

Mech Touch 6871

Chapter 6871 Omega Laser Weapon Technology

Compared to the colorful and charming Dracoloid, the Omega Thresher and the E-MULE were lacking in character and personality.

That did not necessarily make them bad mechs. They certainly did their jobs well, but... Ves simply found them a bit too bland for his sensibilities.

As the Saint Commander moved on from visual inspections to taking out the mechs for a spin, Ves continued to gather more insights on the different first-class mechs.

The designers of the Omega Thresher very clearly positioned it as a mid-range energy weapon platform. It was capable of defending itself at close range, and it was also able to output a respectable amount of firepower at longer ranges, but it reached maximum efficiency at a range where it could comfortably employ its Datura Gravity Well Caster.

"The Omega Thresher initially appears to be designed around its 6 integrated Omega Laser Cannons." Gloriana observed as he saw Casella performing extreme maneuvers while firing its armaments at various floating target bots. "However, it is actually meant to work in conjunction with that large and overengineered contraption in its arms."

The Datura looked like a beast. It was a clear centerpiece of the multipurpose mech. Its effects fully justified the resources put into its development and production.

The Omega Thresher aimed the barrel of its Datura at a cluster of target dummies. The device accumulated a considerable amount of energy before launching a space-warping energy ball that rapidly traversed forward before striking the ground, causing all of the disposable bots in the vicinity to violently converge and collide against each other!

Both Ves and Gloriana not only took in the sights, but also studied the data. They paid close attention to the degree of physical deformities and the kinetic forces generated by the spatial anomaly.

"The 'weapon' is powerful enough to pull alien phasefighter off their trajectories, but their frames should still be able to withstand these forces." Gloriana concluded. "Most modern energy shields will be able to block a gravity well with ease. The effects of a gravity well are too dispersed. The lack of concentration of power makes it difficult to wear down most defenses. Its effects against physical targets are better. Under certain circumstances, the gravity wells can bypass hard armor layers and inflict effect damage against the softer internals. It won't work against archetech, but most alien races do not make use of this tech."

The gravity well caster was a decent attempt at replicating the spatial abilities of phase leaders. The weapon system was a bit too big and expensive, making it clear that it was still in the early phase of its product life cycle.

"I agree that a single Datura Gravity Well Caster in isolation is pretty useless, but that's the thing." Ves gestured at the first-class multipurpose mech being put through its paces. "This testing session isn't able to display the full value of this gravitic weapon because it is inherently designed to work in conjunction with many other Daturas. We will need to gather at least an entire mech company of Omega Threshers before we get to see its true potential."

The gravity wells launched by the Daturas could be combined to form a much bigger and more powerful gravity well.

That would make them much closer to the spatial anomalies generated by phase lords and phase whales.

However, it was not that easy to create them. The weapons needed to be configured in the right settings. They also had to launch their gravity wells at precise angles and with the right timing. Any misalignment could easily cause them to fail to combine, thereby causing them to waste their potential.

It was a weapon system that could only prove its value when utilized by mech forces that possessed excellent coordination.

Ves became impressed by the armed forces of the Red Association for being able to train mech pilots that worked so well with each other that they could make good use of the Datura Gravity Well Casters.

The Premier Fleet could only produce comparable results by relying on Casella's Command Field.

After Ves completed his cursory examination of the Datura, he began to focus his attention on the Omega Laser Cannons.

These were not ordinary laser weapons that just happened to possess fancy branding. They incorporated multiple forms of high technology to drastically increase their firepower, thereby making them much more viable for first-class combat.

Laser weapons existed for a long time. They were one of the most common and versatile weapon systems used by humanity since the Age of Stars.

Many alien races encountered by the human race utilized their own form of laser weapons, but their applications remained remarkably uniform due to their relatively simple and straightforward principles.

However, as humans advanced their technologies, they no longer became satisfied with regular applications of laser weapons.

In a concerted attempt to push laser weapon tech to the next level, the mechers and many other groups sought to develop superior versions that could take the same foundation to the next level.

Omega laser weapon technology was one of the successful results of this effort.

On the surface, it sounded like a rather normal tradeoff between power and firing rate.

However, Omega laser weapons went beyond standard solutions and relied on multiple implementations of advanced technology to raise their firepower to heights that were previously impossible to attain.

Ves noted to his surprise that the maximum energy limit of the Omega Laser Cannons actually exceeded that of the Instrument of Vengeance!

If not for the fact that the Amaranto Mark III's primary armament relied on the true resonance of an ace pilot along with other exotic design applications, the Omega Thresher may have been able to outshoot the ace mech!

"These Omega Laser Cannons are much more complicated than a luminar crystal weapon." Ves commented. "It is all worth it because the firepower of a single full-powered attack is much greater than anything I have seen."

The way the Omega Thresher under the control of the Saint Commander absolutely vaporized the target dummies and whatever soil was underneath underscored how these advanced laser weapons could not be judged according to normal standards.

His wife nodded in agreement as she studied the numbers. "These Omega laser weapons solve several problems that plague ordinary laser weapons. They are powerful enough that they can instantly collapse the azure energy shields of most phasefighters if they all happened to hit the same target. They are also remarkably effective at penetrating through armor. It is remarkable how much Omega laser weapons have compressed the discharge time to such an extent. That greatly helps to minimize dispersion."

One of the problems with laser weapons, especially ones that launched sustained beams, was that it was difficult to keep them on target. Instead of punching a hole through armor plating, they could instead drift across the exterior, thereby causing the obstacle to resist the damage a lot more effectively.

Omega lasers tried to minimize this problem much better than ordinary laser weapons. Their advanced components invested heavily into discharging as much energy at once.

The strain this put on the components of the weapon system was high. The power of an Omega laser cannon was so great that only the most heat-resistant materials could be used to prevent it all from blowing up or melting down.

"The 6 integrated Omega Laser Cannons will serve as the primary source of damage for the Omega Thresher model." Ves said. "They are designed for power rather than precision, so they are not too accurate at longer ranges. Perhaps they will be able to achieve a higher hit rate at further distances when they are under the control of Casella, but I don't expect the Omega Threshers to be able to imitate the Amaranto Mark III. What matters is that their damage profiles allow them to take out elite

phasefighters quite easily as long as they land their shots, but also enables them to wear down the defenses of enemy warships."

The Omega Thresher model clearly synergized well with Casella's Command Field. Ves already looked forward to seeing a couple of hundred of them getting empowered by true resonance before showering hapless enemy units with coordinated energy attacks.

His wife did not look as optimistic. "The Omega Threshers can theoretically perform extremely well against both phasefighters and warships, but only when they are empowered by the Minerva Mark II. Outside of that, their performance becomes much worse. Most of their armaments are tuned for power. The firing rates of their Phase Disintegrator Guns, integrated plasma cannons and Omega Laser Cannons are all low. That makes it much harder for them to hit small and fast-moving targets. They are only truly effective against larger targets such as warships under these conditions."

She was right. The Omega Threshers became a lot less remarkable if they had to fight by themselves. The Larkinsons needed to take its weaknesses into account in order to prevent them from getting demolished with ease if they ever had to fight without the Saint Commander's blessing.

Ves paid closer attention to one of the more exotic energy weapons of the Omega Thresher.

"These 'Phase Disintegrator Guns' are quite new to us. According to the descriptions, the high-tech guns launch some kind of spatial energy bolt that can disintegrate matter by shaking the fabric of space occupied by the target obstacle. They also happen to inflict excellent damage against transphasic energy defenses. This makes them an excellent weapon to use against azure energy shields as well as armor that is normally impervious against other attacks."

The performance of the Phase Disintegrator Guns was quite interesting. They performed well against transphasic defenses, but they were not that special when used against non-transphasic defenses. The guns were solely added to the Omega Thresher in order to serve as specialized counters against native alien assets.

"To put it differently, the Omega Threshers are excellent when used to fight against the native aliens, but they are relatively awful when used against human mech forces." Gloriana remarked.

"Only if the Saint Commander is left out of the picture." Ves added. "This is an important distinction. As long as Casella is able to Commandeer or Enfeoff the Omega Threshers, most of their weaknesses will simply evaporate. Under her exquisite command, the multipurpose mechs will be able to attain much higher hit rates against fast and mobile mechs. The Omega Threshers will also be able to handle enemy mechs that prefer to fight with melee weapons far better as well. The differences in hard performance as well as control will be too great. Only overwhelming numbers can defeat a force of Omega Threshers."

Ves already started to think about what kind of mech he would design as a replacement for the Omega Thresher model.

He couldn't think of any good ideas at the moment. He needed to come up with a design concept that promised a better value proposition than the Omega Thresher.

It was difficult for Ves to figure out weapon technologies that could surpass the ingenuity put into the Omega Thresher design.

Whether it was the Datura Gravity Well Caster, the Omega Laser Cannons or the Phase Disintegrator Guns, Ves could not think of any weapons tech that could match the aforementioned arms in terms of power.

Luminar crystal weapons might theoretically be able to match the awesome power or special properties of some of them, but Ves had never raised their performance to such a height.

The Instrument of Vengeance was an incredibly powerful luminar crystal weapon, but it was also relatively large and heavy.

The Omega Laser Cannons were much slimmer and lighter in comparison!

Ves was not sure whether he, or rather Harry Kaikkonen, could advance the development of luminar crystal weapons to the point where they could match the performance of Omega laser weapons.

It would definitely require a lot of effort from his R&D institutions.

Ves was not sure whether the pace of development could keep up with the Larkinson Clan's ambitions.

Chapter 6872 Balance Breaker

Once the Saint Commander completed her attempts to familiarize herself with the copies of the three new mech models, she began to think how the Larkinsons could best employ them to the benefit of the clan.

Casella continued to look thoughtful as she exited the cockpit of the E-MULE.

Ves approached with a curious expression on his face. "So what do you think about the mechs that will constitute the initial core of our mech force?"

The first-class multipurpose mechs ordered by the Premier Branch clearly had a large impact on her mentality.

Even if she piloted a genuine first-class ace command mech, the Minerva Mark II was an exception rather than the rule. She could not apply the same standard onto other mass production mechs.

Yet when she piloted the Dracoloid and the Omega Thresher for herself, she found that the Red Association designed them so well that there were plenty of aspects about them that surpassed her own ace mech!

If not for the fact that she was unable to effectively resonate with them, she would have been able to display much better combat power while piloting these battle ready machines!

The E-MULE on the other hand might not possess any notable combat power by itself, but its energy reserves were quite huge. Their ability to support other mechs by supplying them with spare energy and shield power was quite formidable as long as they rationed their resources carefully.

The thought of being able to command half a regiment's worth of these mechs excited her to no end!

"I am eager for us to receive all of the mechs and outstanding starships." Casella spoke with clear enthusiasm in her voice. "1000 of these mechs alone are probably capable of defeating the entire expeditionary fleet if we leave out the high-ranking mechs on both sides. If we include my Minerva Mark II on the side of the Premier Fleet, none of the existing expert mechs of the expeditionary fleet can stave off defeat. My Command Field is such a powerful force multiplier that my limited forces can easily tear apart tens of thousands quasi-first-class mechs."

Ves raised his eyebrows. "Is the performance disparity that huge?"

"Yes." Casella said. "The first-class mechs hit much harder. Two or three shots are more than powerful enough to eliminate most of our quasi-first-class mechs. They can also resist far more attacks even if we leave out the effects of my Command Field and Dragon Scales. Most importantly, their mobility is significantly better. This grants total initiative to our first-class machines. They can control the range and dictate when and where to fight. My forces can completely harass any lesser mech force to death by resorting to continuous hit-and-run attacks."

