

Mech Touch 6541

Chapter 6541 The Specter of the Heavensword

Ketis rebuffed the Heavensword!

Such an act was unthinkable to the people who were born and raised in the

Heavensword Association!

Despite the fact that Legion Commander Charles Antunovic and President Fred Walinski had cut ties with their home state and served the Larkinson Clan with unswerving dedication for the last decade, the two men still couldn't believe that Ketis would actually choose to reject the Heavensword.

This went against everything they believed in back when they lived in the Heavensword Association!

They still couldn't understand why Ketis could bring herself to reject the temptation of promoting to a sword saint right away after accepting a baptism of power from the Heavensword.

No swordmaster from the Heavensword Association had ever refused the offer to accept a small part of the inheritance of this mysterious and unfathomably sacred weapon.

It was not just because they felt it was their duty to shoulder the burden of leading their righteous state, even if it came at the cost of forsaking their own swordsmanship and any blades they utilized in the past.

It was because no swordmaster in the history of the Heavensword Association had succeeded in promoting to a sword saint through his own merits.

The hope of the entire traditional swordsmanship community was that as long as the Heavensword Saints explored their own powers and documented their own conditions, they would leave enough clues behind to give swordmasters the inspiration they needed to promote through their own merits.

This was the noble mission that every swordmaster accepted when they selflessly sacrificed the swordsmanship that defined their identities and took up the mantle of Heavensword Saint.

One day, the Heavensworders hoped that they would gain enough information to reconstruct a path towards becoming a sword saint by themselves.

This would allow many swordmasters who had previously remained stuck at their current ranks to unlock their potential and take another step towards attaining godhood by virtue of their transcendent swordsmanship!

However...

What did that have to do with Ketis?

"You idiots. She hissed as she looked back at the gaping expressions of Charles and Fred.

As far as she was concerned, the pair of Heavensworders had completely disgraced themselves by throwing logic out of the airlock!

"Don't you realize that the mission of a Heavensword Saint is over ever since this relic weapon chose to leave the Heavensword Association? Swordmasters are much stronger in the Red Ocean due to exposure to exotic radiation. Our growth conditions are much better than back in the Milky Way. Even if we don't make any revolutionary advancements in our swordsmanship, we will still be able to reach the threshold to sword saint if we rely on those magical new elixirs or simply growth over time!"

One of the theories that Ketis came up with to explain why proper sword saints never arose in the past was because of the lack of E energy to fuel the quantitative growth of swordmasters.

Ketis did not exactly know why expert pilots were able to grow their resonance strength to the limit of their ranks while swordmasters fell short in this aspect, but she was convinced her theory was right!

Now that red humanity had entered the Age of Dawn, Ketis completely rejected the notion that a Heavensword Saint was necessary to devise a complete promotion path for swordmasters.

She already intended to complete this mission and responsibility by relying on her own efforts!

Judging by the dazed expression of the two Heavensworders who were much older than herself, Ketis grew even more disappointed by how any subject related to the 'sacred weapon' instantly deprived them of any inkling of critical thinking.

The Heavensword was literally their god.

This explained why they dared to entertain the thought of questioning or defying its actions.

To them, their god was infallible!

Perhaps Ketis should feel grateful that the two Heavensworders at least retained enough sanctity to refrain from turning their swords against her. She could not expect anything more from these useless idiots.

When the angry swordmaster turned her attention back to what was taking place outside, she felt a little more relieved that Saint Linda Cross had intervened and placed her ace offensive space knight in front of the Heavensword.

The junior ace pilot even spread her Saint Kingdom and firmly established her dominion in the surrounding space.

The relic weapon did not seem to notice at all. No matter how hard Linda attempted to suppress the Heavensword, her willpower became as fragile as glass as it crashed against the 'tiny' weapon!

Saint Linda grimaced. Just as she and Ketis predicted, the recently revived grand work was far more powerful than it appeared on the surface!

There was an endless depth to the Heavensword that Linda could only vaguely sense through her Saint Kingdom.

It was as if the Heavensword encompassed an entirely independent kingdom of its own, and happened to be good at obscuring its borders!

Without the relic weapon's permission, Saint Linda had no means of taking a peek of what it held within.

"Back off." Linda conveyed to the Heavensword with the help of her Saint Kingdom. "Ketis does not want your power, and the many strings that come with it. Respect her choices. You have no right to impose your will onto an unwilling swordmaster."

As an ace pilot, Linda Cross possessed the courage to confront and berate a grand work. It helped a lot that the sword lacked a wielder. That massively reduced its intimidation factor and made it tolerable for the new saint to put up a brave face.

She absolutely wouldn't be as calm and composed if the Heavensword was wielded by a powerful swordsman or swordswoman!

As the Amphis Extremis clearly conveyed its intention to bar the Heavensword's way by placing its tower shield in its path, the ace space knight quietly activated its powerful SA-DIX Shield Generator and preemptively spun around the ball of its Wrecker Skull.

The ace space knight clearly meant business.

The First Sword and the Everchanger made their presence and intentions known as well. They formed a triangle formation with the Amphis Extremis and looked ready to assist when they saw an opportunity.

The First Sword unsheathed her long and deadly Decapitator.

The Everchanger held both his Vitalus luminar crystal rifle and Heartsword at the ready.

That was not all. The Minerva, alas still awaiting an upgrade, had begun to advance while leading a troop of 39 Battle Crier mechs armed with exclusive Godkiller heavy luminar

crystal rifles.

While the Saint Commander could have chosen to bring hundreds if not thousands of mechs along to support Swordmaster Ketis, Casella Ingvar did not believe that relying on quantity could make a meaningful difference in a confrontation against a weapon as mysteriously powerful as the Heavensword.

It was much more likely that the mechs would get in the way, or worse, provoke an overreaction from the sentient relic weapon!

While Saint Commander Casella and her carefully chosen subordinates were making their way over, the tension between the Heavensword and those arrayed against it continued to grow.

After a minute or so had passed, the relic weapon looked as if it had made up its mind.

It did not accept Ketis' rejection.

Seeing that its chosen wielder had enlisted the aid of numerous powerful protectors, the Heavensword clearly understood that it needed to resort to violence in order to remove

the opposition.

The Heavensword began to back off a bit before it started to eject a lot of energies.

The ancient and powerful relic weapon began to expose the tip of its vast power by releasing a lot of heavenly energy!

The space around the Heavensword immediately became a lot more sacred, pure and all-encompassing!

The amount of high-quality energy released by the Heavensword was so much that it outright managed to push back the oppressive domain field generated by the Amphis

Extremis!

"This energy!" Saint Linda Cross gasped as her ace mech increased the distance between itself and the busy sword. "I have never felt anything like it. I have a bad feeling about what it is about to do. Get ready"

The ace mech and pair of expert mechs continued to surround the Heavensword as it continued to eject more and more heavenly energy from its hidden but undoubtedly huge energy reservoir.

Slowly, the released energies began to gain definition. They no longer spread without direction, but gradually began to take on a more defined and familiar shape.

"Wait... doesn't that look... like a human?"

"A human wearing one of those ancient cultivator robes." The heavenly energies continued to spread and condense into a gigantic robed human figure that already began to exude an incredible sense of elegance and refinement despite the lack of fine details!

What stood out the most other than the vaguely handsome appearance of this energy projection was that it had reached a scale that was identical to that of the Amphis

Extremis!

Somehow, neither Ketis nor the others thought that was a coincidence.

Joshua threw out a guess.

"Hey... if you imagine the original owner of the Heavensword... do you think this mysterious and disgustingly handsome guy fits the bill?"

Ketis somehow felt that her husband was correct.

The Heavensword... had likely chosen to create a large-scale energy projection of its original wielder, or at least one of them if it had multiple!

The man did not appear to be older than Ketis, but she knew that looks were incredibly deceiving when it came to cultivators who could easily extend their lifespans by centuries or millennia.

The aura and demeanor exuded by the projected sword wielder could only come with the accumulation of age.

Ketis and the others even had the sense that the aura of the former owner of the Heavensword should have been a lot deeper and more profound, but because the Heavensword was unable or unwilling to replicate the man more faithfully, there was a limit to how much energy and processing power the relic weapon put into this effort. "Uhh... the energy projection is too large for his sword. Joshua state the bvious.

He was correct.... for only a few seconds.

Once the projected sword wielder had reached a stable condition, the Heavensword magically grew in size until it was large enough to perfectly fit into its own energy projection's palm!

A huge amount of E energy radiation from the surroundings began to flow in the direction of the enlarged sword, so much so that it had broken past the blockade erected by Saint Linda's domain field!

It was as if a slice of heaven had just descended upon reality.

The energy projection no longer looked like an ancient human swordsman anymore.

He began to exude the faint sense of a god of the sword.

With the Heavensword in hand, it looked as if the specter of an ancient god had come back to life just to challenge the insolent ace mech and expert mechs that barred its way!

"I should have guessed that might happen. Ves owns a weird flute that can do the resize trick as well. It figures that a grand work can also do the same."

The threat posed by the Heavensword had just become a lot greater than before!

The energy projection of the ancient swordsman was not a static construct.

As soon as the sword fell into its hands, it seemingly came to life. Non-existent wind blew at the long folds of 'his' white and blue robes and his silky locks

of shoulder-length hair.

The energy projection did not limit his actions to pretending to be a historic fashion model.

'He' lifted his arm and pointed the tip of the enlarged Heavensword at the Amphis

Extremis in a universal challenge gesture!

The body language of the projected swordsman clearly became more aggressive as well.

The swirl of heavenly energies and E energy radiation surrounding his giant glowing form also grew distinctly more threatening.

It was as if the ancient swordsman was building up a storm centered around his form!

His presence grew more and more domineering.

All of this culminated in a single soundless declaration.

The weak have no right to resist.

Somehow, the Heavensword, or its bizarre swordsman energy projection, was able to

convey a meaning that transcended human language directly into the minds of the

surrounding individuals!

Before everyone could figure out the meaning behind the Heavensword's statement, the

ancient swordsman began to channel a lot of energies before charging straight at the Amphis Extremis!

Chapter 6542 The Wielders of the Heavensword

The Heavensword did not take no for an answer.

In order to convey how seriously it wanted to be wielded by Ketis, the powerful relic went as far as projecting a mech-sized version of one of its presumably former wielders! The elegant robed swordsman did not move as if he was burdened by multiple layers of cloth.

The humanoid energy projection practically danced across an invisible surface as he unleashed a simple slash.

The enlarged Heavensword glowed as it pulled the energies around it to surround its slender blade and form an energy sheath that significantly increased its reach and girth! These energies subsequently collided against the resonance-empowered tower shield of the Amphis Extremis, causing the ace offensive space knight to buckle despite looking as if it should heavily outmass its adversary!

"Saint Linda!"

Both the First Sword and the Everchanger looked ready to intervene, yet held back in case the two expert mechs would just end up getting in the way of the ace mech.

Was this supposed to be a duel or a less restricted gang fight?

The ancient swordsman cleared up their uncertainty by turning around and rapidly whipping his two swords in the direction of the two Larkinson expert mechs!

Two heavenly sword energy attacks lanced towards the machines with hostile intent! Venerable Dise and Venerable Joshua both got caught off guard by this sudden move, but they were skilled and experienced enough to evade on instinct.

The First Sword managed to get clear of the snap attack heading in her direction, but the Everchanger's resonance shield got clipped by the other sword energy attack.

Even though it should have been a glancing hit, the heavenly energy contained within the sword energy attack turned out to be so potent that it briefly disrupted Joshua's willpower!

"The Heavensword's energy is much stronger than regular E energy!" Joshua immediately informed the others. "My willpower can't suppress it at all. It's as if I got struck by a peace of heaven!"

Ketis knew what her husband was talking about. "Stay on guard against the mental compulsion of this 'heavenly energy'. The Heavensword will brainwash you if you entertain any notion of surrender. If you don't guard your mind, you will end up in a state similar to Charles and Fred over here. The more you get exposed by heavenly energy, the stronger the effect. If possible, do not try to block or get in contact with it. Try to avoid the energy attacks whenever possible."

"That is easier said than done!"

While the ancient swordsman smoothly began to exchange blows with the Amphis Extremis, he still had time to keep the two nearby expert mechs busy by whipping slashes of potent sword energy in their direction.

The initial sword attacks were easy enough to evade. Their traversal speeds were not as high as gauss weapon attacks and they solely followed linear trajectories.

However, the ancient swordsman quickly adjusted his harassing attacks by adding a homing element to the sword energies!

Both the First Sword and the Everchanger received powerful hits to their resonance shields, causing their integrity to drop by as much as 30 percent!

"We can't take too many of these hits!"

"We need to get close!" Venerable Dise uttered as her competitive streak urged her to do more than maintain a passive posture. "As long as we get close enough to the energy projection, we can stop him from unleashing these sword energy attacks."

