

## Mech 4051

### Chapter 4051A Different Kind of Product Reveal

Just as Ves feared, it was hard to market the newly-completed Pacifier model.

So what if it was a cheap and affordable law enforcement mech?

So what if it was fairly fast in relation to its weight class?

So what if it came with a glow that could pacify people?

Most of the Planetary Guard units and other associated law enforcement agencies that the Larkinsons contacted did not even bother to listen to the sales pitch!

It made no difference if the LMC's Marketing Department or Ves himself approached the potential clients with an offer.

Any message they dispatched simply got lost in the abyss!

"The market for law enforcement mechs is not as fluid and prone to rapid shifts as the other mech markets that we are accustomed to." Gavin explained to Ves. "The authorities in the Red Ocean bear a huge responsibility in protecting millions if not billions of MTA credits worth of colonial assets as well as precious manpower. The law enforcement agencies cannot afford to gamble on new and untested products that come out all of the time. If they happen to bet wrong on a gimmicky mech model that has not been tested in the field for months or years, then the consequence might be the utter failure and ruination of an expensive colony. Do you understand now why our pitch has fallen on deaf ears?"

Ves reluctantly nodded. It was not that difficult to understand. If the law enforcement agencies adopted mechs and mech ecosystems that were published by famed, established brands that retained Master Mech Designers with decades or centuries worth of experience in designing non-lethal mechs, then they all knew exactly what they were getting!

Not only did these mainstream law enforcement mech models offer guaranteed high performance, but their designs were so solid and reliable that their copies could easily remain in service for at least a decade without falling apart!

That latter part was extremely important to many major clients. One of the more common faults of less established and lower-ranking mech designers was that their products tended to look flashy at first, but possessed a weak and rotten foundation under the hood.

Though Ves did not believe that the Pacifier was unreliable to the point that it would become too worn out after a few years of service, it was hard to convince others that his product was sound.

Claims alone were not enough! What the market truly paid attention to was reputation and a solid track record. Any vendors that tried to jump into this market without an advantage in either of these areas would just get the doors slammed into their faces!

Ves tiredly rubbed his face. "I thought that enough knowledgeable people would know and appreciate the effects of our glows. The one that I have paired with the Pacifier is a perfect fit! Why can't those stodgy leaders and decision makers take us seriously for once!?"

"Any organization that uses mechs gets flooded with offers from other mech companies." Gavin answered. "Many of them claim to solve a problem twice as good as the competition. Words are not enough in today's market environment."

"Then we should hold a live demonstration. Please rent a slot at a prominent exhibition hall in Kotor City. I think it might be time for us to hold another product announcement."

Gavin looked reluctant. "That can be arranged, boss, but... you won't be able to speak to the right audience if that is the case. We can attract thousands of locals and tourists to our show, but if we cannot lure in our target audience, then our outreach won't be as effective as we hoped."

Ves understood what his personal assistant was talking about. Government officials and Planetary Guard officers usually did not attend these kinds of shows, especially one held by a young and relatively obscure Journeyman Mech Designer.

When most people thought of Journeymen, they thought of up-and-coming mech designers that were adequate in designing mechs for the private market but did not possess the qualifications to compete with the big boys!

While Professor Taigen could more easily make everyone take him seriously due to his reputation, track record, age and rank, Ves had none of these advantages!

No government institution would take him seriously!

Ves scratched his head as he thought on how to overcome all of these hurdles.

"Wait a second." He suddenly jerked. "The Pacifier model may be designed with law enforcement purposes in mind, but that should not be the only case where it can play a useful role!"

"What are you talking about, boss?"

"I just had the greatest idea!" Ves grinned as he grabbed onto his assistant's shoulders. "Proceed with renting an exhibition hall and prepare to promote the event as the introduction of a revolutionary new solution to a problem that is plaguing many organizations in the Red Ocean. Since it is too difficult to market our products to the law enforcement sector at the moment, I think it is best to switch gears and aim for different and more accessible target audiences!"

Gavin began to have a bad feeling about this. "What... sort of clientele do you have in mind, boss?"

"You will see."

Under the patriarch's urging, the Larkinson Clan rapidly made the arrangements. It paid good money to rent an exhibition hall on short notice and held an expensive promotion blitz to attract the attention of as many potential buyers and users as possible!

A week later, thousands of curious people headed towards an exhibition hall located in the bustling and busy Commercial District.

Akairos Hall was one of the many exhibition halls that had popped up as of late. While it was not that large and did not exude a sense of luxury and opulence, the modern metal-and-glass structure possessed its own strong points.

Compared to many other alternatives, Akairos Hall featured some of the best environmental simulation tech in Kotor City!

The features went beyond making elaborate use of physical projections. Although a sensible person would still be able to distinguish between reality and falsehood, it was also easy for visitors to get caught up in whatever illusion the exhibition hall weaved at the time.

As the invited guests all showed their tickets and gained entry to Akairos Hall, Ves passed the time by inspecting the mechs that would be showcasing their capabilities today.

"The new AP-VEX superfab is incredible." Ves noted to Calabast. "Previously, it took multiple days or even a week for me to fabricate a mech. With the new first-class superfab that we've obtained for millions of MTA merits, it takes less than a day for me to make a Pacifier mech."

Since the completion of the Pacifier Project, Ves had spent five days fabricating five different Pacifier mechs in a row!

Part of the reason why he was able to maintain such a high pace of production was because of the incredible speed and precision of the superfab. Compared to the

traditional production lines based around 3D printers, the technological edge was incomparable!

Another reason why he was able to make them quickly was because their designs were relatively simple, modest and did not incorporate any expensive or powerful materials.

As a result, five new mechs stood proudly before him at the backstage area of Akairos hall. Though none of them were masterworks, his high affinity for mechs along with his considerable amount of practical experience had elevated the quality of the Pacifiers to a high level.

"Are you sure you want to market the Pacifiers to the group of people that you have invited today?" Calabast asked. "If you do this, you will invite a considerable amount of controversy."

"Customers are customers." Ves crossed his arms. "I don't care who buys my products. Each mech aspires to be useful. If the law enforcement circle isn't willing to listen to my pitch, then I will focus my efforts on a more receptive group of people. I can guarantee you that by the time I have ended my presentation, we will receive thousands of orders for our new Pacifier model from our audience!"

Time passed until the time for Ves to make his case had finally arrived. He checked his appearance and made sure his modified suit looked both dashing and adventurous enough to convey a certain image.

"It's time, sir!"

As soon as the show commenced, Ves adopted his public speaking persona and exuded an air of confidence and excitement.

The main hall had gone pitch dark at this moment when he floated towards the center of the podium.

A spotlight gradually shone on Ves, allowing every guest in the audience to get a glimpse of the young clan patriarch and mech designer.

"Welcome, everyone. I am glad to see you attend this little product reveal event today." Ves spoke in a friendly tone. "This event will be a little different from the boring product announcements that should be familiar to you all. This is the reason why we set a few requirements in order for you to be eligible to attend this meeting. We don't want any kids or elderly people to suffer any... accidents."

That certainly caused the crowd to build up more anticipation for the product reveal.

Ves waved his hand forward, causing a soft light to illuminate the audience area.

"You see, the reason why we wanted to invite healthy people who are fit and possess a combat-related background is because we want to hold a more practical demonstration. In other words, each of you will take part in the scenarios that we have prepared so that you can experience for yourself how useful our new product can be to your security companies and mercenary outfits!"

The vast majority of guests that the Larkinsons had invited for this product reveal were those active in the security sector!

Compared to public officials and law enforcement officers, it was much easier for the Larkinsons to attract the attention of mercs and guards.

Though their pockets weren't necessarily as deep, there were a lot of them in Davute.

After issuing a few obligatory safety and risk warnings, Ves did not delay any further and moved on to the next phase of his presentation.

"I am sure you are familiar with what comes next. Our new products will show up behind me while I introduce them with my words. Well, I won't follow that routine this time. I believe the best possible way for you to understand my new mech model is to experience its strengths in person."

Ves waved his hand, causing him and the stage to completely disappear in sight.

The advanced projectors and other illusion technology of Akairos Hall completely went active at this time.

Before the guests knew it, they had been transported from a darkened exhibition hall to the center of what appeared to be a burning colony settlement!

The visitors all looked around with varying degrees of wonder as they could feel the heat of the surrounding fires and smell the scent of burning metal and composites.

As they turned their gazes towards each other, they all noted with surprise that their original 'bodies' had disappeared!

Instead, their forms had all been superimposed by projected bodies of colony residents wearing tarnished outfits. Their 'new' selves also carried various firearms.

As the attendees all tried to make sense of their new illusionary setting, the voice of Ves suddenly narrated the situation.

"This is Epteon III, a real planet in Krakatoa that had been colonized by a pioneer who was way in over his head. The group responsible for erecting this colony was not prepared to face all of the problems and setbacks that occurred. Funding gaps, equipment failures and scarcity of goods, equipment and supplies has made life

increasingly more unbearable to the colonists who signed up with the pioneering organization in order to attain a better life."

Much to the astonishment of the guests, a glow suddenly began to affect them all. This glow gradually drew out their aggression and frustration.

Combined with other stimuli such as the heat of nearby fires and the smell of burning structures and flesh, the mercenaries all began to get pulled into this imaginary setting!

"When the controllers of the colony finally went too far by limiting the amount of food that you can eat, you all decided to rise up and do whatever you can to overthrow the oppressive regime! You picked up your arms and you sabotaged their facilities in the hope that you could free yourselves from tyranny or escape from the settlement that your oppressors had turned into your prison!"

The environment changed again. Hundreds of projections of thugs and guards in black appeared around the group of attendees.

The glow that caused them to feel a lot more aggressive also made them a lot more trigger-happy than usual. When the active glow upped its power and potency by another notch, many of the mercs with a clear line of fire lifted up their illusory weapons and fired fake laser beams that struck the oppressive guards!

The fake guards in black did not allow themselves to get hit with impunity. They all brought their formidable-looking arsenal to bear and fired into the crowd!

Numerous mercenaries who got lost in the illusion shouted and fought back harder even as they felt the heat and the concussive forces of energy beams and explosions washing over their bodies!

By now, over half of the attendees had temporarily forgotten about their original identities and became deeply immersed in their new rebel personas!

#### Chapter 4052 A Different Target Audience

Ves grinned as he watched on from above as the imaginary setting engulfed an increasing amount of mercenaries.

Whether they got lost in the illusion or merely decided to play along because it was fun, the people who chose to attend his product reveal event seemingly forgot all about their real identities and embraced the roles of disgruntled colonists that had rebelled against their oppressors!

The funny part about all of this was that the uprising on Epteon III actually took place. It was one of the numerous failed cases that showed up in the news a few months ago. This was a scenario that happened once and could happen again!

The events that were about to take place in this illusionary scenario would end differently, however.