She was completely right about this. None of the 3 first-class mech models were slow. Mobility had been one of the most important selection criteria.

Their power reactors generated so much output that their flight systems could perform at much higher levels. That also made them more expensive, but it was completely worth it in these cases.

The Dracoloids in particular possessed the greatest edge in mobility. They might not be able to run rings around quasi-first-class light mechs, but the dragon mechs could still overtake them and make sure to claw them or breathe fire into their direction.

The first-class mechs already possessed all of these advantages without taking support link technology or Casella's Command Field into account.

Once these variables came into play, let alone the expeditionary fleet, even a fully equipped RA mech division would not be able to gain any advantage!

"Do you have any special opinions about the initial selection of first-class mech models?"

"We chose well." Casella responded. "The three mech models are completely sufficient for our needs. The multipurpose nature of the Dracoloid and the Omega Thresher makes them inherently versatile. I can comfortably assign various missions to them without worrying that they will fall into a disadvantage. While our Premier Fleet still possesses several noticeable gaps, it is not difficult for us to position our mech force to prevent enemies from taking advantage of our vulnerabilities. At most, we have to restrain ourselves."

The Saint Commander continued to gush about the initial form of the first-class mech force that she would soon command.

She did not sound enthused. She sounded hopeful.

"Do you understand the power we command after the Premier Fleet comes together, sir? We hold the power to turn major defeats and victories. We can prevent many star systems in the Upper Zones from falling. We can confront the most powerful enemy assault fleets and bloody their noses so badly that they no longer have enough assets left to participate in the war."

"You sound as if we have gained enough power to single-handedly turn the war around."

"I am not conceited enough to believe that to be the case, but... we may be able to make enough of a difference in the Red War to prevent an Upper Zone from falling." She responded.

That still sounded a little too boastful to Ves. There were many first-class mech corps numbering up to 50,000 mechs each that were fighting hard to repel the alien invasion.

The Premier Fleet and the Bluejay Fleet together may be able to defeat small-to-mid-sized alien naval concentrations, but it was not possible to confront anything larger.

The Minerva Mark II and the First Sword Mark III may be able to produce a lot of surprises on the battlefield, but there came a point where they could not overcome the enemy's numbers advantage. This was why Ves still lacked a certain degree of confidence.

The ace commander clearly took notice of his skepticism. "The Premier Fleet and the Bluejay Fleet are limited in numbers, but that also excuses us from assuming greater responsibilities. I do not envision our forces engaging in static defensive missions. Instead, it is better for us to rotate between battlefields and serve as critical reinforcements that can tip the balance in a hard-fought battle."

"Are you suggesting that we act as roving troubleshooters, Casella?"

"Yes. Our fleet is small and mobile enough that we can move quickly between star systems. Our logistical burdens are low and we are under no obligations to defend fixed territory. We can adopt a mercenary outlook and offer to defend important star systems that are under siege. I can promise you that there will be plenty of groups that are willing to shower us with rewards if we help them protect their strategically important territories."

That actually sounded like a great idea. Instead of roaming around the Upper Zones and taking the initiative to fight the native aliens without any explicit rewards, the Premier Fleet could charge a hefty price to intervene in any battle!

Even if the Premier Fleet and the Bluejay Fleet did not field a lot of mechs, the inclusion of an ace command mech and a superdimensional ace swordsman mech could make a massive difference!

Ves thought about it a little more and believed more and more in the power of the two ace mechs.

The Minerva Mark II should not only be able to Commandeer a lot of Larkinson mechs, but also extend the same benefits to tens of thousands of third-party mechs!

As long as the mech pilots fielded by other forces did not reject Casella's offer to empower their mechs with true resonance, the Saint Commander could completely upgrade all of those high-end machines to temporary quasi-expert mechs!

As for the First Sword Mark III, her pilot may still be an underdeveloped junior ace pilot, but the full superdimensional conversion should already turn the living mech into a highly effective phase lord killer!

Lesser phase lords shouldn't stand a chance against a superdimensional mech that could cut apart their spatial barriers with ease!

Without the protection of their precious spatial barriers, these phase lords did not have any other way to defend themselves against a rampaging ace mech!

Their large true bodies may buy them a bit of time, but since the First Sword Mark III would be fully clad in superdimensional armor plating, it shouldn't be possible for them to eliminate the absurdly tough ace swordsman mech!

With one ace mech that excelled at wiping out entire fleets and another ace mech that could decapitate enemy champions, the Larkinsons should always be able to tip the balance of a difficult battle no matter what advantages the enemy possessed.

If the native aliens sought to overwhelm their human adversaries by relying on superior numbers, the Minerva Mark II could easily help the defenders wipe out a lot of phasefighters and warships!

If the defenders were being overpowered by the enemy champions, then the First Sword Mark III could quickly relieve the pressure by killing or repelling the alien phase lords!

Enemy forces that possessed an advantage in both low-level and high-level troops were trickier to defeat, but the intervention of the Premier Fleet could still give the defenders hope of attaining victory.

"If possible, I want us to do more than putting out fires across human territories." Casella said. "Although it is risky, I think it is even better if we can engage in offensive operations."

"Are you saying that we should cross the border and attack the planets that the aliens are using as staging points for their invasion?"

She nodded. "Yes. Many forces are unable or unwilling to attack because they are obligated to defend their existing territories. We are not burdened by this responsibility, so we can choose to engage in defensive or offensive actions."

"What you are suggesting is exceedingly risky, Casella."

"We can make use of all of our sources of intelligence to plan out our routes and evade any serious threats. As long as we scout our targets and make sure to avoid contact with ancient phase whales, we should be able to raid a star system that is being used to supply and support the alien fleets that are passing through. If we can attack these alien bases, we can not only plunder phasewater and other valuable supplies, but also wipe out the rest, thereby hindering the operations of many alien fleets."

Ves looked skeptical. "While I do not necessarily oppose these actions, I doubt that my escorts are pleased with letting me risk my life in these dangerous operations."

"You and your family can always stay behind with the Bluejay Fleet if the mechers and fleeters do not allow you to move forward." She responded. "The Premier Fleet should be strong enough to raid many alien staging points. The aliens have not invested heavily in their defenses. The only threats we need to take seriously are the alien fleets that have stayed in order to resupply. So long as not too many of them are lingering in the star system, we should be able to inflict serious damage without incurring too much damage in return."

Damn, Casella really looked forward to going on the attack. She believed that doing so would do more to stall the alien invasion than defeating the alien fleets that constantly arrived in this specific corner of the Red Ocean.

Ves believed she was correct. Red humanity only seemed to lose when fighting so many battles within its territories. Humans truly needed to take the fight to the enemy and wreck their infrastructure.

It wouldn't stop the alien fleets entirely, but it could disrupt their rhythm and delay their advances.

This was exactly what red humanity needed!

The more time the Premier Fleet could buy, the greater the chance that a peak ace pilot successfully broke through and become a powerful god pilot!

"Let's discuss the possibility of engaging in offensive options at a later date." Ves told the Saint Commander. "In any case, we shouldn't plunge into the deep right away. We

need to train and temper our first-class mech pilots first before they are ready to take part in riskier operations. We can always reconsider if it turns out that our soldiers are not up to par."

"Hm, you are correct. I may be too hasty in planning to go on the offensive."

Chapter 6873 Completion of the Final Glory Project

Everyone was waiting for the day the Premier Fleet could completely assemble.

That day should not be too far away. The Larkinson Clan and its allies tried to speed up the timetable and rush through the necessary steps whenever possible.

In the meantime, Ves and other mech designers continued to make a lot of progress in their mech designs. The SF-02 constantly showed its value by allowing the Design Department to complete its projects faster and in a better state than before.

One of the projects that Ves managed to complete was the Final Glory Project.

"It's done."

Ves, Kelsey Ampatoch, Ariana Roux and Jovy Armalon all gathered together to examine the finalized mech templates of the Final Glory Project.

Jovy had done a decent job at converting the final iterations of the mech designs into two mech templates, one for the Middle Zones and one for the Lower Zones.

Regardless of the versions, the Final Glory designs closely matched what Ves originally envisioned.

The Carmine mechs were basically shaped like rockets. They possessed enough boost power to overcome the gravity wells of most planets. In order to reduce their cost, the 'mechs' did not possess any limbs. It was not as if they would need them in order to reach their targets and self-destruct.

Although the Final Glory designs looked simple, the mech designers put a lot of work and effort into making it as efficient and explosive as possible. This was not easy to do as the mech designers had to work hard to make it as cost effective as possible.

Ves looked pretty satisfied with the results. The mech templates made by Jovy were adaptable enough that any mech designer could develop a localized variant of the Final Glory.

There was enough tolerance in the material choices that his 'customers' could choose to construct their machines from cheap to slightly more premium alloys.

Not that it made that much of a difference. The Final Glory mechs were designed for one-way trips only. Whether they got shot down with ease or required slightly more effort to eliminate ultimately shouldn't make that much of a difference.

"Are we actually going to publish this mech?" Ariana Roux asked.

Ves turned to the female Journeyman. "Are you having cold feet?"

Ariana, who had been responsible for designing and programming the cheap hacking module that should hopefully interfere with the targeting of the Final Glory mechs, clearly looked troubled by their work.

"I understand the usefulness of this mech, but... I still find it difficult to stomach the fact that I have worked on a mech design that is expressly designed to kill its own pilot."

"The rules are outdated." Ves stated. "The Red Association won't give us any trouble over this. Jovy wouldn't have played such an indispensable role in the design project."

He already knew that a lot of professionals might try to accuse Ves for breaking an unforgivable taboo. Making it known that a genuine RA Senior Mech Designer like Jovy worked openly on the Final Glory Project should instantly cut off this line of attack.

People were already used to the mechers being hypocrites. This was hardly the first time the Association trampled its own rules and violated its principles.

Ves actually found that the RA was a lot more flexible than people assumed. The mechers deliberately cast themselves as rule bound enforcers in public, but privately they were open bending or outright erasing any rules that got in their way.

Their stance reminded Ves a lot about himself.

"Does anyone else have any ethical concerns they need to voice at the moment our project is finished for whatever reason?"

"..."

"Okay, since none of you are bothering to voice any more useless objections, we will publish the mech templates to the public." Ves declared. "Since this is not a product that has undergone validation through the Red Association, we can't sell it through regular channels. I think it is best just to publicize the mech templates as well as the default mech designs through our own channels. Our clan is popular enough that plenty of people are paying attention to our every move. The media will naturally pick up our new Final Glory designs and figure out their purpose."

"That sounds minimalistic, sir." Kelsey objected. "Shouldn't we market the mech design more actively?"

Ves shook his head. "I don't think it is a good idea. We are all familiar with the controversies surrounding this suicide mech. The last thing I want to do is to tarnish my reputation by making it look as if I am deliberately trying to found a suicide cult. I also don't want to earn the impression that I think that red humanity is all doomed, so we might as well go out with a bang."

"The public will ascribe motivations to you regardless of what you say." Jovy pointed out. "Publishing a brief statement will at least provide a measure of clarity."

Ves looked skeptical. "Maybe, maybe not. I don't think people will be particularly swayed by my words. My supporters will easily buy my arguments, while my detractors will always think that I am lying. I don't intend to say anything. I will let our works speak for themselves. Once my products are being used, I hope that the public will eventually recognize the good that I am trying to do with the Final Glory Project."

"I think you are being too optimistic about the public, Ves."

"I have better things to do than participate in a popularity contest. If there are serious problems related to the public adoption of the Final Glory mechs, I may change my mind and intervene directly. I don't think it is necessary, though."