That was as good of a plan as any.

Though Venerable Joshua preferred to remain patient and take potshots at the ancient swordsman with his Vitalus, the luminar crystal rifle only inflicted trivial damage to the target!

The Everchanger had already opened fire shortly after the ancient swordsman went on the attack.

Joshua not only resonated with the Vitalus, but also used his companion spirit, Willy to channel the Illustrious One and significantly amplify the power of the luminar crystal rifle's light beam attacks!

The hyper light beam attacks were supposed to be remarkably effective at damaging E energy constructs, but this rule was not absolute!

Against an energy projection comprised out of high-grade heavenly energy, the distinctly lower grade of energy output of the Vitalus rifle was at a heavy disadvantage! Seeing that the Everchanger's ranged attacks were largely ineffective against the target, Venerable Joshua set aside his current approach and began to move his Everchanger closer!

The Everchanger even placed the Vitalus on its back since it would only get in the way. The entire vibe of the Everchanger changed as Willy as well as the expert mech himself ceased to channel the Illustrious One.

Joshua instead decided to channel Trisk, taking the advice given by Saint Linda Cross to heart.

The Everchanger was no Dark Zephyr, but the expert hero mech could be quite fast when he needed to be. From the moment the entire machine began to borrow from the

power of the Free Bird, the living mech moved as if he had lost at least 20 percent of his mass!

This was an amazing result, and one that made the Everchanger significantly faster and more agile than before!

With the freedom and integrity of his wife at stake, Venerable Joshua was determined not to let the Heavensword have its way!

At the same time, the First Sword surged forward with her Decapitator greatsword eager and willing to humble the arrogant Heavensword!

"Be careful!" Saint Linda Cross warned as her ace space knight attacked with its flail, causing a heavy skull-shaped ball to fling forward, only to get deflected by the projected swordsman with a moderate amount of effort. "I am picking up a surge of energy from the Heavensword!"

Just before the two expert mechs came close enough to thrust their swords into the rear of the ancient swordsman, the shape of their target suddenly blurred.

"INCOMING!"

Two simultaneous collisions occurred as the forward momentum of both expert mechs got arrested by the energy projection!

Two projected sword wielders in fact!

"What?!"

"There are three of them now!"

The Heavensword had actually generated two additional energy projections, each of them just as large as the first one!

"They're different!"

"Well, that answers the question whether the old Heavensword used to be wielded by different swordsmen."

Confronting the Everchanger was a teenage-looking woman who wore similar but less refined robes as the original projection.

Her youthful countenance made it seem as if she was the ancient swordsman's descendant or disciple.

Naturally, the lesser projection did not hold the genuine version of the Heavensword. The young swordswoman instead held an inferior copy comprised out of concentrated heavenly energy.

The First Sword confronted another projected swordsman.

This time, the lesser energy projection resembled a taller and more muscular man. There was nothing elegant about his appearance. His hair was short and messy while his face was marred by scars. He wore a leather-like outfit that made him look like a hunter, though his feet remained bare.

The man looked as if he was a lot more accustomed to fighting with his fists than wielding an elegant blade!

Nonetheless, the muscular swordsman held the copy of his Heavensword with easy familiarity.

After the two additional energy projections showed up, the fight entered into a temporary lull.

The Amphis Extremis backed off from the ancient swordsman. The latter did not immediately press forward.

"What is going on here?" Joshua asked,

Ketis, who was observing the fight from a projected screen aboard the fleeing combat carrier, figured it out first.

"It's a test."

"A test?"

"Did you remember what it conveyed to us before it started to go on the attack? It said the weak have no right to resist. The implication is that if I want to preserve my swordsmanship, I have to prove I, or rather all of you are strong enough to justify my

rejection."

"Are you kidding? How can we defeat a weapon as powerful as a sentient grand work? We don't even have a weapon that is powerful enough to dent the Heavensword!" "Perhaps that will not be necessary for us to prove our strength." Saint Linda Cross

remarked.

The ace pilot also managed to gather a few clues by examining the intent radiating from the energy projections.

There was a clear sense of ritual to this fight. This caused Ketis to form another theory.

"The Heavensword cannot unleash its true power in its current state. It is limited by its lack of wielder and its limited energy reserves. This may be why it has decided to give us a chance of proving it wrong by giving you a test. As long as you can defeat or outlast your designated opponents, the relic weapon will hopefully give up on forcing me to become its wielder."

Although Ketis did not have enough proof to back up her assertion, it sounded as good

of an explanation as any. The ace pilot and expert pilots distinctly had the feeling that they were not confronting the Heavensword at its best.

It was either holding back, or it had not yet completed its recovery.

The Heavensword did not give them any time to swap theories with each other.

All three energy projections charged forward and went on the attack! Neither side did anything fancy. They instead tested each other's strength by exchanging physical blows with each other.

The Amphis Extremis was forced to endure the greatest pressure as it was the only mech that was being threatened by the genuine version of the Heavensword. The elegant swordsman's hair continued to whip elegantly in the non-existent air as he spun and danced while trying to overcome the ace offensive space knight's defenses. Saint Linda Cross quickly discovered that the heavenly energy condensed across the relic weapon's blade was disproportionately effective against her ace mech's energy defenses!

Her proud Saint Kingdom got invaded with ease while the resonance-empowered azure energy shield generated by the SA-DIX was being depleted at an alarming rate!

It was only when Saint Linda no longer tried to suppress the elegant swordsman with her Saint Kingdom and shut off the SA-DIX Shield Generator that her Amphis Extremis

was finally able to withstand the power of the Heavensword. The enlarged Heavensword still struck the tower shield with enough force to chip and dent its resilient source, but the material damage was a lot more bearable than the

alternative!

"Do not attempt to defend against the Heavensword's attack by relying on your resonance shield or energy defenses." Saint Linda Cross warned the others. "Either

evade or block its attacks with physical objects. The damage it inflicts on solid matter is not as great."

This might be a quirk of the heavenly energy being channeled by the Heavensword, but

it kind of felt as if it was giving the mechs a chance to beat it through a contest of skill

rather than get unilaterally overpowered by the massive difference in quality and raw power!

The three energy projections did not make it easy for their adversaries, though.

They employed different sword styles to press the skills of the high-ranking mech pilots.

The three sword wielders did not remain static either. They vigorously moved around in space, making full use of their ability to maneuver in every direction to circle around and attack their opponents from different angles.

The energy projections initially started off at a sedate pace, but quickly began to speed

up until their dizzying maneuvers pushed the mechs and mech pilots to their limits! The Amphis Extremis, the First Sword and the Everchanger constantly had to turn around and stress their maneuvering thrusters just so they could block or parry an

incoming strike!

There was no time for the pilots to celebrate a successful interception of an attack as

the swift and speedy projected sword wielders had already circled around to launch another light and probing strike!

"This is getting annoying!" Venerable Dise grunted in frustration.

"I feel as if I am sparring against a light skirmisher!" Venerable Joshua complained. "I

don't even have time to launch a counterattack anymore."

"Then do better." Saint Linda spoke as her space knight struggled to keep up with its

must faster adversary. "This is just the first test. If we cannot pass it, then you can forget about what else the Heavensword has in store."

The thought of getting humiliated by a sword that didn't even have an actual wielder

caused the two Larkinson expert pilots to burn with shame.

"I am not going to lose against this senile fossil!"

Chapter 6543 The Elegant Swordsman

Due to the Heavensword's 'consideration, all three machines had entered into a somewhat stable rhythm.

Each mech was being suppressed by the high mobility of the mech-scaled energy projections.

The heavenly energies that make up their bodies' and in a few cases their 'swords' were not as weak and fragile as ordinary E energy.

Despite the complete absence of willpower and true resonance, the energy constructs more than proved their mettle against the powerful ace mech and expert mechs!

It was rather amazing for observers to realize that a single sword, which was originally small enough to fit in the hands of a human, was able to suppress several champions of red humanity.

The Heavensword's solo performance already vindicated the people who claimed that this mythical weapon was more than a match against an expert mech or an ace mech!

No one dared to voice any theories where the Heavensword was able to hold its own against a god mech.

No one entertained the notion that the most powerful individual combatants of the human race would find themselves inferior to an ownerless sword, even if it was a remarkably powerful one.

The mere thought that a god mech would get defeated by a single relic was... too frightening to comprehend!

Ketis resolutely set aside all thoughts about whether that was possible.

There was no point in resisting if the Heavensword possessed this capacity.

For now, the power level of the relic weapon was still reasonable enough to handle by the mechs that fought on her behalf.

"Saint Commander Casella." Ketis transmitted to the approaching Minerva. "Please suspend your approach and maintain your distance. The Heavensword is... manageable for now. If you rashly interrupt the individual duels, then I am afraid you will provoke the weapon into taking unpredictable actions."

"Acknowledged, Swordmaster Ketis."

The ace command mech along with the accompanying Battle Crier mech company had already slowed down earlier.

Now, the troop of mechs had arrested their forward momentum entirely, making sure to keep a healthy distance from the unfolding bouts.

The Saint Commander was clearly able to read the evolving circumstances as well. Her outsider's perspective clearly allowed her to see that the Heavensword was testing the

high-ranking mechs as opposed to battering them down as if they were genuine enemies.

Of course, the Heavensword was anything but gentle with its opposition, given that its strikes began to chip away at the armor of the beleaguered machines!

This was why Casella Ingvar still remained poised and ready to intervene with her troop. Every mech was precious. High-ranking mechs and living ones were even more priceless!

Not only did they constitute the core power of the Larkinson Clan, but they also served a vital role in defending the Viola Magnifica System against the native aliens.

Having one or several of these powerful mechs fall during the Red Tide Offensive might cause a cascade of failures that would be devastating for red humanity!

For this reason, if it looked as if one of the high-ranking mechs was about to succumb, Saint Commander Casella had already decided to intervene by force no matter the

consequences.

That was not necessary for the time being.

The mechs were regularly getting cut by the heavenly energy, but their armor systems were not for show.

Ketis could clearly observe that the swordsmanship demonstrated by every wielder was substantially different.

The projected sword wielders only employed the most basic and foundational techniques of their respective sword styles, but that was already enough to give her a lot of clues.

She was able to confirm that each of them wielded the Heavensword with great familiarity and with their own distinctive styles.

The Elegant Swordsman as she decided to call the first energy projection wielded the Heavensword as if it was made to be held in his hand.

His elegant countenance and swift but beautiful moves perfectly matched the Heavensword's shape and aesthetics.

As a swordmaster, Ketis was able to observe that the Elegant Swordsman danced across space similar to how Venerable Brutus Wodin controlled his own expert mech in the thick of combat.

This not only made the Elegant Swordsman look as if it took no effort for him to evade the flail attacks of the Amphis Extremis, but also allowed him to build up momentum and direction for his next attacks.

The Amphis Extremis possessed an excellent advantage when it remained on the defensive. Its tower shield was large, thick and provided enough cover to easily block attacks coming in from many different angles.

Yet the Elegant Swordsman seemed to treat the presence of the large slab of alloys as an interesting challenge. The expression of the energy projection remained flat, but his flowing movements betrayed an elevated sense of interest and inquisitiveness.

The sword attacks employed by the Elegant Swordsman mostly consisted of slashes that flowed according to the momentum and rotation of his projected body. Despite the potential power that he could put into these moves, the simulated wielder of the Heavensword remained cautious and restrained by not committing to his attacks. While this heavily limited the damage that the potent Heavensword could inflict on the Amphis Extremis, it also made it very difficult for Saint Linda Cross to punish her adversary for getting close!

The Amphis Extremis was losing.

While the ace mech was quite fast for its archetype, it was never designed to keep up with highly maneuverable humanoid opponents.

This was why it carried a tower shield. Yet when the rotation speed of the Amphis Extremis was unable to keep up with the circling of the Elegant Swordsman, the defensive equipment was only able to prevent the Elegant Swordsman from launching easy attacks at forward angles.

Saint Linda Cross was stuck in a dilemma.

Her mech was completely optimized to fight against native alien forces. The enemy phase lords and phase whales that posed the greatest threat were all large but not too maneuverable in combat. The design of the Amphis Extremis therefore paid little

attention to the need to attack highly maneuverable targets.

The ace offensive knight might be able to increase its mobility by tossing aside the tower shield, but that would leave it a lot more open to frontal attacks.

"You cannot afford to fall into the rhythm of your opponent." Ketis judged.

Fortunately, Saint Linda Cross was an experienced veteran that fought against plenty of mechs. She had not forgotten how to deal with fast-moving opponents such as light

skirmishers.

Against other opponents, the Amphis Extremis would have channeled more power into its Saint Kingdom and seek to slow down its adversary through willpower suppression.

That did not work at all against the sword-wielding energy projection.

Saint Linda therefore began to make use of more sweeping attacks.

