

Mech 2391

Chapter 2391: Massed Firepower

The expert candidates waiting in the cockpits of their respective mechs. Unlike the other Larkinson mech pilots, they had been ordered to keep their mechs still.

This caused the new custom mechs that Ves had personally modified and upgraded for the expert candidates to remain out of sight.

Joshua Larkinson clutched one of the manual controls tightly. Anticipation and urgency ran through his body. His concentration and fighting intent had risen to a peak.

After being continually denied the right to pilot the Quint, the time had almost come for him to bond and unite with the upgraded masterwork mech!

Only a minimal amount of systems had come online. Enough to keep Joshua in the loop and provide him with an overview of the ongoing battle.

He watched the projection of the Penitent Sister ships falling one by one. The main cannons of the Gravada Knarlax not only inflicted enough damage to devastate entire city districts at once, but also enjoyed a considerable effective range against large and cumbersome targets such as ships!

When the ranged mechs of both sides finally opened fire, the space in between them became filled with lasers, missiles and projectiles of all kinds!

Though the damage dealt by the mechs wasn't much due to the extended range, this would change soon enough.

Joshua wanted to be out there. He wanted to launch his Quint and charge straight to the Gravada Knarlax. At the very least, he wanted to shoot the distant pirate mechs and whittle down their numbers!

Unfortunately, it wasn't his time yet. It was as if a cage pressed against his cockpit. It constrained him and blocked him from unleashing his full might.

As a mech pilot and a Larkinson, all of this waiting was unbearable!

Poor Joshua wasn't the only one who was brimming with impatience. The other expert pilots such as Commander Orfan, Commander Dise and Tusa also had to remain on standby while their fellow Larkinsons had already begun to exchange blows against their pirate counterparts.

None of them liked it, but they recognized that this was not the right time. If Ves was right and their new mechs would truly be able to facilitate their breakthroughs on the

spot, then doing so while there was still a lot of distance to the pirate fleet was not optimal.

Their time would come, but not in the early phase of the battle!

Instead, the regular mech pilots did much of the fighting in their stead.

Commander Melkor decided to join his fellow mech pilots in the field this time. Due to the high prestige and requirements of the Avatars of Myth, he was able to add plenty of command talent to the roster.

Grizzled trueborn veterans of the Bright-Vesia War calmly directed the Avatars alongside veteran officers from other states.

Melkor acted more as a figurehead in certain situations. This time was no different. As the nominal head of the Avatars, his presence among his own men significantly boosted the battle spirit of his subordinates.

Every mech pilot liked a fighting leader! Even if it was not entirely wise for senior officers to enter the fray and lose sight of the big picture, Melkor thought it was worth it for him to take the field.

Just like Ves and Major Verle, Melkor realized the most critical factor to winning this battle was whether the Larkinsons kept fighting!

If even a small number of them lost heart against the overwhelming and overpowering might of the pirates, the panic would quickly spread to the other Larkinson mech pilots!

This was an outcome that the Larkinsons had to avoid at all costs. If it took Melkor — who hadn't been entirely diligent in keeping up his piloting skills — to take the field, then so be it! He was a mech pilot as well!

His Bright Warrior in rifleman mech configuration fired shot after shot at the distant pirates. Even though the enemies fielded over 8,000 mechs, each of them had spread out over a wide area.

Part of this was due to their internal divisions. Aside from the core 2,000 mechs fielded by the Allidus Alliance, the rest consisted of a large mix of disparate pirate outfits. None of them wanted to fight too close alongside each other.

Another reason why the pirates spread out their mechs was to make them less susceptible to weapons of mass destruction. The Allidus Alliance didn't know for sure whether the Larkinsons were willing to employ nuclear missiles and other destructive weapons in this battle, but they employed a bit of caution and forced every pirate mech to fly apart from each other or huddle behind different asteroids.

At longer ranges, this meant that most shots flew in between the swarm without hitting anything.

Even Melkor experienced significant difficulties in hitting anything. While he did manage to strike a few enemies here and there, his laser rifle lacked the punch to take them down in a single hit. Many times, his shots hit against the asteroids instead of solid mechs.

He soon noticed that certain enemies were harder to take down than others. The Allidus Alliance mechs boasted especially strong armor, enough to give them a lot of durability.

Throughout the firefight, only the Penitent Sisters achieved great results. Their superior mechs with their excellent targeting systems and powerful rifles whittled down a lot of pirate mechs at range. Their weapons were so powerful that much of the cover that the pirates were hiding behind could not offer them sufficient protection!

Only the fastest and most elusive pirate mechs managed to avoid their wrath. Every other pirate mech was at constant risk of getting taken out by a powerful positron beam or a searingly high-powered laser beam!

A short but heated discussion ensued between Major Verle and Commander Chancy. The Penitent Sister Commander thought it was best to direct her firepower against the higher-quality mechs of the Allidus Alliance, but Verle thought otherwise.

"Quantity has a quality all of its own, Valerie." He spoke to her in a private command channel. "The mere sight of thousands upon thousands of enemy mechs is constantly wearing away at our confidence. In addition, once we enter into knife-fighting range, being swarmed from all sides by thousands of pirates is too much for our limited forces to bear! We need to reduce their numbers straight away, and I need the help of your Penitent Sisters to accomplish that. Can you do this for us, commander?"

Valerie Chancy scowled at Major Verle's projection. "Cleaning up the trash is beneath us, major. Your mechs are already doing adequately against the cannon fodder. Our weapons may be powerful, but our limited number of ranged mechs can only fire so many times."

"I understand your dilemma, but this is preferable to the alternative. Even if the remaining pirate mechs are stronger, we can at least cope with their quantity."

"Taking the core pirate mechs out first would definitely destroy their spine."

"Their spine is too tough." Verle shook his head. "It is easier and more convenient to remove the flesh first. Besides, the effect of focusing our fire on them is greater than you think. What do you think the rank-and-file will do when they notice they are being targeted by your formidable second-class mechs? They'll fear for their lives and quickly huddle further away, thereby causing the pirate mechs to lose cohesion."

As the mechs adjusted their targeting priorities, this largely came to pass. With every Penitent Sister mech managing to take out a pirate mech in just one or two hits with a disturbing degree of regularity, the rest began to experience the same kind of terror that pressed onto the Larkinsons.

Both sides had to withstand their own boogeymen. For the Larkinsons, it was the Gravada Knarlax. For the pirates, it was the enemy Hexer mechs.

To many pirates, their fear towards second-class mechs exceeded their fear of the Allidus Alliance and its formidable warships!

This was because the threat of warships was too distant from them. While they gained a bit of confidence from the fact that they were fighting alongside them, so far the main guns of the Gravada Knarlax single mindedly tried to take out ships instead of mechs.

With the apparent lack of help coming from the Allidus Alliance ships, the constricted pirate mech pilots soon couldn't take it any longer.

No one wanted to have their cockpits seared through or their mechs being cut in half due to an instant attack from a Penitent Sister mech!

Even though the latter did not really amount to a lot after suffering losses in the previous battle, their high hit rate and huge damage had already taken care of more than a thousand pirate mechs at this time!

This was a horrible loss rate! Therefore, despite the cajoling of their Allidus supervisors, the constricted pirate mech pilots increasingly began to find more ways to shirk the battle.

Once a couple of pirate mechs retreated, the remaining ones began to develop doubts as well! In this complicated situation, it became increasingly more difficult for the Allidus Alliance to keep the undisciplined and cowardly bottom feeders in line!