The mech designers talked a bit more on how they could promote the Final Glory Project among the increasingly more desperate space peasants of the Upper and Middle Zones.

He found it rather sad that far too many colonists still got wiped out because they continually failed to secure a spot on an evacuation ship.

This told Ves a lot about the availability of starships in human space.

There simply weren't enough civilian starships available to fully supply factories with raw materials and transport finished goods to where they were needed.

There were even less starships available for evacuating civilians.

In fact, even if there were enough starships available to evacuate 50, 70 or 100 percent of the population of planets under risk, they probably wouldn't get mobilized for this purpose anyway.

Ves could already see how the increasing amount of planetary cleansing incidents was driving soldiers to a frenzy.

The Larkinson Clan certainly did not lack for soldiers who wanted to volunteer for active combat duties, that was for certain.

Even Ves was not immune to this war fever. Part of the reason why he was eager to drive the Premier Fleet to the front was because he wanted to do his part to stop the alien advance.

After the Larkinson Clan published the Final Glory mech templates and mech designs, the works already generated a small amount of discussion.

Ves did not expect there to be so little discussion. Perhaps he still needed to wait for the issue to ferment in the mech community, but so far it appeared that few people were willing to debate ethics and morality in an age of looming extinction.

Oh well. The relative tranquility freed him from the need to intervene.

He decided to turn his attention to other mech design projects.

"We are ready to fabricate the First Sword Mark III." Ketis' physical projection declared.

"That is fantastic news! It took you a little longer than I thought, but I hope the additional time has helped to refine your work."

"I like to think so, Ves. I have tried my best to turn the First Sword Mark III into an excellent dueling machine, and that was before superdimensional matter came into the picture. With the help of the Mech Supremacists, the new ace mech will be like a dream come true. I cannot imagine how effectively she will be able to demolish enemy phase whales."

"It is a foregone conclusion that the First Sword Mark III will be able to cut apart lesser phase lords with ease." Ves made a guess. "It is a little more questionable whether she is able to defeat greater phase lords with only slightly more inconvenience, but I do not think it would be that simple."

Ketis crossed her arms. "Perhaps. I think that it is possible for the First Sword Mark III to defeat at least some greater phase lords, but we shall see for ourselves. The debut of this ace mech will not be too far away."

"Our Saint Commander has great ambitions for Saint Dise and her upcoming ace mech. Are you sure you want to stay with the expeditionary fleet? It will be really exciting to see the First Sword Mark III test her mettle against all sorts of powerful phase lords."

"No thanks. There are plenty of phase lords in the Middle Zones for me to see." She said while shaking her head. "Besides, my new minders do not want me to step foot on

the more destructive battlefields in the Upper Zones. My importance and the importance of the Heavensword to the war effort has grown so much that I already have my own escort fleet, do you know that? It is called the 575th Redwinx Escort Fleet."

"What an imaginative name." Ves flatly replied.

"It is not as big or powerful as the Bluejay Fleet. The Red Three doesn't have so many warships and first-class multipurpose mechs to spare, and they do not want to draw too much attention in my direction."

"I don't think that is possible, Ketis. Your role in opening up a passage to the Blue Dimension is public knowledge. The cosmopolitans definitely leaked your details to the native aliens. If the Red Cabal is smart, it will try to dispatch a strike force consisting of multiple ancient phase whales to snuff out your life. You are directly responsible for turning god pilots such as the Fist of Defiance into a much more implacable foe. It makes too much sense to eliminate the source of superdimensional matter."

"I do not intend to withdraw." Ketis affirmed yet again. "A swordmaster belongs on the battlefield."

"A mech designer belongs in the rear." Ves retorted.

"That rule never applied to you. Why do you think I am any different?"

"This is a serious matter, Ketis. I hope you are not relying on the charity of the Heavensword to protect you against retaliation."

Her expression told Ves that this may be exactly why she did not fear any ambushes.

This was not a healthy mindset. Ves hoped that his former student at least had contingency plans in place.

"Once you have finished the First Sword Mark III, what will you be working on next?" Ves inquired.

"I haven't thought about it yet, to be honest. My Stormblade Samurais already perform well when deployed against the native aliens. I do not recognize an urgent need to update any of my existing works. I also do not think that I can make a large enough contribution by designing yet another swordsman mech that is meant to fight the native aliens. I need to come up with a more inventive idea."

"You don't have any in mind?"

"Surprisingly... no." She said. "I can't come up with a killer swordsman mech concept that can fight more effectively against alien phasefighters and warships than the Stormblade Samurai Mark II. Any alternatives I can come up with are either too expensive or too difficult to pilot effectively. I may have outdone myself when I designed that mech. Stormblade technology is just so useful. It is difficult to find weapons tech that can surpass its performance or do something different that is also useful."

"Well, if you aren't in the mood to design a new swordsman mech, why not design an update to one of your existing works?"

"Most of my works are still fairly current." Ketis said with a frown. "Which one of them needs an upgrade?"

"The Everchanger for one..."

Chapter 6874 Superdimensional Supplements

Ves looked down at the solid bars that he had placed on the metal table.

He had spent several days in his design lab trying to study the new materials that he had taken from the vault.

So far, he managed to gather very little information that he had not already obtained through other sources.

"Superdimensional matter is truly confounding, don't you agree, Lucky?"

"Meow..."

The gem cat did not hang out with the kids for once. He had dropped by his design lab and stared intensely at the metal bars.

More specifically, his gaze was mainly directed towards the two that Ves had placed on the right side of the table.

The different bars of matter corresponded to the different variations of superdimensional matter found in the Blue Dimension.

The structure-grade superdimensional matter was by far the weakest and least valuable of the set. It basically consisted as a form of ordinary silicates that just happened to gain superdimensional properties.

The superdimensional rocks were the most abundant form of matter in the 365th dimension as far as red humanity was aware of. They comprised the vast majority of matter that made up the strange floating islands.

Due to their ubiquity, a lot of researchers managed to obtain samples of it. Many researchers managed to find out all sorts of details about superdimensional sand and rocks, but none of it sounded particularly relevant.

Superdimensional or not, rock was still rock. It made for a fairly awful material for the purpose of building mechs and most war machines.

Currently, most people thought that it was best used to make large fortifications more resistant to bombardment.

Perhaps they could be used to make affordable forms of infantry or vehicle armor plating that performed well against transphasic attacks.

There was also talk about using it as a cheap way to clad the exterior of starships, but it did not really make sense.

That was what hull-grade superdimensional matter was for.

This consisted of harder and more metallic substances that also possessed superdimensional properties.

It was a bit harder and more resistant to damage than structure-grade superdimensional matter.

What was even more important was that it could easily be blended into different alloys that still retained much of the original superdimensional properties while also gaining a lot of other useful properties.

Its relative abundance made it so that researchers and developers still managed to obtain ample enough samples of this kind of matter.

The RA's internal database already included thousands of new entries on superdimensional alloy formulas. Most of them weren't particularly inventive, but their performance boosts were undeniable. Each of them promised better defenses, greater heat absorption capabilities and other nifty upgrades.freewebnovel.com

The reason why this type of mid-grade superdimensional matter was labeled as hull-grade was because it was abundant enough to harvest in large quantities, but also tough enough to use in starship construction.

Unlike mechs which were small enough to warrant the use of the best materials throughout their entire frames, starships were simply too large to warrant such astronomical investments.

The Common Fleet Alliance and the Red Fleet had to bow down to economic reality and mostly settle with materials that the Mech Trade Association and the Red Association considered inferior.

It worked out most of the time because the fleeters utilized materials that were mostly available enough in large quantities that they could construct a lot of sizable hulls without running into critical resource bottlenecks.

The fleeters might decide from time to time to invest the best possible materials to develop an exceedingly rare super-class warship such as the famous dreadnoughts, but such investments did not align with their general fleet doctrines.

This was why hull-grade superdimensional matter suited their overall purposes the best. Commodore Zonrad Reze had already mentioned rumors about using the initial harvests to upgrade the most critical compartments and armor sections of several dreadnoughts.

If not for the fact that these metal monstrosities used up such an astronomical amount of metal, the RF would have been able to upgrade all of their prized vessels into superdimensional dreadnoughts.

Despite the focus on using hull-grade superdimensional matter on starship construction, it was also decently useful for mechs.

Hull-grade superdimensional alloys clearly beat transphasic alloys in most cases. Only the limited availability of the former combined with the cost-effectiveness of using it on standard mechs made this combination rather questionable.

The mech industry mostly thought that hull-grade superdimensional alloys were too precious to use on standard mechs. However, mech designers also thought that these alloys were a little bit disappointing to use in most high-ranking mechs.

This was where armor-grade superdimensional matter came in. The properties of this higher grade of matter satisfied many people's desires when it came to incorporating superdimensional matter into mech frames.

The jump in performance between hull-grade and armor-grade superdimensional matter was obvious. Few people would object to using the latter to clad the armor of the most powerful ace mechs and god mechs active in the Red Ocean.

The Fist of Defiance had already shown that a powerful God Kingdom could amplify the properties of superdimensional armor plating to such a ridiculous height that it could even resist the monstrously lethal bite of an ancient phase whale!

The biggest downside to using armor-grade superdimensional matter in mech development was that it only favored certain types of mechs the most.

Mechs focused on direct combat and fighting up close clearly had a much greater need for superdimensional armor systems.

That did not mean that ranged mechs and support mechs had no use for superdimensional armor systems, but the probability that they needed the additional protection was a lot smaller.

High-ranking ranged mechs generally possessed enough mobility to avoid most attacks before they landed on their mech frames.

A battle must go drastically wrong for high-ranking ranged mechs to be forced into fighting back at enemy phase leaders at close range.

This was why there was so much chatter in the mech community about skipping superdimensional upgrades for god mechs such as the Auto-Coordinator and the Ragnarok.

This was especially the case when there were many peak ace pilots that began to see high-grade superdimensional matter as a catalyst for their own breakthroughs!

Ves did not want to get involved in this debate. He had his own opinions on the matter, but he would only attract a huge amount of criticism from the opposing side if he voiced his opinion in public.

In any case, armor-grade superdimensional matter happened to be abundant enough to use as the main material for the production or conversion of entire mech frames.

While it was difficult to manipulate and work with, the incredible performance of superdimensional armor systems made it more than worthwhile for the Larkinsons to incorporate into mechs.

Ketis had already done so, though only with the help of the Red Association. She did not possess the extensive knowledge and expertise required to process superdimensional matter by herself.

"Then there is the most valuable piece of all." Ves spoke as he wore a thick glove before carefully picking up the densest and hardest metal bar.

Weapon-grade superdimensional matter was the scarcest version that people had found in the Blue Dimension thus far. Its scarcity disappointed a lot of people as it also happened to be the hardest and most powerful variety of superdimensional matter found up to this point.

It was still superior enough to cut through armor-grade superdimensional matter with a lot of effort.

It would be a dream to use weapon-grade superdimensional alloy to clad an entire mech, preferably a god mech.

However, there was so damn little of it that it would probably take Ketis multiple trips through the Blue Dimension before the Larkinson Clan could mine enough of it to build an entire mech out of this miracle metal.

That was far too extravagant and unrealistic for the Larkinson Clan and any other group.

This was why it was called weapon-grade superdimensional matter. It was a pretty clear indication that it should primarily be used to make weapons as opposed to armor.

Ves could see why. It made little sense to do it the other way around. The scarcity also played a big role. It was not as resource-intensive to use the best version of superdimensional matter for weapons and more precisely melee weapons.

No one made any suggestions about using weapon-grade superdimensional matter to construct ranged weapons.

