

Mech Touch 6861

Chapter 6861 Valkyrie Redeemer Mark IV

Saint Commander Casella Ingvar ultimately approved of the Ferocious Piranha Mark IV.

It was not the most transformative update to the Ferocious Piranha line, but it retained many of the advantages of the Mark III while updating its configuration to the standards of the Hyper Generation.

The results therefore satisfied the most essential demands of the Larkinson Army and the mech market.

Casella should feel happy about that, yet she found it hard to find much pleasure in the release of this long-awaited update.

"I feel rather underwhelmed by this Mark IV." She voiced.

"I don't blame you. My work has long exceeded everyone's expectations on a consistent basis." Ves explained. "I always find a way to make new products that revolutionize their product categories. When updating an existing mech, I devise all kinds of new solutions that significantly enhance the existing configuration. This is most pronounced in the latest high-ranking mechs such as the Dark Zephyr Mark III, the Amaranto Mark III and the Minerva Mark II. When you go from those masterworks to the Ferocious Piranha Mark IV, the differences in quality and commitment are obvious."

Ves essentially admitted that the Design Department did not really do its best to develop the best version of the Ferocious Piranha Mark IV.

Alexa lowered her head. "Our Design Department was overtaken by the Great Severing. If the Phasewater Generation did not meet a premature end, the Ferocious Piranha Mark III would have remained relevant and up to date for at least a decade. Technological development would have begun to stabilize after the human race has gotten a handle on phasewater technology. All of those plans became worthless when the onset of the Hyper Generation ignited a new frenzy centered around E energy radiation and hyper materials."

A new technological life cycle started before the last one had run its course.

The Phasewater Generation lasted much shorter than any other mech generation. This caused a lot of problems for many mech companies, not just the LMC.

Many of the larger mech companies were at least able to replenish their core mech lines fairly quickly. They employed many capable mech designers and were less reliant on individual talents.

The Design Department of the LMC could not keep up. The company was still too young and had not expanded quickly enough. The poor timing of the Great Severing only complicated matters further.

"The Mark IV's are predominantly reactionary mech designs. They are directly developed in response to an unforeseen circumstance. They lack the planning and investment of a proper mech design project." Ves elaborated. "So long as our civilization does not suffer any massive disruptions in the next decade, we should have ample time to properly plan out the development of the Mark V's. We don't have to cram them in the same 2-year timespan and rush them all to completion while doing the bare minimum like we are doing now. Does that satisfy you, Casella?"

"The future is too far away." The Saint Commander replied. "Many people will depend on your Mark IV's to fight the enemies that are pushing us closer and closer to extinction. While I am not particularly overwhelmed by the Ferocious Piranha Mark IV, I can recognize that it would have taken much longer for it to get released if you insisted on devoting your full attention to it. That will end up forcing many mech pilots to remain stuck with their modified Mark III's."

Mech design often amounted to reconciling overblown expectations with the constraints of reality.

Time was the greatest constraint of every mech designer. The more successful ones always tended to be those who completed more work in less time.

Those who could not work well under time constraints had no business remaining in the mech industry.

"Let us proceed with the Valkyrie Redeemer Mark IV." Alexa proposed and began to change the projections to show the schematics and the simulations related to this popular mech line. "Similar to the Ferocious Piranha Mark IV, we have developed an iterative update to the Valkyrie Redeemer. It is split into two editions, one quasi-first-class that makes use of phasewater and one second-class that is mainly targeted towards general customers. It is a hyper mech that predominantly makes use of death-attributed hyper materials to enhance its natural inclinations. It is also a seventh-generation living mech that comes with all of the associated bells and whistles."

The projection zoomed in on the armaments of the Valkyrie Redeemer Mark IV.

"As you can see, both weapons of the Mark IV are unusual. The ranged option of this marauder mech is a fourth generation luminar crystal rifle. What makes this weapon different is that it incorporates Mr. Harry Kaikkonen's ERC luminar crystal technology. Mech pilots can make use of their strong emotions to materially affect the expression of their hyper weapons. For example, as long as they are angry, they can transform this emotion into extra firepower."

Casella looked interested. "The Instrument of Vengeance wielded by the Amaranto Mark III is the first ERC luminar crystal weapon of its kind, am I correct?"

Ves grinned. "That's right. The Instrument of Vengeance is currently the ceiling of what can be done with luminar crystal technology. I have high expectations for Mr. Kaikkonen. He has successfully taken over the responsibility to continue the development of luminar crystal weapons. While he has yet to come up with more design applications, his current one is already useful enough. Using human emotions to enhance the firepower of luminar crystal weapons is like drawing upon free energy."

The only problem was that the performance boost was inconsistent. Humans had little control over their emotions. If they channeled the wrong one in their luminar crystal rifles, they may end up firing weaker shots.

This should not be a major impediment to the adoption of ERC luminar crystal weapons. The mech pilots needed to train themselves into evoking specific emotions that were tied to greater damage output.

Besides, the Hexers who were expected to be the most predominant customers of the Valkyrie Redeemer Mark IV should not have any problems with evoking strong

emotions that were conducive to augmenting the firepower of ERC luminar crystal weapons.

Ves only needed to reference his wife to have a pretty good idea how well the Hexers could weaponize their rage!

He even thought about whether he should commission Harry Kaikkonen to develop a custom ERC luminar crystal pistol for his wife. Given her strong mood swings, she might be able to fire an energy beam that was powerful enough to drill through a mech!

"So the luminar crystal weapons of the Valkyrie Redeemer Mark IV have become a more serious threat rather than a peashooter, is that correct, Ves?"

"It depends on what they are fighting against. The Valkyrie Redeemer Mark IV's are well-positioned to defeat enemy phasefighters. Their effectiveness is not as good when fighting against enemy warships, but they are still able to do a lot of damage as long as they close the distance and use their space suppressors to weaken the enemy vessel's energy shields."

The Valkyrie Redeemer Mark IV needed to remain fairly light and compact. Their mass should be slanted towards the lower end of medium mechs. This meant that the Mark IV could not afford to wield a large and bulky rifle that also required plenty of support systems inside the mech frame.

The same applied to the spear. It was lighter and slender than the weapons wielded by dedicated spearman mechs.

This easily enabled the Valkyrie Redeemer to wield the weapon with a single hand.

"Have you turned the spear into the Mark IV's Ultimate Module?"

Ves nodded. "Yes. The Soultaker Spear is a little bit more special than the Piranha Teeth. The former can unleash an empowered attack that should have a similar effect to battle formations that make use of Helena, but on a much smaller and weaker scale. It will take a lot of time to charge up the Soultaker Spear, but you can massively speed up this process by staying close to lots of dying enemies. The weapon is literally named this way because it feeds off the spiritualities of deceased enemies."

Casella's eyes sharpened. "What about deceased humans?"

"Relax. The Valkyrie Redeemer Mark IV will never mistreat red humanity. The Soultaker Spear can make a distinction between human and alien souls."

To be honest, Ves felt tempted to bend this rule, but he ultimately rejected this setting. He did not want to get in trouble with people who objected to the unsolicited harvesting and repurposing of red human souls.

"Does the Soultaker Spear possess any other advantages aside from its status as an Ultimate Module?"

"No." Ves shook his head. "The weapon has otherwise undergone minimal changes. What has changed is the physical defenses of the Valkyrie Redeemer Mark IV. If you have looked at the designs, you will see that the round shield that the Valkyrie Redeemer previously wielded is absent. We replaced it with the Battle Skirt System. Beatrice Hendrix has made sure to design a slightly thicker version of this defensive system. This way, the Mark IV can enjoy the protection previously covered by the physical shield, but quickly put the modular armor plates away when they are not needed anymore."

"It also allows the Mark IV to wield both weapons in two hands at all times. It is rather debatable whether the Valkyrie Redeemer is a marauder mech or a hero mech." Alexa Streon mentioned.

The Battle Skirt System added a considerable amount of cost and complexity to the mech designs, but it added an unparalleled degree of flexibility.

Not only would the Valkyrie Redeemer Mark IV manipulate its modular armor plating in any shape it desired, it could also borrow the modular armor plates of other Valkyrie Redeemers in order to increase its defenses in a pinch!

Ves saw no reason why the Mark IV should continue to carry around a clumsy physical shield when a superior solution was within reach.

"I feel bad for the mech pilots of the Maiden of Adversity." Casella said in a melancholic tone. "The Battle Skirt System defined this mech model. Now, it is being applied to other machines like the Bastion, the Minerva Mark II, the Valkyrie Redeemer Mark IV and who knows what else."

"We haven't talked about the Bright Warrior Mark IV yet." Alexa supplied.

"Well that too. Is there still a reason for the Maiden of Adversity to exist?"

Ves and Alexa exchanged glances.

"Probably not, Casella." Ves replied. "An elite variant of the Valkyrie Redeemer Mark IV can pretty much substitute for any newer version of the Maiden of Adversity that we can come up with. I don't think this mech line has failed. It will simply live on in all of the mech designs that make use of the Battle Skirt System. Being able to inspire other mech designs to imitate its look and features is another form of success in my book."

"I do not completely understand your argument, but I suppose that makes you the mech designer."

This would not be the first or last time that Ves took the initiative to retire an active mech line. The Maiden of Adversity and other products that had fallen into comparable situations had their places in the mech market in the past, but eventually got overtaken by fresher, newer and more competitive mech models.

Ves was only willing to perpetuate the mech models that had proven to be more relevant and timeless to the mech market and red humanity.

His time was too precious to waste on mech models that had lost their appeal.

"The Hexers will have other products to choose from in the future." Ves promised.

In any case, the Peninent Sisters, the Glory Seekers and the Hex Army should be more than happy with the improved features of the Valkyrie Redeemer Mark IV!

Alexa had already cycled the projections in order to present the Bright Warrior Mark IV.

Chapter 6862 Bright Warrior Mark IV

The Bright Warrior.

The quintessential Larkinson mech.

If there was any mech model that defined the Larkinson Clan, it was the humble but practical Bright Warrior.

It had always been designed with versatility and modularity in mind. The Mark III edition expanded upon this modularity, allowing for a wide range of customization and personalisation.

Bright Warriors therefore came in all shapes and sizes. Mech pilots became accustomed to accessing shopping lists where they could exchange their accumulated Larkinson merits on better armor, new swords, shoulder-mounted missile launchers or jamming-resistant sensor modules.

Their inherent versatility and flexibility allowed many Larkinson mech pilots to adjust their configurations to match different roles.

Some Larkinsons preferred to turn them into defensive bulwarks. These Bright Warriors featured thicker armor systems, stronger azure shield generators and thick physical tower shields.

Other Larkinsons wanted to turn their machines into fire support platforms. The Bright Warriors carried luminar crystal cannons that possessed modest sieging capabilities while external energy cell packs became attached to their mech frames. Upgraded sensors and targeting systems enabled them to launch accurate fire at longer ranges on a busy battlefield.

There were also stripped-down Bright Warriors that featured less armor but stronger flight systems. These machines carried no armaments aside from a sword or a pair of knives. These were duelists and interceptors who were slower than Ferocious Piranhas but much more capable of beating enemy phasefighters in a direct confrontation.

Then there were the Bright Warriors that eschewed damage entirely and converted into support mechs. Even if they carried a pistol or rifle for self-defense, they rarely made use of them as they were far too busy with using remote shield generators to cover ejected escape pods. They also took up the responsibility of countering hostile ECM or conducting field repairs on damaged equipment.

It was through the expansive degree of customization and variation that the Bright Warrior had taken root in the heart of the Larkinson Army.

The Bright Warrior might not excel at a single role in comparison to a specialized mech design, but it was available and convenient.

It reduced the demand for mech designs that fulfilled roles that the existing mech roster failed to address.

Many low-ranking mech designers of the Larkinson Clan had made a career out of designing custom or standard modular parts and equipment for the Bright Warrior platform.

The Bright Warrior also happened to be the mech line that was least prone to becoming obsolete.

When the Hyper Generation kicked off, many Larkinson mech designers had already begun to explore the potential of hyper technology. They developed increasingly more sophisticated and mature hyper modules that could easily be slotted into the Bright Warrior platform.