Still, the commanders of the pirate fleet did not exhibit much concern. The warships still focused their fire on the Larkinson and Penitent Sister ships despite knowing these vessels did not have any immediate battle effectiveness.

This allowed the Larkinson mechs to fly closer without suffering as much as they expected.

However, it soon became evident why the Gravada Knarlax and the other warships kept pointing their primary gun batteries at the larger targets.

Their secondary gun batteries finally started to open fire!

Placed along the hull of the heavy cruiser, the Gravada Knarlax's numerous laser cannons each began to rake across the battlefield, taking out dozens of careless Larkinsons mech in the initial volley!

If that wasn't bad enough, the Gravada Knarlax was capable of supplying an incredible amount of power to the laser cannon hardpoints. Along with the inherently high heat capacity of the heavy cruiser, the damage outputted by more than a hundred laser cannons posed a huge threat to the approaching Larkinson mechs!

What was worse was that unlike the pirate mechs, the Larkinsons couldn't hide behind a single asteroid all the time.

Occasionally, the Gravada Knarlax's main cannons blew them apart, usually causing any mechs that were close to them to suffer a huge amount of damage as well.

The nature of the battle also meant that the Larkinsons had to close the distance to the pirates as fast as possible. Unlike the Allidus Alliance which could mostly rely on the formidable range advantage of its warships, the most potent means of the Larkinson Clan only worked up close!

Ves grimly looked on as the activation of the Gravada Knarlax's secondary weapons was taking a considerable toll on his own mechs. Some of the lasers also started to pepper the Penitent Sister combat carriers, causing them to rupture or explode a bit sooner than ideal.

Something had to change!

He narrowed his eyes and concentrated his mind. He activated a few spiritual triggers he planted beforehand.

Two large initiatives went into motion.

One of them concerned resuming the long-stalled growth of his mother's mysterious spiritual construct.

One of the main constraints of this process was the incredible amount of energy it demanded. Perhaps it wasn't a problem for the Superior Mother to supply this energy, but Ves was not so fortunate.

He had to resort to another source. Some of his design spirits were able to feed the growth process, but Ves did not want to harm any of them, especially since the Larkinsons fielded mechs that depended on their glows.

Out of all of his design spirits, Ves had to pick a design spirit as a source of energy that was powerful but not critical to his lineup. The spirit had to be someone he didn't mind

pissing off. It was best if he already shared a hostile relationship with it! This way, he wouldn't be making any new enemies.

Of all the choices, he eventually settled for a particularly suitable choice.

In the vault of the Scarlet Rose, a P-stone rested close to the Ancient Sarcophagus. Upon receiving a spiritual command from Ves, a small construct began to form a spiritual connection between the two objects.

Soon enough, an odd connection came into existence!

Chapter 2392: Expending Assets

A section of Maynard Fields became host to an incredible destructive spectacle!

Two powerful forces confronted each other in a clash that had reached the intensity of a full-blown war!

The Allidus Alliance wanted nothing less than to crush the civilized interlopers who thought they could run roughshod over the pirates of the Nyxian Gap!

Scum they may be, but the natives of the Nyxian Gap possessed their own pride!

Of course, that was not enough for the pirates to commit to a battle that was already wiping out the equivalent of billions of hex credits in value.

Many pirate commanders already started to bleed in their hearts as they saw their accumulation crumbling apart before their eyes.

Hundreds of valuable pirate mech pilots had already lost their lives as the incredibly lethal weapons wielded by the Penitent Sister mechs pierced their cockpits with relative ease.

Though the Allidus Alliance offered plenty of compensation for the pirate outfits that 'volunteered' to fight on its behalf, some advantages simply couldn't be bought with money.

Even pirates had friends and comrades! With each death, a pirate gang lost another brother or sister that brought life and even joy to the band.

The Larkinsons and Penitent Sister mech pilots who harvested their lives didn't care. They were suffering even worse!

Though it sounded incredibly intimidating to square off against 8,000 — now 7,000 — mechs, at this distance quality mattered more than quantity.

It was the Gravada Knarlax that made all the difference! Her formidable rows of laser gun batteries constantly peppered the Larkinson mechs with accurate, sustained attacks!

The heavy cruiser provided numerous advantages over mechs when it came to operating a large number of weapon hardpoints.

First, a large ship always possessed a huge amount of processors. The space its data processing systems occupied already exceeded the size of a mech!

While the Gravada Knarlax had to split up her processing power to run many different systems and advanced components, there was plenty left to spare to calculate highly accurate targeting instructions!

Second, the vast number of sensor arrays on the pirate flagship was capable of observing enemy elements with much greater fidelity and detail. Even the second-class ECM and jamming systems of the Penitent Sister mechs failed to obfuscate the eyes of the Gravada Knarlax. The gap in power was simply too big!

Therefore, the crews assigned to each laser mount didn't have to lift a single finger. The ship's formidable automation capabilities already took care of everything! Only when the AIs and algorithms glitched for some reason or another would the operators have a reason to take over manual control.

With all of these advantages, the Larkinson mechs initially lost quite a bit of their numbers! The lightly-armored mechs of the Sentinels, Battle Criers and Vandals suffered considerably more than the other mechs as their light and agile mechs were unable to rely on their superior mobility to dodge every accurate shot!

"Aggh! How the hell can we even get close to that monster?!"

"We can't do anything but hide behind the asteroids and ships!"

After being caught off-guard, the suppressed Larkinson mechs were forced to huddle behind nearby asteroids or moving ships.

With fewer mechs to target, the pirate mechs and ships simply directed their aim to the ships of the Larkinson Clan instead!

This was bad, as at this range it became easier to target the more fragile vessels of the Larkinson fleet. Even the Redfeather began to incur some deep scars after getting hit by dozens of errant pirate mech attacks!

"Damnit, our light carriers aren't built to take part in this kind of battle! Our ships are only suited for small-scale mercenary skirmishes.

The rain of lasers pouring from the stupendously large and massive ship was dealing more damage to the Larkinson Clan's morale than getting attacked by thousands of pirates mechs!

Ves gritted his teeth as he quickly left the bridge and moved to the vault. Though his departure caused the bridge crew to feel some doubt, his next move was simply too crucial for him to stay away.

With Nitaa's armored bulk following his smaller armored form, they quickly reached the entrance vault.

Lucky, who Ves had draped on his shoulder, suddenly grew nervous.

"Meow?"

"I know it feels bad, but we have to go inside."

After going through an expedited security check, they entered the vault compartment.

Prior to the battle, Ves had already removed the Ancient Sarcophagus from one of the locked compartments. The ancient alien coffin was currently shaking and vibrating as if something inside was trying to escape.

When Ves observed the coffin in his spiritual vision, he could see how the bonds of the sarcophagus strained to contain the raging entity that was feeling some of his strength leaving him! A special spiritual bond was actively siphoning away his strength!

Ves could see that the situation was growing more precarious. Though the half-grown spiritual construct that corresponded to his mother's design had absorbed a huge amount of spiritual energy, he could see that Nyxie was already making good progress in seizing control of it. He could not imagine what would happen if the ancient alien managed to subvert such a complicated and powerful spiritual product!

"This is why I'm here."

He quickly retrieved his F-stone which he had tried to avoid using for a very long time. Out of all of his spiritually-reactive materials, he had never found a second F-stone. This literally made it irreplaceable.

Normally, he would avoid using it at all costs, or at least expend as little charge as possible.