Most firearms did not need such an extravagance. Perhaps an argument could be made if the weapon was designed with bayonet usage in mind, but what sort of self-respecting ranged mech would get entangled at close range?

Absolutely no one was stupid enough to design a kinetic weapon that launched weapon-grade superdimensional projectiles.

Perhaps one or two powerful shells could be made for god mechs such as the Ragnarok as a final trump card, but that should be the limit.

For now, weapon-grade superdimensional matter was solely reserved for the creation of melee weapons, and that is how it should be. It was better to use the best materials for weapons that could eliminate the most powerful phase lords.

There was supposedly a variation of superdimensional matter that was even better.

Although nobody had ever managed to detect or obtain any of it, the mechers and the fleeters became increasingly convinced that super-grade superdimensional matter existed somewhere in the Blue Dimension.

Ves had no idea what clues they found that caused them to make this conclusion, but they certainly sounded convinced.

Perhaps they were hoping that the next couple of jaunts in the Blue Dimension might allow them to stumble upon this mythical prize.

Ves did not think this was a likely possibility, though. The chances were great that super-grade superdimensional matter could only be found in areas that were more than simple floating islands.

It was far too difficult to find something inside this mysterious dimension. Two explorations in two different locations had only revealed the existence of those strange islands up to this point.

Perhaps they needed to move to the galactic center of the Red Ocean or an entirely different galaxy in order to stumble upon higher grades of superdimensional matter.

Ves did not dare to hope that he would be able to obtain any of it in the short term. For now, he would base his plans on the known versions of superdimensional matter.

"Lucky."

The cat instantly grew attentive. "Meow?"

"You've been wanting to take a bite, right?"

"Meow meow."

Ves turned around and waved the bar of weapon-grade superdimensional matter in the gem cat's direction.

"Here. Take a bite."

"Meow..?"

"Yes, I'm serious. I don't think it is worthwhile for you to eat the lower grades of superdimensional matter. We are going into war very soon, and I want you to be in your best condition. This is the best version of superdimensional matter that I have on hand, so you must eat and grow."

Strangely enough, Lucky did not pounce on this precious bounty. Though he clearly desired to take a bite, he also acted as though he was facing a great monster.

The gem cat eventually overcame his hesitation and began to float forward. He stopped in front of the precious superdimensional bar and sniffed it a few times.

As his head slowly came closer, he hesitated for a few more seconds before he nibbled at one of the corners.

That was all he did. He nibbled off a tiny piece.

As soon as the small chunk entered his mysterious stomach, the cat immediately reacted as if he had eaten an entire shuttle!

"MEOW!"

The floating cat recoiled and did not show any desire to take another bite!

Ves had a feeling that superdimensional matter did not mix well with Lucky's dimensional stomach.

"Are you full? Already?"

"Meow meow meow!"

"I see. Well, I will keep this bar in reserve for when you are ready to take another bite. You need to finish this in order to grow a stronger body. Don't skip your meals!"

"Meeeeooooow!"

This was the first time that Ves had witnessed his cat express his reluctance in devouring a piece of metal!

Weapon-grade superdimensional matter appeared to be way too much for him to digest with ease in his current state!

Chapter 6875 Superdimensional Regalia

Witnessing Lucky's reaction to eating a tiny amount of weapon-grade superdimensional matter was entertaining.

It also generated a few questions.

Ves took a second look at the metal bar. It did not look as pristine as before now that a certain gem cat had nibbled off a small corner.

Well, at least he wouldn't have to be afraid of Lucky devouring his entire stash one day.

It also dashed his hopes that Lucky would be able to turn into a full superdimensional gem cat in the short term.

Hopefully, his stomach would get a few upgrades out of this that would make it a lot easier to devour and digest superdimensional matter next time.

With that distraction out of the way, Ves turned back to his current priority.

The real reason why he spent time on researching superdimensional matter was because he wanted to use it for his own purposes.

Now that he was about to lead the Premier Fleet into combat, he wanted to take all contingencies into account.

This included a comprehensive upgrade of his combat gear.

Although it should never be necessary for him to enter the battlefield in person when he already enjoyed the protection of the Minerva Mark II and the First Sword Mark III, who knew what might happen on the battlefield.

Despite all of his preparations, he had found himself forced to defend himself on far too many occasions. It was not in his nature to let himself remain so unprepared for the next fight.

Ves decided to tackle two different projects.

He first sought to upgrade his infantry gear. The Unending Regalia was long overdue for an upgrade.

While he was at it, he also intended to upgrade the suits of his wife and children so that they enjoyed the highest level of protection.

It would be even better if they wore a vacsuit or other forms of clothing that was made out of superdimensional matter.

After he tackled all of the infantry-grade gear, he intended to upgrade his phase lord equipment.

His raiment was pretty much an improvised product. He originally intended to develop a special version of a Polymetal 'mech' to serve as the replacement for his raiment, but that would take far too much time to complete.

Now that superdimensional matter became available, he did not want to make his Polymetal mech out of inferior materials.

He needed to wait until the Red Association figured out how to make stable superdimensional nanomachines.

Superdimensional matter presented a lot of new challenges to smart metal specialists.

They were currently working hard to solve all of the new problems that stood in the way of the rise of superdimensional smart mech mechs.

"I guess I will settle for another stopgap solution for now." He let out a deep breath.

It should be simple enough to devise a more optimized raiment that was covered with superdimensional armor plating.

Considering the scarcity of armor-grade and weapon-grade superdimensional matter, Ves believed it was better to settle for using hull-grade superdimensional matter for this project.

He would ideally want to make use of high-grade superdimensional matter, but he could not justify the investment. He would have to use up far too many resources for a project that might not be put to use for a long time.

It was a much better idea to upgrade the expert mechs and ace mechs with superdimensional matter. The ambitious high-ranking mech pilots could squeeze much more value out of these potent materials.

As a mech designer, he felt it was unforgivable to keep the good stuff for his own raiment while letting his champions settle with subpar alternatives.

Of course, that rule did not apply to infantry gear such as his Unending Regalia. Any upgrades would expend a fraction of the high-grade materials that would normally be needed to build superdimensional mechs.

Perhaps Ves might be able to justify the use of high-grade superdimensional matter to upgrade his own raiment first.

He was the most important member of the Larkinson Clan and offered a lot of value to red humanity.

However, even if he kitted himself out with full superdimensional gear, he wouldn't be able to defeat his enemies as effectively as a superdimensional expert mech or ace mech.

It was best to leave the business of fighting and killing to the experts.

The primary reason to develop superdimensional gear for himself was to keep him alive long enough for others to come to the rescue.

The secondary reason to develop all of this expensive gear was to create enough space for him to evacuate the battlefield.

The tertiary reason to develop superdimensional gear for himself was to give him a chance to eliminate the threat in person if no other option existed.

"I'll need to design a raiment that is flexible enough for me to maneuver with." He decided. "I will also have to design a weapon or preferably two weapons that I can use to end the threat to my life."

This was not a trivial project. Ves needed to put real thought into upgrading his phase lord gear. He did not even have a clue what sort of weapons he needed to design for himself.

"I need to develop a superdimensional melee weapon for myself that is easy to use. How about... a spear? I just need to stab it at the enemy in order to make use of it. Then again... the shaft could break if it is made of lower grades of superdimensional

matter. Maybe it is better to use a mace. It is a lot more difficult for such a weapon to break. Its thickness will make it more idiot proof."

Aside from that, he also wanted to design a ranged weapon to give him more options than to charge straight at an enemy phase lord.

"It will have to be a kinetic weapon that launches superdimensional projectiles. It is wasteful to use superdimensional matter as consumables, but I can probably get away with it if I make it out of the structure-grade or hull-grade variety. Perhaps I can make use of the good stuff if the projectile is retrievable somehow."

He needed more time to figure this all out. Working on his infantry gear was a good way to mull over his choices for his next project.

Ves decided to start by materializing the Unending Regalia from his Vault.

He immediately looked at it from a critical perspective and winced.

"What a kludgy mess."

It started out elegantly enough as a relatively light suit of combat armor that primarily relied on Unending alloy as its primary form of protection.

During the Phasewater Generation, he hastily upgraded a handful of modules while replacing the exterior Unending armor plating with high-grade transphasic armor plating.

While the new armor plating offered far better protection against transphasic attacks, the rest of the armor did not keep up with all of the improvements.

Now that he looked at his Unending Regalia from his current perspective, he spotted way too many flaws and shortcomings.

The Gloriana side of himself wanted to tear it all apart and rebuild it from scratch!

Ves shook his head. "That is silly. This armor is alive."

While the Unending Regalia was not as alive as a third order living mech, it would be a shame to throw away so much accumulation.

"Let's make it better."

Ves began to sketch out a draft design. He did not apply too many demands considering that he was a phase lord himself.

The only reason to make use of the Unending Regalia as opposed to his much larger raiment was because he was stuck indoors.

He might not be able to unfold his true body for fear of collapsing an entire structure or jamming his body against armored bulkheads that were far too strong to break through.

He was not too worried about his own protection if he remained human-scaled. While his body was a bit more vulnerable at this size, he was still not as easy to assassinate as before.

Ves felt much more concerned about his family. There was a good chance that any threat to his life might threaten his wife and children if they happened to be close at hand.

"Besides, even if they are not close, they can still be targeted separately."

This was why he intended to design similar suits of combat for his wife and children as well.

"I have to make sure that the suits for my children can be resized to keep up with their growth." He reminded himself.

It would be best if he involved his wife in this follow-up project, but not right away. It would be best if he completed his own superdimensional combat armor first so that he could present a concrete example to Gloriana.

As Ves continued to sketch out his draft design, he soon came across a few problems.

"Should I add the Battle Skirt System to the design? If I do so, I might as well make the Unending Regalia completely modular."

This was not a small decision. Switching to a modular armor system would make it easier to repair it in the field. He could just fabricate spare superdimensional armor plating and store it inside the Vault of Eternity. If he ever ran short of intact plating, he could just pull up replacements from the System Space and instantly restore his physical protection.

He was not the best at designing modular armor systems, though. He usually left this responsibility to the armor specialists in his clan.

"I will have to call over Beatrice Hendrix if this is the case."

Ves originally wanted to tackle this job as a solo project because the Unending Regalia had always been one of his personal projects.

However, given that he wanted to give his wife and children the best possible protection, he could not think of many reasons why he should skip the Battle Skirt System.

If it was good enough to protect the Minerva Mark II, then it should be good enough to use on the Unending Regalia!

Once he opened up the possibility of involving other mech designers, Ves began to think about who else he should invite to upgrade his personal gear.

"I should probably invite Harry Kaikkonen to upgrade my Amastendira."

The Amastendira had saved his life more than once in the early days, but it had turned into a completely outdated weapon in the current day and age.

It had completely missed out on the benefits of the Phasewater Generation and the Hyper Generation.

The sidearms wielded by his bodyguards from the 2nd Apocalypse Warden Battalion were frankly more effective than his old energy pistol!

Although a part of him wanted to upgrade his Amastendira into a fourth generation luminar crystal weapon, the more sensible side of himself recognized that he was no longer the best Larkinson for the job.

Perhaps very little of the original Amastendira would be left once Harry upgraded it into a modern luminar crystal weapon, but Ves was fine with such a transformation.

Perhaps very little of the original Amastendira would be left once Harry upgraded it into a modern luminar crystal weapon, but Ves was fine with such a transformation.

Ves continued to formulate more plans and ideas as he steadily completed his draft design.

The conversion to a modular armor system complete with the Battle Skirt System caused his original suit of combat armor to gain a substantially different look and vibe.