The Amphis Extremis did not have any way of turning faster, but it could swing its flail in

circles at extended ranges!

The rather slender but incredibly tough chain attached to the skull-shaped ball began to lengthen. The Amphis Extremis also began to swing the Wrecker Skull in different

motions above its head or in other stances.

The Elegant Swordsman immediately noticed the change and began to back off more frequently in order to avoid getting caught.

After a few moments of evasion, the energy projection quickly figured out how to respond to this change.

The simulated holder of the Heavensword actually began to predict the arm swings and weapon trajectories of the Amphis Extremis and struck whenever it spotted an opening! The timing had to be precise. The Elegant Swordsman also had to maneuver his way through the flail attacks along the right trajectory in order to land an attack without suffering retaliation.

The Amphis Extremis was still getting damaged, although this time its suffering had decreased.

Even so, the ace offensive space knight had yet to land a single solid blow against its adversary.

Just as it seemed as if the Elegant Swordsman would be able to dance around the Amphis Extremis with impunity, Saint Linda Cross employed a surprising trick! The Amphis Extremis actually began to randomize the rhythm and timing of her sweeping flail attacks by changing the length of the chain!

When the chain became shorter, the Amphis Extremis was able to make the heavy skull-shaped ball complete an arc faster at the cost of reducing its range.

The opposite happened if the chain lengthened all of a sudden. Venerable Linda also employed another trick to make her ace mech's attacks less predictable.

She utilized her true resonance to dynamically increase or decrease the mass of her weapon without the usual precautions.

By making the flail heavier, it took more energy to build up momentum, thereby causing

it to swing around a little slower than normal.

By making it lighter, Saint Linda Cross found it much easier for her ace mech to complete an arc!

Merely being fast was not enough as the Elegant Swordsman was always faster and more maneuverable.

What truly made a difference was that the frequent changes in the reach and mass of the flail made it exponentially more difficult for the Elegant Swordsman to predict the ace space knight's attacks!

"So this is your true strength. It is not your flowing movements that allow you to evade my attacks, but your ability to predict my moves in advance." Now that Linda figured out why she fell at a disadvantage against this adversary, she doubled down on her new tactics and continued to make herself as difficult to predict

as possible!

The mind and spirit of an ace pilot was so strong that Linda was able to make semi-conscious decisions on which parameters she wanted to change.

She refused to believe the Heavensword was powerful enough to discern her intentions in so little time!

The Elegant Swordsman had to endure more pressure, but he still flowed around the Amphis Extremis as if he was swimming in the water.

Yet no matter how amazingly the Elegant Swordsman managed to block most of the

unpredictable blows, its luck was finite.

Saint Linda Cross finally became jubilant as she not only managed to fool the Heavensword, but also managed to land a solid hit against the Elegant Swordsman!

If the energy projection was a lesser phase lord, then the direct hit would have crushed

numerous bones and obliterated the outer layers of the flesh!

Yet just as the resonance-empowered ball that suddenly gained the momentum of a crashing light mech was about to collide against the Elegant Swordsman, an illusionary calm and peaceful lake came into being!

It looked incredibly peaceful and graceful as its surface mirrored a nightscape filled with stars and a mysterious moon.

Softly glowing lotuses floated across the surface of the lake. Each of the succulent looking flower petals gazed at the moon and appeared to absorb its light and energies.

This lake illusion was anything but a phantom. The pond, which was being illuminated by the light of a moon, not only absorbed the kinetic energy transferred upon impact like a champ, but also prevented the ball from striking the body of the current energy

projection!

"How?!"

"Whatever energy defenses the Elegant Swordsman relies upon is behaving similarly to a

non-Newtonian fluid!" Ketis quickly explained over the comm. "It hardens the most when struck with strong and fast blunt impacts! If this strange energy defense truly inherited the properties of a

non-Newtonian fluid, then the best way to overcome it is by using a sword or sharp edge to cut straight through the barrier!"

"My ace mech is not equipped with a sword!"

"Then the only other way to overcome this barrier is by repeatedly bashing it with your Wrecker Skull until it has exhausted the Heavensword's energy reserves."

That was clearly not the most optimal solution in this case, but it was the only one that

Saint Linda could employ under the circumstances.

At least she had made enough progress to go on the offensive. Now that Saint Linda became increasingly more accustomed to making her attacks more unpredictable by randomly varying the length of the chain and the mass of the ball, the Elegant Swordsman was no longer able to poke the Amphis Extremis with impunity!

Chapter 6544 The Teenage Swordsman

While Saint Linda Cross gradually managed to gain an advantage over the energy projection that held the actual Heavensword, the other two mech pilots were having a more difficult time adjusting to their own adversaries!

As expert pilots and fairly young ones at that, Venerable Dise and Venerable Joshua were weaker in many aspects.

They only possessed the seed of the strength of an ace pilot, so it was no surprise that their reaction speeds, combat acumen, true resonance amplification and other parameters did not score as high.

Fortunately, the sword wielding phantoms that confronted them were not as strong as the Elegant Swordsman.

The imitations of the Heavensword constructed out of pure heavenly energy lacked the destructive potential of the original, so they inflicted considerably less damage upon contact with a machine.

Helped to prevent the First Sword and the Everchanger from losing their arms or getting crippled after getting struck by their adversaries!

This was not an exaggeration.

No matter how much Venerable Dise and Venerable Joshua were able to leverage their willpower to strengthen the armor systems of their expert mechs, it did not matter if the base materials were inherently not on par with the alloys utilized by the more modern quasi-first-class or genuine first-class expert mechs of the Larkinson Clan.

The First Sword and the Everchanger were both waiting for multiple years to receive their long-awaited upgrades!

If they were able to fight in their Mark III incarnations, then they wouldn't be struggling so much in their 'duels' against two pure energy manifestations!

However, the two expert pilots also gradually realized that the Heavensword might not have responded to their presence in the exact same way.

What if the Heavensword invested a lot more heavenly energy in these phantom sword wielders?

The living expert mechs would have ended up suffering anyway, only this time incurring much more serious damage that was much harder to repair due to switching over to archemetal mech frames!

"This is looking more and more like a test rather than an unrestricted fight." Ketis concluded as she continued to observe the unfolding duels from a distance. "It is a good decision for the Minerva and her accompanying Battle Crier mechs to stay back."

Yet just because the situation appeared manageable for now did not mean it could go worse at any time.

It all depended on whether the mechs were able to keep up with the Heavensword's exacting demands!

When Ketis observed the performance of the 3 high-ranking mechs, one of them obviously offered more than the hers.

The Everchanger had fallen into an unfavorable matchup against the energy

manifestation designated as "Teenage Swordswoman".

Whether the current manifestation was actually modeled after a teenage female sword cultivator or not remained unclear.

One thing was for certain.

The Teenage Swordswoman was vastly more skilled and maneuverable than the Everchanger!

If the energy construct only possessed one of these advantages, then Venerable Joshua may barely be able to put up a decent fight together with the Everchanger.

Yet when the Teenage Swordswoman clearly demonstrated that she was able to combine her two advantages with great familiarity, her husband's disappointing swordsmanship and the Everchanger's outdated performance characteristics clearly couldn't keep up with the pressure!

"How disappointing" Ketis shook her head at Joshua's embarrassing display.

As an expert pilot with decent combat experience, Venerable Joshua was not a pushover. The reasons why he was being held back was partially because his Everchanger was long overdue an update, but that was not a completely insurmountable problem.

His root problem was that he spent most of his time strengthening his flashiest abilities and his synergies with different design spirits.

This caused his swordsmanship to stagnate. It did not help that most native alien enemies barely gave Joshua a reason to improve his weapon handling skills.

Now that the expert pilot was confronted by a real weapons expert, the enormous gap in skill, experience and judgment became evident!

The Teenage Swordswoman was practically toying with the Everchanger at this stage.

The giant energy manifestation whipped around the expert mech with short but explosive bursts of speeds, making it a nightmare to track her movements.

The tricky adversary took advantage of her superior burst mobility to launch incredibly fast attack runs that Venerable Joshua and his expert mech consistently failed to anticipate and block!

What Ketis found remarkable about the Teenage Swordswoman was that she wielded her weapon in a different way than the other ones.

Unlike the Elegant Swordsman who mainly relied on elegant, flowing slashing attacks,

the Teenage Swordswoman mainly employed piercing thrust attacks that continually needed a certain green-coated expert mech.

Time after time, the female energy manifestation exploded forth like a hurricane, continually outwitting Venerable Joshua by moving past his incorrectly positioned guard and poking the tip of the Heavensword copy straight through a joint or another weak

point.

When the Everchanger belatedly tried to turn around to launch a counterattack, the Teenage Swordswoman teasingly bent her body around the Heartsword and glided away with seemingly little effort.

This routine repeated over and over again as the Teenage Swordswoman saw no reason to switch from a working formula.

As long as she could eliminate the Everchanger by employing the same monotonous tactic over and over again, then she would gladly poke the expert hero mech to death! The Everchanger was getting poked without managing to land a single successful counterattack. His opponent was just faster and more adept at reading his movements. The only consolation was that every piercing thrust only inflicted relatively minor damage onto the mech frame.

This was exactly what the expert mech was the least afraid of suffering.

While Venerable Joshua found himself unable to utilize his willpower to form a resonance shield, he was still able to use it to regenerate Everchanger's wounds.

Cut and broken pieces of metal merged together within seconds. Broken components spontaneously became functional.

The Everchanger had suffered much more extensive damage in the past, and managed

to regenerate from all of that in mid-battle!

This at least allowed the Everchanger to retain his undamaged condition. That invalidated much of the Teenage Swordswoman's intention of defeating her adversary by inflicting continuous debilitating wounds.

Even so, Joshua's willpower was finite. Each time he utilized true resonance to repair his expert mech, his mind and will became a little more worn.

The Teenage Swordswoman must be expending a fair amount of energy as well in order to pull off her swift and nearly unblockable attack runs, but the ease in which she moved made it seem as if she could easily keep this up for a long time!

On the whole, Joshua and the Everchanger had entered into a stalemate against their current opponent, and that was an optimistic interpretation of their fight.

That was not good enough.

If this was a test, then Joshua was clearly failing it! The Heavensword looked for strength, not a cockroach-like ability to withstand injury!

"Stop being so passive and attack!" Ketis growled. "Since your Everchanger can withstand its blows, just forget about defense and do your best to land your Heartsword on the Teenage Swordswoman!"

"I can't." Venerable Joshua replied through gritted teeth. "This energy manifestation is way too fast. Before my Everchanger is halfway to pulling off an attack, this damned woman has already evaded my attack! This is like fighting against the Dark Zephyr, but worse! This swordswoman is like a

light skirmisher that is nearly immune to my ranged attacks. Do you know how awful that is for me and my battle partner? The entire point of a hero mech is to avoid fighting an enemy at her strongest and take advantage of her weaknesses. In this case, not only can't I do anything at range, I don't have any solutions

up close either!"

Joshua, Willy and the Everchanger were already channeling Trisk as hard as they could

manage!

The Free Bird was also freely cooperating with them to speed up the mech frame's movements, but there was a limit to how much the design spirit could boost the performance of a mech, even if it was the highly malleable Everchanger!

The expert hero mech was unable to boost his mobility to the level of the Dark Zephyr.

This meant that Venerable Joshua would always remain a step behind at his skill level!

Ketis grew increasingly more annoyed when she observed her husband's disappointing swordsmanship.

Venerable Joshua was not necessarily weak as far as high-tier expert pilots were concerned.

Objectively speaking, he was not that bad at wielding the blade compared to other unspecialized high-tier expert pilots.

Despite his refusal to dedicate himself to traditional swordsmanship, the private lessons that she especially taught her thick-skulled husband over the years had partially

managed to settle in his head.

His swordsmanship should have put him in an adequate position against the vast majority of humanoid opponents.

Yet whenever he sparred against a genuine swordsman or swordswoman such as

Venerable Dise or Ketis herself, the gaps in skill level ultimately resulted in Joshua's

defeat!

If the gap in skill was relatively small, then Joshua should still be able to muster up a counterattack even if the performance of his Everchanger was subpar.

It was clear that the gap in skill between Joshua and the Teenage Swordswoman was much bigger.

This was the difference between a true swordswoman and a part-timer.

Neither side had employed any offensive extraordinary abilities as of yet. They only

employed a combination of the most basic sword techniques with their intrinsic strengths.

The Everchanger's only advantage at the moment was his unnaturally high capacity to withstand low-damage attacks.

The Teenage Swordswoman on the other hand made excellent use of her fantastic burst mobility.

Each time she exploded into motion, the energy manifestation seemed to summon forth a gust of wind.

The Teenage Swordsman moved with the wind as if she was a cute little sparrow. She was light, fast and seemed to possess practically zero weight.

If the Teenage Swordsman was alive, then she would have uttered a few laughs each time she poked the Heavensword into the lumbering frame of the Everchanger.