Just as the guests all thought they were winning as they shot down the guards in black, a quartet of bare, metallic mechs approached from a distance!

The mechs did not fly quickly, but their appearance already sent a surge of fear and intimidation through the spines of all of the visitors.

Each of them knew that their infantry weapons stood no chance of penetrating the armor of a mech. The differences in scale and power were simply too vast!

Nonetheless, affected by the aggressive glow emanating from below, the attendees all became driven by an impulse to continue shooting!

"We have no way out!"

"Even ants can fell an elephant!"

The four silvery mechs all split up and surrounded the large mob of 'rebels' from all sides. None of them utilized their fluid projectors as of yet. Instead, they merely stood and allowed the fake laser beams to strike their armor with no concern.

Suddenly, the mechs activated special lights that caused their forms to look more powerful and inviolable than before!

At the same time, the mechs all expanded their identical glows at once, covering the entire main hall with a strong field that completely overpowered the existing glow that aroused everyone's aggression!

As soon as the new glow imposed its presence on everyone, their aggression suddenly deflated as they abruptly became beset by an invisible field that forced them into complete calm!

The transition was too quick. Nobody could think clearly about what had happened to them as the tranquility field was so strong that the unprepared guests did not think to fight against their current state of mind.

Only the stronger and more experienced soldiers and warriors among the audience retained enough clarity to fight back against the current effect!

It was only after half a minute had passed that the new mechs dialed down their glows so that the guests were able to regain all of their wits.

"The uprising that engulfed Epteon III could not be suppressed." Ves resumed narrating. "The colonists had inflicted too much damage and had completely given in to their anger

and indignity. With the help of guards who were sympathetic to their cause, they forced a deadly confrontation that ultimately led to the deaths of over 90 percent of the settlement's population while also destroying every piece of valuable infrastructure needed to develop a colony."

The surrounding projections shifted to show the aftermath of this struggle. Images of burned corpses, broken mechs and exploded structures surrounded all of the attendees.

"Think of how this rebellion would have ended if the pioneers included these four mechs in their arsenal. No matter how much the rioters spread themselves out and hide inside various structures, the glow of our new Pacifier model can pass through every obstacle and sap the fury and the passion from the rebelling crowd. Without the heat of their own emotions egging them on, they do not have the heart to rebel any further."

None of the guests were stupid. The glows they experienced and the scenario that they took part in was a powerful demonstration of how a small number of so-called Pacifier mechs could quickly end an insurrection.

It did so not through the use of noise, fluid projectors or more lethal and dangerous options.

No. The mechs instantly took the wind out of the sails of the would-be rebels by suppressing much of their thoughts and emotions!

"The Pacifier model is a revolutionary new product co-developed by the Living Mech Corporation and Voiken Industries. It combines the deep expertise and and accumulation in non-lethal mechs of Professor Taigen Herman Voiken with the glows and other unconventional features that I am known for to produce a fantastic offering that excels at subjugating unruly mobs."

The devices of Akairos Hall switched up the illusionary environment to depict an alien settlement.

Thousands of sentient insects used their alien weapons to fight and resist the human invaders that sought to suppress them without killing them entirely.

The job was a lot harder to accomplish with ordinary mechs, but as soon as the Pacifiers descended from above, many of the aliens resistance units found it difficult to fight as intensely as before!

"Our glows are effective against any living organism that can feel emotions." Ves explained. "Conquering and subjugating alien settlements has become easier than ever. No matter the species, those who oppose you will always lower their resistance when affected by the Pacifier's glow."



Kairos Hall began to showcase more scenarios. They ranged from trying to break up a brawl between two opposing mercenary outfits to calming down a scared and panicked crowd of colonists that had been affected by a disaster.

The Pacifier mechs showcased their value in each of these cases by robbing the hysterical and emotional individuals of the fuel that pushed them forward!

What impressed all of the guests the most was that not even mech pilots who were interfacing with mechs in the heat of battle were exempt from this effect!

"The Red Ocean is a dangerous and chaotic dwarf galaxy." Ves spoke as the illusionary environments faded away. "Violence is prevalent in every zone. There are too many cases that show that soldiers tasked with guarding a site or protecting a population are unable to control a crisis with their existing functions. They are simply not equipped to adequately contain these incidents. They can only suppress violence by exerting greater violence."

The four Pacifier mechs that had previously showcased their abilities to the guests all activated their flight systems and lifted from the ground. The lights shining down from above caused them to look increasingly more impressive and impactful!

"From today onwards, this is no longer the case. Violence has met its ultimate nemesis. The tranquility that our Pacifier model can impose on the perpetrators of violence is the most effective method to end their aggression! Not only that, but our Pacifier model can respond to many other situations such as ending mass hysteria and controlling large amounts of captive individuals."

Ves grinned as he saw how much his presentation had captivated his audience. "The Pacifier model is the ultimate tool to control a hostile and unruly population. Completing suppression and subjugation missions will be a breeze as long as you have at least a couple of Pacifiers in your mech roster. For the generous and affordable price of just 1 MTA credit per unit, the Living Mech Corporation and Voiken Industries are ready to allow your outfits to be the first to possess this power in the Red Ocean! Order today and be the first to harness this exclusive advantage!"

As Ves ended the presentation, many of the guests enthusiastically discussed among themselves.

They shared their thoughts on what they just experienced and discussed the merits of the new Pacifier model.

The copies of the new mech had not disappeared. They had taken up positions in the further corners of the main hall. Those who wanted to experience their surprisingly effective glows again could approach the new machines on their own accord.

Soon enough, one mercenary leader after another recognized the opportunities presented by the Pacifier model and approached the LMC's sales representatives that had made themselves available at this time.

"I wish to place an order for three Pacifiers!"

"Are there any spaceborn variants for this model?"

"Is this mech designed for war?"

"I am willing to order a batch of fifty Pacifier mechs as long as you ship them to my company first!"

While only a small proportion of guests decided to place their orders after the event, Ves was happy with the results.

The demand was enough to keep the Larkinson Clan's new large-scale manufacturing complex busy for a few weeks and maybe longer!

As Ves smiled at this encouraging sight, Calabast approached from behind and shared her own thoughts.

"I have to admit that using illusions to immerse your audience into different scenarios is a brilliant move. The use of glows to put them into the right mindsets is also a nice touch."

"These people need to feel what my product can do. Reading or hearing about its features is not enough." Ves told her. "You can see the results for yourself. Soon, we'll be spreading hundreds of Pacifier mechs throughout the Krakatoa Middle Zone."

"That is not an impressive sales figure compared to the total amount of sales of this region. It took great effort and quite a bit of funding to organize and promote this product reveal event."

"I don't need to hold any repeat events." Ves retorted. "This is already enough. As long as hundreds of Pacifiers begin to make their mark in the region, I don't think that others will miss the incredible value and potential of my work."

Calabast turned towards her strategic partner. "I don't think I need to remind you that you are making a dangerous move, Ves. You are marketing a mech designed for public law enforcement agencies to private mercenary companies. The latter does not have to abide by as many rules and are much less restricted in how they utilize their mechs and tools. They are also much less accountable to the public."

"I know what that means. I admit the Pacifier is prone to abuse, but you can say that about any mech. It is not my place to judge how my customers make use of my products."

What happened in the weeks and months that followed from this remarkable product reveal event aligned his expectations.

As the LMC delivered their newly-produced Pacifier mechs to the first batch of customers that ordered the new product, numerous early adopters enthusiastically put them in the field whenever possible!

For example, a strike took place at a lifeless mining planet. The disruption in operations was costing the mining company thousands of MTA credits in lost revenue and contract breaches.

Though the mining company possessed enough mechs and troops to put down the striking mining personnel, the problem was that the disgruntled workers took all of the expensive mining equipment and mining vehicles hostage!

There were numerous engineers among the crew that had disabled all of the safeguards on the gear and improvised different parts into defensive emplacements.

For a long time, the workers thought they held the advantage. They were assured that the mining company did not want to go bankrupt by losing the expensive mining equipment that could not be replaced.

However, much to their shock, the mining company ended up hiring a mercenary company to end the strike by force!

"THIS FARCE ENDS NOW!"

Hundreds of mechs flew in but did not employ any of their weapons.

Though the miners resisted against the invasion by bringing their mining lasers and other improvised weapons to bear, the mercenary mechs were able to resist these attacks long enough to get close to the blocked entrance.

As soon as the striking personnel thought that the mechs would barge through the defenses and destroy precious machines worth at least tens of thousands of MTA credits, the strange non-lethal mechs all began to expand their glows at once!

The Pacifiers made an immediate difference. Many strikers who fought because they thought they were being exploited and trapped in an increasing amount of debt that they could never repay all lost their anger and motivations all of a sudden.

Why were they fighting?

Why did they threaten to blow up their own workplaces?

Why must they take a stand?

Wasn't it better to clear their minds and embrace peace? Many of the miners manning the defenses started to drop their resistance as they were incapable of summoning any form of resistance at this time.

In the end, the mercenaries easily managed to regain control of the mining complex without causing any serious collateral damage!

#### Chapter 4053 Complementary Match

The momentum of the Pacifier model was almost non-existent at first.

The LMC only sporadically received orders for the new product after Ves held his groundbreaking presentation.

Most of those customers turned out to be attendees who had waited and put more thought into their decisions before deciding to pull the trigger.

There were also leaders who decided to buy a Pacifier or two after hearing the praises of their subordinates who had experienced the product reveal event.

The Larkinsons did not leave it at that and started a more extensive marketing campaign in order to generate more awareness in the mech community.

Ves gave interviews. His clan set up numerous live demonstration events throughout Davute. The LMC even advertised on various news portals and mech portals.

Though demand slowly ticked up due to these efforts, it looked as if the LMC was wasting hundreds of MTA credits on ineffectual advertising.

However, Ves never lost faith in his product and finally got rewarded when the trend started to rise three to four months after the initial reveal!

"We just received an order for 75 Pacifiers!"

"A major mercenary organization ordered 500 Pacifiers yesterday!"

"The backlog of Pacifiers is growing bigger. While we still have plenty of room to expand the production capacity of our manufacturing plant, our material suppliers can't keep up with the increasing amount of resources needed to produce our machines!"

One day after another, Ves received news indicating that the demand of the Pacifier had grown by at least ten times in a relatively short interval of time!

"What changed, Benny?"

"A lot of stories about our Pacifier mechs have spread throughout the local mech community. The mercenaries that bought our products have used them in numerous different missions by now. Their experiences with our new mech model are almost universally positive!"

Another reason why the demand had shot up was because the Voikens had achieved results as well around this time.

Unlike Ves who set his sights on the private sector that he was most familiar with, Professor Taigen Voiken exclusively approached public sector clients.

While the Voikens did not manage to win over the authorities responsible for maintaining order in port systems and major colonies, they succeeded in making inroads with the leaders of smaller colonies and settlements.