He had been a little afraid that the addition of a Battle Skirt made out of spare modular armor plates would give his suit a more feminine silhouette, but he had referenced the designs of plenty of ancient armor that also happened to possess this feature.

As long as the Battle Skirt did not flare out too much to the sides, it hardly attracted any attention.

Maintaining the straightest possible rectangular silhouette was the way to go. He felt he did a decent enough job in preserving the Unending Regalia's masculine appearance.

Ves suddenly frowned. "It's not appropriate to call it the Unending Regalia when there is no Unending alloy left in the design."

He decided to call it the Superdimensional Regalia instead.

Chapter 6876 The Future of Combat Armor

After Ves completed his draft design on the 'Superdimensional Regalia', he finally decided to invite Beatrice Hendrix to his personal design lab.

"You requested my presence, sir?"

"Ah, come over here and take a seat beside me. I would like to receive your consultation on a personal project of mine. It is of great importance. Please study my draft design and notes first before you offer your opinion."

The female Journeyman did as she was asked. She took her seat and calmly perused the projected sketch and documents without making an immediate judgment.

"Your plan is... viable, sir. The application of superdimensional alloy in the form of modular armor plating will require additional engineering. The electronics of the modular armor plating are vulnerable unless they come in the form of archetech, but it does not make sense to apply it in this context. Besides, we have yet to combine archetech with superdimensional matter."

"Are you saying that we shouldn't resort to modular armor plating for my Superdimensional Regalia?"

"I would not go as far as that." Beatrice cautiously replied. "I mainly wanted to point out that relying on modular armor plating for your combat armor will introduce obvious weak points that are far easier to exploit than the armor plating itself. I am sure that weapon-grade superdimensional alloy will resist nearly any attack. What they might not be able to do is to block all forms of vibration, gravitic, EMP or more exotic attacks from disabling the components that are responsible for moving and locking the modular armor plating into place."

He understood what she was getting at. An armor system was only as strong as its weakest link.

Modular armor systems all shared this common weakness. An excellent hacker might be able to access the programming of a mech and cause all of the modular armor plating to go out of control and collapse, thereby exposing the internals of a mech to enemy attacks!

Although most modular armor systems possessed a lot of protection against hackers, it was impossible to close every possible gap. Each modular armor plate had to be connected to the same network and accept wireless transmissions in order to work.

Ves had read about rare cases where hackers succeeded in stripping mechs of their modular armor.

Such cases happened infrequently, but they did happen.

Ves did not expect the native aliens to be able to hack advanced human systems, but who knew whether the cosmopolitans might lend them a hand. He could not ignore this possibility.

"Using a solid armor system will result in fewer points of failure." Ves stated.

"That is most definitely true, but it will also cause you to relinquish the advantages of modular armor plating." Beatrice responded. "There is no single right choice. You will ultimately have to make the decision yourself. The chance that an enemy will exploit the vulnerability of modular armor plating is small, but not zero. If you choose to make use of modular armor anyway, then we must pay special attention to this aspect."

Ves did not have to think too hard to form his answer.

"I agree with you, Beatrice. I think I will take the risk and commit to applying modular armor to the Superdimensional Regalia. The advantages are too great. I think I can also reduce the chance that enemies can successfully hijack my modular armor plating. I will just have to tie them into the living artifact."

He already planned to turn the Superdimensional Regalia into an artifact. He did not intend to turn it into a D-arm or anything crazy like that, but it just needed to be alive enough to maintain a tighter grip on the modular armor plating.

This way, simple hacking attempts should not be able to compromise the programming and functioning of the modular system.

Beatrice nodded in response. She did not question his decision, nor try to argue against it. She trusted him to understand the pros and cons of his own choice.

"If you wish to turn your Superdimensional Regalia modular, then we will need assistance. I have yet to master the knowledge and expertise required to process superdimensional matter, especially the weapon-grade variety. I will also have to learn how to design and fabricate electronics that are either made of superdimensional matter or can remain stable while in close proximity to it. I will need additional time as well as tutoring from the Red Association in order to complete my work."

"Then make it a priority. You will need to master the secrets to working with superdimensional matter anyway in order to obtain the qualifications to work on superdimensional mech design projects. The sooner you get the hang of this, the more we can make use of our existing stockpile. It will do us no good to keep all of those precious materials in our cargo holds."

"Agreed."

The two continued to confer with each other as they refined the draft design and tweaked its configuration.

They also began to work on the related designs for Ves' wife and children.

The Larkinson Clan could still afford to use precious weapon-grade superdimensional matter to construct the additional suits of armor.

"We should make sure to reserve additional weapon-grade superdimensional matter for any future expansions." Beatrice said. "In fact, we can model the physical growth of your children and fabricate spare superdimensional armor plating that is optimized to fit the bodies of your children at different growth stages. The predictions may not fall in line with reality, but the deviations will likely not be great enough to matter. We can design the suits of combat armor to incorporate more stretching and other flexible accommodations. At worst, we can redesign an entire suit of combat armor."

Ves nodded. "I have no objection to that. Unlike other groups, we don't have to abide by any quotas. The protection of my wife and children takes precedence over other goals. Do you have any other suggestions?"

"I do, sir. As a phase lord, your physique has transcended human limitations. You are able to survive while being exposed in a vacuum and subjected to cosmic radiation for extended periods of time, is that correct?"

"Have you ever seen an alien phase lord or phase whale suffocate in space?"

"No."

"I am no different, Beatrice. As far as I am concerned, I can survive a lot of environmental hazards. I am sort of like a human astral beast in this regard. I can't fully explain how phasewater can make this all possible, but that has not stopped me from enjoying the advantages."

Beatrice reached out and modified the draft design for the Superdimensional Regalia.

"If that is the case, then it should be safe for us to remove most of the life support systems from your combat armor. It is completely unnecessary to add oxygen reserves, advanced temperature controls, medicine containers, emergency provisions and so on. All of the space that is used to accommodate these redundant elements can instead be used to further strengthen the core factors of your Superdimensional Regalia."

Ves widened his eyes. She was right! This was so obvious, but he had overlooked this condition.

"This can make a huge difference! Every little bit of space helps. We can devote the spare capacity for other useful functions such as a stronger communication module or strengthened anti-teleportation safeguards."

After Beatrice made her brilliant observation, both of them began to rethink the functions that the Superdimensional Regalia should possess.

They quickly began to form a list of features that the new combat armor must have in order to serve Ves' needs.

They not only incorporated modular armor and the Battle Skirt System, but also began to incorporate modules that boosted detection, communications and ECCM capabilities.

On top of that, Ves insisted on adding a minifab module to the back. Who knew whether it would be necessary for him to get stranded somewhere and needed basic repair and production functions on location.

"Have you thought about the weapons we should add to the Superdimensional Regalia?"

"Yeah." Ves nodded. "I am already planning to task Mr. Kaikkonen with the responsibility to upgrade one of my old laser pistols into a modern luminar crystal weapon."

"A single energy firearm is not enough, sir. There is still a chance that you might drop it or lose control."

"What do you suggest?"

"We may as well add integrated weapons systems to your Regalia. We can add compact luminar crystal guns to the combat armor. They do not have to be powerful, but their firing rates must be high enough to intercept grenades, missiles and other projectiles. They will serve as your point defense guns. The protection they offer to you is secondary. What is more important is that they can protect the people around you, which may also include your family."

"Hm. Your idea sounds viable, but I am afraid that the power of those guns will be disappointing if I have to integrate them into the combat armor. Still, your suggestion holds too much merit for me to ignore. Anything else?"

Beatrice made another suggestion. "We should make use of the weapon-grade superdimensional matter to make knives or swords with it. This will help you penetrate the defenses of stronger adversaries with greater use. My preference is to integrate them into the armor, but your choice may differ. We should consult Ketis if we want to forge the best possible blades for your Superdimensional Regalia."

Ves had not thought that far yet. He felt reluctant to wield actual swords. He was no reformed sword practitioner, that was for certain.

"I think I prefer to have them integrated into my combat armor. We can make them extend from my forearms in order to keep it simple. It shouldn't be necessary to do anything fancy. A simple sharp superdimensional weapon that can puncture through energy shields and armor plating alike is all I need."

"You should still go ahead and contact Ketis for her advice."

"I shall do that shortly after this meeting." Ves affirmed.

They moved on to discussing other aspects about the Superdimensional Regalia.

Unlike mechs, the capacity for a suit of combat armor was extremely limited. Superdimensional matter enabled them to cheat this restriction to an extent, but it was still frustrating for Ves to hold himself back from adding too many features.

"We don't have to finalize the designs for the additional suits of combat armor right away." Ves eventually said. "We should finish the Superdimensional Regalia first before we apply the lessons that we have learned on other projects."

"I have no objection."

Ves did not expect this side project to take a long time to complete. The Superdimensional Regalia was only a fraction of the size of a mech. It might contain a lot of small components, but the total amount of parts was much lower.

The raiment that he intended to design next would take a lot more time to complete.

Ves probably wouldn't be able to finish it before the Premier Fleet set off to the frontlines, but that was okay.

The Saint Commander did not want to plunge into the most dangerous battlefields right away.

It was best to remain in the periphery and take out smaller alien raiding elements first.

The probability that Ves would be forced to take action himself should be minimal.

"I am rather envious of you, sir." Beatrice eventually said. "This is the future of combat armor. I cannot think of anything that can offer greater individual protection by itself."

"Would you like to build a suit of superdimensional combat armor for yourself?"

"I do. Will you make superdimensional matter available to other mech designers such as myself?"

Ves thought about it and did not see a reason why he should keep all of the good stuff for himself.

"I will put all grades of superdimensional matter in the Larkinson Exchange. The exchange requirements for them will all be steep, especially for the armor-grade and weapon-grade variety. I won't make it impossible to redeem samples of them, so it should still be possible for you and the others to save up your Larkinson merits. As long as you have made enough contributions, it should fully be within the realm of possibility for you to construct your own superdimensional combat armor."

"That is all I could ask for, sir. Thank you for giving us a chance.

Chapter 6877 Superdimensional Duncie

Ves and Beatrice did not achieve a lot of progress on developing the Superdimensional Regalia.

They became hampered by their lack of understanding of superdimensional matter.

It did not help that they chose to work on the most difficult weapon-grade superdimensional matter either. Its properties were exceptional, but that amplified the difficulty of trying to transform it into a more usable form.

They needed to gain new understanding, insights, instruments and experience. Many other people had fallen into the same boat. Those that managed to walk ahead of the rest jealously guarded their exclusive secrets in order to maintain a competitive edge.

Ves felt frustrated by that kind of behavior even though he would have done the exact same thing if he was in their place.

Superdimensional tech had become the new technological frontier of both humans and aliens.

Nobody wanted to spread their secrets easily, especially to the other side.

While Ves could count on his good relations with the Red Three and the first-rate colonial superstates to gain free access to the less critical secrets, it was a dream for him to obtain access to cutting-edge technology.

The respective powers were not stupid. They most definitely refused to entertain the idea of sharing their most powerful insights and applications of superdimensional tech.

Ves grew annoyed with tribalism in an age where unity was needed more than ever. While the different groups did exhibit signs of greater cooperation in a handful of areas, they staunchly refused to share knowledge and material aid with each other in other areas.

For better or worse, internal strife had always been a part of the human race. The continued existence of a group as old and absurd as the Cosmopolitan Movement proved how extreme these divisions could become.

Internal competition drove red humanity to excellence. Although it drove a lot of people to act selfishly, many of their accomplishments went on to advance the development of human civilizations.

This was why tribalism continued to remain a fixture among humans. It was not only a universal instinct that could be found in practically any race, sapient or not, but also drove a race and civilization to greater heights.