The expert hero mech wasn't known to be a slow or sluggish machine, but he may very well be so in comparison to such a fast opponent!

"Joshua! This isn't working!" Ketis hissed over the communication channel. "If I was in your shoes, I would have punished the Teenage Swordsman for her lack of caution. You don't have any hope of responding fast enough to catch her when she enters within striking distance. You need to remember the swordsmanship lessons that I have attempted to pass onto you and employ proper judgment to predict how she will move the instant she charges forward. Once she initiates her attack run, she won't easily be able to change her course. That is the moment where you need to take action and move

your Heartsword in place to launch a counterattack. If you move too soon, your enemy will preemptively outmaneuver you. If you move too late, your expert mech will receive another stab wound before you have any chance to strike her with your Heartsword."

"Are you kidding me, Ketis?! I can't possibly move fast enough to do all of that during this miniscule window of opportunity!"

What Ketis was asking of Joshua was an incredibly difficult request! Even if his swordsmanship was as good as that of his wife, he still would have struggled

to land a solid blow against the Teenage Swordsman! The technical performance of the Everchanger was holding him back too much. Venerable Joshua had outgrown the current iteration of his expert mech many months

ago.

To be honest, the artificial ceiling on his combat performance had become an increasingly greater source of frustration to the ace pilot candidate.

How long must he wait for Ves Larkinson to come around and start the Everchanger

Mark III Project?!

How long must Joshua continue to fight while feeling horribly outgunned by the native aliens?!

With all of these technical handicaps, how could Ketis possibly expect him to gain an advantage out of the swordswoman who frustratingly took advantage of his expert mech's greatest shortcomings?!

Chapter 6545 The Muscular Swordsman

Ketis continued to observe the Heavensword's energy projections fight.

It was amazing to think that a single object could instantly generate mech-sized combatants that could give ace mechs and expert mechs a serious challenge.

Such an object was already valuable enough when used as a protective talisman!

As long as the Heavensword was willing, it could act as a bodyguard for anyone who did not possess fighting abilities!

Ketis did not think that the Heavensword would condescend to allowing itself to be carried by a weak and defenseless civilian.

Its refusal to allow itself to be wielded by the likes of Legion Commander Charles Antunovic and Director Fred Walinski sent a very obvious signal.

To be honest, Ketis felt she did not possess the qualifications to wield the Heavensword either.

This was a grand work that was comparable to a god mech in quality.

In fact, Ketis believed that the Heavensword slightly surpassed the scope of god mechs. Many amazing relics of ancient times had decayed and became lost in the annals of history, yet the Heavensword was still able to maintain basic operations in a barren environment like the Milky Way for cons.

Would a god mech be able to do the same?

Ketis had no idea. It depended on whether the machine could be separated from the man, and what actually happened if a god pilot ever died.

Grand works were way too high-end for a Journeyman Mech Designer to consider making herself.

She even believed that a swordmaster such as herself did not deserve to wield the Heavensword either.

Not even sword saints appeared to be a good match with the relic weapon. The disparity in strength and capabilities between the two were far too great.

Only a sword god could fully master the Heavensword and bring out all of its immense hidden potential.

Ketis would really prefer it if the Heavensword stopped bothering her and go find a worthy wielder among god pilots or other swordmasters.

Alas, the ancient sword was difficult to please. It had very distinct tastes. It appeared to dislike any sort of mech pilot regardless of whether they specialized in swordsmanship. As for swordmasters, the Heavensword did not take notice of Fred Walinski or the other swordmasters that immigrated to the new frontier on their own initiative.

The community of swordmasters was not that big in the Red Ocean. Ketis had talked to them a few times. While they were older than her for the most part, nobody could say for sure who among them was the strongest.

That was because swordmasters lacked a systematic roadmap that could allow them to become sword saints.

This was also why none of these swordmasters stood out. They originated from the Heavensword Association which gave them a structure to become swordmasters, but also imparted them with many preconceived notions.

If the Heavensword wanted to enact change, then it may find Ketis to be a lot more attractive than the other sword idiots.

Unlike these brutes who rarely bothered with normal schooling and just practiced their swordsmanship during their youth and adolescent years, Ketis was vastly more intelligent and educated.

Sure, her education was anything but conventional, but that could be considered an advantage as she hadn't been instilled with rigid sensibilities that only served to narrow her vision.

Perhaps that was what drew the Heavensword to Ketis the most. Not only did she possess the strength of a swordmaster and the intelligence of a mech designer, she also possessed a vision that had not been influenced by modern civilized principles!

The behavior exhibited by the Heavensword thus far showed little respect for the norms and values that most humans took for granted.

It was an artifact that originated from a mythical age in the distant past. Customs were probably a lot rougher and more brutal at the time. If the Heavensword kept pestering her despite her attempts to keep it away, then Ketis needed to understand how it thought in order to wrangle it successfully.

"Ugh, these ancient relics are such a bother. Can't they just stay buried like the rest of the era they came from?" The swordmaster resentfully grumbled.

She began to pay more attention to the three duels. While Saint Linda Cross was beginning to hold her own while Venerable Joshua Larkinson continually failed to catch the Teenage Swordsman, Venerable Dise experienced her own difficulties.

Her challenge was different from the others.

As a genuine swordsman mech pilot, Dise had skill and experience in spades. Her First Sword exuded a confident and eager attitude as she swung the Decapitator.

Unlike Joshua, Dise relied entirely on her swordsmanship to make it to this point. She had never made use of any gimmicks such as the ability to regenerate the damage onto her mech or borrow the power of another design spirit.

She almost embodied the model of a traditional swordmaster, even to the point of developing a close relationship with her weapon of choice, which in this case came in

the form of a mech!

Unlike Venerable Joshua who felt much more constrained while piloting an outdated expert hero mech, Venerable Dise acknowledged the shortcomings of her own aged expert swordsman mech and simply tried to make the best out of her situation.

As a Swordmaiden that had gone on hunts in the past where she pitted her own fragile human body against the savage exobeasts that populated the untamed planets spread throughout the cosmos, Dise had continually managed to defeat powerful creatures despite possessing a fraction of their strength!

This was what Venerable Dise excelled at. Every high-ranking mech pilot of the Larkinson Clan had their own merits that elevated their strength and value above the

norm.

In the case of the Swordmaiden expert pilot, Dise always believed that her excellent fighting and swordsmanship skills allowed her to defeat the strong while she was objectively weaker!

If the disparity in hard power wasn't so gigantic, her First Sword would have sought out an enemy phase lord!

In any case, unless the enemy was especially tricky to fight against, Venerable Dise did not fear any duels against adversaries that were weaker or of equal strength than herself! She was incredibly confident that she would be able to win these bouts at least 9 out of

10 times!

Yet when her First Sword started to get pushed back time and time again by the energy projection designated as the 'Muscular Swordsman', she couldn't help but question that

arrogant assumption.

Her spar against an opponent that the Heavensword had likely selected and reproduced with care brutally taught her that exquisite swordsmanship alone was not enough to gain an advantage in a serious sword duel.

This became evident whenever the First Sword blocked the Muscular Swordsman's attacks.

The expert mech continually got pushed back due to the disparity in strength!

There was a huge difference between the physical power of the two! There were times when the First Sword outright failed to block an incoming sword strike and managed to get her Unending alloy plating cut and damaged as a result!

Venerable Dise initially did not understand why a one-handed weapon like the Heavensword became light, fast, swift or elegant in the hands of the other two energy projections, but turned into a crude cutting implement in the hands of the Muscular

Swordsman!

Just like his primitive leather hunter's outfit suggested, the Muscular Swordsman possessed no grace in his nonexistent bones.

His maneuvering was straightforward. He only ever moved forward and backwards. Most of the time, he pressed forward as if he was constantly stuck in attack mode.

"Has he lost his mind?!"

There was a method to his madness. His unrelenting aggression combined with his awful tendency to doggedly stick to his target at all times stifled the First Sword's ability to

counterattack.

If he ever took a step back, it was because he needed moment to recover or because he was preparing for an even more devastating strike.

Otherwise, he remained committed to offense no matter how much he put his large and muscular body at risk!

What Venerable Dîse found even crazier was that the Muscular Swordsman rarely bothered to evade attacks!

He instead preferred to let the First Sword's strike go through in favor of chopping the Heavensword with great force!

"This madman!"

This exchange always made the First Sword worse off! Every weapon swing from the Muscular Swordsman struck with great force and inflicted more than simple cutting damage.

The Muscular Swordsman may look and act like a brute with no subtlety in his body, but that did not mean he was an imbecile.

"This is a master of the earth!"

The man possessed a surprisingly effective grasp on the earth element.

One of the ways he applied this advantage was to surround the Heavensword with a thicker and substantially longer application of heavenly energy that was strongly biased towards his favored E energy attribute!

The Heavensword effectively transformed into a substantially different sword as a result. The Muscular Swordsman comfortably held the enlarged hilt with both of his thick arms and was able to hack down the blade as if he was swinging down a heavy club! Since the earth-aspected Heavensword crushed down with much greater force than usual, the First Sword acquired a growing collection of cuts as well as shattered pieces of

armor plating.

The internal components of the expert swordsman mech incurred damage as well as the powerful kinetic blows badly rattled the closest sections of the mech frame.

In contrast to the Muscular Swordsman's undeniably effective power attacks, the exquisite and well-executed offensive sword attacks failed to inflict any immediate wounds onto the energy projection!

In multiple cases, just before the Decapitator managed to strike the 'body' of the

Muscular Swordsman, encountered a hindrance in the form of a rocky layer of armor!

No matter what angle the First Sword managed to strike the Muscular Swordsman, the latter always found a way to conjure up a layer of metal and position it over the right limb or body part to block any attack!

Although Venerable Dise understood that her attacks were not completely useless and that every blocking attempt drained the Muscular Swordsman's energy a bit further, the latter appeared to possess an abundance of energy!

Not only were his defenses tough, his endurance was probably good as well! The Muscular Swordsman's reckless and linear fighting style made complete sense after taking this crucial factor into account.

The man fought like a berserker, knowing that most of his adversaries were unable to

outlast him after getting locked in a mutual exchange of blows.

With superior defenses along with an earth-empowered Heavensword that struck like a gigantic club that just happened to have a sharp edge, few combatants of the same level would dare to stand in front of such a beast!

"If that is not enough, my First Sword can't even take advantage of her superior mobility."
Venerable Dise discovered.

For all of the strengths of the Muscular Swordsman, his mobility was much worse in comparison. He simply could not keep up with the First Sword in terms of speed and

maneuverability.

This gave Venerable Dise a chance to outfight the Muscular Swordsman by relying on

her expert mech's superior mobility.

Yet when she actually tried to change her strategy, the Muscular Swordsman refused to

let the First Sword fly away with impunity!

The energy manifestation raised his energy-covered Heavensword with both of his hands and began to leverage another aspect of the earth element!

A thick and heavy energy field came to life that was saturated with the earth element!

Amplified by high-grad heavenly energy, the earth field produced a myriad amount of effects that hindered the First Sword from distancing itself from the source!

The pulling gravity field, the circular vortex distortion and other effects slowed down the First Sword's attempt to disengage from the Muscular Swordsman!

The living mech slowed down to such an extent that the somewhat decent forward acceleration rate of the Muscular Swordsman could easily catch up to his chosen prey. The First Sword hastily put up a defense, but the much better prepared Muscular Swordsman was able to convert his charge into a chopping attack that was unblockable with the First Sword's current strength!

The Larkinson expert mech suffered another nasty cut to one of its shoulder plates.

Precious Unending alloy got cut or fractured with many pieces spreading across space.

If the Muscular Swordsman kept bashing its copy of the Heavensword like this onto the

First Sword, then almost all of her Unending alloy may end up getting lost by the end of this bout!

"This swordsman... is overpowering all of my tactics and basic sword moves!"

Chapter 6546 The Unbreakable Swordswoman

Frustration and unwillingness mounted in the hearts and minds of all three high-ranking mech pilots.

Each of them were struggling to defeat their opponents.

This was not necessarily because the humanoid energy manifestations were directly more powerful than the mechs they faced.

Instead, it looked as if their overall energy output was not that much different from the respective mechs.

The Elegant Swordsman fought with power that was equivalent to that of an ace mech such as the Amphis Extremis.

The Teenage Swordswoman and the Muscular Swordsman both fought at the same power level as the two Larkinson expert mechs.

Since Ketis possessed a clear overview of all of the duels, she knew in her heart that the First Sword and the Everchanger hadn't fallen into a disadvantage because they were underpowered.

The two expert mechs were losing because they failed to utilize their power as well as their adversaries.

For example, if the three energy projections were making optimal use of at least 90 percent of their comprehensive resources, then the utilization of resources of the high-ranking mechs was substantially less, ranging from around 80 percent in the case of the Amphis Extremis to as low as 40 percent for the Everchanger!