This wasn't the time to hoard his assets. He quickly formed a spiritual blade and began to draw upon a huge portion of the offensive charge locked in the F-stone. It immediately dropped from 67 percent charge to just a 37 percent charge!

Just a 5 percent charge was already enough to inflict a telling blow to Nyxie. Now that Ves absorbed 30 percent, he felt his entire Spirituality becoming unprecedentedly excited and sharp!

He knew that the charge bestowed temporary offensive attributes to his spiritual energy, thereby causing him to gain untold destructive power!

His sharp and sparking eyes turned to the red coffin. For a long time, he had continually taken advantage of Nyxie. He harvested numerous spiritual fragments from the hostile entity. He even used it as a co-design spirit for his Doom Guard design.

Though there were many latent dangers involved with exploiting an immensely powerful alien who was likely a contemporary of the Unending One, Ves had always dismissed the threat as a long-term concern.

"It seems I can't keep taking advantage of you anymore. Sorry, buddy, but I need your energy!"

He attacked Nyxie with a succession of piercing blows! Due to the spiritual restraints of the Ancient Sarcophagus restricting the alien tyrant, Ves was easily able to attack and inflict severe harm onto the entity!

A considerable outburst of rage and pain emanated from the red crystalline coffin, but Ves persisted in his attacks! With each blow, Nyxie lost cohesion and bled more spiritual energy. The attacks also caused him to lose his influence on his mother's growing spiritual construct.

With all of the 'blood' that Ves was spilling, the growing construct absorbed ample amounts of nutrients. Nyxie's spiritual energy not only matched some of the demands of its design, but was also sufficiently high in quality to serve as great nutrients!

All of these actions had consequences, though. Ves could feel Nyxie both weakening and strengthening inside his cage. The attacks that Ves inflicted also damaged the restraints that kept the entity trapped. This was something unavoidable, but also necessary as he needed to increase the flow of energy to accelerate the growth process!

This gave Nyxie the opportunity to break out of the prison that had kept him captive for eons!

Despite the risks, Ves still felt it was acceptable to proceed in this way. After all, if his mother's spiritual construct still hadn't come into existence by the time the pirates crushed the last Larkinsons, then all of this was moot!

The process continued on for a couple minutes. By the time Ves had expended his powerful charge, the Ancient Sarcophagus was leaking like a sieve. Though Nyxie had

lost a huge amount of energy, he was constantly mustering up strength from somewhere else. If this went on, Nyxie would definitely break free sooner or later!

When Ves estimated that Nyxie had sufficiently fed enough energy to his mother's construct, he commanded a nearby floater platform to pick up the red coffin.

"Let's move!" He told Nitaa. "We need to move this alien relic to the hangar bay as soon as possible!"

They proceeded to do so, leaving the P-stone that held the rapidly-growing spiritual construct behind. Though Ves wanted to supervise its maturation, getting rid of the increasingly more unstable Ancient Sarcophagus took priority!

The floater platform made it easy to move the red coffin all the way down to the hangar bay. There, a Penitent Sister mech was already standing by. It held an unusual tube-shape launcher weapon that Ves had built beforehand.

Before the mech's feet laid a torpedo. It did not contain any explosive payloads. Instead, it featured an open cavity where Ves promptly loaded in the Ancient Sarcophagus.

Before Ves closed the port, he withdrew a gem from one of his Unending Regalia's storage pockets and threw it inside.

"Alright, you know what to do! Try and sneak as close as you can and fire it at a priority target! The sooner, the better!"

"I will deliver this torpedo to the enemy or die trying!" The fanatic voice of a Penitent Sister boomed from the mech!

"You have about 8 minutes! Any longer and the payload is liable to explode prematurely, so don't hang on to it for too long!"

In truth, Ves had no idea how long the Ancient Sarcophagus would hold its prisoner back, but Ves did not want it to be anywhere near himself or his assets when Nyxie finally regained freedom!

As the Penitent Sister mech carefully loaded the torpedo in its purpose-built launcher and deployed into space, Ves briefly grinned.

"Heh. You cultists aren't the only ones who can unleash a so-called dark god!"

This was a desperate plan, but one that Ves was willing to gamble upon. As long as he succeeded, he not only got rid of a latent danger, but also forced the pirates to incur the consequences of enraging Nyxie!

"Hahahahaha!"

Ves loved letting other people pay the price of his actions!

As he quickly strode back to the bridge, he concentrated a bit and looked out into space. He looked past the increasingly unstable spiritual fluctuations of the Ancient Sarcophagus and moved his vision far ahead.

In the far distance, he observed a hint of malice, darkness and power.

Ves had always known that he and his clan pissed off multiple Nyxian factions. He found it extremely unlikely that the Allidus Alliance were the only ones who wanted to destroy his fleet.

"It seems you are very eager to take revenge, Unending One."

He did not dare to peek inside the imaginary realm. He didn't want to open himself up for attacks and he didn't want to tip off whatever was there. He briefly glanced at the clock projected from his armored wrist.

"It won't be long before you see the surprises I have in store! Hahahaha!"

Ves already expected his mechs and ships to be heavily disadvantaged in this clash.

While the Larkinsons hadn't enacted some of the key components of their battle plan, Ves knew he had to alter the circumstances.

He felt as if he was in the position of Grand Protector Roshaw in the previous battle. When faced against a superior enemy that was on their way to winning, Ves figured it was best to flip the board!

Even if the cultists in the pirate fleet had prepared their own surprises, Ves was certain that his measures were more extreme!

This was because unlike his opponents, Ves had no intentions of controlling the powers he was about to unleash!

"I can't wait! Hahahaha!"

Chapter 2393: Mortis Greyson

The Gravada Knarlax. The proud ship bore her unusual-sounding name with pride.

No one knew why the Allidus Alliance bestowed this name to her. It sounded as if she was named after someone, but Gravada Knarlax could also be named after a planet or star system.

Whatever the case, the Gravada Knarlax had acquired an infamous reputation in the Nyxian Gap. Even in the core regions where the spatial warping and other anomalies caused many complicated systems to fail, the Gravada Knarlax had managed to remain intact for decades.

This was an incredible feat considering that any MTA or CFA warfleet that ventured in the core regions always suffered unavoidable losses sooner or later.

Few people were aware why the Gravada Knarlax remained safe and sound. This was despite the fact the Allidus Alliance continually upgraded her with energetic exotics! These materials were more prone to exciting the dangerous forces of the Nyxian Gap.

Any Nyxian pirate that had lived in the region for a few years knew that gathering too many potent but unstable exotics was a recipe for disaster. The higher the concentration, the greater the chance of something going wrong!

This was why few pirate factions followed in the footsteps of the Allidus Alliance and built their own warships. They could not guarantee that their new flagships would be safe from the disasters that had spelled doom for many grand works in the Nyxian Gap!

Only a small number of high-ranked pirate leaders knew of a way to stave off disaster. Certain groups and natives from the Nyxian Gap claimed to possess the power to prevent or suppress the onset of anomalies.

The Hallowed Abyss Temple was one of the most prominent organizations to make this claim!

While it sounded ridiculous that a group of weird cultists were able to affect the fabric of reality inside the Nyxian Gap, they had proved ability plenty of times for the people in the know to take them seriously.

Therefore, at the small cost of letting the Temple erect shrines in their territories, the pirate lords all gained a measure of security.

What even fewer people knew was that the Hallowed Abyss Temple forged even deeper ties with certain pirate factions. Lord Hivex of the Allidus Alliance possessed a deeper relationship with the Watchers of the Temple. More figures in black and grey robes roamed the ships and bases of the Allidus Alliance than anywhere else. Some of the Allidus pirates had even converted to the cult!