These days, practically every Bright Warrior mech had already turned into de-facto hyper mechs due to this modularity. That should have lowered the priority to designing the Mark IV edition of this iconic Larkinson mech platform, yet Ves still insisted on including it in the first batch.

He had his reasons for prioritizing the Bright Warrior Mark IV. Making it available first would allow the Larkinsons to immediately fulfill multiple roles much better than before.

The existing Bright Warrior Mark III's could be upgraded into Mark IV's while demanding only modest updates and adjustments to their modular equipment.

The performance increase wouldn't be as big as with the Ferocious Piranha Mark IV or the Valkyrie Redeemer Mark IV, but it would still make a considerable difference over many battles.

"As you can see, the Bright Warrior Mark IV is a straightforward iterative update of the Mark III." Alexa Streon explained to the Saint Commander. "Similar to the previous projects, we have tried to keep the underlying mech frame as unchanging as possible to facilitate affordable and convenient upgrades. The Mark IV is therefore not completely optimized for the Hyper Generation, but we consider this to be an acceptable tradeoff. It is more important to elevate the existing Mark III's to the current generation with minimal delays and complications."

The Bright Warrior was among the oldest and most established staple mechs of the Larkinson Clan. A significant proportion of them originally came to life as Mark I's or Mark II's. They had multiple years of growth under their belt and had grown into considerably capable third order living mechs.

All of that accumulation needed to be preserved. The longer they remained as Mark III's, the more their outdated tech, materials and architecture worked against them. None of the Bright Warrior Mark III's had been designed to fight against alien phasefighters and alien warships.

The Mark IV was not that much better in this regard, but it at least made an earnest attempt to do better.

The native features of seventh generation living mechs and the much better integration of phasewater technology should enable it to survive more battles and defeat more enemies.

"If necessary, the expeditionary fleet can fight by relying on Bright Warrior Mark IV's alone." Saint Commander Casella recognized one of the most important benefits of upgrading this mech model first. "The Avatars of Myth and the other mech legions can easily configure them into space knights, rifleman mechs, swordsman mechs or support mechs as needed. This will greatly alleviate the need for updated mech models."

Ves nodded. "The first batch is meant to address the most urgent needs of our clan and our dependents. The Ferocious Piranhas are best at intercepting alien phasefighters.

The Valkyrie Redeemer is widely used by the Hex Army. The Bright Warrior is the default mech of the Larkinson Army. Once these Mark IV's show up on the battlefield, everyone will gain a lot of confidence in the new machines. The morale boost should be very welcome to the soldiers."

Casella agreed. The Red Tide Offensive had taken a toll on everyone's mentality. The war killed many people, but even the survivors came away with mental scars.

The significance of the Bright Warrior line had grown due to the stress induced by fighting frequent life-threatening battles.

With the Golden Cat as their design spirit, the Bright Warriors never failed to warm the hearts of every member of the Larkinson Clan.

The strong focus on kinship was not just a means to bind the clansmen together. It also helped to give the soldiers purpose and succor. It reminded them what they were fighting for and that they always enjoyed the support of family.

The Bright Warrior mech line was one of the secret weapons of the Larkinson Clan. Outsiders simply did not understand its full value. The Golden Cat was not a useless design spirit.

In an age where human civilization was beginning to collapse around them, a mech that embodied the heart of the Larkinson Clan provided a critical anchor of support and stability.

Alexa continued to introduce the merits of the Bright Warrior Mark IV to the Saint Commander.

"The Bright Warrior Mark IV possesses many of the updates applied to the other two mech lines. It has also integrated the Battle Skirt System, so any mech pilot can flexibly add or remove a surplus of modular armor plating at their choosing. What is truly special about the Bright Warrior is its Ultimate Module."

One of the projections that depicted the Bright Warrior Mark IV zoomed in on a schematic before highlighting a strange sphere embedded into the chest of the modular mech platform.

"This is the Mechanical Heart." Ves said. "It is made out of mid-grade or high-grade life-attributed hyper materials. Its only function is to grant the Second Wind Ultimate Ability to the Bright Warrior Mark IV. When activated, the mech will receive a focused infusion of life energy that is directed towards damaged or failing parts. The hope is that this emergency infusion of life energy will control the damage and prevent the compromised components from deteriorating any further."

Casella raised her eyebrows. "That sounds familiar. Will the Bright Warrior Mark IV's be able to regenerate the damage they incur in the same way as the Everchanger?"

"Probably not." Ves shook his head. "The Everchanger is able to regenerate himself to an absurd degree because of true resonance. In other words, Venerable Joshua is the source behind this reality-defying phenomenon. The Bright Warrior Mark IV's do not enjoy this particular luxury. They have to make do with whatever cultivation the mech pilots have attained along with the growth of the Mechanical Heart. I suppose it is possible that years of struggle and accumulation will spur the development of this Ultimate Module to the point where it can replicate a fraction of the miracle of the Everchanger's regeneration. However, I do not expect anything drastic to happen unless there is outside intervention."

His answer disappointed the Saint Commander. It sounded too good to be true for the Mechanical Heart to possess mystical regeneration properties. Hyper technology and E-technology may have opened up a lot of possibilities, but they still had many limits.

"Is that it?" Casella asked.

"Pretty much. There are other nuances, but they are not that big of a deal. The Bright Warrior Mark IV is an evolution, not a revolution. I think we can save that for the Mark V."

"Understood. While I am no longer able to command the expeditionary fleet, I am pleased that my former subordinates finally have access to better solutions. I just wish that they came out half a year earlier."

"Me too, but there is only so much we can do in so little time."

"Are there any other Mark IV's that the two of you are ready to present?"

"No. That is the extent of the first batch." Alexa responded. "The second batch is at least a month away from completion. The Stingripper Mark III, the Redaxe Mark II and most importantly the Transcendent Punisher Mark IV are being brought up to the Hyper Generation."

These were excellent choices.

The importance of the Transcendent Punisher mech line could not be overstated. Although their numbers were limited, the formidable guns and scarily accurate targeting of the Transcendent Punishers enabled them to inflict disproportionate damage from the rear.

The Stingripper synergized well with the Ferocious Piranha Mark and excelled at whittling down alien phasefighters.

The Redaxe was too slow to chase after most alien phasefighters, but their powerful axes inflicted disproportionate amounts of damage onto fixed targets such as the azure energy shields of energy warships.

There were many other staples that deserved an update as well. The Redlance, the Rigid Wall and the Pacifier could all use updates.

Then there were mech lines that became a lot less relevant in the Age of Dawn. Casella was not quite sure whether it was worthwhile to update the Lucid Rage, the Rigid Spine or the Second Eye.

It was up to Ves and the Design Department to make these decisions. All Casella could do was to share her own perspective on what the soldiers needed.

"So what do you think about the first batch, Casella?"

"They are good, I suppose, but... none of these works are relevant to the Premier Branch." She said. "Is it possible for you to design first-class versions of the Mark IV's? From my understanding, they are already designed as quasi-first-class mechs. How easy would it be for you to remove the 'quasi' word and turn them into true first-class mechs?"

"That... is a good question." Ves said as he put serious thought on the matter.

He and Alexa exchanged another glance before they formulated their own ideas on the subject.

"What you proposed holds serious merit." Alexa, who was far more familiar with first-class mechs than Ves, stated her professional opinion. "However, turning them into proper first-class mechs is not as simple as swapping their power reactors. The Ferocious Piranha, the Valkyrie Redeemer and the Bright Warrior are all mech concepts that are derived from the realities of third-class or second-class mech combat. I am afraid that their barebones configurations will not lend themselves well in the harsh realities of first-class combat. This requires a more thorough consideration."

Chapter 6863 The Absence of First-Class Living Mechs

"I do not understand the reluctance to translate the Ferocious Piranha Mark IV, the Valkyrie Redeemer Mark IV and the Bright Warrior Mark IV into first-class mechs." Casella said with a frown. "It is my understanding that the main difference between quasi-first-class mechs and first-class mechs is how much energy they have at their disposal. Even if there are other differences, it shouldn't matter as long as you put first-class power reactors into the mechs, correct?"

Ves let out an exasperated breath. "It may seem simple to you, but it is actually not. The architectures of those mechs are designed to endure the energy output of second-class power reactors. First-class power reactors are much more powerful, but that also imposes a much higher load on the mech frame. The heat sinks won't be able to absorb and radiate so much heat in so little time. The power lines will melt because they are not built to handle so much current. Many of the parts of the mech frame will not be able to make full use of the much higher energy output, thereby causing them to underperform in comparison to proper first-class mechs. The end result amounts to flawed and crippled 'first-class' mechs."

He understood the Saint Commander's desire to ask for first-class living mechs. This was the most important absence of the Premier Fleet. How could the Larkinson Clan possibly field a new fleet without making use of their own iconic living mechs?

Compared to third-party offerings, the mech pilots or at least the experienced ones vastly preferred to pilot living mechs. It would be great if their existing Bright Warriors or other living machines could get uplifted to first-class versions of the same mech line!

Casella did not give up on this subject. "Those are all technical problems. It is the job of mech designers such as yourselves to make them go away. I do not expect miracles from your Design Department. It is already good enough if you can convert the aforementioned Mark IV's into basic first-class mechs that are stable enough to fight alongside all of those first-class multipurpose mechs. As long as you can do this, I can summon so many skilled and battle-tested veterans from the expeditionary fleet. Their existing familiarities with the quasi-first-class living mechs will massively reduce the learning curve of the first-class living mechs. This should especially be the case if their battle partners have followed them into the Premier Fleet."

The ace commander actually raised a few good points. She did not ask for first-class living mechs that could match the performance of first-class multipurpose mechs. She just wanted the new machines to be able to make contributions in their own ways.

Casella clearly grew excited at this prospect. Her Command Field which recently experienced a growth spurt due to piloting the Minerva Mark II. Her expensive domain therefore made emotions transparent.

That might work to her disadvantage one day.

In any case, Ves and Alexa were unable to meet her expectations.

"The technical problems you spoke of can be solved for the most part, but not in a short amount of time." Alexa Streon stated in a calm but assertive voice. "We are not trying to get in your way, but it is truly not possible to snap our fingers and convert those Mark IV's into proper first-class mechs in an instant. Every assumption that we have applied to those mech designs has to be rethought and retested in order to verify whether the same rules still apply in a higher level of warfare. All of that takes a great amount of time and effort to complete."

Ves nodded in agreement. "This means that developing first-class versions of those mech lines takes almost the same amount of time as designing completely original first-class mechs from scratch. These are big projects that require the full dedication of a design team over the course of half a year or longer."

The ace commander frowned deeper.

"I see. Why are you not starting right away? The sooner you get this done, the faster we will be able to field first-class living mechs that truly belong to our clan."

"We are eager to see that happen as well, but we can't rush." Ves responded while shaking his head. "First-class mechs are the best of what our race has to offer. They are designed to exacting standards as they wield far greater power than any other war machine of this size. Any flaws or mistakes will often be magnified to dangerous proportions due to how much power they wield. If we design a first-class mech, we either do a proper job, or not at all. It is very dangerous to rush a design without taking the time and effort to do it right. Perhaps other mech designers are willing to take the risk, I am not among their number."

"Even in the current climate?"

Ves shrugged. "That is why I have directed you to purchase a batch of commercial first-class multipurpose mechs first. The performance of whatever the mech market has available will always trump any mechs that I design under strained conditions. I am not pleased to resort to the work of other mech designs, but the logic is too strong in this case. We are not ready yet to field our own first-class living mechs. I have to ask you and everyone else to remain patient."

Although the Saint Commander clearly did not like what she heard, she had no other choice than to accept his verdict.

"What are you waiting for, Ves? When will you design the first-class versions of our staple mech lines?"

"I am not sure." Ves honestly said. "I still need to put this matter under consideration. It is possible that I will not design any first-class version of familiar Larkinson mech lines aside from the Transcendent Punisher. If it turns out that we are better off using a handful of first-class multipurpose mech models that can cover the roles of dozens of different specialized mech models, then I will favor the more expedient solution. There are good reasons why the first-raters so love their multipurpose mechs."