Unlike the law enforcement agencies of major colonies, the ones in charge of keeping the peace in smaller settlements often struggled to do their jobs!

While there were less troublemakers at more rural towns and cities, a single rogue mech could easily cause a lot of devastation!

The lack of funding and appropriate personnel made it difficult for settlements to receive adequate protection. Everything was expensive and pioneers who struggled to make a profit in the frontier simply couldn't afford the more expensive toys that were also more effective.

The Pacifier model neatly met their needs. While its technical configuration was rather basic, its price tag was low enough to fall within the budgets of many struggling settlements.

As the Voikens started to deliver the Pacifiers to their first clients, the users of the new machines discovered that just one of them was enough to make a qualitative difference in peacekeeping operations!

A single Pacifier could break up an escalating fight.

A single Pacifier could restore a hysterical crowd to sanity.

A single Pacifier could stop a rampaging exobeast horde in its tracks.

As the new law enforcement model began to exhibit more and more uses at different rural settlements, word of it soon spread out, thereby leading to an increased amount of interest from customers based in both the Magair Middle Zone and the Krakatoa Middle Zone!

Sales had grown so quickly that the Larkinsons had to accelerate their efforts to expand their manufacturing plant's production capacity and forge new contracts with material suppliers.

Though Ves expected a turnaround to take place, the trend continued to climb upwards without any slowdown even after the Pacifier model finally became known to the greater mech community.

"Good news, boss! Our Pacifier model has gained the status of a bestseller! It has become one of the hottest new products in the category of peacekeeping mechs of this year! Better yet, the Davute Planetary Guard has finally taken note of our product and ordered 400 copies at once!"

"What?! Really?"

The fact that the main law enforcement group of one of the busiest trading hubs of Krakatoa finally saw fit to buy his Pacifier mechs was a major breakthrough!

Not only did it mean that the Pacifier finally gained credibility among the most important clients in the middle zone, but millions if not billions of residents and visitors would finally get exposed to his work!

Each time the local Planetary Guard sent a Pacifier mech out on patrol, a lot of people would see and possibly experience a measure of its glow in person.

The authorities effectively advertised his work this way!

Ves knew that sales for the Pacifier model would definitely reach new records if that was the case!

"Can you tell me more about this major order?"

"From what I have read, the Davute Planetary Guard originally wanted to purchase a larger batch of 2,000 Pacifier mechs, but they lowered their order when they heard how long it took for us to deliver all of the machines. The client also got discouraged after learning that Voiken Industries has not yet published the right variants that perform better in specific situations."

"Hm, that's a shame, but it takes time for the Voikens to flesh out their new mech ecosystem."

Despite this minor setback, the spread of Pacifiers on the streets of Kotor City and other settlements on Davute VII quickly raised the popularity of the mech model!

Though it was far from the only product sold by the LMC, its incredible success and rapidly growing number of fans provided the Larkinson Clan with a growing amount of cash and influence!

It was the first but certainly not the last product that facilitated the explosive rise of the Larkinson Clan!

As Ves held another virtual meeting with Professor Taigen after the Pacifier turned into a bestseller for both of their mech companies, their respective situations had drastically changed.

Ves and the Larkinson Clan had turned from upstarts into a part of Davute's establishment.

Meanwhile, The Voiken Family that had settled in the Magair Middle Zone not only achieved financial security, but also gained acceptance from the community!

Both of them acknowledged that they couldn't have achieved so much success if they worked separately. The relations between the Larkinson Clan and the Voiken Family had warmed up considerably as a consequence.

When Ves and Professor Taigen informed each other of the developments related to the Pacifier model and the LaVoi System that became increasingly more fleshed out, the two reflected on the reasons for its popularity.

"We recognized a need in the Red Ocean and offered a product that fulfilled it better than any of the competition." Professor Taigen said. "It is not that our competition has been complacent all of this time. There are many products on the market that offer their own advantages. Your specialty may not be the strongest in the most objective sense, but it happens to be highly complementary to the role that law enforcement mechs are expected to fulfill."

This was a clear example that showed that mech models with the highest specs were not necessarily the ones that customers needed the most.

There was still room in the mech market for unconventional mech designers who offered alternative solutions to long-standing problems!

"It also helps that the Pacifier model is one of the few law enforcement mechs that are popular among a wider customer base. It is not just the Planetary Guard organizations that have grown to appreciate the functions of our collaborative work."

Professor Taigen's smile turned awkward. "That is... correct. I have to admit that I overlooked the appeal of our product from the private sector. While I can still foresee how useful the Pacifier can be to professional security companies, it is notable how many mercenary outfits have learned to use our work in more offensive operations."

The Senior Mech Designer felt quite ambivalent about this development.

On one hand, the man had grown up and designed his mechs with the belief that his products not only promoted law and order within human space, but also benefited humanity as a whole.

Letting mercenaries and other miscellaneous take advantage of the Pacifier's glow in other situations might still result in greater order, but it was not necessarily certain whether this development was a boon to human civilization!

This was because tyrants, criminals and oppressors had discovered that it became a lot easier to bully their targets if they used the Pacifiers to soften up the opposition!

Ves wasn't necessarily happy with this development either, but that did not mean he wanted his mech company to restrict its sales!

The Pacifier had become the main cash cow of the Larkinson Clan at this point.

The model also expanded the brand awareness of Ves and the LMC by an explosive degree, thereby making it easier for them to sell their other commercial mech models that would have otherwise gone unnoticed!

"You have a great gift, Ves." Taigen praised his business partner. "No, that is not entirely accurate. You have worked harder than many other Journeymen your age to develop an entirely different dimension of mech strengthening. The progress you have made so far has already allowed you to impart your mech designs with brand-new capabilities that other competitors cannot answer, at least for the time being."

Ves loved to receive acknowledgement for his work. Though his contributions to the Pacifier design was admittedly rather limited, he was still the key reason why the Voiken Family was on the rise in the Red Ocean!

"Thank you for the compliments, Taigen. You are not that bad yourself. I think you just need to make a single major breakthrough for you to realize your design philosophy and elevate the rest of the LaVoi System to the next level by yourself."

Professor Taigen sighed and shook his head. "You are being too optimistic, Ves. I am cognizant of my strengths and limitations. I will need to revise my original plans and seek a more promising pathway to Master if I wish to maintain my pride as a mech designer."

"Hehehe..." Ves awkwardly rubbed his head.

"I do not blame you, my friend. I am thankful to you. Without your wakeup call, I would have settled for advancing to Master through more modest means. Now that I am aware of the greater possibilities at our disposal, I have liberated my imagination and begun to



explore ideas that I have never entertained before. Again, thank you for that, Ves. You have set me on the path of a better future for myself."

"You... are welcome."

Professor Taigen smiled. "I am not accustomed to holding debts, so let me repay my debt to you right now. Have you or any of your men thought about exploiting the commercial value of some of your other glows?"

"What do you mean by that, professor?"

"It is quite simple, my friend. Your background in combat mechs had caused you to focus too much on thinking on how you can leverage your existing selection of glows to mechs designed for battle and war. However, do you know that there is an enormous market for mechs that are not designed for combat? Do you know how many industrial mechs are sold in the Red Ocean per month?"

"Uhhhh..."

"There is a huge untapped market for industrial mechs that can motivate and increase the loyalty of their mech pilots and the workers around them. I believe that there are many warehouse owners and factory operators that would embrace an industrial mech that incorporates the glow of your Desolate Soldier."

Ves widened his eyes.

Before Professor Taigen made this suggestion, Ves had always considered the Solemn Guardian to be one of his earlier and less impressive design spirits.

Compared to the versatility of the Superior Mother or the lethality of Helena, the Solemn Guardian was nothing impressive in combat!

Its duty-based glow may be useful on the battlefield, but the combat mechs that Ves envisioned with it did not sound exciting to him anymore!

This was different, though. Professor Taigen's incredibly insightful tip opened an entirely new window of possibilities to Ves!

He realized that there were plenty of situations where his glows could complement mechs designed for peaceful applications rather than combat applications!

Chapter 4054 A Different Kind of Profit

"Why did you bring me to this warehouse, Miss Monater?"

"Before you meet with your old friend, I want you to gain a deeper understanding of the progress he has made and the success he has achieved."

When Tristan Wesseling initially arrived at Davute, he thought that the Friday Coalition's diplomatic mission would quickly urge him to arrange a meeting with Ves Larkinson.

Perhaps the 'diplomats' were indeed in the process of securing an appointment, but it appeared that meeting with someone as hot and important as the leader of the Larkinson Clan could not be accomplished in a single day!

Perla Monater had already formed an agreement with the warehouse director, so she was smoothly able to pass through the main entrance and security checkpoints together with her companion.

This was not the first time that Tristan had entered a logistical center. He had come across many different ones during his previous assignments where he took part in the reconstruction of war torn cities.

He became instantly impressed by the facilities around him. There were many tall structures before him, but they only represented the tip of the iceberg as the more valuable and delicate goods were all stored in one of the many underground layers.

All sorts of tech made sure that each and every good passing through the warehouse was carefully tracked, monitored and protected. The sheer variety of items, each with different storage requirements and environmental tolerance characteristics, made operating an industrial warehouse and distribution center a lot more complicated these days!

Tristan continually became impressed by all of the devices and bots that efficiently took care of all of the items. Perishable goods were stored and handled in ways that maximized their lifespans while more durable goods were stored in their own optimal conditions to preserve their quality as much as possible.

The differences between the operations of this warehouse and the ones he dealt with back in the Komodo Star Sector were too big!

The Red Ocean was truly a region that encapsulated some of the best of human civilization.

However, Perla Monater did not bring Tristan here to look at modern warehousing solutions. She continued to lead him through the warehouse until they reached a site where the heavier and more cumbersome goods were being handled.

Though it was possible to utilize heavy-duty lifter platforms and bots to move these items around, they consumed a lot of energy and also wore out pretty quickly with heavy use.

Industrial mechs were still useful in many situations where bots were not reliable or flexible enough to do the job. The ones before Tristan looked similar to the many industrial mechs utilized by the Friday Coalition back home.

Even if they were heartland-level machines, the industrial mechs employed by the warehouse were not that special. They were designed to be as cheap, affordable, efficient and reliable as possible. Since they were not expected to take part in any fight, their construction was far from tough and robust from their combat mech siblings.

Tristan dismissed the humanoid industrial mechs pretty quickly. The six-legged insectile ones were a bit more interesting. They were remarkably strong and stable despite their relatively light designs.

It was only when one of the ant mechs passed fairly close to his location that he widened his eyes.

The tell-tale sensation of a glow had briefly affected his mind before the ant mech scurried onwards!

"This... is this the Hymenoptera mech sold by the LMC?"