Right now, the intermingling between Allidus and the Hallowed Abyss had led both of them to push for a confrontation against the Larkinson Clan.

Standing in the middle of the huge and expansive bridge of the mighty Gravada Knarlax, two powerful figures observed the battle through the large central projections.

One of the figures was a large, imperious-looking man. Wearing a resplendent suit of chrome-like armor that was bedecked with trophies and marks, Lord Hivex truly exuded the aura of one of the most pirate lords of the Nyxian Gap.

Despite his success and rise to power, nobody knew where Lord Hivex came from. His origins were a mystery, and so were his aims. So far, he single-handedly raised the Allidus Alliance to a formidable power in the core regions through a combination of shrewd decisions and ruthless determination.

He was the first in the Nyxian Gap to order the construction of an armed warship! Though he took a lot of risks for doing so, his gambit paid off. With the help of a strong and overpowering warship, hardly any other pirate faction wanted to challenge Allidus Alliance!

Such a figure should have been at the height of his power at this time. Yet oddly enough, the imposing pirate leader had adopted a restrained posture. It was as if he was not the ultimate authority in the formidable pirate fleet.

This was all due to the other figure that stood besides the legendary pirate lord.

Few Nyxian pirates were able to recognize his black-beared appearance underneath his ragged but thick black robe. Since the battle had commenced, the dark figure had done nothing but observe the projections of the ongoing battle.

At some point, the robed figure stirred. Lord Hivex noticed the movements.

"Black Watcher Ortis, is there something amiss?"

"Something is stirring. The Larkinson Clan.. is more powerful than I expected. The Dark Gods are right to be concerned." A gravelly voice responded.

Lord Hivex slightly shook his head. "If this is the extent of the Larkinsons, then I do not see the need for your Temple to intervene. This vessel is already pounding their assets into scrap. I admit that those approaching suicide ships are of some concern, but our enemies think too lightly of our firepower.

The Gravada Knarlax had already destroyed or knocked out a number of unusual combat carriers.

From the modifications made to them, it did not take long for the Allidus pirates to conclude the second-class combat carriers had all been converted into suicide ships.

Ever since Lord Hivex discovered this fact, he ordered the Gravada Knarlax to prioritize taking them out. As long as all nine of her main cannons concentrated their fire on a given ship, not even the ships built by Hexers were able to withstand the damage!

The broken fragments of many of these ships littered the surrounding battlespace. Their potent, explosively payloads drifted off into space without the chance of detonating against their intended targets.

If this pace of destruction continued, none of the Hexer suicide ships should be able to come anywhere close to the Gravada Knarlax!

Yet as time went by, the Black Watcher continued to sense something dangerous. He tried to commune with his dark god.

As a black-robed member of the Hallowed Abyss Temple, he outranked the Grey Watchers. Usually, important figures like him were stationed at the physical location of the temple or particularly important outposts.

The Gravada Knarlax happened to be his current station. His presence alone bestowed powerful, mysterious capabilities to the heavy cruiser!

In fact, Lord Hivex and a handful of other Allidus leaders believed that Black Watcher Ortis alone contributed as much to the ship as one or two of her mighty turrets!

This meant that anything that made the Black Watcher uneasy was enough reason for Lord Hivex to put his guard up. He knew that the Larkinson Clan was still holding some of its strength back, but what could they possibly do against the pride and joy of his fleet?

"Not good!" The Black Watcher uttered and pointed at the map! Over there!"

"What is it, Your Excellency?!"

"A storm is brewing! It's too late!"

As the battle between the two forces became more intense, a sudden change swept over the pirate fleet.

Some time earlier, the Penitent Sister mech that received a special from Ves had snuck forward amidst the chaos. The Hexer mech pilot deliberately chose to swing around in order to avoid the brunt of fire pouring down the middle.

Even though her mech stood out a bit, no one paid attention to a single odd mech amidst an ocean of mechs. Most pirates dismissed her machine as a scout, which suited her just fine.

It wasn't until she crossed a certain line that a number of pirate mechs received orders to block her from approaching further. Scout or not, letting any sneaky enemy get too close was not a good idea!

Once she recognized that she could go no further, the Penitent Sister decisively launched the torpedo.

The specially-constructed torpedo launched forward. Its powerful thrusters immediately accelerated forward at a rate of acceleration that could make Tusa jealous!

The odd torpedo immediately attracted the attention of the pirates that were tasked with intercepting the lone mech. It took some time for them to report their findings to their superior, who in turn had to report to an Allidus officer.

By the time the pirates directed some of their fire against the odd torpedo, the mysterious projectile had already crossed a fair distance. In the meantime, its thrusters kept increasing its forward speed. This not only made it more challenging to land a hit, but also decreased the time it reached its target!

"Damn, what is up with this missile?! Why haven't you shot it down already? It's practically racing forward in a straight line!"

"But boss, we did hit a bunch of times. It didn't go down!"

"What?! Are you serious?!"

This was not any torpedo. Ves had not only used up plenty of Breyer alloy and some other precious materials, but he also reinforced its nose and forward sections with a layer made out of scraps of extremely valuable Unending alloy!

"The big missile, no, torpedo, is heading straight at the Mortis Greyson!"

"I have a bad feeling about this. Tell those ship boys to shoot it down!"

The Mortis Greyson was the second-most powerful warship of the pirate fleet. While her dimensions and tonnage paled in comparison to the Gravada Knarlax, the destroyer and her formidable laser cannon turrets formed a powerful deterrent against both Penitent Sister mechs and lightly-armored Larkinson ships alike!

Just like the Gravada Knarlax, the Mortis Greyson possessed its own suite of secondary gun batteries. While they were primarily designed to fight against hostile mechs, they also functioned as point defense.

Since the Mortis Greyson was already directing a prodigious amount of power reactor output to her primary laser cannons, the destroyer opened fire with a formidable array of ballistic cannons.

Though fairly inaccurate by nature, their large quantities along with the support of advanced ship systems caused them to land a lot of hits against the incoming torpedo.

To the ship crew's surprise, none of the impacts managed to take out the odd torpedo! In fact, other than slowing it down a bit, the enemy projectile began to unleash an even greater burst of acceleration, giving very little time for the pirates to direct more fire in its direction!

"It's coming close!"

"Careful!"

Before everyone knew it, the torpedo reached the Mortis Greyson!

The torpedo thudded against her hull with so much force that its Unending alloy nose pierced straight through the thick but softer hull plating!

Many of the pirates aboard the pirate destroyer had braced themselves and unfolded the helmets of their vacsuits or hazard suits over their heads. Each of them expected some kind of explosion to detonate inside the ship.

Yet as half a minute passed, the pirates slowly relaxed. They looked confused at each other.

Was the torpedo a dud? Had the Larkinsons screwed up somehow? What was the point of launching this powerful and expensive torpedo at their ship?

"Send a security party to the compartment where the torpedo has landed!" The captain ordered. "I need visuals on it immediately!"

One of the officers located the compartment the torpedo had finally breached before it bled out all of its momentum. The disturbingly-intact cylinder rested quietly as it had pushed halfway through the bulkhead leading into a storage compartment.

As the captain observed the strange torpedo through the projection, a part of him began to feel uneasy. It would have been better on his nerves if the torpedo detonated already.

A few seconds later, he received a priority transmission from the Gravada Knarlax. Before the captain had time to play the message, the projection of the breached compartment suddenly lost signal.

