

## Mech Touch 6178

### Chapter 6178 Frontier Warlords

Ketis shared a few more ideas on future upgrade directions for the First Sword.

Many of them did not sound as dramatic as pairing up the First Sword with living fey, but Ves did not mind. He was glad that his former student possessed an adventurous spirit and kept trying to think up ways to give her mechs an edge over the competition.

If Ketis did not possess a strong enough enterprising spirit, then she would never be able to excel in this industry.

A mech designer who only sought to keep up with the competition had already lost from the beginning, because such a loser only needed to suffer a single setback to fall behind!

In contrast, a much more innovative mech designer like Ves who managed to gain market dominance in several product categories managed to build up a lot of strategic depth. If he ever fell into a disadvantage, he could continually cede market share in order to buy enough time to make a comeback.

Products like the most recent Fey Fianna and Ultimatum lines still managed to preserve an invincible lead in their respective niches.

The competition was not letting the LMC get away with completely dominating those markets, though.

At the very least, most rivals who hadn't given up on the markets for second-class drone mechs or heavy artillery mechs managed to readjust their positioning and appeal to more budget-conscious customers.

This was not a market segment to be underestimated. The demand for cheap mechs had skyrocketed as many of the colonies situated in or just behind the border regions invested massively in their defensive forces!

The expansion of so many planetary garrison units happened on an enormous scale. This meant that it cost a huge amount of money to fund these expenditures. The cheaper the product, the more mechs a customer was able to buy!

Aside from outfitting elite forces, it made little to no sense to invest in the infamously expensive products of the LMC.

The Ultimatum, though undeniably powerful and incredibly accurate, was extravagantly priced at 30 MTA credits!

Typical heavy artillery mechs could already be bought at around 4 to 8 MTA credits.

Sure, the customer would get an objectively worse performing mech in return, but when space and logistics were of no concern, it was better to field 6 generic heavy artillery mechs in a defensive stronghold than a single Ultimatum!

This was not a long-term solution to undermine the Ultimatum's absolute dominance in the upper end of the heavy artillery mech market, but it gave the rival mech companies hope of regaining much of their market share.

They did not necessarily have to design a mech that performed better than the Ultimatum.

The competitors just had to design a more attractive product.

There was a difference between the two. Ves already read reports that the dominant mech companies were already in the process of designing low-to-mid end hyper heavy artillery mechs that performed well enough and were much more affordable to buy and maintain in bulk.

The Red War was not just a war between high-end elite forces. The rabble that did not appear as heroic and barely managed to reach the top of the news portals also played an important role in territorial struggles!

In any case, in order for Ves to achieve success and maintain his market leadership, he had to be competent enough to navigate these market dynamics.

Ketis already made a good start by releasing her early Monster Slayer model, but she needed to do more in order to become a serious force onto the market.

The good news was that she was making progress.

The innovations that Ketis sought to apply to the next iteration of the First Sword may very well serve as a prototype to innovative new commercial mech models!

Whether she would succeed in the end or not was never certain, but Ves did not think she would fail. She had access to excellent support and infrastructure within the Larkinson Clan. The advantages of working as a mech designer in the Design Department continued to grow over time.

"I can feel it." The physical projection of Ketis spoke in a serious tone as she hugged the black gem cat tighter against her chest. "A dark cloud is about to engulf the Red Ocean. The coming war will not end soon. It will encroach upon our society and slowly drive everyone to desperation. I do not want my children and your children to grow up in this period, but there is little we can do about it. I don't expect my work to save red humanity, but I will do whatever it takes to make my children's childhood a little brighter."

As a father himself, Ves agreed with Ketis' sentiment. He was no longer working for his own interests anymore. He also wanted his children to live well, and the best way to do that was to ensure that human civilization maintained cohesion.

"It's not going to be easy." Ves sighed. "We can never win the Red War by relying on quantity. We can only do our best to increase the quality of our products and hope that our pace of innovation exceeds the speed in which the native aliens steal and adapt our technology."

"The aliens may be able to apply many of our stolen tech with the help of the cosmopolitans, but they cannot replicate our mechs. So long as we focus on that, we can always preserve our greatest technological lead."

Technology was red humanity's few remaining hopes of winning the Red War. That was the common consensus of the higher ups. Ves agreed with it as well, but he put greater stock in another advantage.

The unlimited potential of the human race.

That was not to say that other races such as the orvens and the phase whales possessed any less potential.

However, their rigid societies and long-term stagnation made it difficult for Ves to believe that they would be able to keep up with humanity.

As Ves finally ended his long but informative discussion with Ketis, he wrapped up his work and returned to his private villa in the evening.

Ves, his wife and children enjoyed dinner before settling down to enjoy quality time in the evening.

Of course, he had never stopped his work. He had left his cyborg leg behind in his design lab in order to work on the Amaranto Mark III Project, and his other incarnations were also helping in different ways.