"Correct." Miss Monater nodded. "When you read the briefing about the Larkinson Patriarch and his work, you must have moved past the descriptions of his less remarkable mech designs, correct?"

Tristan awkwardly smiled. "Mech designers such as myself are mainly interested in the more pivotal and innovative works of each other. There are mech designs that push the boundaries of what is possible and have succeeded in breaking new ground. There are also mech designs that combine existing tech and solutions to produce new combinations that are commercially interesting but not that remarkable from an innovation standpoint."

"The Hymenoptera mech line indeed falls into the second category, but I am afraid that you have overlooked its disproportionate importance to Patriarch Ves and the Larkinson." Perla told him. "Though the profitability of this humble industrial mech model is not that high, especially since the Living Mech Corporation has completely outsourced its production, how many of them do you think are getting sold on a monthly basis?"

"Ten-thousand?"

"Try a hundred-thousand."

"What?!"

Miss Monater grinned. "You heard that correctly. The Hymenoptera and its many variants are by far the highest-selling products of the Living Mech Corporation. The only reason why it isn't celebrated as a cash cow is because its product margin is extremely thin. The base model can be purchased for only 0.25 MTA credits, which is relatively expensive for an industrial mech but is not that profitable for the LMC due to the inflated prices of industrial materials as well as the cut demanded by third-party manufacturers."

Tristan found that difficult to understand. "I did not pay attention to this before, but I can understand why it is a good idea to pair an industrial mech with a glow that can make workers more motivated and diligent. In the brief time that ant mech strayed close to us, I felt a moderately greater need to do my duty to my state than before. Such a glow is a godsent to any workplace where people are prone to slacking off! I am not too familiar with the price levels of different mechs in the Red Ocean, but a mech as useful as this Hymenoptera should absolutely be worth more than 0.25 MTA credits! Why doesn't the LMC charge a greater premium for this product?"

The diplomatic attaché smirked and turned to the bewildered Journeyman.

"That is because the Hymenoptera is focused on earning a different kind of profit. You see, monetary profit is not the only way a mech designer and mech company can get rich. By lowering the price of a useful range of products to the point where it is barely above breaking even, the Larkinsons are able to achieve a desirable result, which is spreading as many Hymenoptera mechs as possible throughout the Red Ocean! The LMC has adopted an aggressive pricing strategy that has succeeded in making the 'Hyms' ubiquitous in an increasing number of colonies through the new frontier. The trend is still rising to this day."

That was remarkable! The sales figures might sound astonishing at first, but the sheer amount of settlements and workplaces that emerged in the new frontier was also astonishing.

"Why?" Tristan questioned. "Why try so hard in selling so many mechs at a price that doesn't yield any meaningful profit? The Larkinson Clan should be swimming in a lot more MTA credits right now if it raised the price of its Hymenoptera models by just 0.05 MTA credits per copy."

Tristan would have raised his prices by a considerably larger margin if he was in Ves' shoes. A mech with a value proposition as high as the Hymenoptera could still be widely sold even if it was twice as expensive!

"You are still too naive, Mr. Wesseling. You have never operated an independent mech company. You also never had to rely on your own reputation and network to obtain any favors. You have studied and worked under Master Katzenberg for your entire career as a mech designer. Each time you issued a request to a government institution, you borrowed the clout of your backer. This is a convenience that may seem invisible to you,

but is unthinkable for the Larkinsons. Though they maintain some relations with certain MTA factions, they have to fend for themselves for the most part."

While Perla Monater may be right that Tristan had never experienced the difficulties of operating an independent business without backing, his intelligence and his ability to infer clues were not weak.

As soon as he received a couple of clues, Tristan was able to piece together the reason why the LMC deliberately underpriced its Hyms.

"The mech company is trying to turn itself into an indispensable component of colonial society. If so many different companies have grown accustomed to the strengths and features of this industrial mech line, then they cannot bear to go back to a state where the Hyms are no longer available."

"Exactly." Miss Monater affirmed. "The greatest profit earned by the Hymenoptera mech line is influence. This is only a single warehouse, but thousands of facilities like these have spread across the surface Davute VII throughout the past few years. Each of them employ at least a handful of Hyms each. There are many other settlements in Krakatoa that all have their own warehouses and factories, and each of them have become significantly more productive and less problematic as soon as they put the Hyms in operation. All of those companies and all of the leaders and groups have benefited from the improvements brought by this industrial mech line."

"Each of them is grateful to the LMC, no, to Patriarch Ves." Tristan uttered with amazement. "None of those customers want anything bad to befall him. He has turned himself into such a material benefit to so many people that he has become unassailable!"

"It is quite amazing, is it not? The LMC has four major product categories. It is most known for its humanoid combat mechs. This is the mech company's greatest source of profit. It is also earning more attention for its beast mech models, though it still has a long way to go. The Larkinsons have also been dabbling in biomechs as of late, but their offerings are still too meager thus far. Compared to all of these product groups, it is the Pacifier mech line as well as the Hymenoptera mech line that truly form the foundation of the Larkinson Clan in the Red Ocean."

"No one can get rid of Patriarch Ves because there are too many organizations that have a vested interest in his continued survival and success." Tristan concluded.

Perla Monater looked sour. "While we have never made any plans of this sort, our superiors have been arguing for years whether they should put effort into removing the source of our problems in a more direct fashion."

"You mean..?!"

Assassination was the most direct way to remove a problematic individual!

Though there was a lot of security in Davute, a large second-rate state that had just taken over an entire star sector was capable of bringing a huge amount of resources to bear on an assassination mission!

Tristan had little doubt that if the Fridaymen truly wanted to assassinate his old friend, they would have been able to do it one way or another. It was just a question of how much funding, manpower and resources they were willing to invest and how many negative repercussions they were willing to bear.

Unfortunately for the Fridaymen, Ves not only enjoyed MTA protection for a few critical years, but also raised his status to the point where he was being constantly watched by a variety of powerful parties!

"Those talks have fizzled out after the Pacifier mechs and Hymenoptera mechs have conquered the hearts of too many interest groups." Miss Monater stated without any surprise. "There are certain coalition partners that have insisted on going through with this foolish errand, but cooler heads have prevailed. Your mission is one of the more gentler alternatives we have decided to pursue in order to solve our problem with the Hexers."

Tristan twitched his lips. He tried his best not to smile. In the end, the principal reason why the victorious Friday Coalition was unable to get rid of the source of their biggest problem was because Ves designed and sold a lot of industrial mechs!

These cheap and humble ant mechs had accomplished a feat that the Larkinson Patriarch's deadlier and more impressive Valkyrie mechs failed to achieve.

The Hymenoptera design beat the Friday Coalition.

Chapter 4055 Hymenoptera Mech Line

Tristan understood why Perla Monater specifically brought him on an excursion to an industrial warehouse.

She wanted to introduce him to the living mechs that practically brought the Friday Coalition to its knees.

The notion sounded absurd and Tristan had a hard time believing in it if he had read about this from afar.

However, after coming face to face with the Hymenoptera mechs and learning how many of them had spread throughout the new frontier had opened up his perspective.

Ves and his clan had come a long way since they left the Milky Way!

A lot of pioneers struggled to adapt to the conditions of the Red Ocean, but the Larkinsons apparently thrived in the booming and chaotic environment.

Their rise exceeded the expectations of the Friday Coalition, so much so that the state had been forced to shelve its plan to assassinate Ves!

This was undoubtedly a major setback and source of frustration to the Fridaymen. The mech designer that turned the Hexers into deadlier and more intractable opponents was allowed to continue his work and aid the Hexer diaspora into rising again in the Red Ocean.

If not for the LMC's clever decision to branch out and compete in the market for both law enforcement mechs and industrial mechs, Ves would have been fair game to the Friday Coalition's secret operatives!

Though Tristan was sure that someone as rich and prominent as his old friend would have invested a lot in his personal security, there was still a huge disparity between the power of a clan and a major second-rate state!

Yet because of the massive amount of influence accrued through the sale of one of the lowest and most overlooked type of mechs, a state that had managed to grind down and overwhelm the Hexadric Hegemony in a massive sector-wide war had no choice but to compromise with an enemy!

This reality contrasted sharply with how the Fridaymen treated their archenemies. The former never compromised or made deals with the latter.

Despite how strong and aggressive the Hexers were at the time, the valiant members of the Friday Coalition bravely stood their ground and managed to end the greatest source of bigotry and tyranny in the Komodo Star Sector.

Every Fridayman including Tristan gained pride in taking part in this great endeavor! Winning the Komodo War was an accomplishment that would certainly be celebrated by many generations of descendants to come!

This was also why Tristan found the current situation to be absurd.

Defeating the Hexadric Hegemony turned out to be costly but doable for his state, but getting rid of a single Journeyman Mech Designer in the Red Ocean turned out to be a bridge too far!

This strange situation forced a victorious state that had just proven itself in war to adopt a much more humble posture towards the Larkinsons.

What was even funnier to Tristan was that the Fridayman diplomats still failed to attract the Larkinson Patriarch's attention despite the humility that they had shown!

It was as if the Journeyman and his clan were too powerful to bother with the demands of an entire second-rate state!

"The power of a mech designer can be great, but this is ridiculous!"

Ves had exceeded the scope of a Journeyman so long ago that his rank in the mech industry was completely misleading!

The amount and power of his innovations as well as the value that they brought to his many products were so overwhelming that he should have been a Master Mech Designer!

Tristan did not understand how his old friend hadn't advanced to Senior as of yet. Sure, he knew as well as any other Journeyman how much work and effort it took to reach the next rank, but a mech designer with as many accomplishments as Ves should have made this far already!

If not for the fact that Tristan had long given up participating in this race, he would have grown both jealous and envious at how much Ves took off these past few years.

"What will happen if we cannot strike any agreement with my old friend?" Tristan asked as he and his guide were ready to exit the warehouse.

"We will resume the fight as best we can." Miss Monater shrugged. "We will not give up our colonial holdings in this dwarf galaxy. If necessary, we will delay our reconstruction and consolidation efforts and funnel more resources into the Red Ocean to make certain that our colonies can hold their ground against the Hexers that have fled to the new frontier."

"Is it that important for our state to maintain a foothold in the Red Ocean?" Tristan questioned.

"Yes. There are too many reasons to count. Access to phasewater, forging new connections and giving our fellow Fridaymen hope for future expansion are just a handful of the strategic advantages that we can gain. There are more that I cannot even say to you. All of our coalition partners are united in this cause."

That was a serious remark. These days, the Friday Coalition was not as tight as before. The absence of a major enemy in the Komodo Star Sector had started to loosen the camaraderie between the different coalition partners.

The Gauge Dynasty that had always been powerful from the beginning had become more aloof and aggressive.

The members of the Gauge Dynasty suffered the least from the Komodo War, but demanded the greatest amount of territory!