The expert hero mech was especially badly affected. Venerable Joshua failed to find a way to make good use of the ranged capabilities of his machine.

That massively wasted the Everchanger's combat power and caused the living mech to fight as if he was already partially crippled!

It didn't help that the opponents selected by the Heavensword seemed tailor-made to exploit their weaknesses and evade their strengths. This exacerbated the difference in energy utilization. The mechs that were at a slight disadvantage began to suffer a lot harder than they should.

Still, Ketis believed that this was not an excuse for Venerable Dise and Venerable Joshua to fall so badly behind.

The battlefield was never fair.

Venerable Dise and Venerable Joshua were both mature expert pilots that had fought plenty of battles in the past where they had fallen behind.

The quality that separated expert pilots from standard mech pilots was that the former did not back down, and always tried to find a way to surpass their own limitations as well as their opponents in order to secure victory!

So far, Ketis saw no sign of a turnaround, but she remained hopeful that one may be on the way.

What also caught her attention was that neither side had resorted to their greater capabilities.

The energy projections were most definitely capable of pulling off extraordinary sword techniques with the Heavensword, yet religiously stuck to only the most basic and foundational sword techniques.

The pilots were smart enough to withhold their own special attack abilities for the time being. Once they began to escalate, their opponents would undoubtedly follow suit!

If there was no other choice, then Venerable Dise and Venerable Joshua could always choose to make the first move, but doing so would probably cause them to fail their apparent tests.

They held themselves back not just because they wanted to play by the rules of the Heavensword, but because their pride and their hunger for a challenge did not permit them to cheat their way out of their problems!

As frustrated as the two Larkinson expert pilots felt, they were both aware that they usually entered in these kinds of moods prior to a possible breakthrough attempt. Having tried and failed to grasp the moment to smash through their bottlenecks and advance to the rank of ace pilot like Isobel Kotin, Dise and Joshua felt as if they had both been left behind by a pilot who originally became a demigod later than themselves.

Even if the experience of every high-ranking mech pilot should be unique, the Swordmaiden and the Golden Boy still felt inferior due to this difference.

When the critical time had come, Isobel Kotin did not back off, but decisively chose to burn herself and her living mech and got rewarded for her courage!

If Venerable Dise and Venerable Joshua wanted to rise to a greater height, then they must at least demonstrate as much courage and fearlessness as Isobel Kotin!

Taking the easy way out and forfeiting a challenge contradicted this ideal,

If they wanted to take a step forward, then they could not afford to falter!

However, if there was no way for them to raise their energy utilization, then they might not have another choice.

"Come on, Dise. Come on Joshua. Please figure it out. The two of you can do it. I know it. You just need to connect the dots."

Ketis did not pick it up at first, but she eventually managed to figure out a way for both Larkinson expert pilots to permanently increase their energy utilization and beat their adversaries fair and square.

The question now was whether Dise and Joshua would be able to make this realization in time.

Even Saint Linda Cross had much to learn about how to better make use of her abilities as an ace pilot.

The spectating swordmaster felt tempted to just give the answers to the two Larkinson expert pilots, but she had a strong feeling that this was a challenge that they needed to overcome through their own efforts in order to make it truly count.

Spoiling the secret to them was like giving students the answers sheet corresponding to an exam that they were supposed to take tomorrow.

There was no real accomplishment in both cases!

Of the two pilots she paid close attention to, Ketis felt that Venerable Dise had the highest expectations for Venerable Dise.

Her options were much more limited than that of Venerable Joshua.

The First Sword was a simple expert mech armed with only one primary weapon. Venerable Dise brought nothing to the table aside from her extraordinary willpower, her piloting and swordsmanship skills and her companion spirit.

There was not much she could do with this toolkit. If Venerable Dise wanted to vanquish the Muscular Swordsman that was beating up the relatively fragile First Sword as if her attacks didn't matter, then the expert pilot needed to think out of the box as soon as

possible!

"Tch! My mech can't take these hits for much longer!"

Shortly after Venerable Dise discovered that the opposing mad dog's attacks could not be easily blocked or evaded, she tried her best to spread out the places where the earth-empowered blade eventually struck.

This allowed Dise to prolong the First Sword's time in the field and delayed the onset of critical damage to the internals.

Even so, she could not prevent her expert mech from suffering minor internal damage due to all of the physical impacts and shocks.

This slightly decreased her expert mech's performance, causing her mech frame to incur even greater damage!

This was the scariest aspect of this bout. The First Sword was already struggling to stay afloat when she was still in peak condition.

How much faster would the living expert mech get defeated once she started to suffer an increasing amount of malfunctions and system failures?

Venerable Dise felt more and more urgent to figure out a countermeasure against the winning formula of the Muscular Swordsman.

She felt incredibly indignant at the thought of losing against this apparent brute! Even if the masculine sword wielder was actually a lot wiser and more knowledgeable for making such deep attainments in the earth element, Dise could not accept the idea of suffering defeat at the hands of such a stupid-looking energy manifestation! Her unwillingness fueled her resistance. She kept fighting not because she saw a pathway towards victory, but because she wanted to avoid an embarrassing defeat! The Muscular Swordsman did not make this easy for her. He charged forward yet again while simultaneously preventing the First Sword from evading or slipping away by strengthening his earth aura!

The persistent energy field somehow caused the surrounding fabric space to distort, as if the Muscular Swordsman had become a planet that exerted enough gravitational pull to force a 'moon' like the First Sword into orbit!

There was a strong sense of inevitability and righteousness to an obvious distortion of the natural laws!

The Muscular Swordsman was nowhere near as massive as a planet, and the First Sword did not even come close to matching the mass of an actual moon!

Yet because of the strange and weaker variation of domain field actively levered E energy radiation so well, the actual results were multiple times stronger than what the Muscular Swordsman could manage by relying on his own energy reserves! This was also why the Muscular Swordsman was able to manipulate so much earth energy. He borrowed it from the environment rather than waste much more precious heavenly energy to produce his results.

Venerable Dise suddenly shuddered as she managed to make a profound realization! Even as her momentary distraction almost caused the Muscular Swordsman to cut off one of the First Sword's arms, the expert swordsman mech pilot still couldn't shake off

her inspired idea!

"DISE..." The First Sword communicated with her battle partner. "THIS... MAY BE THE ANSWER THAT YOU HAVE BEEN LOOKING FOR SINCE YOUR FAILURE AGAINST THE

EMPEROR TREE."

"Do you think so as well?" Dise smiled even though the First Sword was still stuck in a terrible position.

"BACK THEN, YOU WERE SO DESPERATE TO CHASE AFTER POWER THAT YOU ALMOST THOUGHT ABOUT TURNING YOURSELF INTO A BEAST. IF YOU GAVE IN TO YOUR TEMPTATION, YOU WOULD HAVE THROWN AWAY EVERYTHING THAT MADE YOU A SWORDSWOMAN AND REPLACE IT WITH MINDLESS SAVAGERY, SUCH A PILOT BEARS LITTLE RESEMBLANCE TO YOUR TRUE SELF. NOW THAT YOU HAVE FOUND A

WAY TO BECOME STRONGER WHILE RETAINING YOUR SWORDSMANSHIP, YOU SHOULD GRASP IT WITH BOTH OF YOUR HANDS."

Venerable Dise had already made her decision.

She came up with her latest idea by comparing herself to her current adversary.

As far as swordsmanship was concerned, she still believed that hers was better.

What caused her to lose despite this obvious advantage was the Muscular Swordsman's heavy usage of his earth element mastery.

He not only made deep attainments with it, but also integrated it into his swordsmanship, allowing him to form a combat system that was simple, brutal and

direct!

If Dise wanted to put up a proper resistance against this combination, then she needed

to form her own combination!

Dise became convinced that swordsmanship alone was not enough for her to gain the upper hand in this fight!

If she couldn't break the earth aura that constrained her expert mech and overcome the

rock armor that protected the Muscular Swordsman from any serious harm, there was

no way for her to win this bout!

"I need to fight fire with fire!"

She meant that in a metaphorical sense, of course.

Dise quickly ruled out the use of the earth element. She had no special affinity or

relationship with it, and she did not have a single clue on how to grasp and harness earth-attributed E energy.

She needed to find a different attribute. She learned about the importance of the

so-called 'five elements' recently, and one of them immediately caught her attention.

"Metal."

It had to be the metal element.

Her will was as hard as steel. Her mech was made out of unbreakable alloys. Her

all-metal sword was forged to cut through anything.

Though Venerable Dise initially had little idea on how to call upon the metal element in

the same way the Muscular Swordsman wielded the earth element, that soon changed. It was as if a switch had turned inside her heart.

Dise suddenly felt as if she had been fighting in an incomplete state all this time.

She never noticed it, just like how person who was born blind never understood what

sight truly brought.

Yet now that she had synced up to the metal element, she belatedly discovered that she

possessed a strong connection to the power of metal!

It was in her sword.

It was in her mech.

It was in the very core of her swordsmanship!

The metal element sang to her immediately after she recognized how deeply she embodied it already.

Venerable Dise effortlessly resonated with the power of metal. An energy vortex formed around the First Sword that caused the living mech to absorb a growing amount of ambient metal E energy.

Even though Dise and her battle partner did not know any sophisticated ways to leverage the metal element, their true resonance instinctively guided the metal energy to the exterior of the mech frame and the edge of the Decapitator sword.

It made an immediate difference in the First Sword's combat performance! When the Muscular Swordsman managed to launch another power attack that struck the battered and damaged expert swordsman mech, the earth-empowered blade failed

to inflict as much damage as before!

The metal element reinforcement had done its job and blunted the damaging strike! The mech frame did not even experience a single tremor from the heavy kinetic impact!

"I... am... UNSHAKEABLE!"

When Venerable Dise finally saw her chance to mount an effective counterattack, she soon controlled her expert mech to retaliate and circle around her adversary!

The earth aura tried to drag the First Sword into an invisible field of mud, but the metal reinforcement partially managed to resist this effect!

"I AM UNSTOPPABLE!"

The expert swordsman mech flew only a little bit slower as she successfully managed to flank her slower opponent before launching a retaliatory power attack! The Decapitator swung directly at the Muscular Swordsman's neck, aiming to decapitate or at least heavily injure the earth sword cultivator!

The Muscular Swordsman may be the slowest of the three energy manifestations, but he still managed to shift his stance at the last instance and move his shoulder in the way.

An entire arm got chopped off, causing the Muscular Swordsman to hastily switch the copy of the Heavensword to a one-handed grip!

After a long string of frustrations and setbacks, Venerable Dise derived so much satisfaction at this accomplishment that a dam had broken inside her being!

The First Sword victoriously raised her Decapitator upwards with both of her arms!

The sharp gleam of metal glinted across the entire ensemble!

"I AM UNBREAKABLE!"

The power of metal served as the last piece of puzzle that had brought Venerable Dise to completion!

Chapter 6547 The Blind Can See

From the moment the Swordmaiden champion known as Venerable Dise Larkinson realized what she had been missing in her pursuit of power, she became complete.

For many years, Venerable Dise proactively sought one challenge after another, seeking to improve her swordsmanship and her survival abilities.

She bravely tested her physical body against numerous different exobeasts, each of which possessed deadly capabilities that could have easily gutted any other human in less than a second.

Dise did not go on these dangerous hunts because she loved the sport like the Hunters.

She solely sought to sharpen her swordsmanship and gain more experience in defeating opponents that were more powerful than herself.

Each time she undertook a hunt, she shed most of her gear, trusting only in the alloy that comprised her greatsword.

It was due to the fact that she was armed with a sharp and resilient metal weapon that she was able to complete one challenging hunt or another.

Although her fragile organic body always held her back, Dise had learned to work around its limitations and find opportunities to make the best use of her formidable blade.

The situation was different when she piloted a mech. Not only was she working on a larger scale, but a machine also opened up a wealth of new options.

From being able to move in more directions to allowing the Unending alloy armor plating to resist damage that would have crippled a fragile human body, piloting a mech always invigorated Dise.

Dise wouldn't have been able to make it so far without the First Sword. Compared to the prior mechs she piloted, Ketis had outdone herself by designing an expert swordsman mech that was nearly perfectly tailored to her swordsmanship and her combat inclinations.

Although Dise's swordsmanship had evolved and changed over the course of her career as a demigod, the First Sword only required minor adjustments to stay in sync with Dise's combat approach.

The First Sword was like a second and vastly more superior body to Venerable Dise.

She likened it as the true body of a phase lord, even if the connection between herself and her expert mech was not permanent.

It didn't matter to Dise. She was just a slightly more special human whenever she was outside of the cockpit, but as soon as she interfaced with the First Sword, her vulnerable human physique became irrelevant.

That was because she embodied a well-engineered mechanical construct capable of outdueling and outfighting many different powerful opponents!