But only if it was controlled to a certain degree. Too much tribalism and factionalism could fracture a civilization and cause people to turn against each other when it was clearly detrimental to their race as a whole.

Ves was not sure whether this also encompassed the ingrained habit among researchers and developers to keep their more valuable secrets of superdimensional technology to themselves.

When he shared his views on the limited knowledge sharing to Alexa Streon, she crossed her arms in response.

"You sound jealous." She replied. "You are upset because you are not the pioneer, the innovator or the trendsetter this time. While our clan has earned credit for introducing superdimensional matter to red humanity, we are by far the worst at deciphering superdimensional theory and developing strong applications of this new type of material. You are not accustomed to being put on the backfoot of a rising trend. You must be seething inside your brain."

Ves looked at his direct disciple. The former Terran smirked as if she derived joy out of his perceived suffering.

"Whose side are you on, Alexa?"

"I am on the side of truth." The woman spoke in a calm but judgmental tone. "Since I joined the Larkinson Clan in order to study and build upon your work, I have an obligation to do what is best for the Larkinsons, and not your ego. I stand by my statement. You are pushed to an uncomfortable position because you already recognize in your heart that you are unlikely to become a leader in this new and exotic field."

As much as he wanted to deny it, her words indeed rang with truth.

The Larkinson Clan did pretty well during the Phasewater Generation. The expeditionary fleet's many exploits during this oft-remembered period yielded plenty of phasewater, enabling the Larkinsons to design and produce plenty of transphasic mechs.

The Larkinsons partially owned the Hyper Generation. The onset of systematic cultivation and the possibilities opened up by hyper materials made him feel right at home. His living mechs became stronger and more relevant than ever before.

Although it was way too premature to announce the start of the Superdimensional Generation, the big players that had lots of R&D institutions at their disposal were already beginning to build up their own leads in superdimensional tech.

The Larkinson Clan had no hope of matching their progress. It lacked the quantity and quality of scientists and other specialists that could systematically build up institutional knowledge in this broad and incredibly relevant field.

While Ves and his clan also suffered from the same problem when it came to phasewater technology and hyper technology, they managed to get ahead by relying on individual brilliance.

That probably would not work this time.

Ves had studied the samples of superdimensional matter many times in the past week.

Try as he might, he felt no inherent affinity with them. Not even his advantages as a phase lord granted him a deeper insight into the nature or the uses of superdimensional matter.

Phasewater clearly possessed more than a few similarities to solid superdimensional matter, but they behaved so differently that Ves could apply the same set of rules to both at the same time.

He had to build up his comprehension of superdimensional matter from scratch.

From there, he could either wait for the other major players to throw their outdated and shallow scraps to the public, or he could try to go his own way and innovate in this field.

The latter solution was what he relied upon to gain an advantage in hyper technology, but this time Ves did not think it would be so easy to replicate his earlier success.

He let out a resigned breath. "You are right, Alexa. I am good in some fields, but not in others. I know my strengths and weaknesses well enough to understand that materials science is not my forte. In fact, none of the lead designers in our clan has high

attainments in this field, including Gloriana. They are not predisposed to make rapid progress in superdimensional theory."

"Since you understand our problem, the solution should be obvious."

Ves thought for a few seconds before he understood what she was getting at. "You are proposing to hire a specialist in metallurgy or materials science?"

"Why not? That has worked out well enough for our clan in the past. If we cannot adequately master a branch of science and technology with our current personnel, then we must expand it by recruiting those that can cover our shortcomings."

"Well, the problem with that proposal is that I am sure that the Red Three, the first-rate colonial superstates and pretty much every other major power has made similar realizations. It will be difficult to recruit people with the right expertise." Alexa explained.

She was right. The best scientists and engineers had already been swept from the job market.

The ones left probably did not possess the qualifications to develop new and unique applications of superdimensional tech.

Ves continued to frown as he tried to think of anyone he knew that could fit his requirements.

He suddenly came across a name that might just do the trick!

"Wait! I know a guy who may be able to help us out in a meaningful fashion! He's an old friend who goes back a long way."

"Who do you have in mind? Are you confident in your ability to recruit him to your cause?"

"Tristan Wesseling is the direct disciple of Master Meredith Katzenberg. The Fridayman Master still resides in the old galaxy. She specializes in materials science,

and has passed on much of her teachings to her former student. Tristan may have chosen to apply his knowledge in a different way, but I am sure that the attraction of working with superdimensional matter is strong. That said, I am not too confident that I will be able to pull him into our clan."

That disappointed Alexa. "Why would your friend not want to join your clan and work on your behalf? Is it another ego problem?"

"Probably. Tristan Wesseling and I had similar enough starting points that we often compare our successes against each other. It goes without saying that I have gained a huge advantage in this race. Whether it is out of stubbornness or self-esteem, Tristan has always rejected my earnest invitation to join my clan and work in the Design Department. He has thrown his lot with Davute instead. In hindsight, this is not a good choice."

"Davute is under siege." Alexa mentioned. "The side branch on that planet has already evacuated all non-essential clansmen. It remains unclear whether the defenders may be able to hold onto the capital planet, but the chances are great that it will fall to the aliens sooner or later. If Tristan has lost all of his fixed assets on Davute, then that will put him in a more vulnerable position than before. Your chances of recruiting him should be significantly higher."

In other words, Ves should pounce on the opportunity!

He decided not to proceed with this argument any further and instead decided to call the former Fridayman Journeyman Mech Designer directly.

"Ves." Tristan's physical projection showed genuine confusion. "I did not expect you to contact me directly. Our careers have diverged from each other. I no longer belong to the same circle as yours."

"You shouldn't undersell yourself, Tristan. Mech designers might not be able to make a lot of accomplishments in their early years, but as long as they improve, they will get better eventually."

"None of us have time to improve." Tristan sighed. "If we are not geniuses, then we have already fallen behind. Thoroughly."

Ves shook his head in rejection. "I don't quite agree with that, but let's not drag out this debate. Tristan, the reason why I called you directly is because I need your help. Your company in Davute will clearly lose its roots once the native aliens have conquered it with difficulty. Would you like to join our clan? You can bring as many of your employees and so on if you wish, but you will all have to earn your keep."

The Journeyman Mech Designer began to think why Ves was so much more enthused about recruiting him. He soon figured out the answer.

"You want my help in deciphering and finding new uses for superdimensional matter. Why me? Why not others?"

"People like me would rather work with people I can trust rather than those who are merely competent." Ves responded. "Another reason is that the mechers, fleeters and so on have all preemptively recruited those who can actually be of significant use to their research. Have you received any offers?"

"I did, but not that many. My career so far is not as impressive as yours. My specialization is also more divorced from metallurgy and materials science. Most people who review my record will not easily come to the conclusion that I am well predisposed to study superdimensional matter."

"Are these people right, or is there more to you than meets the eye?"

Tristan Wesseling shrugged. "I honestly cannot tell. I have no contact with superdimensional matter, and what little I can find on the galactic net hardly teaches me anything useful. Personally, I think I may be able to quickly understand superdimensional matter and a number of possible uses, but I have no proof to back up my assertions."

"I can give you what you need to get started." Ves seriously offered. "We have plenty of superdimensional matter in storage. We also have access to information channels that can teach you more about developments in this rapidly growing field. You only have to agree to join our clan."

"I... need to think about it, Ves."

Tristan Wesseling did not immediately accept the offer, though he did not immediately reject it either.

Chapter 6878 Tristan's Answer

Tristan Wesseling felt ambivalent towards the offer made by the patriarch of the Larkinson Clan.

As a Journeyman Mech Designer, he possessed his own pride.

He defected from the Friday Coalition because he became disillusioned by its division and dysfunction.

That did not mean he lost faith in all states in general.

He chose to become a citizen of the Colonial Federation of Davute by choice.

Although it was not the best colonial state in the Red Ocean, Tristan still agreed with the vision that the founders were trying to carve out in the new frontier.

He had done decently well since he started up his own mech company on Davute. Wesseling Design Services remained relatively modest until the Great Severing caused a lot of hyper materials to emerge.

Tristan dusted off his original specializations in materials science. He worked together with the state institutions of Davute to decipher the properties of hyper materials and develop effective alloys with them. His contributions were not particularly big or revolutionary, but he still derived a lot of satisfaction in developing new hyper alloys that the Davutans used in a few of their military mech designs.

He also made strides in progressing his design philosophy. His crystals became even more powerful after incorporating the effects of different hyper materials.

The development of positive and negative hyper gems presented a breakthrough in both his research and business success.

It was much easier to convince others that his tiny gems could boost the performance of an entire mech by using 'hyper materials' and 'hyper technology' as buzzwords.

Even though his pre-hyper gems also possessed the capacity to enhance the performance of mechs to a lesser degree, too many people found it far too esoteric to believe they worked.

It did not help that the gems only improved the performance of mechs by single digits in most cases. This was hardly a noticeable performance boost, though true connoisseurs appreciated how it could give them an edge in the most critical of battles.

The Hyper Generation demystified a lot of phenomena that people previously regarded as magic or superstition.

Although Tristan felt disappointed by the fact that he had to borrow the label of hyper technology in order to finally convince the market to take his gems seriously, a sale was still a sale.

His hyper gems did not reach mass adoption, but the Journeyman never expected for that to happen. His products may be small, but they were expensive for the boost they provided. They could only ever be sold as luxury products that occupied a small niche in the broader mech market.

For several years, that had been his pattern. He continued to split his time between exploring the applications of specific hyper materials, designing new mechs and developing new hyper gems.

He was finally making slow but steady progress in developing his design philosophy.

The Great Severing turned out to be a boon for his life and career.

The Friday Coalition had become a relic of the past to Tristan. The second-rate state from the old galaxy could no longer exert any pressure.

Meanwhile, the Hex Federation completely suppressed the Friday Colonies that lingered in the Magair Middle Zone.

Tristan did not have to fear the Fridaymen making any attempt to bring him back to their fold!

This was why he entered the beginning of the Age of Dawn with optimism. This was an era that was already shaping up to present her with an endless amount of fruitful work.

Tristan became satisfied.

The Colonial Federation of Davute continued to develop its planetary settlements. Its prosperity became clear to everyone.

Even if his progress still was not as fast as that of Ves and other prodigies, Tristan saw hope of working towards a better future.

Each day, he made incremental progress towards advancement to Senior Mech Designer.

It may take a decade or two, but Tristan remained optimistic that he was moving forward at a slow but consistent pace. He already likened himself to a turtle as opposed to a hare. He did not really care too much about how many years it took to reach the next rank so long as his progress did not stall.

The Red War continued to be fought in the background.

While Tristan was much more aware of the risks and dangers than many other Davutans, he still retained enough confidence in red humanity's ability to hold back the native aliens.

So long as red humanity gained a bit more time to improve its technologies and develop upgraded mechs, he was confident that humans would ultimately prevail.

Tristan had admittedly grown complacent about the threat of war.

He should have known better.

He failed to anticipate the space refugees.

He failed to take into account the possibility that all 5 defensive bands would break.

He also utterly failed to foresee that the native aliens would overrun the Krakatoa Middle Zone and steamroll their way to Davute!

Tristan couldn't help but feel sour about losing so much assets on Davute. The headquarters and main facilities of Wesseling Design Services had cost a significant chunk of money. He had upgraded their security systems and main production equipment.

Now, all of it was likely about to turn into waste. If the native aliens succeeded in toppling the defenses of Davute, then there was nothing stopping them from bathing his facilities with cleansing and all-destructive flames!

The Red Tide Offensive did not register as a threat for more than half a year.