Casella frowned in disapproval. "First-class multipurpose mechs also impose extreme demands on mech pilots. They can only be piloted by professionals with A or B-grade genetic aptitudes. You may be able to relax those requirements somewhat with the Carmine System, but the pilots still need to master an excessive amount of skills. The assistance of auxiliary qi cultivation may help second-class mech pilots close the gap,

but it cannot substitute for formal attendance at a proper first-class mech academy. These machines demand far too much from their pilots."

She raised a good point. The manpower requirements for first-class multipurpose mechs were extremely harsh. It was much easier to find mech pilots that possessed the qualifications to pilot first-class specialized mechs.

Most Larkinsons valued the simplicity and affordability of mechs that only focused on doing a single job well. They were accustomed to working with specialized mechs and did not appreciate the hassle of working with much more demanding first-class multipurpose mechs.

Ves did not want to put himself in one camp or another. He wanted to be more objective than that. Since so many first-raters swore by their multipurpose mechs, he felt it was better to keep an open mind and try it out for himself to see what the fuss was all about.

He knew that committing to designing a first-class multipurpose mech would make it much harder for second-class mech pilots to promote to the Premier Fleet, but he could not allow sentiment to overrule sound logic.

"When will you design your own first-class multipurpose mech?"

"Soon, Casella. I cannot give you an exact schedule or anything. I am still juggling a lot of different projects right now. I don't have enough direction now. I need inspiration to design an unforgettable first-class multipurpose mech for our clan."

"Oh. I see."

The lack of inspiration was a big impediment to his intention to design a first-class multipurpose mech.

He just knew that if he forced himself to design such a machine, he would end up developing a bland and boring product that would be lacking in personality.

A mech design that lacked a true soul did not deserve to exist as far as he was concerned.

"We did not call you here to talk about designing first-class living mechs." Ves said. "We merely wanted to introduce the first batch of quasi-first-class and second-class living mechs designed for the Hyper Generation. Do you have any further comments about the Ferocious Piranha, Valkyrie Redeemer and Bright Warrior?"

The Saint Commander spent a bit of time in thought. "I do not have any further questions or comments. I need to see them in action before I can provide more accurate feedback. In my opinion as a mech commander who is highly familiar with the previous editions of those mechs, I think the Mark IV's won't cause any storms, but will still be able to help more clansmen survive. I believe that is the most important gain."

That sounded about right. The goal of the Mark IV's was not to dazzle the enemy and allow the mech designers to earn more accolades. They just needed to keep up with the times and adapt to the changing battlefield.

Just as the meeting was about to end, Ves brought up another topic.

"Casella."

"Yes, sir?"

"It is about time for us to procure first-class multipurpose mechs for the Premier Fleet. I have been holding off this decision because technology is constantly improving. However, now that the Tortuous Scream is less than a month away from delivery, the time for waiting is over."

"Red humanity's industries are also under increasing strain." Alexa Streon mentioned. "The Upper Zones are holding for the time being, but what is happening in the Middle and Lower Zones has already compromised many shipping and supply contracts. Once the native aliens make inroads into our most resource-rich territories, many first-class mechs will become impossible to produce and sell."

"Then we should make sure that we place our orders sooner rather than later." Casella said. "Do you already have any first-class mech models in mind?"

"I don't have any concrete choices, but I can already tell you that we will predominantly procure first-class mechs from the Red Association. As a tier 3 galactic citizen that is in favor with all of its leaders, I do not foresee any problems with purchasing non-experimental mechs. If I have a good relationship with a particular RA mech designer, then I may be able to buy the good stuff."

Casella raised her eyebrows before looking at Alexa.

"Why choose RA mechs? Are Terran mechs that bad?"

"No." The former Terran mech designer responded. "Mechs designed by Terrans have their own strengths and characteristics. They are not necessarily worse than the mechs designed by the Red Association. It is just that they are lacking a critical feature that Ves greatly values."

"What missing feature?"

"Support link technology." Ves answered with a grin. "We are one of the few private organizations that has received an official permit to make use of shield link technology. This is a powerful if demanding piece of tech that is already integrated into most high-end RA mechs. This feature will definitely keep more of our mechs and mech pilots alive."

The Saint Commander became delighted by this news!

She understood the value of shield link technology just as well as Ves.

Casella no longer grew upset about the absence of first-class living mech models. If her subordinates in the Premier Fleet could pilot exclusive RA mechs that enjoyed the cover of shield link technology, then it became much easier for her to keep them all intact on the battlefield!

"Do you also have permission to incorporate shield link technology into your own mech designs?"

Ves nodded. "That's right. This is also a reason why a straightforward translation of the Mark IV's into first-class territory is not advised. As I mentioned earlier, shield

link technology is a demanding piece of tech. It requires a much stronger mech architecture in order to accommodate its demands."

Chapter 6864 1000 First-Class Mechs

Procuring first-class mechs for the Larkinson Clan was the final major step to turning the Premier Fleet into a real fighting force.

Without the mechs, the Premier Fleet mostly consisted of useless combat carriers.

The only vessels that could fight without needing to rely on strike craft were two captured and converted alien hulls.

The first was the converted archeship, which recently came into operation as the Morpheus.

The second was the converted orven battleship, which was still officially known as the Torturous Scream of a Human Dying in Agony over a Span of 46.7 Hours.

Both warships were slated to play indispensable roles in the Premier Fleet.

Yet despite their power and capabilities, Ves and the other Larkinsons still considered mechs to be their primary means of waging war.

A single stealth vessel had good scouting and infiltration capabilities, but the Morpheus could easily get shot to pieces if she ever became exposed.

The Tortuous Scream possessed much more formidable combat capabilities, but her fate was doomed as long as she came under fire by dozens of enemy warships.

Neither vessel could afford to take great risks.

The Morpheus would probably be assigned to low-risk remote scouting assignments. Perhaps the Larkinson Clan might use the archeship to transport stealth units such as the Phobos to an enemy position, but this should be done as little as possible to minimize risks.

The Tortuous Scream would serve as the anchor of the Premier Fleet. So long as she was positioned in the rear and outside of the effective range of enemy warship cannons, she would likely remain intact.

Given the limited roles of these two vessels, the mechs of the Premier Fleet pretty much had to do everything.

When Ves decided to go shopping for first-class mechs, he decided to call everyone that was relevant to the discussion.

He scheduled a meeting in the conference room and invited Gloriana, Casella, Alexa Streon, Kelsey Ampatoch, Klaus Robar-Fulton, Kalister Devos, Tarsa Merovik.

He also brought in Jovy Armalon and Vector Loban to serve as the sales representatives of the different groups and factions of the Red Association.

The conference room therefore became divided into different cliques.

Gloriana stuck close to Ves, naturally.

Casella sat by herself.

Alexa and Kelsey had both taken charge of guiding and mentoring the three new former Terran Apprentice Mech Designers.

So far, Klaus, Kalister and Tarsa had already showed their value by assisting the Minerva Mark II Project and the Final Glory Project in their own ways. Their understanding of archetech and unique Larkinson methods may still be insufficient, but their grasp on the fundamentals was stronger than that of their second-class counterparts.

Due to their common origins, the three Eden Institute graduates had already formed a club of their own. They were unable to integrate into the existing cliques within the Design Department as many other assistants as well as lead designers saw them as rivals.

Everyone chatted by themselves at first before Ves tapped his knuckles against the surface of the conference table.

They fell silent and took their seats. Ves naturally sat at the head of the table with Gloriana sitting to his right.

"Good morning everyone." Ves greeted everyone in a serious tone. "You all know why you are here. The Premier Branch needs to order a batch of first-class mechs. Due to the fact that we have permission to make use of shield link technology under the supervision of the Red Association and the Red Fleet, we are mainly considering the acquisition of first-class mechs that have integrated this indispensable form of high technology. While I am not necessarily opposed to buying mechs designed by Terrans, Rubarthans or other groups, their value proposition must exceed that of an RA mech equipped with shield link technology in order to have a chance of getting selected."

Gloriana spoke next. "Before we begin the selection process, do you have any questions?"

Kelsey Ampatoch raised his hand. "Can't we solve multiple problems at once by designing variants of first-class mechs? We can easily licence a mech designed outside of the RA that meets almost all of our requirements. We can then proceed to design a variant that not only includes shield link technology, but is also alive. The variant does not have to deviate any further from the base model if we want to save time."

The former Rubarthan mech designer made a good suggestion. Variants existed for a reason. Just because the Larkinson Clan had yet to design its own first-class mechs did not mean it was prohibited from designing variants.

"Designing first-class variants is admittedly less demanding than designing original mechs, but it is still a two to three-month commitment." Gloriana replied. "Our manpower is still relatively tight and we are still working on many mech design projects. The time and resources spent on developing living mech variants can be skipped entirely if we purchase ready-made mechs from the Red Association."

"Do we have to purchase the mechs from the Red Association wholesale?" Alexa Streon asked. "The mechers can secretly tamper with the mechs sold to the Premier Branch. They also prefer to produce their mechs through materialization rather than

with more traditional and less efficient superfabs. Such mechs are often clinical and less likely to demonstrate living tendencies."

Ves nodded in acknowledgement. "You are right about that last part, Alexa, but it doesn't matter if we are not making use of actual living mechs. Even if they are alive, I don't really care too much about investing in them. They are a stopgap solution as far as I am concerned. The same goes for the Tortuous Scream. We are using them because we need strong hardware that we cannot supply ourselves for the time being. The first-class mechs don't have to be amazing. They just have to be solid enough to satisfy our needs for a few years. I am confident that we will slowly be able to phase them out when we finally introduce our own first-class living mechs to our mech roster. Does that clarify matters?"

Alexa wordlessly nodded.

Kelsey looked disappointed. He was hoping for an opportunity to participate in the development of living mech variants, as did several other mech designers.

"I think it is important to mention that our first-class production capacity is limited." Gloriana said. "The Premier Fleet does not include a factory ship. While some of the decks of the Tortuous Scream have been converted into workshops and production halls, you should not hold high expectations. The production facilities are barely enough to replenish the mechs that we have lost after a strenuous battle, and even then they may be overwhelmed. Other ships only have workshops, and very few Larkinsons are currently trained and certified to produce first-class mechs. It is not as simple as pressing a button and letting a materializer do all of the work."

Nothing was ever simple when working with powerful but volatile or unstable materials.

The limited production capacity of the Premier Fleet meant that the Larkinsons would have to transfer mechs from outside sources if they needed a large number of machines.

"Can we borrow the assistance of the Bluejay Fleet?"

"No, Mr. Devos." Jovy Armalon responded this time. "Our escort fleet is almost entirely comprised of warships. We lack the support ships that can significantly

increase our production of mechs. Our warships themselves also lack spare capacity to devote too much internal space for production."

"Can't we expand Diandi Base?" Tarsa Merovik asked.

Ves shook his head. "One of the reasons why we want to move to the Premier Fleet is to reduce our dependence on fixed locations. We don't want to invest billions of MTA credits into a first-class mech production complex, only for the native aliens to swoop in and bombard it into pieces."

"There are several ways to mitigate or prevent that from happening, sir." The former Terran female Apprentice was not afraid of speaking up. "You can build a secret production complex that is deep underground or located in the middle of an asteroid belt. Another popular method is to build an underwater complex that can float and relocate at the depths of a planet's ocean. They have proven particularly resistant against orbital bombardment."

Gloriana shook her head in disapproval. "The phase whales and the juregs are but two of many native alien races that are aquatic in origin. There are other races that are good at burrowing underground. They all have their own racial tech that is good at hunting down hidden bases. The only reason why many of these hidden bases have yet to be destroyed is because the native aliens are more invested in snatching our territories than completely pacifying the ones they have already conquered. Besides, even if those bases with production facilities remain intact, it is impossible for them to ship their finished goods across occupied territory."

On this point, she agreed with her husband. The increasingly more dire alien invasion vindicated his aversion to investing in colonial holdings and real estate.