The exobeasts that gave her a challenge when she hunted them on foot could easily be crushed beneath the heel of the First Sword!

Against other mechs and warships, the First Sword was still able to outmaneuver them and strike them down with varying degrees of ease depending on the circumstances.

Dise always felt that she had become an existence akin to a god when fighting with her battle partner.

With every sortie, her bond and understanding of the First Sword grew even further.

Although Dise had gradually increased her complaints about the lack of comprehensive upgrades to her outdated expert mech, there was still an advantage to essentially piloting the same machine year after year.

Dise had reached an unprecedented degree of mastery in controlling her expert mech.

Whereas other Larkinson expert pilots such as Venerable Jannzi, Venerable Joshua and Venerable Vincent Ricklin spent much of their time deepening their mastery of their respective battle partners, none of them were as exacting in terms of skill and control as Dise!

This was no surprise, as Dise had always relied on technique and skill to overcome opponents that were equal or stronger than her expert mech in power.

The better her mastery over the First Sword, the more she could execute her sword techniques, both ordinary and extraordinary, with minimal waste and maximum efficiency.

Over the years, Venerable Dise had regularly managed to defeat her peers in practice spars.

As long as the differences in rank, energy output and resonance strength was not too great, her First Sword was readily able to outduel machines that were a lot stronger and more modern!

All of the fancy new tech and features introduced in the newer expert mechs such as the Phobos, the Lionheart, the Blood Star Mark II and the Greenaxe turned into useless distractions or other obstacles to overcome to the expert pilot that most likened herself to a swordmaster.

While these victories stroked her ego and validated her swordsmanship, Dise still felt inadequate in many ways.

This was because she was unable to defeat all enemies that were equal or slightly stronger than herself.

No matter how much more precise, sharper and more sophisticated her swordsmanship became, she had reached a plateau where further improvements slowed down.

She had to spend months worth of practice and experimentation to slightly make her sword a little more lethal.

Combined with the fact that the boosted growth of resonance strength came to an abrupt end after hitting her bottleneck, Dise became incredibly frustrated by her lack of visible progress!

The more time she spent without making any substantial improvements, the more she began to entertain doubts whether she was as strong as she imagined herself to be. When the reality of her lack of subsequent growth sank in, her mind entertained darker thoughts.

Had the evolution of her swordsmanship taken a wrong turn?

Did she earn the right to feel so conceited about her dueling power when she was unable to confront a phase lord?

Would she become one of the many high-tier expert pilots who would remain forever stuck at their current ceiling?

That last thought haunted her like nothing else. This was one of the worst outcomes for a champion at her level to end up as. Even if the Age of Dawn had rewritten the rules and given mech pilots more opportunities to advance, it still took superhuman effort in order to attain sainthood.

This was the reality to everyone who undertook the most difficult and punishing form of cultivation.

Expert pilots could make do with decent extraordinary willpower.

Ace pilots had to meet higher standards.

Those aspiring to become saints had to prove themselves to be the best of expert pilots. They could never become satisfied with their current advantages and constantly needed to risk themselves to temper and fuel the growth of their willpower and convictions.

Venerable Dise had put in a lot of effort to break through a year after the start of the Age of Dawn.

She actively fought alongside the other Larkinsons of the expeditionary fleet and volunteered for riskier assignments.

Despite the accelerated growth of her resonance strength, Dise personally felt that she sufficiently tempered and mastered her extraordinary willpower.

Her willpower shouldn't be inferior to the likes of Tusa, Casella and Isobel when they triggered their last breakthroughs!

Venerable Dise had also invested a significant amount of time on meditation as well as introspection.

She clarified and reinforced her reasons to fight, which was to protect the Swordmaidens and the comrades of the Larkinson Clan.

Her conviction had always remained consistent, and she made sure that it remained relevant by maintaining her friendships with her fellow Swordmaidens.

They were like fellow sisters or daughters to her. They were weaker, restless and vastly more immature than her. Yet Dise saw pieces of herself in the women who admired her and idolized her as one of the ideals of the Swordmaidens.

How could she not dedicate her life and being to protect them from the nefarious enemies that they were unable to defeat by themselves?

The Swordmaidens did not need coddling. They were more than strong enough to handle any equal challenges.

Yet they were painfully vulnerable against enemies that outclassed them by mass, superior tech and extraordinary power.

Dise had appointed herself as their foremost champion and protector against these vast and nearly undefeatable foes.

Her strength as an expert pilot was not even close to what was necessary to defeat or deter all of those terrible adversaries.

In that sense, Dise had more than enough drive and motivation to pursue greater power!

Yet despite all of these factors, she still remained stuck as an expert pilot!

It was one thing to acknowledge that she was still fairly young compared to other expert pilots and that she still had plenty of decades to go in order to find her breakthrough opportunity.

It was another thing to see even younger expert pilots such as Tusa and Isobel pierce through their bottlenecks sooner than she could imagine!

Why had Dise remained stuck while others overtook her in the race to become the strongest champion of the Larkinson Clan?

This question continued to plague her for months on end.

She spent almost the entire Red Tide Offensive seeking the answer that would quell her doubts, yet none of the battles against the invading aliens gave her any relief!

The swordsman mech specialist never imagined that an impromptu challenge against the projection of a 'genuine' swordsman would deliver her the answer.

How could she have been so blind to such a core aspect of her strength?

As a swordswoman and a mech pilot, Dise had relied on the power of metal to empower herself.

Pure skill was great if she had it in abundance, but without a piece of metal in her hands or around her body, Dise could not even defeat the weakest third-class mech by herself!

It was only when she paired her superior skill and control with the hard power of metal equipment that she could truly bring her potential to life!

The First Sword was not just a living expert mech to her. Now that Dise had begun to recognize the importance of metal, the mech frame sang to her in a way that previous instances of resonance had never evoked!

The Decapitator was more than a mech sword. Dise had always known on an intellectual level that it was a masterwork creation that Ketis had lovingly forged for her fellow Swordmaiden, but how could a mech pilot possibly understand the full significance of this act?

It was only when Dise had opened her eyes to the true power of metal that she truly recognized the special nature and the hidden strength of the Decapitator.

The reason why it was so unnaturally good at beheading other opponents was due to the fact that it was an artifact that surpassed mundane metal products!

Ketis had literally put a piece of herself inside the Decapitator. This not only imbued it with a portion of her own power and intent, but also made it a little more compatible with the element of metal.

Dise had already called upon this power whenever she tried to behead an opponent. She just did not realize the underlying mechanisms and source of power at the time.

All of that had changed today.

Now that the Muscular Swordsman had inadvertently led her to lift the blindness that afflicted her for her entire life up to this point, she finally gained the ability to see how much her life had become intertwined with metal.

Her affinity and intimacy with the Metal E energy attribute were so high that Dise felt as if she was no different from a clown all of this time!

How could she miss such obvious relationships!?

It was only when she had made a fundamental cognitive shift that Dise recognized what she had been missing for so many years.

Everything fell into place.

Having satisfied all of the other conditions to break through a long time ago, her breakthrough after becoming 'complete' happened in an instant!

With more power at her disposal than ever before, her entire life state began to reach a higher level!

Even her companion spirit Respa began to promote to an entity that gained an entirely separate domain!

Forced resonance began to act on the First Sword and the Decapitator, flooding both with the power that temporarily elevated their parameters to the standards of an ace mech!

After years of fighting under clear physical limitations, the unlocking of the power of metal had allowed Dise to fully elevate her willpower to a great height, and thereby amplify the power of any mech she piloted to an even more ridiculous degree!

"I AM THE DUELIST WITHOUT PEER. I AM THE HUNTRESS OF BEASTS. I AM THE MISTRESS OF ALL ALLOYS. MY SWORD SHALL REMAIN FOREVER SHARP AND MY ARMOR SHALL NEVER BREAK. FROM THIS DAY ONWARDS, THE POWER OF METAL SHALL FOREVER FORTIFY MY EQUIPMENT! LET MY MECH SING THIS TRUTH!"

The First Sword glowed with the power and the potential of metal!

A rudimentary Saint Kingdom began to unfold that easily pushed the earth aura generated by the Muscular Swordsman away!

From now on, Saint Dise Larkinson would never allow herself to succumb to the domain of an adversary so easily!

"LET THE BLADE IN MY PARTNER'S HANDS VALIDATE MY CLAIMS!"

Chapter 6548 The Son of the Mountain

There were many differences between expert pilots and ace pilots.

From transforming their rudimentary resonance shields into proper Saint Kingdoms to unlocking the growth of their resonance strength to a much greater height, any expert pilot practically underwent a comprehensive rebirth and evolution from the moment they triggered a second apotheosis.

When Dise Larkinson finally attained her sainthood, what stood out the most to her was that she gained enormous improvement in her ability to sense, understand, reinforce and sharpen the metal under her control.

She was able to take immediate advantage of her newfound sense of metal to gain a far better grasp of what the First Sword and the Decapitator were capable of under normal circumstances.

Saint Dise then proceeded to infuse them with metal E energy drawn from the ambient environment to strengthen them far beyond what was normally possible with hyper technology!

Although the Unending alloy and other metals resisted this forced procedure, Dise's willpower had finally grown strong enough to defy this outcome and impose her own ideal result.

It was far easier for her to do this than other ace pilots due to her particularly strong affinity for the metal element!

With the temporary blessing of forced resonance, most of the actions that normally required Saint Dise to pilot an ace mech could all be applied without any major hindrance while piloting her trusty expert mech and battle partner.

The First Sword had grown enormously when Dise managed to break through. The feedback generated by a mech pilot attaining sainthood was enormous.

Not only did the living mech's spiritual foundation grow a lot stronger due absorbing all of the energies that Dise carelessly released during her momentous ascension, but the very essence of the First Sword became even more aligned the new ace pilot's domain!

This meant that the First Sword was able to absorb and contain far more metal energy than before!

The same applied to the Decapitator mech sword as well!

The giant and gleaming greatsword grew tougher and sharper without losing any flexibility. The masterwork creation practically sang when resonating with Saint Dise's willpower, and actively sought to make itself more useful in any way possible!

Saint Dise became delighted with every new facet that she managed to discover about her expert mech and mech sword.

If she wanted to, she could easily keep herself entertained for days as she patiently examined each and every aspect that she had overlooked in the past.

This was not the time for her to indulge in her newfound sensitivity and comprehension towards metal.

She turned her attention back to the Muscular Swordsman. Ever since he discovered that the expert mech was able to break the hold of his earth aura, he had backed off and patiently gave Dise the time to complete her transformation to sainthood.

Even though Dise was aware that she was not facing a real blood-and-flesh sword cultivator, she still made the First Sword perform a simple bow in respect to the energy manifestation.

The expert mech then turned around and bowed to the source behind her latest and most crucial realization, the Heavensword.

"Thank you for letting me see the truth of my own power. Now that I have clad my will in metal, I shall complete this challenge and beat you at your own game. You better power your energy manifestation up, or else I will easily cut off its head with my Decapitator!"

The power of the First Sword had reached an entirely new level, if only temporary. The current state of the Muscular Swordsman was simply outclassed on almost every level, so he was no longer able to present a worthwhile challenge to the new saint.

It would be too boring to cut down the adversary that had given her the chance to break through without any effort.

The relic weapon apparently registered her request, because the blade that was currently in the hands of the Elegant Swordsman transmitted a powerful pulse of heavenly energy that directly struck the Muscular Swordsman!

It was as if the earth-wielding energy manifestation received a massive upgrade!

His aura strengthened to the point where it was able to push back against the First Sword's Saint Kingdom.

The definition of his appearance improved and his energy signature had multiplied by multiple times. "Let's set aside this boring dance and go all-out! Give me all you got! Show me how a true swordsman from ancient times wields his blade!"

Her urge to duel became stronger than it had ever been in the past. The notion of being able lock blades with an actual representation of an ancient human sword cultivator exhilarated beyond all measure!

This was a rare and unique experience that was almost impossible to attain through other means! Dise did not want to miss out on this rare and precious opportunity!

Her current breakthrough state was temporary. Once she exhausted her reserves, the newly ascended ace pilot would inevitably enter a state of exhaustion. She needed to conclude this fight within this time window in order to end this day on a perfect note!

The Muscular Swordsman seemed to oblige with her demands by not wasting his time. After he fully processed the additional injection of heavenly energy, the Muscular Swordsman let out a silent shout and began to shock and vibrate the surrounding earth energy into his false body! Soon enough, the pieces of rock armor that previously only showed up just before the First Sword landed an attack appeared in a more persistent form this time.

The rock armor segments also began to multiply. They soon began to cover the mech-sized form of the Muscular Swordsman in a suit of pure condensed earth energy that had taken the form of a suit of armor made out of rock!

A runed suit of armor no less!

The rock-clad Muscular Swordsman even conveyed the name of this technique in a manner that transcended mortal means of communication.