Then everything accelerated far beyond the public's imagination.

Perhaps the bigshots had an inkling of what was about to happen, but Tristan was not qualified to join their circle.

This meant that he and practically everyone else in Davute had been completely caught off-guard by the latest developments.

Now, the Colonial Federation of Davute was bleeding star systems and population. Many star systems that never had the opportunity to build up proper defenses had become cleansed of all human presence.

It was like the Sand War all over again, but this time the native aliens actually enjoyed the act of wiping out helpless human civilians!

The capital planet of the colonial state was next.

Valiant protectors such as the renowned 77th Warborn Mech Division under the lead of Saint General Ark Larkinson put up a mean resistance, but they were suffering so many losses in every serious engagement that they were steadily running out of mechs and mech pilots to deploy onto the battlefield.

Yet it remained questionable whether they could hold the relentless native aliens back from conquering and razing the heart of the colonial federation.

If Davute fell, the entire colonial state would break.

Tristan would lose everything, and so would many other mech designers that invested heavily into the planet and state.

His customer base, his network of contacts, his friendships and alliances, his favorable business agreements, his debts and much of his employee relationships threatened to go up into smoke.

Many more people and companies stood to lose billions if not trillions of the MTA credits worth of assets and investments!

The economic damage was enormous, and the greater damage to red humanity as a whole was even worse.

The Colonial Federation of Davute had previously done so well. Tristan was but one of many people who had left their old lives behind and put their utmost into building a new life for themselves in the new frontier.

Now, the native aliens pushed hard to wipe out one of the strongest and most exemplary second-rate states in the Magair Middle Zone.

The Journeyman felt helpless to stop a possible tragedy from happening. He was too small of a figure to make any meaningful difference in the battle for the continued existence of Davute.

"This must be what the Hexers felt when they saw their state crumbling before their eyes." He muttered.

It felt incredibly unpleasant to be on the losing side of a war.

Just booking an evacuation out of Davute was a nightmare. It became even more difficult to book evacuations for his employees, even his closest ones.

Tristan felt responsible for their lives. He did not want them to remain stuck on the planet if the native aliens managed to breach the attempts to keep hostile intruders away.

Many Davutans who had pledged the oath had already turned their backs on it. They ultimately valued their lives over intangibles such as fame and reputation.

Should Tristan follow suit?

Should he recognize the futility of standing tall against a storm?

Should he pay the insane resettlement fees needed to immigrate to a safer colonial state in the rear?

Tristan entertained far too many doubts in the past few weeks. There were nights where he woke up terrorized by nightmares. His old wartime experiences gave him plenty of reference materials. It was not that difficult at all to imagine all of the horrors that the native aliens were about to unleash upon the population.

Just as the Journeyman continued to remain paralyzed by indecision, his old friend who came from the Komodo Star Sector called him out of the blue and sent out a recruitment offer.

Ves' insistence on maintaining a strong mobile fleet presence sounded prescient in the current day and age.

Transferring to the Larkinson Clan would solve so many problems.

He would become safe as few native aliens could defeat the Larkinsons in open battle.

He would gain access to excellent design facilities.

He also gained access to a lot of knowledge that the Larkinson Clan had accumulated from different sources.

Best of all, he could also gain access to precious samples of superdimensional matter! The entire clan would support his research, as he would be the most competent materials scientist in the Design Department.

Yet as Tristan thought about his existing obligations to Davute, he did not want his selfishness to take precedence over doing what was right.

He had to ponder for several minutes after receiving the initial offer.

It took a bit of time, but he eventually managed to make up his mind.

"Ves. Thank you for waiting."

"Have you decided?"

"Yes. I... am more open to joining the Larkinson Clan than before, but I do not want to abandon my current colonial state when it still has a chance of breaking the enemy advance and bouncing back." Tristan Wesseling ultimately said. "I have pledged an oath and I do not intend to break it without cause. Cowardice is not a valid reason."

"Does that mean you refuse to join the Larkinson Clan?"

"Not entirely. Let me make my intentions clearer. So long as Davute still stands, I will consider it an obligation for me to contribute to the colonial state's war effort in my capacity as a mech designer. If Davute has fallen, then there is little left to bind me to a dead colonial state. I will become a free agent in this scenario. I will be free to join the Larkinson Clan without violating my original pledges."

The reaction from Ves made it clear that he did not approve of this conditional agreement.

Yet that was the best that Tristan was willing to give.

"Tristan..."

The Journeyman remained steadfast. "Please respect my choices. I cannot drop everything and join you the instant you call for my services. I am probably in the minority here, but I still believe in the Davute Project. The Red War has overtaken everything, but that has made states such as the colonial federation all the more precious. They are the few places that try to give humans a semblance of normal life."

"You care about that a lot." Ves observed.

"I do." Tristan nodded. "I have seen how unrelenting total war can warp the population of an entire state. The same will happen to the rest of us if we continue to let war triumph over peace. It is in times like these that we must work harder than ever to preserve our humanity. Please let me stay and fight. If the situation truly becomes untenable, then I will try to evacuate with your fellow Larkinsons. Until then, I will stay and do my duty as a Davutan."

Chapter 6879 Sticking to Principles

Oddly enough, Ves appreciated his old friend sticking up to his principles.

Tristan Wesseling's decision to remain loyal to the Colonial Federation of Davute earned his begrudging respect, if not approval.

Many people in Tristan's position would literally kill an entire city or planet in order to join the Larkinson Clan.

Even if it was not able to match up to the prestige of the Red Three or the first-rate colonial superstates, the Larkinson Clan was clearly one of the few organisations in human-occupied space that was still in ascendancy.

The combination of strong young talents and a growing military arm convinced people that the Larkinsons had a greater chance of adapting to the rapid changes changing place across the new frontier.

Both the mech designers and the mech pilots of the Larkinson Clan had already shown excellence in many occasions. That may not be special in itself, but what was important to note was that each of them were well below a century years old!

In fact, most of the Senior Mech Designers and ace pilots were less than 50 years old, which clearly indicated that each of them had bright futures ahead of them if they managed to survive!

To a number of people, that provided more reassurance than any established state or superorganization.

The leaders of the previous age may not necessarily remain dominant in the latest age. The cracks had already been showing, and the native aliens clearly reserved most of their firepower towards the biggest players, not a smaller group like the Larkinson Clan.

As such, if the Larkinsons extended an invitation, few people would be able to reject the call unless they were already locked in an existing employment contract.

Ves believed that while Tristan and his mech company had already signed a number of agreements with Davute, it should to be a big deal to unilaterally end them given the dire state of the colonial state.

It took considerable courage, a misplaced sense of duty and a firm commitment to one's own principles for Tristan to say no to all of the temptations offered by his old friend.

Although Tristan's stubborn stance served as an unwelcome obstacle to expanding the capabilities of the Larkinson Clan, Ves did not entirely disapprove.

Tristan earned his respect for being a man who valued his duty, pride and his own personal beliefs above naked self-interest.

His conditional rejection of the Larkinson Clan only made him more desirable. He had already demonstrated 10 times the guts of typical mech designers. He had truly demonstrated the unique and quirky attitude of mech designers who originated from the wartorn period of the Komodo Star Sector.

How should Ves respond to Tristan's stance?

He had no choice but to bow down and respect his friend's earnest wishes.

"Fine." He told the physical projection of the former Fridayman. "My invitation shall remain open to you. If you ever change your mind, you can contact my personal assistant directly, and he shall make the necessary arrangements. Are you safe, and do you require off-world transport?"

Tristan hesitated for a moment. "I have no trouble securing an evacuation route for myself, but my employees are not as fortunate. You would do me a great favour if you permit them to ride aboard your own ships as they are in the process of evacuating men and movable assets from your planetary branch. You do not need to give them first-class cabins or anything. Comfort takes a backseat, so you can dump them in the cargo holds. They can bring their own tents and provisions."

Ves chuckled. "That won't be necessary. Our own transport fleet is small and rather limited, but we can easily accommodate a few hundred stragglers. I wouldn't be surprised if the department responsible for managing our merchant marine has already taken to transporting people from planets under threat."

"Thank you for accepting this favour, Ves. I owe you one. I truly should have done more to secure a starship for myself. I became deterred by the exorbitant prices and restricted availability of even the smallest courier vessel. At the time, I truly did not think it was necessary for me to squander so much money for an overpriced hull. It is only now that I realise that it would have been worth it even if I paid triple the asking price."

That was a mistake that many people made, not just Tristan. For whatever reason, these pioneers and colonists readily traded away life and service on safe and serviceable starships just to be able to plant their feet on solid ground.

Long ago, a much more naive version of Ves might have joined their crowd without thinking, but the current version of Ves only saw foolishness.

How could these dummies possibly hold any confidence in the safety of a planet located in a dwarf galaxy where all of the native alien races sought to kill all humans?

The fools!

"I think it shouldn't take too long for all of us to know whether Davute shall survive." Ves commented. "It will depend on whether the native aliens can sustain the Red Tide Offensive and continue to throw more cannon fodder at our defenders. It will also depend on whether our peak ace pilots are able to step on the road to no return and successfully make it to the other side."

Nobody could truly say for certain whether red humanity had what it took to stop the alien advance at this stage. Humanity's frontlines were still too wide for the god pilots to form an absolute wall that could break every alien incursion attempt.

This was why Davute's position had remained so precarious. It was located in the Krakatoa Middle Zone which remained incredibly vulnerable due to its fairly forward positioning.

The Magair Middle Zone which was located behind was in a considerably more favourable positioning in comparison.

"You really care a lot about Davute." Ves commented. "You claim that it is worth sticking up for the colonial state because it is one of the few places that still cling to our humanity, is that correct?"

"There are many states that hold similar stances to Davute. It is not an exception in this regard. What I find lamentable is that the states that still do more than pay lip service to this ideal are part of a dwindling group. States that have begun to violate human rights and push its population to new extremes are the ones that are doing a little better. I just cannot accept this kind of travesty. I want states such as Davute to survive and prove to our entire race that we can be strong while still clinging to our original notions of civilisation. From the moment we surrender to barbarity, we become sapients that are less than human." freewebnovel.com

Interesting position.

Ves narrowed his eyes in thought.

"I cannot find it in myself to agree with your stance." He calmly replied. "I admire your sentiments, but I think you are holding our race to a standard that we have never met throughout our entire history. We are but one of many civilisations competing for supremacy in galaxies that are characterised by limited space and limited resources. Survival trumps every goal. To hold back is to court disaster. The Red War has already made it clear that the native aliens don't care about our nobility or our high-minded principles. They only care about spreading death and destruction to humans that have never shied away from raining death and destruction to all races, including themselves!"

In the end, it all came down to a difference in perspective.

Tristan still believed that the human race was noble, civilised and enlightened.

Ves on the other hand became convinced that the human race had never risen above its own selfishness, barbarity and short-sightedness.

If Ves had to choose between the two, then he would rather have the human race conform to the latter.

At least in that case humans would be willing to violate every principle for the sake of their own survival!

Alas, it did not appear that Ves and Tristan could ever find agreement on this matter. Their stances were too far apart, and they were not the sort of people who easily allowed themselves to get swayed by opposing opinions.

Both of them recognised this fact and made peace with it. Neither of them were crusaders, and they had no problem with working alongside individuals who held different opinions.

"I haven't been paying too much attention to the defence of Davute, but I hear that the 77th Warborn Mech Division is going above and beyond to safeguard the most important planet of your colonial state."

Tristan nodded. "The local news portals are praising your uncle to high heavens, and that is when he has clearly outgrown his Lionheart. He is admittedly impressive in combat. There are times where he has successfully upstaged other ace pilots despite the fact that he is still piloting a high-tier expert mech. Are you planning to remedy this misalignment, Ves?"