On the other hand, the Carnegie Group and the Vermeer Group suffered badly due to the initial invasion of the Hex Army. Many of its star systems were still far from returning to their prime.

Given how much the Carnegies and the Vermeers had sacrificed to hold back the Hexer invasion, they should have earned more rewards.

However, the balance of power had shifted away from them, which made it difficult to compete against the Gauge Dynasty and the Konsu Clan.

The two most powerful coalition partners even showed tendencies of mopping up the remaining ones that had all grown weak and vulnerable!

Yet despite these growing internal tensions, the coalition partners had not forgotten about the threat from the Hexers, and the escalating situation in the Magair Middle Zone likely caused them to stay together for a while longer.

Tristan gained a much greater cognition over the importance of this charm offensive. There was too much riding on his attempt to negotiate with Ves. If he was not able to conclude a sensible agreement with the Larkinson Patriarch, then a lot of Fridaymen would suffer!

Before he and his guide left the warehouse, he took one more look at the popular ant mechs lifting and carrying different crates and containers.

The different variations and their physical differences told him that the Hymenoptera was a modular or at least a semi-modular design.

The base model was designed to be a cheap but customizable platform. It was largely made out of mundane metals in order to reduce its reliance on scarcer and more expensive exotics as much as possible.

There were more expensive variants available if clients wanted to obtain stronger and more resilient versions of the Hymenoptera, but for the most part its ordinary variants were already good enough to fulfill many different jobs.

That inherent versatility and flexibility was due to its brilliant mechanical design!

As Tristan observed their performance a bit closer, he could tell that the ant mechs were able to lift a surprising amount of weight. Their insectile construction enabled them to support their frame on six limbs, four limbs and two limbs, allowing them to choose when they needed to maximize their footing or carry the heaviest and strongest weights in their limbs.

"The Hymenoptera is largely designed by the Power Pair." Miss Monater informed him. "From what we have learned, Ves Larkinson was only responsible for turning it into a

living mech while his wife worked on the legs to make them more versatile and capable of holding different objects while also navigating difficult terrain."

"Power Pair?"

"That is how the Larkinsons and numerous other people refer to Janassa Pellier and Tifi Coslone. Both Journeymen have become prominent for designing LMC mechs that are physically strong and dangerous to fight against at closer ranges."

"I see. No wonder these ant mechs look so comfortable when carrying heavier containers."

With the help of these advantages, the Hymenoptera found a place in many warehouses, factories, mines and other work sites throughout the Red Ocean.

Its semi-modular nature and abundant number of variants allowed customers to configure them according to their needs.

For example, a company operating on the surface of an untamed planet might opt to buy a more expensive variant that not only possessed better armor, but also possessed limited fighting capabilities!

The ant mechs didn't need to be strong enough to fight against real combat mechs. It was already enough to make certain that they possessed enough teeth to fend off exobeast attacks.

Another company might be in the business of making bioproducts. It could purchase a batch Hymenoptera mechs, but replace its forelimbs with variant components that were especially designed to handle organic materials!

Then there were companies that operated outdoors in a mountain range or other complex environment. The Hymenoptera variants that they might wish to utilize would possess the ability to fly with the help of wing-like flight systems that could be installed and removed from their backs!

The flying ant mechs were faster and more maneuverable than their flightless counterparts, but exerted a greater strain on their frames while also drastically increasing power consumption.

Even so, giving these popular industrial mechs the ability to fly further increased their ubiquity throughout the Red Ocean!

There were only a few situations in the dwarf galaxy where there was no place for the Hymenoptera!

"How powerful is the LMC exactly these days?" Tristan asked when the pair finally exited the warehouse and stepped onto the streets.

"That is difficult to say." Perla Monater replied. "The LMC's profitability is not too high but their reach and influence has already exceeded many companies led by Masters. The mech company has published a few mech designs that have gone on to become major successes in the Red Ocean, but this trend will continue unless the competition can respond with an effective counter to living mechs."

Tristan knew that this was always a possibility, but it was unlikely that one would exactly show up. If the Fridaymen failed to develop a truly effective counter against glows and living mechs after leveraging the power of their entire state, it was likely that others would not be able to achieve anything better.

"What are the sectors and markets that the Larkinsons excel at?" He asked.

"Hm, their product catalog encompasses over a hundred commercial mech models if we leave out the variants, but there are several broad categories where they managed to stand out. Aside from their dominance in the markets for both law enforcement mechs and industrial mechs, they have also been a rising force in training mechs."

He had already read a bit about the LMC's innovative but controversial training mechs. While there were many conspiracy theories surrounding the Larkinson Clan's iconic products for mech cadets, their potential value was undeniable!

An increasing number of mech academies were unable to resist the demands from their mech cadets.

Which aspiring mech pilot didn't want to train with a machine that could actively guide them and pull them into battle scenarios that were much more realistic than what the latest simulators could accomplish?

Enough time had passed since the initial introduction of the LMC's commercial training mech models that a noticeable difference in grades and results had formed. Mech cadets that intensely trained with living training mechs graduated with noticeably stronger piloting foundations!

"Slowly but surely, the LMC is becoming a more integral contributor to humanity's development in the Red Ocean." Miss Monater said. "The Larkinsons can cease developing combat mechs entirely and still become an indispensable group solely through the sale of their other mechs. They have also become a key source of strength, wealth, influence and prestige for Davute. This has enabled them to make a lot of friends in the local community."

In other words, Davute had become their new homeland!

## Chapter 4056 First Star Mech Academy

The Pacifier mech line and the Hymenoptera mech line were the two most popular products sold by the LMC.

Both of them had a lot in common. They were designed to be cheap but offered a high amount of value. They were functional and offered a lot of room for customization and variation. They were also useful while still leaving a lot of room for competing products that performed slightly different roles a lot better.

The training mechs that the Larkinsons had developed were a lot more ambitious in comparison!

When it came to humanoid mechs and tiger mechs, the products that the Larkinson Clan towards the academic sector threatened to displace many competitors!

Many major mech companies and many Masters felt directly threatened by the innovative training mechs that the Larkinson Clan had unleashed onto the market.

The Chiron model was the original Larkinson training mech.

It was already a few years old, and while the LMC's Desig Department had revisited the original design and upgraded it to a massive degree, its significance was still great.

The next generations of Larkinson mech pilots had already stood out compared to the graduates of other mech academies for their superior performance.

Whether it was their piloting skills, their reactions to unexpected situations or their ability to form deeper connections with their mechs, the youngest soldiers of the Larkinson Army already showed a lot of promise!

However, the Chiron at the time was not as impressive and revolutionary as the War Squire mech line.

The War Squire or the Tutor Project when it was still in development was a mech design that was not only sold on the market, but also introduced many innovative features and capabilities that the Larkinsons had gone on to implement in their clan-exclusive mechs!

The War Squire had already achieved a lot of success after only a couple of years after its release. This was quite remarkable as the market for training mechs was just as static and concentrated at the top as the market for law enforcement mechs!

The Curiosity model that came out after the release of the previous mech model looked and sounded like a joke at first.

However, despite the ridicule it attracted, the training mech that just happened to look like an oversized cat had become incredibly popular in both the Larkinson Clan and mech academies that placed a large emphasis on beast mechs!

The War Squire and the Curiosity mech models did not look too special at first. While their technical designs looked adequate enough, their quality, performance, cost efficiency and optimization levels did not meet the strict standards of elite mech academies!

The actual reasons why they stood out from the competition and became increasingly more desirable to mech cadets were twofold.

First, the unique qualities of living mechs provided struggling mech cadets with constant friends and companions that often provided the right guidance at the right moment. This was because the training mechs constantly interfaced with the mech cadets, thereby granting them a deep understanding of the growing soldiers that aspired to pilot combat machines.

Second, the two training mechs included a brilliant new feature that only a crazy mech designer like Ves Larkinson could come up with. This second feature elevated the War Squire and the Curiosity mech models from interesting products to groundbreaking works that could actually win awards!

The journey to develop these amazing mechs was not easy, though. Ves struggled with completing the War Squire that introduced a major breakthrough in mech cadet training solutions.

During the start of the fifth design round, Ves initially drafted the Tutor Project and planned out its ambitious features while spending more time in researching the current state of training mechs at the time.

He discovered that there was a big gap between second-class training mechs and first-class training mechs!

"Damn. No wonder those first-class mech pilots are able to display amazing skills. Their augmentations are indispensable, but their training environment is also impressive!"

First-class mech cadets received the attention of AIs that were so helpful and powerful that they needed the support of extremely powerful supercomputers in order to perform all of the necessary calculations!

Not only that, their training mechs were more powerful and more versatile.

The most expensive products were even capable of repairing themselves on the fly! They accomplish this precious and costly function by relying on nanotechnology or precious exotics with self-repair functions.

The increased damage tolerance of first-class training mechs allowed mech cadets to take part in live practice sessions without holding back too much! The machines were much tougher than their second-class equivalents, allowing mech cadets to get accustomed to attacking with the intent to kill.

What Ves sought to accomplish was not that different from what these overpriced first-class were already capable of. If he could implement a similar function to a second-class mech, then he could provide second-class mech cadets with a portion of the training environment of their batters!

"Where do I start, though?"

Ves did not exactly know where to begin. He needed to develop an extremely elaborate spiritual design in order for his Tutor Project to live up to his expectations.

He decided it was high time for him to tour the Larkinson Clan's mech academies.

After looking up what his clan's educational institutions were doing these days, he discovered without too much surprise that the Davute branch had founded a local mech academy on the surface of Davute VII.

"Interesting."

The ambitiously named First Star Mech Academy was located in the outskirts of Kotor City.

While the distance from the city center was considerable, the land outside of the more desirable districts of the capital city was much more affordable and available.

Though Ves didn't recall ever giving his approval to this plan, one of his chief ministers had apparently approved of the creation of the mech academy and allocated a lot of money and resources to build a large campus from the beginning.

While the academy was built to accommodate over 10,000 mech cadets at a time, it was far too soon for the First Star Mech Academy to hold so many classes at once!

When Ves arrived at the campus of the mech academy via shuttle, he noted how many of the training grounds were empty and unused.

During his shuttle's approach, he only saw a couple of dozen Chiron mechs maneuvering through a giant obstacle course from above.

Ves made his way to the expansive training field and approached a group of veterans and mech instructors that were keeping a close eye on the Chirons moving through the obstacle course.

"Good day, clansmen."

"Sir! Welcome to our humble mech academy." The head instructor greeted the patriarch. "Please do not mind the lack of activity. We built this academy with future proofing in mind. Once our clan has grown bigger, our campus will become as busy as any other mech academy. We also have plans to accept external enrollment."

Ves looked surprised. "You are actually opening the doors of the First Star Mech Academy to the public?"