Son of the Mountain.

Whatever these runes actually meant, they qualitatively transformed the previously crude applications of earth E energy and massively increased the efficiency and effectiveness of the rock armor!

The copy of the Heavensword went through a similar transformation. Shards of rock condensed around the originally slender blade and began to depict runes that massively strengthened ridiculously large and thick blade!

Collapsing Peak.

At this point, the augmented Heavensword could no longer be regarded as a sword anymore. Instead, it turned into an extremely thick and massive siege weapon that only vaguely resembled a sword!

Its edges weren't even sharp anymore. The Muscular Swordsman had completely given up on relying on the sharpness of his weapon, and relied entirely on the mass of his ultra-heavy weapon to inflict overwhelming blunt impact and concussive damage!

The two duelists couldn't be more different at this time.

The two even exuded completely different auras.

Saint Dise smirked as she readied her machine for a fight that she was bound to remember for the rest of her life.

"Go."

The First Sword boldly took the initiative and charged forward!

The Muscular Swordsman responded by swinging his massive transformed sword faster than Disc anticipated.

If the earth aura was still able to drag down the First Sword's mobility and cause the living mech to move sluggishly, then she would undoubtedly get crushed or expend excessive resources in an attempt to block this devastating blow.

However, the metallic gleam on the First Sword's armor system glowed brighter, allowing the mech to cut through the Muscular Swordsman's domain and shake off much of this debilitating effect!

Like a shovel digging through soil, the First Sword only had to expend a moderate amount of effort to avoid getting bogged down!

Since the expert swordsman mech was originally a fairly fast and mobile machine from the onset, the restoration of much of her capabilities finally granted her a considerable edge in mobility!

The Muscular Swordsman's attack missed!

Yet just as the First Sword attempted to circle around her adversary and attack the Muscular Swordsman from the side, the latter's strike produced another surprise!

After missing its intended target, the rock-covered sword struck the fabric of space, generating a spacequake of sorts that rippled out in every direction!

The First Sword would have incurred significant internal damage if she had remained in her weak state, but her damaged but still functional Unending alloy armor system successfully resisted the quake effect with the help of lots of metal reinforcement!

"UNBREAKABLE BODY!"

Saint Dise practically felt invincible inside the cockpit of her trusty battle partner! The First Sword's armor system had always been a little thinner and easier to break in order to preserve her mobility, but now it was able to withstand attacks and effects that previously would have gotten her in trouble. This was just the start. Saint Dise was confident that as long as she mastered this new ability and raised her resonance strength, she could elevate the defenses of her First Sword much further

beyond the upper limits of a 'mere' second-class expert mech!

In the end, the surprisingly tricky spacequake only caused minor difficulties to the First Sword.

Though the expert swordsman mech ended up stumbling and missing the best timing to launch at counterattack, Saint Dise still pushed through and forced her machine to strike with her newly sharpened and strengthened Decapitator!

The sharp and eager masterwork mech sword swung across space and ended up slicing through much of the rock armor like an axe cutting through wood!

Even though the strike failed to penetrate all the way through, Saint Dise was still happy with this result!

In the past, her expert mech's attacks bounced off the rock armor without inflicting any significant damage!

The Muscular Swordsman channeled additional earth energy in order to close the gap, but it took precious time for him to complete this process.

Saint Dise strengthened her attacks. The First Sword continually circled around her much slower adversary and launched opportunistic attacks that damaged the exterior of the Son of the Earth.

The Muscular Swordsman tried to fight back as hard as possible, but his Collapsing Peak attacks had no chance of crushing the faster and much more elusive First Sword.

At most, the energy manifestation was only able to rely on the secondary effect of this offensive technique and generate spacequakes that disrupted the First Sword's stance and depleted her energy a little faster.

The Unbreakable Body ability was not for show.

While the defenses of both fighters had proven to be fallible, neither side displayed any remarkable offensive capabilities that allowed them to break past the defenses of their enemies and inflict a crippling or killing blow.

If the duel continued to unfold in this pattern, then it would turn into a contest of attrition where the combatant that ran out of energy first would lose the fight.

This was not what Saint Dise wanted!

Her forced resonance state was continuing to move closer to its closing state, so her First Sword

backed off a bit in preparation to launch the extraordinary sword technique since evolving into an ace pilot!

Which one should she employ? Should she go for the classic and highly penetrating Sword of Lydia, or should she attempt a Decapitation Strike that allowed her to evoke a semblance of Ketis' sharpness?

None of them seemed suitable to her anymore. They were all sword techniques conceived in a time where Dise remained blind and ignorant to the power of metal.

They all needed to be reconstructed from the ground up in order to take full advantage of her incredibly high metal affinity.

As Dise gazed at her rock-covered opponent, a new idea spontaneously entered her mind.

She gathered her euphoria, her love for metal and the scattered sayings of Ketis and fused them all into a brand-new extraordinary sword technique that seemed incredibly fitting for this situation! The First Sword slowly raised the Decapitator sword before lowering the blade until the tip was pointed at her target.

The masterwork mech sword then began to absorb more metal energy than ever before! The edges not only became sharper, but the entire blade gained additional extraordinary properties

that brought out the best of what metal had to offer!

As the Decapitator seemed to turn into an ultrasharp sheet of extraordinary metal, the First Sword finally charged directly forward, intending to finish off the Muscular Swordsman in a single blow! "MY SWORD SHALL NEVER KNOW DEFEAT!"

Chapter 6549 Rise of the Swords

This was the final attack run of the First Sword.

The expert mech was still able to keep fighting, but the same could not be said for the newest ace pilot of the Larkinson Clan.

Dise was already beginning to flag at this point. If she was not able to complete this attack, then her forced resonance state would quickly disappear!

As such, she invested all of her remaining power and concentration in a sword technique that she should by all rights not be able to execute so soon after her breakthrough!

The Muscular Swordsman was not content to act as her target dummy.

The energy manifestation responded to the First Sword's predictable attack run by raising his massive Collapsing Peak blade above his head.

The simulated swordsman then proceeded to swing down his massive weapon with such thunderous force and momentum that it seemed that it could shatter an entire mountain range!

The space around the massive rock-covered blade already started to ripple in the passing of this enormous weapon, thereby causing the surroundings to become destabilized!

It was as if the collapse of this mountain precipitated an apocalyptic end to the universe! This was the illusion and sentiment conveyed by the Muscular Swordsman's artistic conception! Even if it was an immense exaggeration of what he was able to accomplish in reality, the artistic conception still boosted the power of his attack while generating other effects that inflicted widespread area damage!

This was the ancient sword cultivator's ultimate sword attack, one that was designed to not only crush through the hardest of defenses through overwhelming brute force, but also pulverize anything that was caught in the surrounding area, thereby solving the problem of highly mobile threats as well as large quantities of swarm-like enemies.

It was an attack that was incredibly powerful and difficult to control, yet the Muscular Swordsman possessed such an excellent grasp on the earth element that he was able to execute this technique with an amazing degree of control!

His attack even went as far as to conjure up a visual manifestation of his artistic conception!

The illusion that Saint Dise perceived a moment earlier actually became a more visible and tangible manifestation!

This was already a sign that the Muscular Swordsman was partially able to wield the power of a god by reproducing a scene that did not originally exist in reality!

All of these factors powered up his ultimate attack even further. Even a tough and resilient ace mech such as the Amphis Extremis would not be able to escape unscathed when struck by such a heavy blow!

Yet the First Sword continued to advance without fear, because Saint Dise invested all of her newfound confidence in the power of metal into this final piercing attack!

Just as the tip of the Decapitator was about to collide against the cataclysmic earth sword swinging down from above, Saint Dise concentrated almost all of her frustrations, all of her hopes, all of her love and all of her willpower into the mech sword that resonated with her heart like nothing else! She began to execute a deceptively simple but incredibly promising new extraordinary sword technique that fully brought out the strength of the metal element!

The new ace pilot thought about nothing else but to shatter every obstacle in her way!

"ONE SWORD BREAKS TEN-THOUSAND LAWS!"

A shining line of silver sheared through space.

In one moment, a cataclysmic collapse of earth had threatened to crash through an entire section of space.

In the next moment, all of the momentum gathered by the Muscular Swordsman dissipated in every direction.

The threat disappeared and the destructive forces melted away as if they had lost all of their backbone.

Every observer became gobsmacked. Even Ketis could not fully register the move that the First Sword performed at the end.

All she could see was the First Sword on the other side of her adversary. The expert mech continued to coast along while slowly releasing the power that had forcefully elevated her performance to the level of an ace mech.

The Muscular Swordsman had been defeated.

The empowered Decapitator had shattered the rocks that made up the Collapsing Peak sword, pierced through the rock armor conjured by the Son of the Earth and directly blasted part of the reinforced energy manifestation that should have been a match against an ace mech!

Ketis had high hopes for Saint Dise after her breakthrough, but she did not dare to imagine that she became strong enough to eliminate this opponent right away!

Would the First Sword be able to annihilate the Muscular Swordsman so quickly if he wielded the real Heavensword as opposed to an inferior copy made out of heavenly energy?

Nobody could say for sure. Such speculation was pointless because only the actual outcome mattered.

Venerable Dise was no more.

Saint Disc had risen.

She, along with her companion spirit. Respa, had taken another major step towards godhood, and became powerful enough to represent the Larkinson Clan on the galactic scene!

A small part of Ketis felt jealous that her fellow Swordmaiden got to break through first, but the mech designer quickly squashed this impulse and genuinely welcomed this outcome.

Ketis would have preferred to praise Dise for her massive success and gush all over her newfound power and abilities, but this was not the time to celebrate the emergence of another Larkinson ace pilot..

The Heavensword still remained a problem.

Saint Dise had unambiguously passed the test and went above and beyond to prove she had the strength to protect Ketis' rights and wellbeing.

However, now that she had overloaded herself in a massive way, she had lost much of her power and concentration. The First Sword no longer exhibited any kind of resonance at all, and had reached her more vulnerable state in many months.

Ace pilot or not, Dise needed to return to the fleet and head over to an infirmary to check whether she had not suffered any physical or mental sequelae after breaking through.

This effectively meant that she was no longer able to remain on the battlefield and resist the

Heavensword if she insisted on converting Ketis into the next Heavensword Saint! Therefore, this positive outcome did not bring as many advantages to Ketis as she wished.

She could have dearly benefited from the protection of another ace pilot, but oh well.

Fortunately, there was at least one other dependable champions by her side.

While the First Sword had successfully vanquished the Muscular Swordsman by utterly shattering all of his earth-based techniques, the Amphis Extremis had managed to gain the upper hand against the Elegant Swordsman in a different way.

Unlike Dise, Linda Cross had broken through a bit earlier and had a bit more accumulation as an ace

pilot.

The Amphis Extremis was also a genuine ace mech that did not rely on temporary enhancements to punch above its weight.

The only issue that Saint Linda struggled with for a time was the fact that her Wrecker Skull was not particularly effective against the Elegant Swordsman.

If the Muscular Swordsman embodied the raw strength of the earth element, then the Elegant Swordsman reproduced the smooth and flowing nature of the water element.

That made it very difficult for a straightforward mech like the Amphis Extremis to land a direct hit on the tricky bastard!

In the few times that Saint Linda managed to successfully slam the ball of her ace mech's extended flail into her enemy, the Elegant Swordsman conjured up an energy barrier that bizarrely took the form of a nighttime lake covered in lotuses to easily disperse the heavy kinetic force! Saint Linda reached an impasse as soon as she realized that the Elegant Swordsman was able to do this as many times as needed without having to worry about running out of energy anytime soon. The female ace pilot of the Cross Clan could find a way to improve the way she wielded the Wrecker Skull to forcibly break her adversary's exquisite defensive technique.

She could also attempt to break apart the elegant and beautiful defensive barrier by wielding a bladed weapon instead.

After all, Ketis had already deduced that this weird water element energy barrier possessed the properties of a non-Newtonian fluid.

If Saint Linda Cross was a genuine weapon enthusiast like her new colleague Dise and seriously wanted to develop her ability to wield an extendable flail to the fullest, then she would definitely

choose the first approach.

However, Linda was not the kind of soldier who cared about such attitudes. She was a practical ace pilot who not only agreed to switch from wielding a sword to wielding a flail as her ace mech's

primary weapon, but also broke from the archetype of a pure offensive space knight by agreeing to mount a pair of shoulder-mounted machine guns!

Though the Crosser ace pilot was not as crass to open fire with the machine guns, she was not above switching her melee weapon in order to gain an advantage!

She did not ask to borrow the sword of one of the Larkinson expert mechs, or request the blade of any other machine for that matter.

Instead, the Amphis Extremis patiently entered into a stalemate with the Elegant Swordsman until a light skirmisher dispatched from the Hemmington Cross hastily approached the ace mech! "Saint Linda Cross! I have brought what you have requested! How would you like to receive your

arms?"