"Any other questions?"

Kalister Devos raised his hand this time. "What is the quantity of first-class mechs that you are hoping to acquire for the Premier Fleet?"

"I can answer that." Ves responded. "The composition of our Premier Fleet is still in flux due to multiple reasons. We currently have about 15 first-class combat carriers in our possession. Each of them can carry 30 first-class mechs, which amounts to a total of 450 mechs. We are also expecting the transfer of a modern first-class fleet carrier from the Eternal Vulcan Empire. This baby alone can fully carry and support 320 first-

class mechs. The sum of mechs we can carry as a baseline is therefore 770 mechs. I have not included the first-class mechs that the Tortuous Scream is able to carry as bunker mechs or in her spare cargo bays."

"Our current target is 1000 mechs." Gloriana directly stated. "We aim to purchase mechs derived from half a dozen or so RA mech models. For every model, we will make sure to acquire enough spare machines that can be used to replace any losses that we incur in battle."

That was quite clever, though they needed to free up enough cargo space to store all of the spare mechs.

1000 first-class mechs represented a lot of wealth. It was not cheap to produce so many machines. It may also be problematic for the RA to produce first-class mechs that relied on rare materials that could only be sourced from the conquered territories.

Nonetheless, Ves believed that the RA should still be able to supply most of the mechs in its catalog.

When everyone was done with asking questions, Ves moved to the next phase of this meeting.

"Before we are ready to browse the RA mech catalog, we first need to determine a direction for our acquisitions. We can't blindly select mech models that look cool or boast the highest numbers. Our choices should be guided by the mech doctrines and strategies that we intend to employ in the Premier Fleet. Saint Commander, you have spent a lot of time puzzling out this stuff. Please share with us your wisdom on this subject."

The Saint Commander smiled sardonically. "While I am an ace commander and participated in many second-class battles, I must state that I have never participated in a proper first-class battle. I have studied numerous textbooks and treatises. I have spoken with Tusa and Stark. I have consulted many other first-class officers and soldiers. I have also explored my ideas in simulation battles. That has increased my theoretical understanding of how warfare is being waged in the Upper Zones, but I do not consider myself to be an authority in this field."

Gloriana nodded her head at Casella. "We all understand your plight. We still value your opinion as you are the designated commander of the Premier Fleet. The first-

class mechs that you select must not only conform to the needs of the Larkinson Clan, but must also synergize well with your Command Field. Your voice holds great weight in this discussion."

Casella looked pleased. "Well, if you trust me that much, then I shall share my opinion on what we should acquire first."

Chapter 6865 First-Class Selection Criteria

After spending a bit of time in the Premier Branch, Casella Ingvar learned a lot about first-class warfare.

She had put a lot of thought on how to shape the first-class mech forces of the Larkinson Clan.

Ves had entrusted her with a lot of responsibility. The Saint Commander understood extremely well that her voice could determine the life and death of many Larkinsons.

That was not the extent of her influence.

Depending on the battles that the Premier Fleet fought in the future, Casella may be able to affect the lives of billions if not trillions of people!

Lesser individuals may feel crushed by the weight of all of this responsibility, but the Saint Commander was no ordinary woman.

Her willpower and her experience granted her the capital to take over leadership of the Premier Fleet and guide it to a brighter future.

Since the Premier Fleet was heavily reliant on its mechs, it became extremely important to select the right ones to serve as its stopgap mechs.

The Larkinson Clan would eventually field its own first-class mechs. It was impossible for a clan founded and led by one of the most prominent mech designers to continue to rely on third-party products.

However, Ves and the Larkinsons had only been developing for a relatively short amount of time. The clan had grown at an astronomic speed, but it was still short on accumulation.

The Saint Commander was confident that the Design Department would sort it out eventually.

In the meantime, she needed to do a good job by guiding the selection process and make sure that the Larkinsons purchased the mechs that fit their mech doctrine and martial traditions.

"Let me begin by describing the kind of force the Premier Fleet should be." Casella began as she stood up and addressed the mech designers in the conference room. "According to our patriarch, the Premier Fleet must fulfill two distinctive objectives. First, it must be a sharp weapon that can be used to inflict harm against our enemies, most particularly the native aliens. Second, it must serve as the mobile headquarters and home base of the Larkinson Clan. Everyone should be clear that the Premier Fleet is clearly modeled after the expeditionary fleet."

Multiple heads nodded.

"We do not have to worry too much about fulfilling the second objective for the time being." Casella continued to speak. "The expeditionary fleet already hosts the bulk of our core members. Even if it is still a second-class fleet, it is not in imminent danger. It makes much more sense for us to focus on fulfilling the first objective to the best of our ability. We must build up the framework of a strong first-class mech force first before thinking about expanding it with non-military assets."

Ves nodded in agreement. "It is really hard to acquire first-class starships under the current climate. Every shipyard is busy with producing starships for internal consumption. The war has also disrupted a lot of shipping lines, making it harder to obtain the bulk goods needed to construct large hulls. Our own two shipyards are working hard to produce more first-class starships, but they are facing increasing production delays due to shipping disruptions."

The message was clear. The Premier Fleet would not be expanding anytime soon. The Larkinsons needed to cherish the hulls that were already in their possession and prevent them from receiving any harm.

This limited how aggressively the Premier Fleet could wage its battles. Its mechs needed to deploy further away from their motherships.

"So our primary goal should be clear. We must forge the Premier Fleet into a strong mech-based fighting force in a short amount of time. Since we lack strong territorial holdings or colonies that can support a large population and local industries, we also have to make sure to minimize our attrition as much as possible. This means that we must field mechs that are durable, reliable and easy to repair and maintain. I know that the last two demands are difficult to satisfy when it comes to first-class mechs, but we should do our best to reduce our reliance on third-party facilities."

She was right. In this day and age, it became more vital than before to ensure that the Premier Fleet and its mech forces remained as self-sufficient as possible.

"We shouldn't purchase mechs that are too exotic," Gloriana surmised. "There are many powerful mechs that rely on rare strategic resources that are difficult to source or intricate tech that is difficult to reproduce outside of specialized production facilities. Such mechs often deliver superior performance in order to justify their greater expensive and more stringent demands. While it would be nice to have them at our disposal, if we cannot maintain them as they get damaged or replace them if they are broken, then it is better to forgo them entirely."

The Larkinson Clan already suffered such a case when it came to Solus Gas. The valuable exotic gas possessed amazing properties that enhanced the concealment properties of anything that was impregnated by the substance, but its supply had become cut off after the Torald Middle Zone fell to the invading aliens.

The good news was that the Larkinsons managed to harvest and stockpile an abundant supply of the unique gas.

It should be enough to last for a long time, but only if the Larkinsons rationed it carefully.

For the time being, Ves was only willing to expend Solus Gas on high-ranking mechs, stealth vessels and possibly a handful of starships.

If red humanity was not able to retake the Torald Middle Zone anytime soon, then Ves might have to restrict the usage of Solas Gas to supporting the expert mechs and ace mechs that already integrated the material.

"My next demand is that the first-class mechs that we are looking to procure must be easy to adopt without needing to take any special steps." Casella spoke. "There are many complex products on the market that require additional setup and exploration in order to serve their customers well. We don't have time for that. It is not worthwhile for us to invest too much in the subsequent development of our machines if they are only meant to serve as stopgap mechs."

Such products were not that common in third-class and second-class mech markets, but they were much more prevalent among first-raters.

Customers in first-rate states always had greater demand for customization and personalization. Mech companies played into this demand by making their mech designs more open and easy to adjust.

The Saint Commander then proceeded to share her final demand. "Lastly, the mechs that we must purchase should ideally score well in terms of defense and mobility. It is more important to keep our forces alive than to defeat our opponents. We may even choose to withdraw from a battlefield in order to cut our losses. It will do our clan little good to win a battle by sacrificing 50 percent of our mechs."

Tarsa Merovik raised her arm. "Shield link technology and Dragon Scales should make our mechs much harder to eliminate than other first-class mechs. Is it not wiser to put more emphasis on offensive power in our selection? Killing our enemies quickly also helps to preserve our numbers."

"Your words have merit, Miss Merovik. The two solutions that you have mentioned can significantly increase the survival rate of all of our mechs. However, I do not expect that the Upper Zones will remain prosperous for long. If the Red Tide Offensive continues at its current pace, it will become much harder to acquire first-class mechs and manpower in the coming months and years. We must conserve the assets and manpower that we already have. It is for this reason that our mechs must have a strong capital to survive any storm, especially when my Command Field is not available for whatever reason."

The Saint Commander possessed a lot of confidence in her ability to keep most of the mechs under her command alive, but she knew better than to assume that she would be available all of the time.

Even if she was able to Commandeer and Enfeoff all of the first-class mechs, they could still be taken down when attacked by a much larger enemy force.

Attrition warfare was the greatest weakness of the Premier Fleet, but Casella was determined to defy the efforts of the native aliens to grind the Larkinsons down.

The Saint Commander answered a few more questions before she decided to move on to the next step.

"Now that we have a clearer idea on what sort of mechs our clan should field, let us move to exploring the RA's mech catalog. Even if we leave out the mechs that do not conform to our criteria, we are still faced with thousands of viable options. We need to impose additional criteria in order to make a more targeted selection. Do any of you have any suggestions on what we should look into first?"

Alexa made a suggestion. "We should look into mechs that can intercept alien phasefighters. Eliminating the enemy strike craft is always a necessity when fighting against the native aliens. We have much more room for maneuver if we are able to suppress or eliminate the enemy phasefighters. We can look into a different mech model to fight against enemy warships."

"Agreed." Casella smiled. "A first-class multipurpose mech that is good at defeating alien phasefighters must be fairly light and fast. Their maneuverability does not have to be excellent, but their straight-line acceleration performance must be good in order to catch up to the alien craft. Long-ranged weapons are dispensable as their effectiveness against alien phasefighters have always been questionable in isolation. Their ranged armaments should perform well at shorter ranges. They must also have strong enough melee combat capabilities to quickly break down enemy azure energy shields if they are able to get close enough."

The Red Association designed many mechs that fit this particular set of criteria. The mechers themselves recognized the importance of fielding mechs that fared well against alien phasefighters.

The enemy strike craft developed so rapidly in the past few years that they had become a credible threat to red humanity. No human force dared to ignore them anymore as they could do a lot of damage if left unchecked.

After browsing the catalog for a few seconds, Casella highlighted one of the top listings.

Surprisingly enough, the mech she choose to display on the main projector was a beast mech as opposed to a humanoid mech.

The first-class multipurpose mech resembled a rather light and slender dragon that possessed stiff and slightly oversized wings.

While the machine fell under the medium weight classification, it was obviously on the lighter end due to its relatively slender mech frame.

"The DFN-72CEG Dracoloid." Casella recited. "As you can see, it is a beast mech that is designed for mobility and interception. Its armor system is not that impressive, but it is partially able to compensate for its lacking physical defenses by mounting a serviceable azure energy shield generator. It mounts 4 compact gauss guns, 2 plasma guns, and a flamethrower in the head. It can also grapple and tear apart foes with its claws or teeth."

"Is that it?" Klaus looked a little confused.

First-class multipurpose mechs generally mounted more weapon systems.

"The armaments do not sound impressive, but they are quite powerful despite their compact sizes. The gauss guns are able to fire a variety of high-end ammunition. The plasma guns can be charged to launch more powerful plasma bolts. The flamethrower shouldn't be underestimated either as it can be loaded with high-grade propellants that can rapidly erode transphasic energy shields and transphasic armor as long as they are laced with a small amount of phasewater."

"The weapons are just enough to kill alien phasefighters." Ves said with satisfaction. "It doesn't appear that these dragon mechs are good for much else, but that is okay. Their mobility is their strongest advantage. Few alien phasefighters should be able to outrun these fast machines."

Chapter 6866 Dimensional Storage Technology

[Prev Chapter](#)

Next Chapter

6866 Dimensional Storage Technology

General first-class multipurpose mechs needed to possess rounded attack capabilities in order to handle a variety of enemies.