Ves still felt the need to cherish the remaining time of relative peace by letting his main self stay away from work and devote much of his attention to his family.

This time, he decided to play a virtual board game that reminded him of Pirate Empires.

Frontier Warlords adopted a similar style of strategic gameplay, but it took place around the much more current setting of the Red Ocean immediately after the Great Severing.

The game developer frequently updated the game and also released many interesting expansions themed around different alien races or specialized gameplay.

Admittedly, the base game was rather barebones, but it truly came to life after customers like Ves bought all of the pricey expansions.

Ves didn't care about the cost. He only cared about playing a game that truly encompassed the vastness of the Red Ocean.

"Your turn, Ves." Gloriana stated.

"Huh? Oh, right. This turn, I intend to expand the fleet of my puelmer raiding fleet by investing my funds in the construction of 2 high-end heavy cruisers. They should have all of the latest stolen human tech that the puelmers managed to reverse engineer and adapt to their own tech base. They should be ready in 3 turns, though it will take longer to merge with my fleet."

A section of the projected board screen. Somewhere inside the large stretch of alien-occupied space, a series of shipyards began to show that they were in the process of completing this order.

Ves spent his remaining actions on making his fleet of puelmer warships raid a highly developed colony on a human-occupied star system. The rich resources and advanced human tech on the planet should make up for the heavy investment that he previously made!

"I'm done."

Aurelia smirked when she finally got her turn. "It's too late, papa. I choose to trade all of the favors I have earned from the Red Association to request a rushed portal jump to the E3 System. My mech force should arrive just in time to catch the puelmer raiding fleet at a disadvantage, thereby preventing it from disengaging early!"

"What?! Is that what you are spending your favors on, Aurelia?!"

"It is better to eliminate your puelmer raiding fleet earlier rather than later. The strategy guides taught me that puelmer fleets are notoriously difficult to defeat at the later stages of the game."

Ves groaned.

Since Aurelia's single action was such a big deal, there was nothing else she could do in her turn.

"Sister."

"It's my turn now, hehe!" Andraste exclaimed. "Papa, I want to make a trade."

"What is it that you want, pumpkin?"

"I will try to save your fleet in exchange for becoming my vassal. You will transfer half of the profits you make to my account and do whatever I say."

Ves' expression looked ugly. "Are you blackmailing your own father?"

"I am not~ I am merely asking for fair compensation. Isn't this what you taught me, papa? Hihhi~"

"I also taught you that everyone has a bottom line. I will take my chances with Aurelia's mech force if you stick to your excessive demands. Let's do this. My puelmer force will relinquish 30 percent of the profits to your phase whale, and it will also obey 3 reasonable requests, but no more. Once my puelmers have completed their last request, you will free them from their vassalage. Is that agreeable to you? I will not accept anything worse."

His second daughter struggled to make up her mind. In the end, she did not want to risk this deal.

"Fine, papa. I will take action now. I am letting my phase whale Jenny initiate a cross-system teleport to the E3 System and team up with the puelmer raiding fleet to beat back Aurelia's human mech force."

"Sister! No fair! Your phase whale is too strong!"

"I only have one, and her actions are so expensive that I hardly managed to do anything in the previous turns! Did you know how long I waited for someone like papa to get into trouble?"

"Quiet down, children. No arguing, please." Gloriana sternly admonished her girls. "Lucky, you are next."

"Meow." Lucky yawned as he woke up from his shallow nap.

The gem cat raised his paw and began to press a series of projected buttons and levers.

Lucky's secretive cosmopolitan cell that had remained dormant in the past few turns suddenly exploded into action!

Icons that previously remained hidden from view to every participant aside from Lucky became visible!

That was not everything they did. The cosmopolitans were blowing up space stations, sabotaging starships and detonating bombs inside various settlements in the star systems surrounding E3.

It became clear that Lucky's wanted to generate enough disruption to slow down and hinder any additional human reinforcements to the star system in the center of his action range!

"What?!" Aurelia looked shocked. "How many sleeper agents have you trained, Lucky, and how come you managed to predict that a fight would erupt in E3?"

The gem cat arrogantly lifted his head. "Meow."

Another cat began to make her turn. The elegant-looking Clixie used her paw to manipulate the interface of the digital board game according to her own plan.

"Clixie has invested her resources into furthering the development of her human colony yet again. She has completed the construction of an industrial spaceport and has begun the construction of 3 light industry and 1 heavy industry factories."

The Rubarthan Sentinel Cat completely chose to avoid any form of conflict by setting up a colony in a relatively resource-poor star system in the rear of human-occupied space.

This extremely steady development strategy was incredibly safe, but also incredibly boring and slow, which was why most players rejected this approach.[freewebovel.com](http://freewebovel.com)

Clixie was different. She unflinchingly kept reinvesting her resources into colony development, not even bothering to raise a token mech force for defense.

"Miaow." The cat declared once she was done with her turn.