"Toss it over."

"By your command, ma'am!"

The light skirmisher possessed weak throwing arms, but its forward momentum was already enough to toss the old but still functional mech weapon forward!

The Amphis Extremis quickly extended the chain of its flail and swung it in a wide sweep in front that forced the Elegant Swordsman to move further backwards than usual.

The ace mech took advantage of this brief window to turn around and race towards the new weapon

as soon as possible!

The machine even went as far as tossing aside its battle-scarred tower shield!

This surprising action made the Amphis Extremis a lot more vulnerable than before, but Saint Linda

did not care because her machine finally grasped the hilt of a familiar weapon!

It was the old chainsword wielded by her previous machine!

The Cross Clan did not handle its high-ranking mechs like the Larkinson Clan. Master Benedict may have used a lot of expensive resources to fabricate the Amphis Extremis from scratch, but he did not. destroy the original Amphis or strip it for parts!

The old expert mech remained in deep storage in case Saint Linda lost her ace mech and urgently needed a somewhat powerful machine to get back in the fight.

This also included the expert space knight's original weapon, a sword that was attached to a long chain!

Once the Amphis Extremis grabbed hold of the chainsword, it was as if Linda returned to the old days.

She had lost none of the skills and deep familiarity with her main weapon for multiple decades. Even though it was a little awkward for her to wield the chainsword with the arm that was usually dedicated to holding a tower shield, an ace pilot was able to overcome these difficulties with superhuman speed.

What was important was that the Amphis Extremis still wielded its original weapon.

This meant that the space knight became a much more formidable threat by wielding two chained

weapons! After a few near-accidents where Saint Linda's inexperience with this unconventional weapon combination almost caused the chains of the two weapons to tie themselves into a knot, the ace pilot rapidly learned how to keep the chains separate and under her control.

The Elegant Swordsman had little chance to gain an advantage anymore at his current level of strength and skill.

Sure, the Amphis Extremis had tossed aside its protective tower shield, but with two extendable weapons in its arms, Saint Linda was able to control the space around her to a much better degree and eventually allowed her chainsword to cut straight through the Elegant Swordsman's energy

barrier!

Chapter 6550 Satisfying the Heavensword

Two out of three duels concluded in a satisfying manner.

Saint Dise Larkinson secured the most astonishing result.

After many years of struggle, she finally discovered her incredible potential as a manipulator of the metal element, and activated it in such a spectacular fashion that she immediately rammed through her bottleneck and broke through!

The power she displayed and the realization of the might she always dreamt of harnessing in her duel against the Muscular Swordsman convinced everyone that she deserved to attain her sainthood. Best of all, her breakthrough took place in fairly benign circumstances, so the probability that she had become distorted due to an extreme outburst of negative thoughts and emotions were practically nil!

All of this meant that Saint Dise was likely to retain the same degree of stability and reliability as she exhibited during her expert pilot days.

The same could not be said for the likes of Saint Commander Casella Ingvar and Saint Isobel Kotin. Both of them broke through under abnormal circumstances that concerned the higher ups very much.

The Larkinsons paid care and attention towards their only Saint Commander in particular.

No one had forgotten that her cherished brother, Venerable Imon Ingvar, died during an escapade gone wrong.

Even if General Ark Larkinson managed to avoid any blame due to the death of a vital asset under his command, Casella Ingvar was too compromised on this sordid issue and could not accept this objective verdict!

There was bad blood between the two extraordinary mech commanders. It would have been best if the two were placed as far apart as possible, but the needs of red humanity trumped these personal grievances.

The unsympathetic and overworked military strategists that were responsible for propping up the frontlines carelessly assigned the expeditionary fleet of the Golden Skull Alliance and the 77th Warborn Mech Division to the same star system!

Perhaps in the eyes of the Red Three, the Warborn fielded a lot of mech pilots that originally hailed from the Larkinson Clan and Cross Clan.

Since that was the case, they should naturally perform better when fighting alongside their compatriots in the expeditionary fleet!

That logic should have worked under ordinary times, but because of the unsolvable tension between Saint Commander Casella and General Ark, the two mech forces simply chose to request

assignments that put them at least one light-minute away from each other at all times.

That worked, more or less. Saint Commander Casella meticulously fulfilled her duties without complaint. She did not show any sign of abnormality towards the apparent presence of the Warborn in the Viola Magnifica System.

However, many Larkinsons secretly questioned whether the ace commander would remain this way when the native aliens conducted their next large assault.

Once the battlefield became engulfed in chaos, would the Saint Commander truly remain

well-behaved when the battle lines became compressed and the man who failed to take good care of her brother entered her reach?

Nobody could say for certain!

Ace pilots might appear just as human as a random person on the street, but had already crossed the halfway mark towards their journey to godhood.

They had already shed many aspects of their mortality that previously made them weak and vulnerable.

Yet were all traits that supposedly decreased their combat effectiveness truly negative?

The reduction or complete absence of human expressions such as fear, doubt and hesitation had made ace pilots a lot more decisive and fearless.

That was good if they had to hold the line against powerful adversaries, but the side effect was that it also made them more prone to taking radical actions that fell outside of the scope of their objectives!

This was the risk that came with handling high-ranking mech pilots that managed to break through under less desirable circumstances.

In any case, the Larkinson Clan did not have to worry about this risk factor when dealing with Saint Dise.

She was an honorable warrior.

Her conviction was upright and noble.

She had always prized her self-control.

A proper transition from an expert pilot to an ace pilot should not undermine these positive traits, but reinforce them instead.

Saint Dise should be moving closer and closer to the ideal swordswoman that she had always aspired to become!

Under the halo of her unexpected but undeniably breakthrough, the success of Saint Linda Cross became a lot less remarkable.

Unlike Dise who clearly overperformed in the most dramatic way possible, Saint Linda Cross merely met everyone's expectations.

Even if she was a fresh ace pilot who broke through relatively recently and had yet to prove her mettle in a serious battle, an ace pilot who had already stabilized her new condition was still a combatant that far exceeded the combat capabilities of an expert pilot in every way!

Their strength was not only higher, but their ability to adapt to adverse circumstances was considerably better.

Situations that stumped expert pilots would not faze ace pilots because the latter possessed a lot more ways to express their power.

Although not even Ketis expected for Saint Linda Cross to take up her old arms again.

The Amphis Extremis resembled a gladiator as the ace mech had forgone its shield in favor of dual-wielding two chained weapons!

This combination proved too much for the Elegant Swordsman, whose flowing movements and creative attack angles got stifled by the extended and versatile reach of the Amphis Extremis!

That meant that the protectors that stood up for Ketis successfully managed to pass two out of three tests.

The Heavensword, which used to be held in the hands of the Elegant Swordsman, flew free again. The enlarged relic weapon did not make any drastic moves. It merely retracted the heavenly energies that previously comprised the Elegant Swordsman and the Muscular Swordsman before remaining in waiting.

The Heavensword did not make any further action against the Amphis Extremis and the First Sword. This was fortunate since the latter had to withdraw from the field in order for Saint Dise to recover from her breakthrough and give her the rest she deserved.

When Ketis studied the Heavensword from another live feed, she couldn't tell what it was thinking, but she could make a few guesses based on her observations.

The Heavensword was probably the most satisfied with Saint Dise. She was the closest thing to a true swordswoman among the mech pilots.

Over the course of her struggle, she had stepped up by imitating the Muscular Swordsman's method of harnessing the power of an element to augment his swordsmanship and open up new possibilities of attack and defense.

In other words, Saint Dise successfully vanquished her opponent by inheriting the swordsmanship principles 'taught' by the Heavensword!

Even if Dise only copied the principles and did not absorb anything else from the ancient sword cultivation legacy on display, this was already enough.

She could be regarded as a successful graduate of the Heavensword.

The performance of Saint Linda Cross was merely satisfactory. She was not a true swordswoman and never pretended to be one. While she recognized the value of a sword and relied on one to pass her test, she did not imitate the methods of her opponent to do so, but stuck to her own distinct fighting

style.

This satisfied the Heavensword's basic condition of strength. Saint Linda proved with her deeds that she was not weak, and that was enough to earn the weapon's begrudging approval.

There was only one duel that remained unresolved.

Everyone's attention soon shifted to the last protector, and became disappointed at what they saw.

It was not that Venerable Joshua was doing particularly badly. His Everchanger still remained pristine for the most part as the high-tier expert pilot readily took advantage of his ability to regenerate his machine to keep his battle partner in good physical condition.

Yet all of this regeneration gradually exhausted his willpower and began to give him a headache. So far, Joshua had managed to adapt to his adversary's rhythm. He even began to employ his mech's

Heartsword to block a few of the piercing strikes launched by the incredibly swift and elusive Teenage Swordsman, but that was the most he managed to accomplish.

The only energy manifestation remaining in action still stuck to her current strategy engaging in hit-and-run attacks.

The Teenage Swordsman moved like a gust of wind. Her lithe robe form rapidly blurred forward and easily managed to predict and circle around the Everchanger's hasty guard before poking the tip of the copy of the Heavensword into a rear armor panel!

By the time the Everchanger turned around to launch a hastily counterattack, the Teenage Swordsman had already flown out of reach!

This pattern had repeated so many times that everyone had grown numb at the sight.

"Joshua..." Ketis grew mixed after observing the remaining fight.

She felt disappointed, angry and concerned at her husband. She knew him well, so she understood that he must be feeling incredibly frustrated at his continued ineptitude.

He was fighting for more than his own pride! He was also fighting to preserve Ketis' future!

It was the husband's duty to protect his wife. Failing in this task meant that he was too weak to keep his family safe.

Joshua did not want this to happen!

If possible, he wanted to beat the Teenage Swordsman by breaking through like Dise.

This was easier said than done.

There was a difference between his situation and that of Dise.

The latter possessed hidden potential that she easily managed to unlock after realizing her shortcoming.

The former may or may not possess untapped potential of his own, but he lacked the means to draw it out in this difficult circumstance.

Joshua already harnessed the power of life, or else he wouldn't have been able to regenerate his machine.

There may be other aspects about life that he had yet to explore, but he did not think he had overlooked anything big like Dise.

Venerable Joshua realized that he would not be able to trigger his breakthrough by copying her homework.

"This damn Heavensword is too biased towards swordsmanship! Why can't you give me a break and allow my luminar crystal rifle to inflict actual damage for once?!"

His complaint may be valid, but the Heavensword never had an obligation to be fair.

The fact of the matter was that Venerable Joshua and the Everchanger were particularly unsuited to overcome the Heavensword's challenge.

Joshua still tried, though.

He tried to evoke the power of different design spirits. He switched from channeling Trisk to channeling the Golden Cat, Qilanxo, Zeigra, the Illustrious One, Lufa, Ylvaine, Gaia and even the Superior Mother!

Yet none of the advantages granted by this diverse collection of design spirits brought the expert pilot any closer to victory.

In fact, the Everchanger incurred even more damage, as the loss of mobility due to disengaging from

Trisk was too significant!

Ketis was pretty clear why Venerable Joshua ultimately failed to measure up like Saint Dise.

"Your fundamentals are too poor. She sighed.

His swordsmanship was good, but he fell short of the standards of a genuine weapon master.

His versatility was his strength, but it was not omnipotent enough to allow him to respond to any situation.

His state of mind remained susceptible to setbacks, which meant that his willpower was not yet up to

the standard of an ace pilot.

All in all Toshna was simply not ready at this time.

Perhaps his lack of success could be attributed to the underperformance of his outdated expert mech, but this excuse clearly did not apply to Saint Dise!

As the one-sided beating continued to drag on for a few more minutes, the Teenage Swordsman completed her final attack run before her entire form lost definition.

The heavenly energies that made up her shape dispersed before flowing back to their source.

The Everchanger froze in space. Venerable Joshua breathed heavily as he tried to puzzle out why the

Teenage Swordsman had disappeared.

"What... what happened, Ketis?"

"My guess is... the Heavensword has run out of patience. The swordmaster voiced her guess based on her own feelings towards her husband. "You failed the test. There is no point in giving you any further opportunities when you have no chance of overcoming this challenge"

Joshua became devastated as his failure began to settle in his mind.

There was nothing much that Ketis could do for him at the moment. She had greater concerns to deal with at this time!

Now that only two out of three protectors satisfied the Heavensword's demands, how would the sentient artifact evaluate the outcome of this exercise? Would the ancient weapon become satisfied that Ketis at least had two dependable guardians, or would it consider Ketis to be weak for entrusting her safety to the wrong champion?

Nobody could predict how the Heavensword would judge the results! There was too little data on its personality, its behavioral characteristics and its values! The Heavensword could have made everyone's lives a lot easier if it bothered to communicate directly with humans rather than leave everyone guessing with its bizarre actions and decisions. "What will you do next?" Ketis frowned in concern.