Their versatility was a core part of their strength. They should never end up helpless when they faced opponents that they were not supposed to fight against.

The DFN-72CEG Dracoloid contradicted this prevailing trend.

Its mech frame integrated 'just' 7 ranged armaments. Each of them were not that big aside from the flamethrower module installed inside the throat of the dragon mech. Yet each of them were far more powerful than their modest sizes suggested.

As Ves and the other mech designers read the spec sheet of this first-class multipurpose mech, they all became thoroughly impressed.

The Red Association never joked around when it came to its own mechs.

The mechers already imposed standards onto any mech designed for sale. They demanded much higher standards when it came to the mechs that their own soldiers may depend upon to defeat their enemies!

"The Dracoloid is clearly a multipurpose mech designed for close to mid-ranged superiority." Alexa Streon analyzed. "Its gauss guns can be used to shoot against distant targets, but their models and the dragon mech shape makes it difficult to maintain accuracy and precision at longer ranges. Their power is also rather low. What is good about them is that their firing rates are faster than other gauss weapons. Their ammunition reserves are also high. The guns are all fed by dimensional magazines that can fit 15 times the quantity of rounds than they could normally accommodate. Of course, these dimensional magazines are costly and difficult to replace."

"Do we possess the production method and facilities to produce our own dimensional magazines?" Ves asked.

Jovy answered the question. "Dimensional storage technology is an older and more established form of high-technology. It predates the Phasewater Generation and can be produced without phasewater, although the process is much harder and the materials are far more troublesome to procure. The availability of phasewater has allowed those who mastered this tech to simplify and expand the production of small-to-middle-sized dimensional containers. Research teams are currently working to develop a means to turn structure-grade or hull-grade superdimensional matter into enhanced versions of dimensional containers."

"The production method of dimensional containers should not be difficult to acquire." Alexa said. "Many first-class powers have mastered one variation or another. You can exchange it from one of the Red Three or the first-rate colonial superstates. However, do note that if we attempt to produce dimensional containers ourselves, our efficiency will be much lower. We will not be able to scale up our production, and the cost of production will be at least twice if not thrice as great. The same applied to dimensional heatsinks."

Ves dismissively waved his hand. "I don't really care about whether we will have to pay more to produce these gadgets ourselves. We need to be self-sufficient. Dimensional containers are too useful. If we are cut off from established human industries, our mechs will need to utilize smaller weapons or dedicate more capacity to ammunition storage if we don't have the ability to produce our own dimensional magazines."

"The Devos Ancient Clan is more than willing to share this tech to the Larkinson Clan in exchange for light concessions." Kalister Devos offered.

Even if he had formally cut off his loyalty to the Devos Ancient Clan, that did not mean he lost all of his affection for it. He believed that it was best if the Larkinsons and the Devosans formed a mutually beneficial alliance.

"That will not be necessary." Jovy interrupted with a light cough. "Dimensional storage technology used to be a much more exclusive form of high technology in the past, but the Phasewater Generation has made it much more common. I can make a promise on behalf of the Survivalist Faction that if the Larkinson Clan ever places a large order of mechs that is equipped with dimensional magazines or dimensional

heatsinks, we will provide textbooks, manuals as well as a basic set of production machines to produce your own replacements."

Gloriana's eyes shone with enthusiasm. "Our clan accepts this deal!"

Naturally she would do so. Dimensional magazines and dimensional heatsinks sounded far too useful to leave aside.

Even Ves looked forward to having this tech for himself. It would allow for high-end mechs to drastically expand their ammunition. It could also allow mechs to store their handheld weapons inside dimensional pockets.

Dimensional storage technology was one of the key reasons why first-class mechs were so much more powerful than their second-class counterparts.

The price to produce these dimensional containers was also excessive. Even if the use of phasewater was able to substitute for more expensive materials, the other requirements remained so onerous that it was impractical to apply this tech to second-class mechs.

The mech designers continued to study the Dracoloid model. With the help of dimensional magazines, the dragon mech relied on its gauss guns as its primary source of damage.

Their accuracy suffered when they launched their rounds at their highest firing rate, but this also boosted their damage output. This was a particularly effective move at closer ranges.

"The plasma guns are chargeable." Kelsey Ampatoch noted. "There are only two of them, but they are especially designed to charge up to a high limit before releasing powerful plasma bolts. Due to this design choice, their muzzle velocity and accuracy are rather poor, but their considerable power more than makes up for that. Two hits at maximum charge can probably overload the azure energy shields of many alien phasefighter. The plasma guns can also inflict considerable damage at warships with every salvo, though their firing rates are so low that they are not that effective against such targets."

The plasma guns were the heavy hitters of the Dracoloid model. They sacrificed firing rate and long-ranged accuracy for pure power. They excelled at overwhelming defenses through hard power.

"The flamethrower is the most special weapon of the Dracoloid." Ves shared his own opinion. "It is really a brilliant piece of engineering. According to the documentation, when the Dracoloid bites a chunk of transphasic alloy, it can actually swallow it. The resulting alloy can rapidly be broken down inside the dragon mech's 'stomach', thereby merging a part of the phasewater into the propellant. When the Dracoloid finally releases its breath, the additional phasewater will drastically increase any damage inflicted onto transphasic defenses."

This was the true killer of the Dracoloid model as far as Ves was concerned!

This gimmick was so powerful that it could easily enable the Dracoloid to snowball and continually increase its killing efficiency when fighting against multiple phasefighters.

As long as the mech pilot was skilled and brave enough, he could command his machine to continually bite and breathe fire at one target after another.

Hundreds of Dracoloids could easily melt apart a swarm of alien phasefighters once they got going!

"The Dracoloid model has an optimal upgrade." Jovy mentioned the Larkinsons. "If you are willing to pay additional MTA credits and phasewater, we can replace the default propellant canister with a dimensional propellant canister. It will be able to accommodate 5 times as much flammable liquids than normal. Unfortunately, it is difficult for us to raise this ratio due to the size of the container and the volatility of the dangerous propellant. The dimensional canister should still give the Dracoloid enough opportunities to release a fire breath to last an entire battle."

The extra cost did not matter too much to Ves. The Larkinson Clan was still loaded with money and it was not short on phasewater either.

Even if the Red Association wildly overstated the prices for the Dracoloid and the optional upgrades, it did not matter because Ves would rather have tangible combat power than intangible wealth in his hands.

As the Larkinson mech designers continued to study the specs of the dragon mech, Klaus Robar-Fulton detected another powerful feature.

"There is also an afterboost setting to the flight system of the Dracoloid model. When activating 'Rush Mode', it will expend energy 10 times faster than normal, but accelerate 3 times faster. It can only be activated once per deployment, and after it has run its course, the flight system will incur damage. The dragon mech will have to be repaired after battle."

Being able to accelerate 3 times faster for a small interval of time could be a crucial game changer!

However, the fact that the Dracoloid's flight system became impaired after the Rush Mode came to an end did not sit well with Ves.

"This is one of the other reasons why I have taken an interest in the Dracoloid model." Saint Commander Casella stated. "Our interceptor mech must be faster than all of the other mechs of the Premier Fleet. There are light mechs that may be faster than this medium dragon mech, but they are too flimsy and fragile to endure the rigors of high-intensity battles. The Dracoloid is a compelling alternative as long as they are not undertaking independent missions. The Rush Mode may sound like a double-edged sword, but only in the hands of others. The Dracoloids will not compromise their flight system when they fight under my command."

Ves widened his eyes in realization!

"Of course! Dragon Scales! When you activate this key resonating material, you can boost the physical defenses of every mech by at least 3 times in the case of Knights, and 5 times in the case of Vassals! This defensive enhancement is all-encompassing. It not only affects external armor plating, but also internal structural components. More importantly, it protects against all forms of damage no matter whether it is kinetic or thermal. So long as your Commandeered or Enfeoffed Dracoloids enjoy the protection of your Dragon Scales, they can unscrupulously keep their Rush Mode active!"

He made another important realization. Due to the protection offered by Casella's true resonance as well as the effects of Dragon Scales, overheating became a non-issue for the mechs she empowered!

"Rush Mode increases the energy consumption of the transphasic flight system of the Dracoloid by at least an order of magnitude." Jovy Armalon pointed out. "However, the energy reserves of the Dracoloid are still generous enough to be able to support its continued activation during the entire approach phase. Your mech pilots do not have to be frugal about its use at all so long as the battle does not drag on for multiple hours. What is even better is that the protection that you provide can allow the Dracoloids to forcibly override the limit of one activation per battle. After all, there is no reason to keep this limit if the dragon mechs effectively incur no damage."

What a wonderful synergy!

Ves did not forget that Casella's Command Field also improved the mobility of all of the empowered mechs by a lesser but still respectable margin, which meant that the Dracoloids already moved faster without relying on this Rush Mode!

He finally understood why the Saint Commander favored this first-class multipurpose mech over others.

Compared to other mechs that were mostly humanoid in shape, the Dracoloid was deliberately designed with mobility in mind. The specific shape of the mech was highly optimized for forward acceleration and interception.

This was very necessary for mechs assigned to kill alien phasefighters. The latter possessed an advantage at mid range, while the former possessed an overwhelming advantage at close range.

This meant that as long as the Dracoloids were quickly able to close in on the enemy phasefighters, the alien strike craft stood no chance!

They would get massacred in quick order!

More and more mech designers made the same realization. They all fell in love with the Dracoloid.

It was already a strong multipurpose mech when used for interception and screening purposes.

When everyone thought about how well the Dracoloid's configuration synergized with the Minerva Mark II, they could scarcely wait to unleash these dragon mechs onto their alien foes!

Chapter 6867 HEF-Z16 Totori MAXXX

Ves always had a good awareness of the capabilities of Casella's Command Field.

He knew what she could do, but that did not necessarily mean he had discovered the greater potential behind her set of abilities.

Even he had not imagined that Casella would be able to use the combination of her Command Field and Dragon Scales to amplify the performance of a first-class multipurpose mech like the Dracoloid to such an extent.

"It is rather coincidental that Dragon Scales synergizes so well with a dragon mech called the Dracoloid." Gloriana mirthfully commented. "Are they related to each other?"

"That is unlikely." Jovy shook his head. "Dragon Scales is a resonating alloy that was originally designed to assist drone mechs rather than command mechs. Dracoloid is a much more recent product designed by Master Ziri Crenshaw of the Mech Supremacist Faction, who you may better know as the Dragon Queen."

Several people's expressions changed at the mention of this name.

The Dragon Queen was one of the more eccentric mech designers of the industry. She was famous for being nuts about dragons. She loved the mythical creatures so much that she had dedicated her entire life and career to designing dragon mechs.

Although her obsession was rather extreme, she knew how to design dragon mechs better than anyone else.

"The Dragon Queen led the design project that resulted in the Dracoloid." Gloriana proudly mentioned as if she had a stake in it. "She is also responsible for developing the interesting flamethrower and the mechanism that enables the dragon mech to eat transphasic alloys to empower its fire breathing capabilities. I am already beginning to

consider whether we should invite her to help us design the Promethea Mark II Project."

"I don't think that is a good idea." Ves quickly shared his own thoughts. "Saint Isobel Kotin is a rifleman mech specialist who has only made use of humanoid mechs in her career. A dragon mech fights much differently from what she is accustomed to. Much of her marksmanship skills do not translate well in a beast mech. Also, dragon mech configurations are best at close to mid-ranged combat. We are planning to position the Promethea Mark II as a mid-to-long-ranged asset, specially made to burn down enemy warships and phase leaders alike. Putting Isobel in a dragon mech that is similar in nature to the Dracoloid is like forcing a trained sniper to fight with her fists."

"Not all dragon mechs are close combat specialists." Alexa commented. "There are larger and heavier mech configurations that are designed as mobile artillery platforms. By sacrificing their ability to wield external equipment like humanoid mechs, they often boast superior mobility, armor and room for weapon modules."