Seconds later, a huge unstable wave of pressure engulfed the entire Mortis Greyson! The captain and everyone else aboard the ship screamed as they felt as if something was trying to crush their minds!

"Ahhhhh!"

Just thirteen seconds, the heads of the captain and every other crew member aboard the pirate destroyer exploded!

As blood, bone and brain tissue rained all across the interior of the destroyer, the broken spirits of the recently-deceased didn't even have time to dissipate.

An enormous suction force dragged the spiritual remains to the location of the torpedo. As soon as every scrap of remnant spiritual energy disappeared, a silent roar erupted from the Mortis Greyson.

The surrounding ships and mechs all paused for a moment as the roar affected both man and machine!

An instant later, an unimaginably powerful force cracked the Mortis Greyson! The pirate destroyer deformed as if a huge monster was trying to escape from within!

Chapter 2394: Explosive Results

An ominous presence roused from the bowels of the Mortis Greyson! The proud pirate destroyer not only lost all of her crew in an instant, but had also bulged far beyond what she could handle, causing her to look as if she had tried to bear a child that was too monstrous for her to carry!

The Mortis Greyson literally lost her life after being forced to bear this child. Now, an ancient horror was rousing. Not only had he succeeded in breaking through the prison that held him captive for how many long years, but his rage at what Ves had done to him caused the entity to have nothing but revenge on his mind!

The increasingly more powerful spiritual fluctuations emerging from the Ancient Sarcophagus destabilized the entire ship even further!

If that wasn't enough, a single gem that Ves placed next to the Ancient Sarcophagus became subject to a considerable amount of abuse.

Though Nyxie only possessed the barest of rationality after suffering eons of crushing isolation, the alien tyrant had developed an undying hatred against Ves! As far as this monstrous spiritual entity was concerned, he needed to pay the little human back for all the suffering he endured! He would not rest until he took revenge against the weakling who sought to exploit someone who had once ruled over an entire space empire!

The rage flowing out of Nyxie was so violent that the so-called Highly Unstable Chaos Essence gem couldn't withstand the pressure any longer.

Just like the heads of the pirate crew of the Mortis Greyson, the gem broke apart, unleashing the potent chaos energy locked inside!

A large amount of energy quickly spread inside the chamber of the torpedo, only for the entity that had breached the restrictions of the Ancient Sarcophagus to automatically absorb it by instinct!

By the time that Nyxie had just started to recognize that it was a very bad idea to take in highly volatile energy with very chaotic properties, his entire spiritual makeup abruptly transformed!

The pressure emanating from the Mortis Greyson doubled! The warping had grown so bad that the physical force acting on the entire hull of the crippled destroyer increased as well!

Every nearby pirate mech or ship quickly started to distance themselves from the broken warship. A powerful wave of malice and chaos spread across kilometers. This caused the pirates aboard the Gravada Knarlax to feel a bit uneasy.

While the Black Watcher was quietly communing with someone, Lord Hivex issued a series of orders.

According to the Black Watcher, whatever or whoever crippled the Mortis Greyson was just waking up! Was this the trump card of the Larkinson Clan? Was this why Ulimo Citadel fell?

"Milord, we have received an incoming hail from the Larkinson fleet!" One of the pirate bridge officers announced. "Mr. Ves Larkinson wishes to speak to you in person!"

The pirate lord's eyes grew grave. What did this young mech designer want to do? Intimidate him? That was silly! Lord Hivex had fought and beaten far more enemies than this kid from the Komodo Star Sector. There was no way he would shy away from a clean-shaven brat!

He accepted the hail. Due to all of the attacks and energy unleashed on the battlefield, the projection that appeared before the pirate lord was marred by noise and static.

"Mr. Larkinson." Lord Hivex greeted with a ferocious grin while he summoned his full bearing as one of the power players of the Nyxian Gap. "Do you wish to offer your terms of surrender, or shall I have to pry it out of you in person once you lie before me after my men have amputated all of your limbs?"

The projection of Ves grinned back. While his Unending Regalia did not boast the numerous impressive-looking trophies of his counterpart, its exceptionally high quality along with its dashing red cape significantly boosted his stature.

"Before you fantasize about bringing me before your feet, you should make sure you even get to keep them by the end of this battle." Ves confidently hit back. He spread out his armored hand. "I know you've got a bunch of cultists on your ship. I came prepared this time. Do you like the little surprise I've sent to your little destroyer? Sorry about the crew, but my alien god is very hungry and very angry. Eating pirates is his favorite activity, so I did him a favor and sent him to a buffet!"

The pirate lord seethed. "Your scheme will not work. The dark god at our side is unending and eternal. You know nothing about the powers that we can harness. If you think you can stop our dark god with an impostor, then think again."

Ves tauntingly smirked at the furious pirate lord before he abruptly ended the transmission. He sat back in his chair as he contemplated what he had accomplished.

First, he confirmed that the infamous Lord Hivex was present aboard the flagship. This was important, because Ves was very interested in collecting the bounty on the powerful pirate lord's head if possible.

Second, the brief contact allowed him to influence Lord Hivex. This was an even more important objective.

Ves knew that unleashing Nyxie after he had just knifed the formerly-trapped entity a bunch of times was a very dangerous course of action.

Anyone who suffered so much abuse would have thoughts of taking revenge!

Therefore, his plan of freeing Nyxie in the middle of the pirate fleet was actually very precarious. Nyxie could easily ignore the inconsequential pirates and head straight back to the Scarlet Rose to torture Ves in endless ways!

As Ves did not wish to be the first to suffer the brunt of Nyxie's fury, he needed to find some way to drag Nyxie into a conflict with the pirates.

First, he tried to affect Nyxie's rationality by attempting to infect him with a bit of chaos. While Ves had no clue what the Highly Unstable Chaos Essence gem contained, its description suggested that it was nothing good.

He could see the result of this act with his spiritual senses. Nyxie's fury and rage had skyrocketed after he absorbed a sudden burst of chaotic energy!

However, this was not enough. Ves had to make sure that Nyxie only thought about directing his ire towards the pirates rather than the Larkinsons.

This was why he employed his Devil Tongue against Lord Hivex! Through the few words he said, Ves implicitly conveyed the impression that Nyxie was actually on his side!

He acted and spoke as if Nyxie was his ally or patron. None of the signals that Ves released carried any hint that Nyxie was actually eager to crush him into paste!

Now, Ves could only wait to see how the pirates intended to respond. Would they act in accordance with the strings he had pulled?

"ALERT! WE ARE DETECTING UNUSUAL ANOMALOUS ACTIVITY FROM THE GRAVADA KNARLAX!"

"It's an anomaly, sir! The pirates are doing it again!"

A bit of panic spread among the crew. Everyone remembered the horrors they faced when the dark sphere had engulfed the entire area around Ulimo Citadel.

Now that darkness began to flow out of the Gravada Knarlax, the latent trauma that many Larkinsons had incurred suddenly emerged into the forefront of their minds!

Ves activated a command that allowed to speak to every Larkinson in the fleet.

"Do not be alarmed! We are prepared for their tricks this time. We have readied plenty of countermeasures to defeat their measures! Focus on your own fight! Don't let anything make you forget what is at stake!"

The fight between the mechs was intensifying. As the two sides closed in on each other, the Gravada Knarlax continued to fire her main cannons against the dwindling number of Hexer suicide ships!

Meanwhile, the dark fog that spewed out of the Gravada Knarlax began to form a vague, monstrous shape. The shadowy apparition vaguely resembled the Unending One.