"Why not? We may not have a long and storied heritage as trainers, but we have the skills and experience to do a good job. If we combine those strengths with training mechs that are better than anything else on the market, we can raise a large amount of skilled mech pilots that have already spent years piloting our mechs."

The rationale for opening up the First Star Mech Academy was strong. The Larkinson Clan had the space, funding and willingness to turn this landbound institution into another business!

The point of running the academy and opening it up to outsiders was not to earn a lot of tuition fees.

The real purpose for training so many mech cadets was to introduce them to living mechs at an early and impressionable stage!

Once they graduated, not only would they request their employers to stock up on LMC mechs, but also spread positive word of mouth about the Larkinson Clan!

In short, the First Star Mech Academy was a potential way to allow the Larkinson Clan to earn a lot of revenue and influence in the future!

Of course, the academy first needed to convince mech cadets to enroll and attend its courses!

This was easier said than done because neither the Larkinson Clan nor the academy itself earned any renown in the educational sector as of yet! Which mech cadet would be willing to take a gamble on an unknown school that did not possess any track record or source of confidence that could make its programs more attractive?

The only way that the First Star Mech Academy could snatch mech cadets away from other, more reputable educational institutions was to possess a clear superiority in a single aspect!

"We have all heard that you are working on developing a new training mech, patriarch." The head instructor spoke. "We will always be at your disposal if you have any inquiries or demands related to your upcoming training mech."

"That is great to hear. Learning more about the circumstances of our only training mech is exactly why I have come. I haven't been paying too much attention to the Chiron model at this time, so I am curious to hear your feedback on my work. It has already been in service for a couple of years, so I am sure you have collected many stories."

The mech instructors indeed had a lot to say about the main training mech of the Larkinson Clan.

"The Chiron model is good on its onset, but it is most effective in the younger years of a mech cadet's training trajectory. It falls off in the later half of a mech cadet's years in a mech academy because it is too weak, too slow and not able to catch up any further to the performance of currentgen combat mechs."

Ves nodded in understanding. "I can understand why you would say that. The Chiron is indeed targeted towards beginners. It should be excellent at teaching basic fundamentals and it should also provide a lot of dynamic guidance as the mech cadets grow older. However, you are correct that we did not adequately consider the needs for older trainees."

He already planned to upgrade the Chiron model to keep up with the growing demands of his clansmen.

He also intended to revisit and revitalize its spiritual features so that they became the best training machines in the Red Ocean!

However, he first had to complete the development of the Tutor Project.

"The Chiron's configuration is too balanced in my opinion." Another instructor remarked. "It's the training mech version of the Bright Warrior, sir. That is best if we want our future mech pilots to graduate to piloting our Bright Warrior mechs, but they are not adequate enough to prepare them for piloting our more specialized machines. This is why we have procured training mechs that correspond to light mechs, heavy mechs and numerous specialized mech types."

Ves smiled at them. "Don't worry. You won't have to rely too much on commercial training mechs to train our mech cadets in the future. We will develop many different variants of our commercial training mech models. In the past, we were too short on time and manpower to develop those variants, but this is a different time. We have enough lead and assistant mech designers to develop dozens of variations. It might take a bit of time to complete them all, but you will be able to rely much less on the products of other mech companies."

That was good news to the mech instructors. They had all worked with the Chiron model as well as other training mech models and noticed a clear difference in results.

"Is there anything else you wish to say?"



"Yes. The Chiron is a humanoid mech model. There is nothing wrong with that, but many of our mech cadets insist on piloting it so much that they do not have much of an incentive to pilot beast mechs. We should offer them a viable alternative if we wish to staff our own beast mech legion."

#### Chapter 4057 Uncovering Talent

Ves continued to quiz the Larkinson mech instructors about the Chiron model and what their mech cadets sought from their training mechs.

Each and every instructor was a veteran who possessed an abundant amount of experience. A few even participated in major wars, thereby accruing valuable practical knowledge that could help many of their pupils survive the battles of the future.

"One of the biggest challenges to transforming immature brats into qualified soldiers is to prepare them for the cruelty and unfairness that they will face when they step onto an actual battlefield." An aged female instructor explained. "Everyone dreams of becoming future heroes and champions, but for everyone that succeeds, hundreds or thousands of colleagues get struck down without any mercy."

Another instructor concurred. "Every mech academy struggles with the same dilemma, sir. If we want our cadets to build up confidence and pursue greater and more ambitious jobs, we need to make sure that our training program does not pressure them too hard. The training scenarios and simulated battles that we craft for them need to be fair enough for them to stand a chance of winning as long as they display the level of skill that we expect of them. However, if we do this too much, then our cadets will develop a distorted impression of actual battles and be in for a rude shock once they fight their first actual battle when nothing goes their way. Will they break or will they adapt to the adversity?"

Ves frowned. This indeed sounded like a flawed solution. Personally, he was of the opinion that it was better to prepare the mech cadets for the harsh life ahead. This way, they knew how much they could take in advance and prepare themselves accordingly.

This was not the perfect solution though, as affirmed by the female veteran.

"The opposite approach isn't necessarily better either, patriarch. You may think that ratcheting up the difficulty and intensity of our training programs will produce tougher and more mentally prepared mech cadets, but that is only valid to a certain degree. If we push our cadets harder, we will increase the proportion of producing elite mech pilots, but that will come at the cost of breaking a larger proportion of bottom performers. The latter will have become so discouraged at the prospect of entering into actual battle that they will often decide to pursue safer and less intensive careers. Instead of enlisting in a mech military, they will opt for jobs at safe and boring security companies."

"I see."

Ves often looked down on mech pilots that spent over a decade of their lives training to become the future heroes of the battlefield, only for them to squander their opportunities for greatness by becoming the equivalent of a glorified security guard!

Of course, Ves was being a bit too harsh and unfair towards these humble mech pilots.

Guards played an essential role in society. There were many facilities and people that needed protection, and some mech pilots had to fulfill these essential jobs.

Even the Larkinson Clan needed mech pilots that could perform the same protection duty day in and day out without any complaint or insistence on doing more. It was not always the case that every job related to mechs needed to be fulfilled by skilled and hardened elites!

One of the reasons why Ves supported the creation of the Mercenary Hall was to give his more ambitious and battle-hungry mech pilots the opportunity to utilize and develop their skills further.

He knew their type well enough to know that they would easily get bored if they had nothing else to do in their time except participate in training sessions that got stale after a time.

Just as different types of professional mech pilots needed different treatment, mech cadets also performed better or worse depending on their treatment.

"Mech academies usually try to specialize in teaching a limited range of mech cadets." An instructor explained. "The elite ones raise their recruitment standards in order to maximize the proportion of mech cadets that respond well to harsher training. The more accessible ones are not as picky and usually focus on training mech pilots without as much expectation that they will excel in battle."

"What of our mech academies, then?" Ves curiously asked.

The female instructor smiled. "We try to do both, sir. Currently, our clan hasn't produced enough new potentates to justify the creation of multiple mech academies that operate in parallel, so the ones we have now are basically mixed. Depending on the grades, the individual performance and the aspirations of each of our cadets, we assign them to different tracks."

She raised a finger.

"There is a command track that we have opened up for the handful of mech cadets that have shown talent and passion in ordering troops in battle."

The instructor raised another finger.

"There is the elite track where we have concentrated the best-performing mech cadets that have responded well enough to our harsher training courses."

She raised a third finger.

"Then there is the normal track which is exactly what you can imagine. Most of our cadets are on this track at the moment. We maintain its training intensity at a level that meets the requirements of our clan but at the same time make it broad enough to accommodate all sorts of mech cadets."

Ves nodded in understanding. "I suppose there is considerable movement between the tracks, correct?"

"Yes. That is the advantage of maintaining multiple training tracks, sir. Those that perform well in the normal track have the opportunity to be promoted to the elite track. Anyone that is currently within the elite track that finds that they cannot handle the pressure anymore can demote to the normal track. We try to assign our mech cadets to the right tracks as best as possible, so there is not as much movement between them as you think, but as these kids continue to grow and mature under our instruction, they will change in ways that might not make them suitable to their current tracks anymore."

"In the future, we plan to offer additional tracks." Another instructor mentioned. "We will split the normal track and the elite track into ones that specifically focus on training ranged mech pilots, melee mech pilots, light skirmisher mech pilots, heavy artillery mech pilots and so on. We can make this happen as soon as our enrollment numbers are high enough. This is also one of the reasons why we are so eager to attract external mech cadets."

The instructors spoke a bit more about how they differentiated their training and their lesson programs.

"All of this sounds great, but I have a feeling that this approach isn't perfect either. What kind of problems are you facing?" Ves asked.

"Although our approach sounds as if it is accommodating to everyone's needs, the fundamental issue with trying to place our mech cadets in different boxes is that it is harder to uncover their true talent and potential. We have seen cases where mech cadets end up in the normal track due to personal problems, but slowly prove that they are fully qualified for the elite track. If they had been put into the elite track from the beginning, they would have risen up to the challenge and be considerably further ahead."

That indeed sounded like a wasted opportunity, but how could the mech instructors know how much the mech cadets could take? These were young kids who were

undergoing a highly transitory phase in their lives. It was extremely difficult to pin them down from the moment they attended their first classes!

"Consider this other example, sir. Take a mech cadet that has shown a preference in rifleman mechs. We can assign courses to him that mainly develop his marksmanship skills, but he is only able to perform well enough to remain on the normal track. However, what if his talent in swordsmanship is much stronger? This strength may not be obvious if he only attends a few shallow swordsmanship courses, but if he truly tries to delve deeper into this mode of combat, his skill and progress fully meets the standard of the elite track. However, we cannot know this unless we force the mech cadet to invest a lot of time in training how to pilot a melee mech, which he initially wasn't passionate about."

All of these scenarios sounded increasingly more complicated. Ves developed a greater understanding and sympathy for the mech instructors that sought to maximize the potential of every mech cadet.

No teacher wanted their students to follow the wrong trajectory and end up squandering their opportunities for greatness!

However, even the most elite and renowned mech academies struggled with finding the most perfect fit for their mech cadets!

It was already good enough to establish matches with positive outcomes. Mech academies were already satisfied if a training program brought out 60 percent or 80 percent of the potential of a mech cadet!

Was this the perfect approach? Definitely not. It was the most practical approach, though. Most mech academies had no choice of finding out what stuck for each mech cadet. As long as the pupil in question showed at least some positive results, that person's trajectory was set. It was too risky to spend time on digging further and trying to uncover the mech cadet's true talent.

Ves wasn't satisfied with this reality, though. He was someone who did not easily give up in the face of difficult obstacles. As a mech designer and an engineer, he had been trained to assume that there were always solutions to different problems!

He just needed to figure out if he had the tools to solve the current issue.

As Ves gazed out towards the training field and observed the Chiron mechs navigating the elaborate and expensive obstacle course, he tried to understand how his living training mech facilitated the matching process.