Ves shook his head. "That is great, but the Promethea's mech concept has worked fine for Isobel. She wouldn't have been able to advance to the rank of ace pilot so quickly if that was not the case. I will not rashly try to upend her entire combat system and turn the Promethea into a dragon mech. End of discussion."

With that distraction out of the way, the discussion soon went back on track.

Saint Commander Casella Ingvar had voiced a clear preference for the Dracoloid as the interceptor of the Premier Fleet. Everyone could see why she favored this dragon mech.

They spent a bit of time looking for alternatives. It was not a good idea to prematurely pin their hopes on the first mech model that caught their fancy.

Many of the mech designers found numerous first-class multipurpose mech designs that offered similar value to the Dracoloid.

However, these humanoid mech models lacked the recklessly powerful Rush Mode that could drastically amplify their mobility.

They also lacked a trump card as awesome as the devastating short-ranged transphasic flamethrower weapon system.

While there were mechs that did possess powerful armaments that could pack a mean punch, they were either too heavy, too demanding or too exotic.

That did not necessarily disqualify them for use. Many RA mech units eagerly adopted these models.

Some of the better ones even maintained a mech ecosystem that worked well when fighting alongside other mechs of the same system.

However, Ves had no interest in getting locked in an exclusive mech ecosystem. It was easy to adopt one, but difficult to abandon it later on. The more powerful the ecosystem, the greater the price of quitting.

The Dracoloid was thankfully free of such schemes.

It was for this reason and more that the gathering concluded that it was their best choice.

"Thank you for affirming my proposed mech model." Saint Commander said with a smile. "The Dracoloid is an excellent interceptor machine. It may be overly specialized for this role, but we are already accustomed to this. The Dracoloid can still be used to fight against warships and fixed fortifications, though it will not be able to perform as well against these enemies. We need to select another multipurpose mech that primarily excels at outputting accurate firepower at longer ranges."

"Do you have any suggestions, Casella?" Ves asked.

Casella briefly smiled. "I have already browsed the catalog and bookmarked a dozen or so that have caught my interest. However, I do not think it would be conducive to this discussion for me to voice all of my preferences. It may be better for you to browse the catalog yourself and think about which ones best align with our needs. I can tell you later if your choice is on my shortlist."

That sounded quite thoughtful of the ace commander. She probably did not want everyone else to do nothing else but nod their heads and say yes.

By withholding her opinions, she was forcing all of the gathered mech designers to use their brain power and judgment.

Ves turned to one of the new Apprentices of the Design Department. "Tarsa."

"Uh, yes, sir?"

"You have taken the time to browse the RA mech catalog. Give me a recommendation. Which mech has earned your appreciation?"

The female mech designer looked nonplussed for a moment, but she quickly adjusted herself and transmitted her choice to the central projector.

"I think that the HEF-Z16 Totori MAXXX is a viable choice for a ranged superiority platform. As you can see, it is a larger and more massive multipurpose mech than the Dracoloid. What stands out to me is that it features a more even balance between firepower, defenses, and mobility."

Several people's expressions turned weird when they read the description of this humanoid multipurpose mech.

"Interesting name." Ves commented.

"That is an understatement." Gloriana muttered. "I can already tell that a boy was in charge of this design project."

Tarsa Merovik ignored the discussion on the naming of the mech. "The Totori MAXXX is defined by its weapons systems. At close range, it wields a flexible plasma whip and is mounted with 3 integrated Arc-Pulse CIWS that excels at intercepting ordnance... or nearby strike craft. At mid-range, much of its mech frame is dedicated to housing the formidable integrated MAXXX Plasma Stream Cannons that can fire devastating streams of hot plasma. At long range, it wields a single ULTRAMAXXX High-Velocity Mass Driver that is designed to function like a handheld siege weapon. Its hit rate against small dcraft is not high, but it is much

easier to land shot at larger and less maneuverable targets. Oh, the mech also boasts a pair of shoulder-mounted missile launchers."

"..."

For a moment, nobody said anything. They were all taken aback by the... eccentric concept and branding of the multipurpose mech.

"I concur with Gloriana." Alexa broke the silence. "The lead designer of the Totori MAXXX is most definitely male."

"Does he really need to use 3 X's for the MAXes?" Ves asked while scratching his head. "A single X already does the job."

"Perhaps he thinks that it is not extreme enough for his liking."

After the mech designers got over the odd naming scheme, they began to analyze the design for its strengths and weaknesses.

Gloriana most definitely had a lot of opinions about the design. "This mech is too loud. It has an abundance of power, but distressingly little finesse. Look at how the bulky MAXXX Plasma Stream Cannons and its support systems take up so much capacity. The firepower of these weapon systems are admittedly high, but their resource consumption is also high. The Plasma whip is a rather interesting weapon, but it is too unconventional and requires dedicated training to master. The most excessive weapon of all is the ULTRAMAXXX High-Velocity Mass Driver. It is long, massive and unwieldy. It is excellent at damaging large targets at longer ranges, but it is deadweight when used against anything smaller, lighter and faster."

"I think that is an acceptable tradeoff." Ves opined. "The Totori MAXXX is clearly designed to fight like a mobile artillery mech. The mass driver is a pure siege weapon and should only be reserved against big enemies. The other weapon systems are much more effective against alien phasefighters and comparable enemy units. In fact, the MAXXX Plasma Stream Cannons are probably its best all-round armaments. They can inflict high damage against enemy warships, but can also be used to melt apart enemy phasefighters with reasonable accuracy at mid range."

Alexa began to frown. She clearly did not like the configuration of this multipurpose mech model.

"The Totori MAXXX is weakest at close range. It will suffer when it is overtaken by enemies that have rushed forward. The plasma whip is an interesting weapon system. Its enhanced reach makes it easier to strike enemy phasefighters, but it is lacking in efficiency and penetration power. I think it is better to replace it with a more generic plasma sword."

"Good suggestion. Any other comments?"

"This is clearly a multipurpose mech that is good at long-ranged bombardment, but probably needs the protection of other friendly units to fend off enemies at close range. We do not necessarily have to address its flaws as long as it can stably work together with other units."

Ves rubbed his hairless chin in thought. "Hmm... I am inclined to ignore all of the multipurpose stuff and purely treat it as a ranged gun platform. It is not as if the native aliens are fielding mechs of their own. Their phasefighters hate fighting at point-blank range."

"Do not forget about the cosmopolitans, sir." The Saint Commander warned the patriarch. "Saint Stark has already fought against cosmopolitan mechs. The traitors understand that their erstwhile alien allies are not good at melee mech combat, so they gladly offer their services to the alien fleets."

Multiple Larkinsons scowled when they got reminded of the treachery by humans.

Most cosmopolitans still hadn't woken up and tried to make sense of their situation.

"We do have to guard against cosmopolitan melee mechs, but... not too much." Saint Commander Casella shared her own opinion. "There are not that many cosmopolitan mech pilots in existence. The enemy will struggle to field enough cosmopolitan mechs to defeat my empowered mechs. The previous testing sessions have clearly shown that our enemies must field far greater quantities of strike craft before they have any hope of defeating my troops."

She raised a good point. It was not just the ridiculous amplification that could make the Totori MAXXX a lot harder to defeat at close range. The Command Field also granted Casella the option to control a Commandeered or Enfeoffed mech directly, thereby allowing it to fight with the skills and judgement of a high-ranking mech pilot!

This meant that all of her empowered mechs would be able to fight back much harder than usual!

The weaknesses of this extreme mech design wouldn't be as severe as before.

At the same time, its pronounced strengths would become even more exaggerated after getting empowered by Casella's Command Field!

"When the Totori MAXXX fights under the auspices of the Minerva Mark II, it will practically turn into a heavy artillery mech... that happens to maneuver particularly well in space." Ves concluded.

Was the Totori MAXXX the right fit for the Premier Fleet?

Chapter 6868 FFEE1100 Omega Thresher

[Prev Chapter](#)

[Next Chapter](#)

6868 FFEE1100 Omega Thresher

In spite of its silly names, the Totori MAXXX was truly a good first-class multipurpose mech model.

It was exactly what it looked and sounded like. It was a mech that exemplified the concept of hard power. It eschewed all forms of subtlety and fitness in favor of brutalizing its enemies upfront with its torrential integrated MAXXX Plasma Stream Cannons or its more exaggerated ULTRAMAXXX High-Velocity Mass Driver.

While these weapon systems were difficult to use at closer ranges, they were deadly at mid range, which it preferred to fight at most of the time.

The Totori MAXXX was also able to fight at longer ranges, but most of its armaments were not optimized for this scenario.

The bombastic multipurpose mech was designed to fight against enemies that it could see.

Ves knew it just by looking at its appearance and taking a peek at its design schematics.

Mech designs tended to mirror their creators.

For example, Ves liked to design weird but creative mechs that possessed life and vitality. They all started out the same way, but as they went through their trials, they became marked by their experiences and grew a life of their own. He recognized the fundamental truth that miracles were not created from the start, but emerged out of a journey of strife and conquest.

Gloriana preferred to design mechs that embodied her ideal of perfection. While she always fell short of reaching her impossibly high standard, she still tried to make an earnest attempt with every mech design project she completed. Her persistent efforts rewarded her in spades as she was able to independently fabricate her own masterwork mechs on a semi-reliable basis.

The designer of the Totori MAXXX undoubtedly loved to design mechs that crushed their enemies with the most direct application of force.

The exaggaratingly large and powerful mass driver was the crowning jewel of this multipurpose mech model.

It reminded him of the latest iteration of the Instrument of Vengeance that he designed for the Amaranthmo Mark III.

Both of them apparently held similar intentions when they designed these large and powerful firearms.

"So what do you think about the Totori MAXXX, Casella?" He asked the only mech pilot in the conference room. "Does this blunt force instrument fit your strategic layout?"

The Saint Commander's expression remained impassive as she issued her reply.

"The comments that you have made about the Totori MAXXX are all valid. This is a first-class multipurpose mech that is straightforward, but that is not necessarily a demerit. It is true that it is short on finesse. The Totori MAXXX struggles to keep up in situations where it has fallen into a disadvantage, but I believe that the combination of my Command Field and my direction will minimize these occurrences from happening. With the extensive range of my domain, it should not be difficult to employ them where they can make optimal use of their formidable firepower. I am confident that I will be able to bring out the utmost of their strength."

"So are you willing to add the Totori MAXXX to our mech roster?"

Casella quickly shook her head. "Let us not make a hasty judgment, sir. One of the shortcomings of the Totori MAXXX is that it does not synergize particularly well with my Command Field. I can enhance its performance and improve its control, but it does not contain any obvious features such as the Rush Mode that we can exploit to a much greater degree with the help of my true resonance. There are alternative mech models available that offer other advantages."

It sounded as if she was not that eager to embrace the Totori MAXXX model and all of its exuberant eccentricities.

"Does anyone else want to propose an alternative?" Ves asked the gathering.

Alexa pounced on the opportunity and transmitted her recommendation to the central projector.

"I have found an alternative that should synergize better with our Saint Commander's Command Field. The FFEE1100 Omega Thresher is a humanoid multipurpose mech that offers greater balance and has less pronounced weaknesses. Its firepower is good, its physical defenses are better and its mobility is not bad. Its design incorporates

enough integrated weapon modules, but also pays great attention to optimizing and reinforcing its armor system."

Compared to the Totori MAXXX, the Omega Thresher looked a lot more normal in comparison.

In fact, it was difficult to distinguish any pronounced strengths of the Omega Thresher. It looked rather generic at first glance, but upon closer examination, Ves discovered that it relied completely on energy weapons to inflict damage. Its design completely rejected any dependence on physical ammunition.

"The Omega Thresher is a multipurpose mech that is designed to be lower-maintenance than normal." Alexa continued to explain. "It is a mech that is entirely dedicated to energy weapon usage. At close range, can wield a variety of melee weapons. It also possesses 2 wrist-mounted Plasma Sweeper Cannons. At mid range, it is equipped with 4 integrated Phase Disintegrator Guns as well as 2 integrated plasma cannons. At long range, it relies on 6 Omega Laser Cannons, which can be charged and overloaded to a ridiculous degree at the cost of reducing their firing rates. More interestingly enough, it can also wield a Datura Gravity Well Caster."