Instead of facing the Larkinson assets, the monstrous fog creature warily faced the crippled Mortis Greyson.

The power unleashed by Nyxie had abruptly increased, causing the dark monster summoned by the Hallowed Abyss Temple to feel incredibly threatened!

Acting on the suggestion of Black Watcher Ortis, the dark monster did not wait for the powerful interloper to regain control over his power.

The fog monster proactively decided to launch an attack! The whale-like monster flew out of the Gravada Knarlax and began to fire a dark beam of destruction from his maw!

The strike drilled a hole through the broken Mortis Greyson and hit the chaotic entity buried deep inside!

Another silent roar emanated from the broken destroyer. For the first time in many ages, Nyxie fully emerged from his coffin!

Ves observed the incredible sight with both his physical and spiritual vision.

Nyxie's chaos-infused form looked angry and unstable. Different attributes and colors ran through his alien form.

Unlike the Unending One, Nyxie appeared to be based on a humanoid alien. This must be how he looked like when he was alive!

Due to his fluctuating shape, it was very difficult for Ves to pin down Nyxie's actual appearance.

One thing was for sure, though. Nyxie was pissed, and all of his ire was currently pointed at the dark monster.

The two terrible entities immediately began to fight each other! The two exchanged powerful spiritual attacks at a scale that visibly shook the material dimensions!

"Hahahah! That's the spirit!" Ves exulted!

He finally felt relieved. The dark monster might not be the only measure the cultists had in reserve, but at least Ves had preemptively neutralized this move before it could do any damage to his assets.

The rest of the battle did not go very well, though. Despite the darkness that continually poured out the Gravada Knarlax, the ship was still keeping up its punishingly brutal barrage of fire against the Larkinsons!

The other five escort ships were also keeping up their attacks!

The Larkinson Clan was losing ships at a rapid rate. Not only the Penitent Sister combat carriers, but also the ships of the Avatars and Sentinels were getting wrecked at a worryingly high rate.

The fight between the mechs were also taking their toll! Though the Larkinsons and Penitent Sisters managed to destroy thousands of mechs, the core forces of the Allidus Alliance were still intact! Under their lead, the pirate mechs bled their foes at a gradual but alarming rate!

The Larkinson Clan only fielded less than a thousand mechs to begin with. This made every loss a lot more painful than before. Their buffer was worryingly thin, and they would definitely not be able to survive getting mobbed by thousands of inferior mechs!

Ves didn't need Major Verle to recognize that his side was still on a losing trajectory.

He did not despair. He directed his attention to another projection. "It's time."

The Gravada Knarlax may have succeeded in crushing the majority of incoming Penitent Sister suicide ships, but three of them barely managed to hold on as they made their end runs!

The Penitent Sister skeleton crews aboard those vessels cleverly rotated their speeding carriers so that one of them would not be forced to absorb all of the punishing attacks.

By evenly spreading out the damage, the three banged-up ships all managed to hang on long enough to reach the pirate flagship!

At the final moments, the Gravada Knarlax unleashed a near-simultaneous volley from all three turrets. Nine powerful kinetic projectiles slammed into the ship that was currently in the lead.

The Penitent Sister carrier immediately shattered into pieces!

However, the heavy cruiser had finally run out of time. Just before the two suicidal combat carriers crashed against the hull of the Gravada Knarlax, the dark fog flowing out of the ship suddenly enveloped the ship!

Two smaller ships crashed against the blackened heavy cruiser! Two huge impacts slammed against the darkened shell, though amazingly the solidified dark fog managed to withstand the hugely powerful blows!

"THAT'S ABSURD!" Ves shouted as he watched the event in disbelief!

Though the fog visibly weakened to a huge degree, it had done its job. The crashes failed to inflict material damage to the Gravada Knarlax!

However, this was not the extent of this gambit. Just seconds later, a large amount of enriched nuclear bombs and other volatile explosives detonated all at once!

Huge blasts engulfed the side of the Gravada Knarlax!

As the titanic explosions subsided, Ves and everyone else paid close attention to the heavy cruiser.

A gaping hole had appeared on the starboard side the Gravada Knarlax. Though the hull had been breached, the damage didn't appear to be fatal!

"She's still alive!"

Just as disappointment spread amongst the Larkinsons, a highly volatile anomaly spread from Gravada Knarlax and rapidly engulfed the entire battlefield!

The three Highly Unstable Chaos Essence gems that Ves planted in the final Penitent Sister combat carrier were finally making their mark! Under his deliberate arrangement, the energy unleashed by the gems were bringing the imaginary realm closer to the material realm!

The shadow of an immense vortex descended upon the battlefield.

Chapter 2395: Flipping the Board

The entire battlefield had grown more and more chaotic as time went on. Debris flung in every direction. A trail of broken starships littered from one end to the other end as the Larkinsons and Penitent Sisters both lost a substantial amount of ships!

The losses ran in the thousands. Even if the crews of every ship frequently performed evacuation drills, anytime the Gravada Knarlax breached a vessel with her powerful main cannons, the resulting damage often killed at least a quarter of the people aboard!

The tyranny of warships had managed to accomplish the one feat that every other threat in the Nyxian Gap failed to accomplish. The pirate warships managed to fell at least a third of the starships of the Larkinson Clan!

If the Gravada Knarlax kept focusing her powerful primary gun batteries on the remaining Larkinson ships, then Task Force Predator would certainly become history!

Both sides knew this. The Allidus Alliance had taken advantage of the incredibly punishing firepower unleashed by the Gravada Knarlax several times. Enemies who were stupid enough to underestimate the power of a heavy cruiser had all paid the price of their ignorance!

Though Ves had never witnessed a ship comparable to the Gravada Knarlax in action, his extensive foundation in mech design and engineering granted him a great amount of respect for her weapons and armor.

It didn't matter if the underlying tech was rather rough and crude. Scale alone compensated for most of the weaknesses!

Therefore, from the very start, Ves always prioritized taking out the Gravada Knarlax. There were still ways to overcome the thousands of pirate mechs and the handful of smaller pirate warships, but taking down a heavy cruiser was too difficult with just the mechs at his disposal.

"There's also the cultists to consider."

He already knew for certain the Hallowed Abyss Temple wanted to take revenge. The Larkinsons pissed off the Unending One quite a bit during the last battle. Ves could

easily predict that a 'dark god' as vengeful and furious as the tentacled whale would push its worshippers to go for a second round!

Facing one of these two threats was already bad enough. Facing both of them at once spelled

certain death as far as he was concerned!

If he played by the rules, his lack of assets meant that he would surely lose the game.

This was why he had to mess it up! He resolutely plotted to flip the board, and the only way he felt he could accomplish was by taking a page out of the book of Grey Watcher Xarnus.

"Transform the stage!"

As long as he called down an anomaly onto the battlefield, then the pirates with their formidable warships and ocean of mechs would have to fight against the environment as well as the Larkinsons!

Of course, his clansmen weren't having it easy either! As the strange anomaly that Ves had cooked up with the help of detonating three Highly Unstable Chaos Essence gems at once, the strange phenomenon that followed suit had caused everyone to freeze for a time.

This was not because they were paralyzed, but because none of them could move!

Both Larkinsons and pirates found out to their horror that every move they made, they automatically snapped back to their previous positions.

One of the bridge officers experimentally lifted his hand, only for that same hand to return to resting on his desk.

