wasted too much time along the way. Even though he didn't regret enlisting the help of the Roving Hunter, it meant that the mercenaries assigned to guard him weren't able to last, especially as their mechs consisted entirely of Guard Masters!

"We need a new plan." He stated.

"What about sneaking into the hangar to hijack a random shuttle? Maybe the fellows inside will make the same response as the groups we've passed."

"Can you guarantee that none of these potential hostiles will shoot at our escape vehicle as we try to make our way out? It only takes a couple of shots or less to down an unarmored shuttle."

"..."

Continuing onwards without a solid plan was sheer folly. They had to figure out a more viable solution to escape.

Could they take an alternate route? Perhaps, but most ways led back to the immediate surface where the fighting was much more intense according to all of the peripheral vibrations the Odineye captured!

The best escape routes were all beyond the underground hangar. Due to its nature, it connected to various entry and exit tunnels that connected to the surface at several different locations. As long as Ves and his group reached one of the furthest ones, then they would be able to emerge at the outskirts and away from the heat of the battle!

"How can we pass through the hangar without getting embroiled in combat?"