"Has my Chiron mechs been helpful to your attempts to uncover and identify where your mech cadets should be placed?"

The instructors all smiled.

"They have offered a bit of assistance, yes. The Chirons all know the mech cadets the best, so there have been numerous cases where the living mechs have helped us figure out a better place for their assigned partners. However, much of this is dependent on the personal experiences and accumulation of the individual Chiron mechs. The mechs that are fresh off the factory do not start with as much knowledge and wisdom, so they do not always know any better. This situation will likely improve as our Chirons get older, but this is a lengthy process."

The Chiron mechs did not completely start from scratch. They were all connected to the Golden Cat, a design spirit that had become exposed to the performance and skills of many great Larkinson mech pilots.

Nonetheless, it was not that easy to transfer Goldie's growing reserve of knowledge and insights to the individual Chiron mechs. They were separate entities so there would always be a barrier between the two. This was why the Chiron mechs still needed to grow by themselves in order to become better at their jobs.

In addition to that, Goldie was not a design spirit that was specialized in training mech pilots. While she was growing in strength, intelligence and many other aspects, the truth was that Ves never created her with training in mind!

If Ves wanted to develop a better and more effective training mech that could seriously displace the competition, he needed to pair his Tutor Project with a better and more specialized training-oriented design spirit.

The design spirit also had to understand mech cadets on a deeper level in order to increase the chances of uncovering their true talents!

As Ves continued to note down his thoughts and ideas, he decided he heard enough from the mech instructors.

"I would like to interview a few of your mech cadets in person. Is a young lady called Lanie Larkinson available?"

#### Chapter 4058 Almost Graduated

Ves still remembered his encounters with Lanie Larkinson. Back when he was still a proud citizen of the Bright Republic, Lanie was one of the many growing kids that aspired to follow in the footsteps of the Larkinsons that did their duty and fought on behalf of the Mech Corps.

Lanie was a lot smaller and cuter back then. She knew so little about real society that she was still a child in every sense of the word.

It was a pity that a considerable amount of years had passed since then. Ves grew from a naive Brighter into a vigilant leader of his independent clan over the course of many different crises and challenges.

While Lanie did not personally fight and struggle through all of these events, she had become a part of a clan that was changing and growing stronger with each passing year.

She transitioned from training to become a third-class mech pilot to becoming one of the top mech cadets in the elite track!

Before the mech instructors called Lanie over, Ves stayed with them and observed her performance with her special Chiron mech.

Ves still remembered that she was piloting the first production copy of the Chiron model. He named it the Sagittarius and it went on to become her first exclusive training machine.

Cadet Lanie did not disappoint everyone's expectations. The Sagittarius supercharged her training and allowed her to develop a deeper understanding and appreciation of living mechs in advance.

However, what truly supercharged her progress was the special experiment that Ves had once conducted upon her. He didn't know what he was thinking at the time, but by using the Golden Cat as a channel to expose Lanie to the skills, insights and instincts of an expert candidate, her performance in her classes had shot up like a meteorite!

The mech instructors did not shy away from lauding Lanie with praises. Even though her genetic aptitude had only reached B-, her actual performance and pace of improvement could rival the heaven-blessed talents with A-grade genetic aptitudes!

"It is truly unreal how fast she has improved." The female instructor said in an admiring tone. "In certain areas such as battle instincts and reaction speed, her performance far exceeds the level of a graduated mech pilot. As long as she remains diligent enough to keep grinding her fundamentals, she is on track to become the strongest graduate of our clan in this decade!"

Another instructor showed concern. "We're actually afraid that she is progressing too fast for her own good. Don't get us wrong, patriarch. We are happy to produce fantastic talent for our clan, but there are lessons that mech cadets cannot learn quickly no matter how talented they are. Becoming a good mech pilot is not only about the skills, but it is also about the mentality. If we want to make Cadet Lanie's future as bright as possible, then we must make sure that she grows step by step as a person as well as a soldier."

Ves fully understood what they were talking about. Just because a mech pilot was overflowing with talent and spiritual potential did not mean that they were guaranteed to break through the extraordinary threshold.

Only those with great will and conviction were able to surpass their previous limits. While Ves and the T Institute were working on solutions that could lower the difficulty of breaking through the extraordinary threshold, he still preferred it if mech pilots could step onto the path of godhood by relying on their own remarkable efforts.

"What type of mechs does Lanie excel at? Is she better at ranged combat or melee combat?" Ves asked.

"That... is rather complicated to explain." The female instructor said with a mixed expression. "She initially chose to train and specialize in ranged combat. After her... outburst of improvement, she has shown a remarkable talent in swordsmanship. She has taken to duel wielding swords like fish to water and has rapidly exceeded all of our expectations. However, that does not mean that she has put her ranged combat skills aside. Currently, she is splitting time in training both her marksmanship and her swordsmanship. She has a great future as a hybrid mech pilot, a hero mech pilot or a multipurpose mech pilot."

Lanie could have opted to devote herself to a single specialty. Whether she stuck to her original passion or fully explored the new swordsmanship talent, Lanie could have been on track to become the next Venerable Stark or Venerable Imon!

However, from what it sounded like, Lanie might be preparing to become a pilot similar to Venerable Joshua instead.

There was nothing wrong with that. Training in multiple combat approaches enabled Lanie to employ the right weapon in every situation, allowing her to fight effectively no matter her opponent.

After Ves heard enough about how the mech instructors thought about Lanie, he was eager to meet with the young lady himself.

The instructors soon suspended the training session, allowing every mech cadet to bring back their Chiron mechs and prepare for the next classes in their schedule.

When a brown-haired woman in a piloting suit hopped out of the cockpit of the Sagittarius and floated down to the ground, she had already schooled her expression and straightened her posture.

It was impossible for the cadets to miss the presence of the clan patriarch and his honor guards!

Of course, as Larkinsons, they didn't act too stiff and formal around him. The culture of the Larkinson Clan was a lot more casual about stuff like this, and that was exactly how Ves liked it. The clan was supposed to be one big family.

"Good afternoon, sir." Lanie simply greeted.

"Good afternoon. I'd like to have a talk with you. Let's head somewhere comfortable so that I can ask a few questions."

They moved over to a nearby park bench where they began to ask how they were doing.

"I am almost ready to graduate, sir." Lanie revealed to Ves. "I can choose to stay in the academy and follow additional courses to expand my competences. For example, the instructors think it is useful if I acquire a few command skills. It's just..."

"You're impatient, aren't you?" Ves knowingly asked. "I can feel the eagerness radiating from your body. You have trained diligently for all of these years, but now that your piloting skills have far exceeded the level of an ordinary graduate, you think you are ready to face real opponents, is that right?"

Lanie eagerly nodded.

Ves not only drew this conclusion based on the opinions of the mech instructors, but also used his own observation abilities on the mech cadet in question.

Compared to many other mech cadets and mech pilots, Lanie Larkinson had grown into a promising and blooming talent. Her spiritual potential had grown and developed closer to that of Imon Ingvar.

She was like a star that was radiating with heat and aggression. She wanted to hop into a mech, get close to an enemy and whack them apart with whatever weapon she had on hand!

Ves inwardly sighed. Though he was glad to see her develop her strength so quickly, the experiment had overridden her original inclinations. Imon had contaminated Lanie's spirituality, causing her to develop spiritual attributes that did not match her original development.

It was not that serious, though. Power was power. Ves was glad for any opportunity to add a strong mech pilot to his clan.

Right now, his insights on how spiritual attributes affected the personality of the individual and vice versa gave him a good understanding on how to further Lanie's progression.



"I think you are ready as well." Ves judged. "While I do not intend to take our fleet on any major expeditions in the next few years, I have granted permission to our mech legions to allow its mech pilots to fulfill mercenary contracts. I believe that will be the best stage for you to build up your actual combat experience and truly evolve as a mech pilot."

Lanie grinned. "I can't wait, sir! If there is one regret, it is that I can't bring my Sagittarius to battle with me. It has been my teacher and battle partner for such a long time that I don't feel as good when I pilot the more advanced training mechs and combat mechs that I am training with these days."

"Mhmm. The Chiron is indeed a bit too basic for a mech cadet of your level. I intend to develop a training mech that addresses this shortcoming and can remain relevant to older cadets. Can you tell me more about your experiences with your Sagittarius?"

"Sure!"

The young lady eagerly answered his questions and shared her thoughts on the Chiron model. Ves had already heard or figured out much of what she said, but he still appreciated the opportunity to confirm and corroborate his own ideas.

One of the most remarkable advantages of the Chiron model was how Goldie added value to it by granting mech cadets a small glimpse of what was possible.

The Chiron also developed substantially different personalities based on their interactions with their first mech pilots.

Just like any other living mechs, their characters were incredibly malleable at the beginning. As they grew older and matured over time, their personalities would become fixed and it was difficult for subsequent mech pilots to influence the living mechs any further.

Ves was already familiar with this dynamic after getting exasperated by the Quint distorted personality.

That reminded him that he should look into providing additional welfare and distractions for his living mechs.

"Right now, we do not have the possibility of allowing a mech cadet like yourself to take your training mech to the battlefield." Ves explained. "Even if we have the technical ability to transform your Sagittarius into a full-blown combat mech, it would not be the best allocation of resources. Our clan has a lot of excellent combat mech models that are much more suited to support their pilots on the battlefield. Your Sagittarius on the other hand can continue to make great contributions to our clan by raising other mech cadets."

"I get that, sir. I don't like it, but I know it is for the best. I will miss the Sagittarius, though. I have been piloting it more than I have to because this will likely be the last year that I can pilot my first true mech partner."

"I am sure your Sagittarius will be happy with helping another promising mech cadet." Ves reassured her. "What about you? Have you chosen your mech legion already?"

"Not yet, but I have already formed my short list. Right now, the Avatars of Myth sounds like the best match for me, but I have also been looking into the Swordmaidens and the Penitent Sisters. Both of them have their strengths."

Ves shook his head. "You may be right, but they have strict demands for their mech pilots. You are not wrong in stating that the Avatars of Myth is the best match for you. It is open to all sorts of ideologies and piloting approaches and it is the only mech legion where you can fully exercise your broad skillset without bumping into any restrictive rules."

"Mmmhmm."

Though Ves wished to place Lanie in the Avatars, it was ultimately up to her to decide her future.

"Do you have a specific mech in mind that you wish to pilot at first?"

"I don't know yet. I hear that you are about to develop a lot of new mechs in the coming years. For now, I think I will stick to medium mechs. I will probably start off with piloting the Bright Warrior but I will probably move on to the more advanced mech models in time. There just isn't one that is completely suitable for me yet. When will you design a hero mech for the Larkinson Army?"

"Not soon." Ves answered. "It is not in my plans at the moment, but I will make sure to consider this matter further. If there are enough mech pilots who have trained in both marksmanship and swordsmanship, then I will design a powerful hero mech for elites, is that what you wanted to hear?"