A formation of mechs attempted to fly forward, only for their mechs to stay in mid-flight several hundred meters back.

One of the pirate destroyers called the Ailing Frey attempted to fire her potent primary laser cannons at a Larkinson light carrier, only for her turret to rotate back to its original orientation!

Though every human remained aware of the passage of time, their bodies and their machines remained frozen for some odd reason!

If this wasn't enough, the opaque shadow of a huge vortex overlapped the surrounding space. Almost everyone taking part in the battle was horribly confused at this vague but frightening illusion!

There were only a couple of exceptions to the rule. The two titanic spiritual entities continued battling each other without any sign that they were affected by the anomaly!

Both the Unending One and Nyxie exchanged powerful blows in the middle of the pirate fleet. The collateral damage of their enormous attacks sometimes felled a dozen or so pirate mechs that found themselves in the wrong place at the wrong time.

Ves also found himself to remain in control. With the help of the B-stone layer of his Unending Regalia, he had gained a moderate amount of resistance from the anomaly's effects.

This was exactly what he wanted! After getting caught flat-footed in the temporal anomaly a few months ago, Ves had always yearned to build this suit of combat armor in order to protect him against spiritual shenanigans.

"Hahahaha!" Ves couldn't help but laugh uncontrollably! "Looks like my little surprise worked!"

The anomaly that he called into being was nothing more than an attempt to bring the imaginary realm closer to the material realm. He basically copied some of the principles of the temporal anomaly and tried to trigger it artificially through some means, though it had been difficult for him to develop confidence in his solution until recently.

The Highly Unstable Chaos Essence gems were packed with energy! With their help, Ves gained an ample source of energy to enable this momentous feat.

However, chaos energy was highly volatile to begin with, and soon their effects began to shape the temporal anomaly that had dawned on the battlefield.

Certain pockets of space became engulfed by strange rainbow warping. Time suddenly resumed in other pockets of space. Some mechs even sped up an instant, causing them to crash against friendly mechs! Projectiles in mid-flight were frozen in time and space in one moment, only to fling forward at ten times their original velocity, causing them to devastate a formation of hapless Avatars mechs!

The chaos was spreading before everyone's eyes! Some effects happened to be beneficial to the mech or ship in question, but more often than not the unstable hazards were wreaking havoc.

"What is going on?! Why can't I see straight?!"

"My mech is cleaved in half!"

"Ahh! I'm freezing!"

The suffering spread to both sides, but it was especially bad for the pirates due to their larger numbers. With more mechs and ships, the environmental changes affected them to a significantly greater degree! The unprepared pirate mechs had become especially panicked about the fact that they were caught up in an anomaly!

The onset of random hazards slowly offset the time freezing effect. Mechs and ships slowly started moving again, but that did not make life easier for everyone. They would rather be frozen in time than be assaulted by violent environmental changes!

Ves couldn't let this situation go to waste. He studied the projection of the Gravada Knarlax. The earlier attacks had caused her starboard side to lose a considerable amount of structure. It was as if a giant monster had taken a jagged bite out of the heavy cruiser!

Right now, she barely looked functional. The destructive attacks disabled her center gun turret, knocked out at least a third of her secondary laser cannon batteries and shut down numerous other systems.

Despite this, the warship slowly regained her functionality! Her toughness and degree of compartmentalization was on a whole other level than a mech. Even if three-fourths of her compartments were destroyed or voided into space, the ship would still be capable of putting up a fight!

What was worse was something more concerning stirred within her bowels. Grey fog and white fog began to leak out of the damaged heavy cruiser. Slowly but surely, they began to solidify in massive apparitions similar to the one that was dueling against the maddened Nyxie!

Not only that, but some of the black, grey and white fog began to spread to the Gravada Knarlax and other nearby pirate assets. Once they became enveloped by the fog, the mechs and ships partially gained protection against the random hazards that struck them from time to time.

The affected pirates managed to regain some battle effectiveness!

Ves widened his eyes as he saw what was taking place. The spiritual signatures from those growing apparitions were different from that of the Unending One.

The cultists were bringing in at least two more dark gods!

He couldn't wait any longer! He had to deploy all of his trump cards before those new terrible beings tilted the battle in the favor of the pirates again!

He activated the command channel. "Swordmaidens, Battle Criers, Penitent Sisters, engage your battle formations! They will shield your mechs against the anomalous hazards!"

"Yes, patriarch!"

"Venerable Jannzi, Joshua, Orfan and Dise, your time has come. Deploy your mechs and show these pirates the might of the Larkinson Clan!"

"Yessss! Finally!" Joshua exultingly cried.

"It's about time." Commander Orfan grinned.

"I cannot do much, but I will shield our fleet as best I can." Venerable Jannzi modestly stated.

"What about me?" Tusa indignantly asked.

"Oh yeah, you too. Go out and make everyone acknowledge your existence!"

Venerable Jannzi and the expert candidates finally launched from the carriers that had deliberately hung back in the rear of the fleet.

Ves had intended for each of them to play a key role in the battle, but he knew that their spiritually-enhanced mechs would certainly cause them to undergo apotheosis right away. This made it important for him to choose the right timing for their introduction.

"Well, the formation of two more entities like the Unending One certainly qualifies!"

Throughout all of the chaos, a hint of order reasserted itself.

The first change came from the mechs that were slowly adopting some unusual formations.

The Penitent Sisters moved first! They had been waiting for the fateful order since the beginning of the battle. As soon as Ves said the right words, the exiled Hexers each opened themselves up to the Superior Mother.

"Bless us, Supreme!"

"Give us the strength to wipe out these degenerate boys!"

Only half of the Penitent Sister mechs entered into a formation. It consisted entirely of melee mechs. So far, they only contributed to the battle by taking potshots with pistols or other light ranged weapons. Now that the distance between the two sides had shrunk considerably, Commander Chancy finally let them loose!

The melee mechs each formed into a wedge formation that corresponded to the death phase of existence. Like an arrow released from a bow, this narrow wedge formation flew towards the swarm of enemy pirate mechs with rising momentum!

Soon enough, the vague silhouette of the Superior Mother with her arm stretched forward appeared above the formation! The projectors embedded in the mechs of the Penitent Sisters automatically activated according to their new programming and began to fill the silhouette with lifelike details!

Every Penitent Sister taking part in the battle immediately felt buoyed at the appearance of the great Hexer Supreme! Her presence was proof that she was blessing their cause!

"For the Superior Mother!"

The Penitent Sister arrow crashed into the swarm of pirate mechs just as they were in the process of reorganizing their ranks!

Due to the incredible quality disparity between second-class and third-class mechs, the charging Hexer mechs did not even bother to take defensive measures as they collided against the weaker pirate mechs!

Over a hundred collisions took place as the pirates instantly lost a chunk of their mechs! Panic spread anew as the Superior Mother clawed her fingers through the mechs of several dozen pirate mechs.

Though her insubstantial limbs inflicted little material damage to the mechs, her attacks still caused their mech pilots to feel sapped of energy!

With the imaginary realm overlapping with the material realm, the Penitent Sister battle formation somehow gained more strength!

However, it wasn't just the battle formations that benefited from their proximity to the imaginary realm.

The growing and solidifying pools of white and grey fog finally finished taking shape! Two different inaudible roars rang throughout the battlefield as two more dark gods had entered the fray!

The grey god vaguely resembled an avian exobeast. The bird flapped its great, ragged wings, causing it to traverse a lot of distance at once! It flapped again, causing a wide and destructive grey wave to rapidly soar to a mech company of Sentinels. The grey wave immediately collided against them, causing the mechs to temporarily glitch!