That last one demanded more explanation. The projection zoomed in on the bulky rifle construction held in the arms of the Omega Thresher.

"The Datura is a gravitic weapon system that can inflict damage or debilitate enemy units." Alexa explained. "It is an attempt to replicate the spatial abilities of phase lords without relying on the same methods. Whether the Datura can be considered a success is up for debate. What I know about it is that it may be weak when utilized on its own, but its effects can be drastically strengthened by using them in combination."

That caused Ves and the others to look surprised.

"The effects of gravity well casters can be stacked?"

"Yes, sir. However, the best results can only be attained when their settings and their usage are perfectly coordinated with each other. Normally, this can only be attained through automation and training, but our Saint Commander should easily be able to produce much better results without requiring all of these measures."

They could easily see how that could be the case. Training should still be useful, as the Datura Gravity Well Casters would become a lot less useful if Casella was not able to provide her support for whatever reason.

Everyone continued to study the strengths and weaknesses of the Omega Thresher model.

Kalister Devos stated the obvious. "The Omega Thresher possesses an all-energy weapon configuration. It is clearly designed to operate with less logistical support than other mechs. As long as it has access to compatible energy recharge points, it can replenish its energy reserves and continue fighting on without returning to their motherships. "

"That is an excellent observation, Mr. Kalister." Gloriana lightly praised. "I should note that the main reason why the Omega Thresher is so heavily dependent on energy weapons is because it is also equipped with energy link technology on top of shield link technology. While it is unfortunate that both links cannot be active at the same time, active energy links can still ensure that these energy weapon platforms can potentially fire for many hours as long as they are energy linked to a friendly starship."

The power generators of any decent-sized starships generated much more energy than the much smaller power reactors of a mech.

Therefore, letting the former substitute the latter could completely transform the combat effectiveness of mechs, especially ones that relied heavily on energy.

This was also why the MTA and the CFA always prohibited the act of connecting bunker mechs to the power lines of a starship.

Naturally, the mechers and the fleeters ignored this rule for themselves. They also made sure to prevent others from making use of any form of energy link technology past a certain threshold..

Ves should not be subject to this prohibition anymore. The mechers treated him as an insider, so he was permitted to make generous use of support link technology so long as he did it under the supervision of the Bluejay Fleet.

When everyone realized that the Omega Thresher could make use of energy link technology, they grew a lot more enthused about this mech model.

They recognized how much of an advantage these multipurpose mechs gained when fighting under the command of the Saint Commander.

When Commandeered or Enfeoffed, the Omega Threshers could recklessly increase their firing rates without needing to be afraid of any damage incurred from overheating many of their components.

So long as the structural reinforcement remained true, the Omega Threshers could run hotter than they could ever dare when they were operating by themselves!

The lack of dependence on physical ammunition granted a huge amount of convenience. Energy was much less onerous to replenish than spent rounds or missiles.

Ves could easily foresee the Omega Threshers performing well in attrition warfare.

So long as Casella of the mech pilots took care to withdraw and cover mechs that came under fire without the benefit of shield link technology, the Omega Threshers should be able to output excellent damage while facing relatively low risks in return.

20:43

"The Omega Thresher is an excellent source of sustained damage over longer periods of time, but that is not how we fight most battles in space." Ves pointed out. "We prefer to fight quick and decisive battles. We want to smash apart the defenses of our adversaries before they can grind us down by using their favorite attrition warfare tactics. The Totori MAXXX may be much more reliant on finite ammunition, but it can inflict a lot more direct damage with the help of its mass drive."

He raised an important point. The Totori MAXXX may not have access to energy link technology, but it was much less reliant on energy weapon systems. That may be useful if the Premier Fleet ever fought against enemies that were much more vulnerable against physical damage.

Gloriana frowned. "I am sorry, Ves, but I vastly prefer the Omega Thresher over the Totori MAXXX. I can foresee the former becoming a great source of ranged firepower with the help of energy link technology. Even if Phase Disintegrator Guns and the Omega Laser Cannons lack a physical punch, they can inflict respectable sustained damage over time. With these machines, we can choose to maintain our distance and avoid any overcommitments."

More mech designers spoke in support of the Omega Thresher. It fit the needs of the Premier Fleet a bit better and also synergized much better with the Minerva Mark II.

Though Ves did not discount the logic behind these opinions, he still found it a shame that the Totori MAXXX had fallen out of favor.

It was a good mech design alright, but it was more suited for larger and better supplied mech forces.

When it came time to make a verdict, the Saint Commander voiced her own stance on the matter.

"The Totori MAXXX is a blunt force instrument. The Omega Thresher is a plasma torch. They are both tools designed to solve different problems. Our Premier Fleet is more suited to use the latter than the former. The Omega Thresher happens to be the only mech model among the two that is included in my short list. There are other alternatives in my consideration, but I am perfectly fine with adopting the Omega Thresher as our anti-ship mech. Does anyone object?"

No one voiced any disagreements. They genuinely thought that the Omega Thresher was the more superior option. They also did not feel strong enough about the Totori MAXXX to advocate in its favor.

At most, they could suggest that the Premier Fleet field copies of both mech models, but that would clearly upset either of them. It may be a good idea to revisit this subject when the Larkinsons had expanded its first-class mech forces in the future.

Chapter 6869 800-RTR E-MULE

The gathering adopted the FFEE1100 Omega Thresher as their primary means of defeating enemy starships at a distance.

Its addition to the Premier Fleet's mech roster meant that the Larkinsons would heavily be slanted towards the use of energy weapons in the future.

This introduced both advantages and disadvantages.

If the enemy made enough preparations, they could specifically field units that were considerably more resistant against energy weapons than normal.

However, the Omega Threshers should still possess an overwhelming advantage against most general enemies.

The fact that the Omega Thresher was especially designed with the exploitation of energy link technology in mind made this mech model all the more attractive to the Larkinson Fleet.

Ves had mixed feelings about this decision. He felt he should have made a stronger case for the Totori MAXXX.

Although he felt a little embarrassed about its naming scheme, he also fell in love with the colorful character of the multipurpose mech. Its designer had no shame when it designed a ranged superiority platform that could strike at distant enemies like a hammer.

Alas, the consensus around the Omega Thresher had become too strong for Ves to invalidate this choice.

Even if he was the patriarch of the Larkinson Clan, it was not wise for him to openly contradict public opinion.

"The Dracoloid model synergizes well with the Omega Thresher model." Gloriana mused as she studied the initial simulations where both mechs worked alongside each other to complete more and more simulations. "One excels at close-ranged brawling. The other excels at mid-to-long range fire support. They can produce fantastic results as long as they are fighting under their ideal circumstances. The two mech models will perform much worse if this is not the case."

That was a big weakness with choosing this particular combination.

More general first-class multipurpose mechs did not possess such a strong bias and could fight decently well at all ranges.

The Dracoloid and the Omega Thresher traded away a bit of versatility in order to gain significantly more power under specific circumstances.

Ves and many other mech designers considered it to be a fair tradeoff.

Saint Commander Casella Ingvar finally moved on to the "Now that we have chosen our two main sources of damage for our first-class mech force, we should round out our basic selection by selecting a support mech. First-class mech combat more heavily involves support mechs as a core element. The first-raters almonnd us already taken this for granted, but it is still a relatively new concept for those of us who were previously second-raters."

"Support mechs sound useful enough." Gloriana mentioned. "In third-class or second-class battles, there are frequent arguments about whether it is useful to take away one combat mech and replace it with a support mech that is not dedicated to causing harm. Such discussions occur much less among first-raters because your support mechs possess serious functionality that more than justifies their place on the battlefield."

"More practically, a mech force that makes good use of its support mechs tend to be able to preserve its mechs much better than those that are not able to do so." Ves spoke.

It was a good idea to add a support mech to the mech. They were powerful force multipliers that could easily exert their full value when used under the leadership of the Saint Commander.

Klaus Robar-Fulton raised his hand. "There are many kinds of support mechs available. Which subclassification does the Larkinson Clan need the most?"

There were support mechs that excelled in performing field repairs, resupply, ECM, ECCM, sensors, communications, crowd control, cargo transport, construction, mine laying, breaching and much more.

Most support mechs tended to be flexible enough to fulfill multiple functions at the same time.

Some support mechs possessed basic combat capabilities while many of them got rid of weapons entirely.

"My Command Field makes multiple functions redundant." Casella stated. "For the most basic selection of mechs, there is no need to consider combat scenarios where my leadership is absent. That is a matter to consider for the future. For now, there is no need to select support mechs that are excellent at scouting and communications. My Command Field encompasses hundreds of kilometers and can detect nearly everything that has entered my domain. It is also easy to communicate with everyone within this broad range... provided that they are friendly."

That was all true. There was little value to adding support mechs to the mech roster that covered such functions. They would only be useful if they deployed far enough away from the Minerva Mark II, but the Premier Fleet should not be launching such operations in the short term.

Alexa voiced her own opinion. "I believe the support mech should be designed to serve as strong nodes for support link technology. This is powerful tech, but there is a large difference between mechs that are linked to starships. Since we are thinking about keeping our own starships out of harm's way as much as possible, it may not be possible to maintain active links across large distances. It is a good decision to field support mechs that can partially take over the role of starships and serve as strong nodes in any support link network."

"I agree with Alexa." Ves said. "The support mech should have large energy reserves in order to support the additional consumption of other mechs, particularly the Omega Threshers. The mech model may even forgo all other functions so long as it can fulfill this responsibility well."

These comments all guided the Larkinsons towards selecting the right support mech for their needs.

Ves inwardly sighed in regret. The current selection criteria almost certainly ruled out any consideration to select mechs designed by Master Vayro Goldstein.

The Survivalist cadre was one of the foremost authorities on support mechs in the Red Ocean, but he preferred to design machines that were able to provide support at greater distances.

That sounded great for most mech forces, but it sounded rather tasteless for the Premier Fleet that already enjoyed a supercharged version of it in the form of Casella's Command Field.

The support mechs designed by Master Goldstein were also often used to save units from their own mistakes and poor judgment.

The more competent the leadership and direction of a mech unit, the less it needed to rely on a support mech as a loss mitigation tool.

"The most direct support mech model that fulfills our criteria is the 800-RTR E-MULE." Gloriana said as the central projector displayed the mech in question. "Despite its plain-sounding name and utilitarian aesthetics, the E-MULE is a mech that completely specializes in carrying a large energy reserve and acting as a powerful relay of shield links, energy links and also data links."

As everyone studied the details of the E-MULE model, they easily gained a thorough understanding of its features and positioning.

"The E-MULE lacks the remote shielding capabilities of similar support mechs." Alexa spoke in a disappointed tone. "That is a function that it can perform well with its extensive energy reserves. While it can rely on its shield link array to offer a measure of protection, it becomes useless if the shield link transceiver of a target mech is damaged. Remote shielding can also offer protection outside of our own mechs."

Ves smiled. "That is okay. We can consider the acquisition of mechs that can provide remote shielding or emergency field repairs at a later date when we expand the Premier Fleet to a large-scale fighting organization. For now, we can only work with 1000 mechs and mech pilots that lack experience fighting alongside each other. We will need to forge them into a strong nucleus first before we can think about expanding their capabilities."

The Saint Commander nodded in agreement. "I agree with the patriarch. We are mostly making decisions based on theory and not on reality. We need to start off with a strong but flexible foundation. Over the course of multiple battles, we can learn what

our mechs have done well and what they have missed. We can augment our capabilities by strategically expanding our mech rosters with mech models that address specific demands. This is better than introducing a dozen powerful mech models all at once before expecting our mech pilots to sort out their places in a short amount of time."

"So are we locking in the E-MULE or are we considering other alternatives?"

The E-MULE faced little opposition. This was because it fulfilled its few functions better than any other mech designed by the RA.

Even though its capabilities sounded boring, Ves and the others did not underestimate it due to its large mech frame that was largely filled with energy cells and other forms of storage.