"A hero mech like that sounds great!"

## Chapter 4059 MSTs

Ves gained a lot of new insights and information after concluding his visit to the First Star Mech Academy.

He was hopeful for the future of the recently-founded institution. Even though most of its facilities weren't being used at this time, the academy that would come under the

administration of the Davute Branch would definitely turn into a renowned school once it adopted the right set of training mechs!

The Tutor Project was the breakthrough that the First Star Mech Academy and many other mech academies needed.

If any other mech instructor learned about this ambition, then they would have thought that Ves had gone crazy!

As Ves researched the academic sector and learned more about how other mech academies prepared their pupils for combat, he discovered that training mechs did not carry as much weight.

The modern teaching methods of mech academies placed a higher emphasis on the curriculum and the selection of mech instructors.

The latter was especially important! Veterans who not only experienced a lot of battles but also possessed a lot of didactic skills were rare and precious talents that every mech academy fought for. A good teacher could increase the survival rate of graduates by as much as four times!

Fortunately, the Larkinson Clan was not short of veterans. A few of them were even good enough with people that they could stand in front of the classroom and pass on their wisdom to a bunch of brats.

However, an effective teaching operation relied on far more than good teaching. The amount of facilities and the quality and capability of the equipment also played a huge role in readying mech cadets for their future jobs.

Surprisingly enough, simulator training gear was just as important as training mechs in improving the combat skills of mech cadets!

Training mechs allowed mech pilots to gain highly realistic piloting experiences, but it was simulator training that allowed them to exercise all of their skills and take part in much more varied battle scenarios.

A mech academy that employed the best available simulator pods and supporting infrastructure tended to raise mech pilots with considerably deeper piloting foundations.

However, if that same school did not invest as much in its training mechs, then the actual performance of its graduates would be far from what they achieved in training. Fear, nervousness and other signs of inadequate preparation severely affected combat effectiveness. Their adaptation to real battles would be so bad that they could be defeated by much worse mech pilots.

The opposite was also true. A mech academy that invested greatly in training mechs but did not invest in good simulating training systems that offered a high degree of realism often fell behind in terms of skill development.

The mech cadets that trained with cheaper and less adequate simulator pods did not get to train the more advanced skills or practice with piloting stronger and more advanced virtual mech models.

The more complicated the virtual mechs or virtual battle scenarios, the more data and processing power needed to provide mech cadets with useful training!

Although the differences between decent simulator pods and good simulator pods were not that great, the latter were considered essential to the more elite and exclusive mech academies!

All of these factors and more determine the quality of education at a mech academy.

Ves focused specifically on both the simulator pods and the training mechs employed by these schools.

"Everyone assumes that there is a separation between the two." Ves murmured. "There is no way for simulator pods to fully reproduce the experience of piloting a real mech and using it to fight a real battle. At the same time, a mech academy can never put its training mechs onto actual battlefields and expect the mech cadets to fight for their lives."

This was why both products were necessary for any mech pilot training program.

It became increasingly clear how Ves could change this equation. He already developed an ambition to merge the advantages of both solutions through developing a brand-new spiritual solution!

He had already theorized some time ago that if he was able to impart a spiritual simulating program of a sort to his training mech, his products would be able to immerse their mech pilots into extremely realistic spiritual combat simulations!

The advantages of relying on spiritual technology over virtual technology were myriad. It was much easier to completely immerse mech cadets and mech pilots into imaginary battles that they could mistake as reality.

Ves also theorized that spiritual simulations would play a much more useful role in stimulating the spiritual development of mech cadets!

Just like dropping mech pilots into actual battles, Ves hoped that the younger and more immature mech cadets could get a much better taste of their future challenges.

Compared to simulator pods that weren't really alive, Ves had much greater confidence in the ability of his living mechs to interface and connect with the minds and spirits of their mech pilots!

He just knew that as long as he succeeded, he could upend the entire market for training mechs!

"It's getting there that's the problem!"

He needed to think carefully about what he needed to accomplish and the resources he could employ for this endeavor.

Compared to last time, his situation was a bit better. He not only spent a bit of time on thinking on how he could realize the key solutions, but also gained access to additional resources that did not exist in the past.

His eyes slowly lit up as his confidence stoked his passion. "I can do it! I just need to flesh out my ideas!"

This was the start of an engaging mech design project. The Tutor Project quickly turned into one of his favorites as he became invested in its purpose and its groundbreaking functions.

As much as he wanted to hurry up and work on its spiritual design right away, Ves knew he needed to develop a good base before he could proceed any further.

"Gloriana, Sara, I need your help with the physical design of the Tutor Project. Can you lend me a bit of your time to design and optimize its frame?"

Ves knew his limits.

Considering that Ves aimed to turn his Tutor Project into a popular commercial product, he knew that he could not rely on himself to turn it into an attractive choice.

His wife and Sara Voiken were excellent contributors to the design. The former primarily invested her efforts into designing an even better internal architecture than the Chiron.

A lot of time had passed since she designed the Chiron together with Ves. She not only accrued more experience and improved her mech affinity, but also developed a lot of new design solutions, of which some of them happened to be extremely relevant to a mass market product.

Sara Voiken on the other hand mainly worked on the exterior of the design. While she was constrained by the specific look and theme that Ves had dictated, she still had plenty of ways to implement her own ideas.F

Months passed as the three worked on the Tutor Project as well as the other design projects of the fifth design round.

While their split attention prevented them from progressing the Tutor Project as quickly as possible, the passage of time allowed them to put plenty of thought on how they wanted to resolve all of the challenges.

The Tutor Project slowly took shape. Unlike his collaboration with Professor Taigen Voiken, Ves retained complete creative control over his training mech design.

He did not restrain his desire to express his art. As soon as Sara completed the first iteration of the Tutor Project's adaptable and semi-modular armor system, Ves proceeded to mold and shape the exterior to fit a specific theme.

Ves visualized the Tutor Project as a knightly squire.

Unlike the Blessed Squire that was basically designed to be a lackey for the superior female mechs of the Hex Army, the Tutor Project was designed with the full expectation of turning its pilots into worthy soldiers.

One of the more interesting aspects about the Tutor Project was that it inherited the morphability of the Chiron Project and pushed it a step further.

Not only was it capable of extending and retracting the length of its limbs and its torso to a greater degree, it could also swap out its armor plating and its limbs with heavier or lighter versions!

Inspired by Professor Taigen Voiken's intention to turn the Pacifier Project into a multivariate mech design that offered a lot of different variations, Ves adopted the same approach for a mech design project that he was confident he could turn into a major commercial success!

Of course, Ves wasn't in a hurry to expand the scope of this design project. He first wanted to complete a base model before he could think about developing alternative parts and additional variants.

For now, Ves wanted to make the Tutor Project look good no matter how much it changed its proportions.

The overall result of his efforts was designing a training mech that looked like it fit a lot better on the battlefield than other training mechs.

There was nothing soft or safe about its external appearance. Ves had adopted the meaning of war as the central motif and theme of his training mech. His decision encapsulated his hope and ambition that his new training mech would become the best possible training tool for mech cadets!

"Once the mech cadets get a chance of piloting this product, they will never want to go back to piloting the training mechs designed by the competition!"

Ves also knew that as long as the Tutor Project turned into a success, he would have to revisit the Chiron design and update it so that it provided even more effective training solutions!

After all, the Tutor Project was merely a commercial mech model that was meant to generate revenue for the Larkinson Clan.

The Chiron on the other hand would always be the premier training mech exclusively available to his clansmen!

Ves already had an idea to give his Chiron model a decisive advantage over the Tutor Project, but that could wait until later.

"First, I need to transform my current training mech from a decent product to a great product."

Now that Ves and his fellow Journeymen pretty much completed the physical design of the Tutor Project, he was ready to tackle the more complicated and crucial spiritual design elements.

He had spent months theorizing and researching his options for this task. After considering numerous different alternatives, he settled upon an approach that he felt confident about.

Ves called it the Mental Simulation Training System.

This was his name for the theoretical model of the Tutor Project's defining training feature. He initially wanted to use the word 'Spiritual' or 'Metaphysical' to describe the revolutionary new simulation training system, but Ves eventually settled for a more innocuous choice in order to generate less doubts and confusion.

"Aside from being an elaborate attempt to pull both the mech pilot as well as the living mech into a spiritual combat simulation environment, the MSTS also aimed to stimulate their potential and spiritual development as effectively as possible!

According to his plans, the MSTS was supposed to accomplish this by exploiting the advantages of three different design spirits.

"The Quint is the expert on mech pilots. There is no 'design spirit' in my collection that understands mech pilots and piloting skills better than this masterwork mech!"

This was not enough, though. The Quint might understand mech pilots, but it did not possess a sufficient understanding of mechs to simulate their performance in spiritual battle scenarios.

"Vulcan is the perfect complement to the Quint!" Ves grinned. "My incarnation not only has access to everything I know about mechs, but also receives the spiritual feedback of a growing number of craftsmen and mech designers! He is by far the design spirit that is most adept in technology!"

After all, Ves created Vulcan to be the supposed God of Dwarfs, Mechs and Craftsmanship. It would be a joke if his spiritual self was incapable of simulating the performance of different mechs!

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Though Ves already thought that using a combination of Quint and Vulcan was sufficient to design his ambitious Mental Simulation Training System, he suddenly realized that it was missing a major element.

"One of the most persistent complaints of conventional simulation systems is that mech pilots are unable to get too invested in the virtual battles. They all know that the scenarios are fake and that their experiences will never threaten their lives. Due to this, it is extremely difficult to raise their mental resilience and their preparedness for actual battles."

What if this was no longer the case?

What if the Tutor Project could simulate the experience of fighting life-and-death battles to a much more realistic degree?

The mech cadets and mech pilots that would get pulled into these spiritual simulations would definitely get exposed to an unprecedented level of stimulation! The chances of individuals activating their spiritual potential outside of the battlefield were much greater as a result!

Only the most hellish training programs that often produced casualties and crippled mech pilots could produce similar results!

Ves grinned wider as he thought of the right design spirit to add a bit of extra oomph to his Mental Simulation Training System.

"Only Helena can induce the threat of death in the hearts of people!"

He suddenly felt a finger poking against his back. He turned around to discover that a floating lady in gray had appeared behind his back.



The lovely glowing flower in her hair made her look adorable, but looks were deceiving. The cute black flower had already reaped the lives of millions of people!

"So let me get this straight. You want to create a training mech that can pull in itself and its mech pilot into an illusionary world that can reproduce any mech battle to a degree that goes beyond the most advanced virtual simulations. All this without adding any expensive gizmos to the training mech in question. Is that correct?"

"Err, yes."

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### Chapter 4060 Spiritual Software Program

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