"Not in the short term. Even if our Design Department works on the upgrade project right away, it will still take 4 to 6 months to complete a proper upgrade. I suppose we can rush this job and settle for presenting a barebones upgrade in a matter of a few weeks, but I do not think that Davute can last much longer. We also cannot stomach the idea of rushing the upgrade of the Lionheart. I am sorry, Tristan, but as mech designers, my wife and I have our own principles. We will not desecrate one of our proud masterwork mechs for expedience's sake."

Tristan's expression grew complex. This was clearly detrimental to his own position, but he could not complain because he used the exact same justification to reject the recruitment offer.

Sticking to principles no longer sounded as good anymore now that others used the same argument.

It was absolutely bad for Davute that one of its strongest protectors and symbols was still stuck with piloting a high-tier expert mech.

The Saint General could have piloted a better machine if he agreed to allow other mech designers to upgrade his Lionheart.

The Colonial Federation of Davute had plenty of Master Mech Designers on retainer that could complete this job quickly and cheaply.

Even if its own mech designers lacked the expertise to skillfully upgrade the Lionheart, it could always use contact foreign professionals that most definitely possessed the capabilities to convert the post-living mech into a proper ace mech.

Yet the Saint General staunchly rejected all of these offers.

He had never made it a secret that the Lionheart was a Larkinson mech from beginning to end.

No other expert mech had succeeded in facilitating his breakthrough. He lost faith in the works of other mech designers.

Only the Miracle Couple could design the best possible follow-up version of his precious machine. They were family and understood his needs better than third-party mech designers. Ves and Gloriana were also a lot more earnest in doing their utmost to elevate the Lionheart to the next level.

This was what Ves had promised to the Saint General.

He might not like his opportunistic uncle, but he had never compromised his professionalism due to personal feelings.

As a mech designer, Ves had the obligation to meet the needs of his clients as earnestly as possible.

Although the waiting list was still considerable, as long as Ark Larkinson remained patient enough, Ves and Gloriana would be able to guarantee that the next iteration of the Lionheart would become as magnificent as the Amaranto Mark II and the Minerva Mark II!

If there was enough high-grade superdimensional matter to spare, then Ves might even make the decision to convert the Lionheart into full or partial superdimensional mech!

While all of this sounded great for the Saint General's future prospects, the decision was highly detrimental to Davute and its many citizens.

The future of billions of Davutans like Tristan Wesseling may be doomed due to Ves' insistence on sticking to his professional principles!

How ironic!

Chapter 6880 Marvaine's Childish Ambition

"So your friend rejected your invitation."

"Yup. Do you think he is stupid?"

"Not necessarily." Gloriana said as she held Marvaine in her lap. "I partially agree with him. It is worth it to fight to preserve our humanity. Survival is important, but so is retaining all of the progress we have to advance our civilization. All of this fighting is causing us to backslide into more savage versions of ourselves. We are looking more and more like the humans of a less enlightened period of our history with every passing day. While I am not stupid enough to hinder efforts to defend our space, I am not blind to the increasing militarization of our entire civilization."

"Hihihi!"

While her mother spoke, Marvaine continued to play with a toy. The colorful ball lit up with different lights and made interesting noises depending on how he manipulated it. Different manipulation patterns generated different responses. There was an entire game centered around making the ball produce rare and highly coveted reactions based on precise timing and deductions.

Ves smiled at his son.

Marvaine was still too young to involve himself in these kinds of debates, but that would change in the future.

The start of the Age of Dawn proved to be a period of strife and war. Ves was afraid that all of the fighting and struggle might force children such as Marvaine to forgo their childhoods and work hard to mature faster than normal.

This was not what Ves wanted to see. His children already exhibited accelerated mental development due to their pseudo-primordial human physiques. He did not want them to lose the joys of growing as kids.

That was why he agreed to live on New Constantinople VIII. The planet and its prosperous cities and society had done wonders to give his children a pleasant and idyllic growth environment.

Sure, their schooling was intensive, but they could keep up with it better than any of their classmates due to their genetic and spiritual advantages.

Even if the schools had begun to accelerate their curriculums in response to systematic cultivation, his children still had plenty of free time left to play with their friends and go out from time to time.

All of that would soon come to an end from the moment the Premier Branch relocated to its new but powerful fleet.

The Larkinsons had already decided to trade away peace for strength. This was one of the many concessions that humans needed to make in order to secure their own survival.

"Papa?" Marvaine asked as he shifted his attention away from his ball.

"Yes, little one?"

"Once we leave this planet, are we ever going to go back?"

"Probably not, son. Red humanity is... in a bad place right now. We are losing star systems left and right. The New Constantinople System is not in imminent danger, but if the native aliens keep winning more fights, they will get here sooner or later. Much of the people should have left in advance just like our Premier Branch, but the aliens will still be free to steal and destroy everything that we have left behind. Even if we can drive the aliens away in the future, New Constantinople VIII will become unrecognizable to us. Our home, your school and everything else you are familiar with are long gone by that time."

Marvaine's expression fell. "That... that is bad."

Ves reached out and petted the boy's head. "Lives are more important than property. Diandi Base may be gone, but as long as our ships are in one piece, our people will live on. We can always build new homes for ourselves, but it is much harder to turn the dead back to life."

"Can we save everyone?"

Gloriana shook her head. "This is war, Marvaine. It is impossible to save everyone from death. Our own clansmen are dying, and there is little we can do about it. The soldiers of the expeditionary fleet are doing their best to step up and make use of our mechs to stop the aliens from advancing. They are not eager to die, but they have accepted it as a necessary price to save the lives of many civilians, including children such as you. Then there are the side branch members of our clan that have chosen to settle in one of the exposed planets of the new frontier. Arranging evacuations for them is... challenging, and not all of them have chosen to flee when they can make a difference at their current locations."

For the first time in years, the Larkinson Clan was losing more members than it was able to recruit.

This was a concerning development as the Larkinsons could not simply resign from the clan.

Clansmen were dying in droves. Many of their deaths couldn't easily be prevented, but the clan should have done more to prepare for this doomsday scenario.

Ves had an obligation to lead the Larkinson Clan and do right by its members. He could have been more attentive with arranging evacuation routes. Another way to limit the casualties to the Larkinson Clan was to constrain its growth and proliferation.

He saw little point in founding so many side branches on smaller and more vulnerable planets.

Perhaps these branches made it easier to harvest and ship local resources, but the clan could have bought them from the open market easily enough.

Ves inwardly sighed.

His own subordinates and advisors still dreamt of building a traditional empire. By seeding so many different planets with branch offices, the Larkinson Clan effectively spread its tentacles over vast amounts of territories.

Even if the Larkinson Clan did not gain sovereignty and primacy over all of these settled star systems, it could still enjoy at least a part of the benefits of holding resource-rich territories!

The Larkinsons ultimately became a bit too greedy and complacent. They did not respect the immense numerical advantage of the native aliens and automatically assumed that human supremacy would prevail.

Even Ves fell for the same trap. He could have been more attentive and stopped all of the side branches from popping up, but he did not do so because he valued strategy over human lives.

"Being a leader is hard, Marvaine." He taught his youngest child. "Ideal solutions are always out of reach. In many cases, the only way you can solve a problem is to pick the best out of a handful of bad options. Secrets and incomplete information can also misguide you into making the wrong decisions."

"Do I have to make those decisions as well in the future?"

Both Ves and Gloriana exchanged glances.

"Perhaps." Gloriana said as she stroked Marvaine's cheek. "If you become successful enough in mech design or another profession, you will gain wealth, power, influence and allies. No matter whether you work within the structure of our clan or join another organization, as long as you succeed, you will begin to build your own networks and alliances. Once you have reached this stage, people will present you with different issues that cannot be solved with easy answers."

Ves voiced his own opinion. "Don't worry too much about the future, Marvaine. It will take a long time before you get to this point, and by then the Red War should have experienced enough major developments that the situation will look completely different. Red humanity has either launched a successful counterattack that has made our space secure, or the native aliens have pushed us all the way to a handful of star systems that are under the direct protection of our god pilots. Either way, it will not be your turn to make so many hard decisions. You should focus on advancing your career instead."

"You have done well at school." Gloriana praised her only son. "Your teachers have all told us how you have consistently exceeded their expectations. It is not only your

memorization that is good. You are able to understand most of the theories that you have learned and apply them in clever and inventive ways. Do not get complacent. If you want to be as good as your father and I, then you need to have grand ambitions and the will to pursue them. Are you strong enough to do so, Marvaine?"

The boy eagerly nodded. Even though he was still a young child, he was the child of two talented and promising Senor Mech Designers.

"I want to become a great mech designer! I want to design mechs that are just as good if not better than yours!"

"Hihihi! You're so cute, my son." Gloriana grinned and leaned down to peck his cheek. "You can certainly try. I look forward to seeing your attempts to surpass my mechs and mech designs."

"Have you put any thought into the design philosophy that you prefer to adopt?" Ves asked.

Neither parents expected to hear a serious answer from Marvaine. He was so young that anything could change by the time he attended a mech design university.

The boy still tried to offer a serious response.

"When I put together my Mekanos, I wanted to make my Mekanos as perfect as the mechs made by mama. Mykonos are like intricate puzzle pieces that you can put together really well if you know the trick to them. It is always fun to make my Mekanos better than the ones put together by the other kids at school."

Gloriana already beamed with pride. She interpreted her son's speech as a validation of her design philosophy. It would be great if she could raise him as one of the successors of her craft!

"Is that the kind of mechs that you want to make when you are grown up?" Ves inquired. "Have you chosen to follow the trail blazed by your mother, or do you have the ambition to pioneer a different field that the mech industry has yet to explore?"

The young boy furrowed his brows and rubbed his smooth chin in a close imitation to that of his father.

"You are right, papa. I don't want to design the same mechs as my mother. I want to do more."

"Like designing living mechs?"

Marvaine stubbornly shook his head. "No. I think a lot about that, but I don't think you would be that proud of me if I inherit your design philosophy. I can do better. I want to form my own design philosophy that is mine alone."

Ves briefly grew a little disappointed at this answer, but a part of him felt a lot of pride.

The mech designers who blazed their own trail and did not rely on their predecessors to build their careers deserved the greatest amount of respect.

Their success rate was much lower than average, but their potential contributions were massive.

If Marvaine could become a successful innovator, then he would definitely be able to stand on his own two feet in the cutthroat mech industry.

"Do you already have a good idea of what design philosophy fits your work on Mekanos?" Ves asked. "Don't be afraid to say whatever is on your mind. We won't laugh. You are still young. You can always change your mind later on if you are dissatisfied."

Marvaine looked up at both his mother and his father. His cheeks became flushed with red as he mustered the courage to give his answer.

"To be honest, I want to design juggernauts instead of ordinary mechs. Bigger is better. Don't you think that juggernauts are cool? I like to look at the Otalon Sprius that you have put into storage. Alexa has told me a lot of great facts about these big machines. They can be so much stronger."

Ves and Gloriana blinked in surprise.

Of all of the possible design philosophies that their boy might choose to pursue, he had certainly picked an unorthodox one.

He was so similar to his father in this regard!

"Is that the extent of your ambition, or do you have a more specific design application in mind? Just wanting to design and make your juggernaut mechs is not enough. You need to distinguish your mechs further to make them unique.

Marvaine grew thoughtful. He tried hard to think of what aspect about juggernauts he wanted to improve.

"I do not want to design a normal mech. I think... I want to design a juggernaut that can devour entire worlds!"

"What?!"