Mechs that provided remote shielding capabilities had to accommodate multiple powerful modules and supportive elements that possessed much lower energy reserves.

There were larger and heavier products that stored a lot more energy, but they were too slow to keep up with most maneuvers involving the Omega Thresher.

The E-MULE's plain and unassuming mech shape actually made it good for keeping up with faster and more vigorous units.

It could beat every other first-class mech in the Premier Fleet based on endurance.

"The E-MULE is not as... flashy and glamorous as the Dracoloid or the Omega Thresher, but it is a sound support mech." The Saint Commander concluded the selection of a support mech model. "Its importance will still be just as great. While we cannot field the E-MULE in large numbers, every honest-looking machine will help."

With this decision, the Premier Fleet's mech roster had taken on its initial shape. The Dracoloid, the Omega Thresher and the E-MULE would serve as the initial blueprint of the Larkinson Clan's high-end fighting force.

The mech roster would definitely expand over time. Newer mechs might get added to meet demands that the current selection could not adequately address.

The Design Department may also design first-class living mechs that effectively replaced the third-party products that the Larkinsons initially used as stopgap solutions.

However, that was a consideration for the future. Ves and the others cared a lot more about getting real first-class multipurpose mechs in their grasp.

"I have a pretty good idea of the overall strengths of our mech roster." Ves spoke up. "However, what are its weaknesses, exactly? What sort of enemies is it weak against? It is better to figure this out sooner rather than later."

Everyone paused for a moment before Kalister Devos attempted to answer the question.

"The multipurpose mechs that you have chosen are rather... simple. The Dracoloid is good at attacking enemies at closer ranges while the Omega Thresher prefers to attack at a distance. Their scouting capabilities are weak, and their pushing abilities are also not that good. Their shield link tech functions as a crutch."

"Fair enough." Casella said.

Ves raised his own complaint. "There is no direct equivalent to a heavy artillery mech. The Omega Thresher can serve as a discount version of one, but it is really not optimized for this kind of job. The Totori MAXXX could have fulfilled this function far better, but oh well. With mechs this good and with the Saint Commander's extraordinary capabilities, we can make do without the firepower of heavy artillery mechs for a time."

He still preferred to have them at his disposal sooner rather than later. They could serve as excellent bunker mechs and may be the final line of protection of many first-class starships.

Perhaps he should go ahead and design a first-class version of the Transcendent Punisher first.

As Ves thought about taking this step, the meeting gradually wrapped up. Everyone had a much better idea of what was in store for them all. The stopgap mechs may be temporary, but their strong features and distinctive design characteristics would no doubt influence the growth and evolution of the Larkinson Clan.

Ves even thought about whether it was possible to design a tiger mech that could occupy a similar niche to the Dracoloid!

Chapter 6870 Dragon Queen's Art

The Red Association needed a bit of time to produce and ship the Dracoloids, the Omega Threshers and the E-MULES ordered by the Premier Branch.

However, the mechers still had a few dozen copies of each model on hand within the Bluejay Fleet and other nearby RA strongholds.

The Saint Commander easily managed to persuade the mechers to transfer those readily available copies to the Larkinson Clan.

It didn't really matter to her whether they were 'used' products.

She believed it was more important to familiarize the mech pilots in the Premier Branch with the new stopgap models as quickly as possible.

Ves supported her decision, though he mostly wanted to get his hands on the first-class multipurpose mechs himself. He had already read their spec sheets many times and studied their design schematics in detail.

He became fascinated with the foreign high-end design principles and the intricate integration of shield link and energy link modules in the mech designs.

Support link technology originally introduced by the Web Mistress was one of the biggest game changers that set the mechs and warships of the RA and RF apart from other human powers.

Their continued ability to maintain this monopoly was one of the main reasons why they managed to stay on top of human civilization.

Now, the mechers and the fleeters had begun to loosen up on this restriction out of desperation more than anything else.

As long as the native aliens continued to take over more human territories, the old hegemons cared less about protecting their own monopolies.

Ves actually felt a little bad about taking advantage of the tragedies unfolding across the more vulnerable parts of human space. The Larkinson Clan's adoption of shield link technology and energy link technology indirectly came at the cost of a huge amount of red human lives.

"So these are our new mechs." He said as he looked up at the three machines that had been delivered to Diandi Base.

"That is correct." Casella Ingvar nodded. "I will be piloting all three models over the course of the day in order to completely familiarize myself with their strengths and weaknesses."

"Now that we can observe the first-class mechs with our own eyes, they appear so much more powerful." Gloriana said with genuine appreciation in her voice. "The mechers have all designed them to a higher standard that we have ever applied to ourselves. Their mech designers have mastered their skills to a higher level and they also have much greater processing power at their disposal. The degree of optimization of these machines are sublime. Production with materializers may cause these copies to be deficient in terms of life and craftsmanship, but they are so uniform in their technical perfection that it is a dream to observe them at this distance."

The Association lived and breathed mechs. It would be stupid if the mechers failed to maintain their superiority in this industry.

While mech designers like Ves developed innovative design applications that not even the mechers could replicate, the latter not only had access to far more trade secrets, but also mastered them to a much greater degree!

This caused the mechs designed by the RA to convey a completely different feel. The three first-class mechs dripped with refinement and professionalism. The mechers

certainly knew how to convey the impression of superiority without making it too explicit.

It was enough to shame mech designers such as Ves and Gloriana. They had tried so hard to push their own products to the top of the industry, yet they were still far away from reaching the impossibly high standards attained by the RA over many years.

"Let's take a closer look, shall we?" Ves proposed as he already began to move forward. "I have been looking forward to examining the Dracoloid. This first-class mech speaks to me in a way the others don't. Ever since I first examined this mech model in detail, I had a notion that the Dragon Queen has a few things in common with me. Both of us don't pay too much attention to the prevailing status quo and like to push our own interpretation of mechs."

Gloriana hummed as she floated off the air and approached the iconic dragon head of the Dracoloid mech. "Hm, I can see that. Her love for dragons is clearly impressed in the detailed artistry and design of this head. It is far more than a mechanism for biting enemies and swallowing up any loose transphasic alloys. This level of detail goes far beyond function. The more you look at it, the more you become taken in by the horror and the might of what appears to be a real dragon. There is even a whole layer of redundant articulation here that can make the eyes and parts of the jaw more menacing than normal."

None of it was strictly essential from a functional standpoint, but these additions made the Dracoloid appear so much more alive and organic.

The Dragon Queen had clearly applied this level of articulation onto many mechs. Her methods were not only highly refined, but also incredibly efficient. She only needed to install a few minor mechanisms to massively make the dragon head more vivid.

This was probably the female Master Mech Designer's way of making her work alive from her perspective.

The only real dragon mechs were ones that convincingly sold the illusion that they were actual fire-breathing reptilian menaces.

That design principle resonated with Ves. Even though he had never met her or talked to her in person, he already felt as if he was already receiving a lecture from the Master Mech Designer with her product as a medium.

This was a level of communication that people outside of the mech designer profession could never comprehend.

Ves lovingly rubbed the smooth exterior of the Dracoloid's armor plating. Even if the mech was not alive according to his own paradigms, he could still feel how much care and attention the Dragon Queen put into its design.

When Ves finally began to examine the more functional parts of the mech, he noted that the integration of shield link technology imposed a heavy burden onto the mech design.

The Dracoloid was rather small and slender compared to other multipurpose mechs, so the shield link array and essential supporting systems took up a lot of capacity.

This was why the mech relied so much on its compact short-barreled gauss guns for sustained damage. Although they all consumed energy in order to launch their projectiles at a fairly high rate of fire, they did not expend as much energy as pure energy weapons.

That meant that the kinetic weapons imposed a relatively lower burden onto the energy reserves of the Dracoloid.

"The endurance of the energy defenses of the Dracoloid is rather disappointing if it does not maintain active shield links." Gloriana observed. "The dragon mech's energy reserves are limited, and it has to feed multiple hungry systems. The azure energy shield, the space suppressor, the integrated plasma guns and most importantly the powerful flight system and its demanding Rush Mode can quickly drain this machine. The absence of energy link technology is a major shortcoming in this regard."

That was definitely one of the biggest shortcomings of this dragon mech. The Dracoloid lacked the endurance to last when engaged in intensive battles.

It needed to defeat its foes and complete its mission quickly, or else its performance would rapidly degrade as it could no longer afford to maintain its azure energy shield or activate its powerful Rush Mode.

Ves recalled what he saw in the RA mech catalog. "The Dragon Queen has designed a larger and heavier dragon mech that does happen to include an energy link array. The problem I have with this alternative product is that it makes too many tradeoffs. It is slower and less maneuverable. It isn't fast enough to catch up to most alien phasefighters anymore, and its version of Rush Mode can only multiply its acceleration by a factor of 2.2 as opposed to 3. Superior mobility is the entire reason why we chose the DFN-72CEG Dracoloid model."

Was it worth it to sacrifice better armor, greater endurance and access to energy link technology for better mobility?

He believed so. Mobility was one of the performance parameters that was difficult to measure its value in reality.

It was much easier to judge the value of a mech by how many shots it took to destroy an opponent or how many attacks its energy and physical defenses could withstand.

Superior mobility on the other hand enabled so many intricate maneuvers that could have a drastic impact on the course of a battle that it was difficult to quantify in simple numbers.

This was why expertise and experience were vital to making the right judgment.

The Saint Commander was smart and experienced enough to know how to leverage the superior mobility of the Dracoloid model.

"As long as we do not commit too much in any battle, the limited endurance of the Dracoloid model will not be a problem." Casella stated as her mind was already refining the tactics and strategies she intended to employ with these machines. "In the situations where we are badly outnumbered, our intervention alone cannot prevent the native aliens from overrunning a planet and conquering a star system. As much as I dislike it, we must make the difficult decision to withdraw in time before we fall victim to sunk cost fallacy."

Ves seriously nodded. "I agree. The enemy fleets that are assigned to invade the Upper Zones are much better equipped and more professionally crewed than the ones that are rampaging across the Middle and Lower Zones. We cannot afford to underestimate any enemy we encounter. The Dracoloid and so on are also not the best of what first-class mechs can offer."

The Red Association fielded more expensive and powerful first-class multipurpose mechs, but they demanded much greater logistical and technical support than the Larkinson Clan could bear.

The Larkinsons eventually needed to field its own first-class mechs. Ves already began to think in this direction.

He still thought about whether it would be worthwhile to design a Larkinson version of the Dracoloid concept.

Ves could convert the dragon mech to a tiger mech.

He could ditch the wings in favor of bulking up the rest of the mech frame.

He could attempt to replicate the unique augmented flamethrower weapon, or he could replace it with another weapon system that synergized better with Casella's Command Field.

"Not good enough." Ves shook his head in disappointment.

Trying to design an alternative to the Dracoloid for the sole purpose of putting his own spin on the concept was not a good enough justification.

The Premier Fleet would not gain all that much if his alternate design did not perform any better than the original Dracoloid model.

Sure, the fact that his mech enjoyed all of the advantages of a seventh generation living mech may make it more attractive to his clan, but he would also be trading away the strong advantages of the highly developed design philosophies incorporated into the Dracoloid design.

Maintaining parity was probably the best case scenario.

If he wanted to develop a true replacement for the Dracoloid, then Ves needed to take a step further and come up with truly powerful design applications.

Innovation was key. It was the best way to break parity and develop a truly superior product.

Ves could either wait for enough time to pass for new technologies to become available, or he could invest his time in R&D and hope that he developed a new innovation by himself.

The former sounded like a lazy way to outcompete the Dragon Queen. He would essentially be taking advantage of her inattentiveness to develop a superior product.

He wanted to do better than that. The more he desired to design his own version of the Dracoloid concept, the closer he came to receiving inspiration that could drive him into action.

He did not try his best to grasp this ephemeral feeling.

He hesitated.

It was too premature for him to think about designing a first-class multipurpose mech that could replace the Dracoloid model.

The Premier Fleet first needed to make use of it before learning what worked and did not work in practice.

Only then could Ves design a new mech that addressed the unmet demands of his troops.