As for the white god, the giant shape that came into being suddenly caused Ves to sit upright in his chair. With wide, disbelieving eyes, the glowing white humanoid form raised a single hand and unleashed a powerful light beam that instantly struck a combat carrier of the Flagrant Vandals! If not for her reinforced armor, the carrier would have probably foundered right then and there!

Ves recognized the humanoid alien.

"Crystal Builder! Luminar race!"

To his utter surprise, the tiny extinct alien race had somehow produced a giant dark god that lived until today!

Chapter 2396: Rise of Heroes

Through eavesdropping the frankly poorly-secured pirate communications, the Black Cats soon found out the names or at least the titles of the two powerful entities.

The grey avian exobeast was called the Inexorable One. Fast, cruel and devious, her reign of terror supposedly surpassed that of the Unending One!

In the short time the giant bird made of grey fog had come into existence, she already started to terrorize the Larkinsons! With her dizzyingly fast speed and strange and unfathomable attacks, the Inexorable One seemed unstoppable!

The giant white humanoid form preferred to remain in the back. Each time he raised his hands, the 'dark' god known as the Blinding One unleashed a terrifyingly powerful light beam that vastly exceeded the power of the laser beams unleashed by the pirate destroyers!

Ves recognized the distinctive shape of the alien race the Blinding One supposedly belonged to. The dark god possessed a strange oval head with no definable mouth, nose, ears or any other facial features.

Instead, numerous holes dotted his entire head. Strange twinkling lights glowed from deeper within, causing them to look both creepy and mysterious. The Blinding One wore a robe-like garment that was apparently bedecked with crystals.

If Ves put a Crystal Lord mech alongside the Blinding One, anyone would be able to recognize the similarities between the two. In fact, many Larkinsons were making this comparison right now since the Crystal Lord was a staple in their landbound mech contingents!

"The white energy apparition is about to launch another attack!"

To the surprise of Ves and many other Larkinsons, the Blinding One suddenly tilted his multi-eyed head towards the Scarlet Rose. The giant white deity pointed his finger at the flagship of the task force.

Instantly, Ves felt as if a searingly bright beam abruptly pinned him into place! His chair began to smoke as it had suddenly become subject to an unknown source of heat!

"What the hell?!"

If not for the spiritual protection offered by his Unending Regalia, he would have probably been cooked half to death!

From the Blinding One's body language, the dark god appeared to be mildly confused by his lack of success. He raised a palm instead and immediately unleashed a potent light beam!

Yet at the moment the Blinding One fired his instant beam, the Shield of Samar had flown right in front of the Scarlet Rose! A faint glow surrounded the mech as it raised its new Unending tower shield!

A bright flash spread from the impact site as the light beam tried but failed to pierce through the extraordinarily valuable shield!

"YOU SHALL NOT HARM MY FAMILY!"

Ves immediately noticed a strange shimmer covering the shield. Spiritual energy began to fill the shield as the Unending alloy it was made out of eagerly absorbed the input!

The more spiritual energy it absorbed, the more the shield started to resonate with Jannzi. Ves discovered to his amazement that the insertion of spiritual energy into a component enabled it resonate with an expert pilot!

This was a huge revelation to Ves! He wasn't sure if every resonating material was made this way, but at the very least he wasn't as dependent on the mech industry's existing paradigms on expert mechs anymore.

What was even more amazing was that the convergence of the imaginary realm and the material realm actually allowed one of his design spirits to converge directly onto the battlefield yet again!

With a triumphant roar, a vague insubstantial silhouette of a giant lizard appeared behind the Shield of Samar!

Whenever the Blinding One's light beam attempted to hit a vulnerable ship beyond the reach of the Shield of Samar, Qilanxo briefly conjured a space barrier that completely caused the attack to disappear!

"We're saved!"

"Jannzi!"

He did not have time to appreciate this insightful discovery. While Venerable Jannzi, the Shield of Samar and Qilanxo shielded a portion of the Larkinson fleet, a single mech could not cover everything!

The Blinding One appeared to be a bit more rational than his more beast-like peers. He raised his hand in the direction of a company of vulnerable Avatar mechs.

"No!"

Yet before the luminar dark god could proceed with his clever attack, a small form struck the Blinding One from the side! The dark god roared with indignation as he attempted to swat the small but surprisingly elusive form from his side!

"You big white bastard! Let off my men!"

Commander Orfan succeeded in breaking through to expert pilot! After witnessing her fellow Flagrant Vandals fighting and dying against the powerful pirate armada, her urge to protect her war buddies had reached a peak!

This was why she immediately experienced apotheosis before her new custom mech fully launched out of the Princely Jackal.

A large, radiant blue glow similar to the glow surrounding the Shield of Samar enveloped the Banthar! While Commander Orfan unsurprisingly hadn't managed to achieve true resonance, her violently-swelling force of will empowered the Banthar far beyond its original parameters!

The spearman mech evoked the air of a champion as it valiantly assaulted the humanoid dark god! Spiritual energy belonging to Qilanxo poured into the Unending spear, allowing Venerable Rosa Orfan to resonate with it and deal substantially more damage to the white entity!

"I FIGHT TO PROTECT MY CUBS!"

Whenever the Blinding One attempted to swat the Banthar, the mech avoided the clumsy blows. With Commander Orfan's vastly-improved battle sense, she easily read the giant figure's attacks. It didn't help that the Blinding One did not employ any sophistication in his attacks. Evidently, the luminar race wasn't very good at fighting up close!

After screeching an inaudible curse, the Blinding One changed tack. The crystals adorning his robe started to glow. Venerable Orfan reacted in an instant by commanding her mech to crouch and huddle behind its own Unending shield!

A sudden omni-directional white blast enveloped the entire area around the Blinding One!

"Hah! Was that supposed to take me down? I told you already, as long as you threaten my men, I will fight you until there is not a scrap of you left intact!"

Though the Banthar lacked the power to inflict a fatal blow on the Blinding One, Venerable Orfan nonetheless posed enough of a threat with it to occupy the luminar dark god as long as her outbreak lasted!

In another corner of the battlefield, another duel between expert pilot and dark god took place!

The Inexorable One did not move to assist her fellow dark gods. The cruel grey bird instead attempted to sneak behind the Larkinson fleet in order to devastate their most crucial ships such as the Scarlet Rose.

Yet before the dark god reached her destination, a speeding form instantly struck at one of her wings!

A spiritual roar of fury escaped from the Inexorable One as her flight deviated due to the sudden attack! The grey bird quickly tried to pin down the offending attacker.

"I'm here, you rotten bird!"

A sharp blue line struck the bird from behind! The attack inflicted serious pain and caught the Inexorable One off-guard!

In the distance, a glowing sky blue glow surrounded the Blueshift. After years of precipitation, Tusa Billingsley-Larkinson finally succeeded in breaking through to expert pilot as well!

Pure power and speed overflowed the Blueshift as Tusa's boiling force of will rapidly integrated with his mech.

His converted skirmisher mech zipped around the Inexorable One, dodging and weaving the Inexorable One's attacks while darting in to inflict periodic stabs with its Unending daggers.

When the Inexorable One seemingly had enough of the harassment, the giant grey bird swelled its chest as it seemed to breathe in. Seconds later, dark god exhaled, causing the space around her to destabilize as energy vortices appeared all around her, spelling danger to anyone caught within!

The density of energy vortices around the giant grey bird was so high that it was impossible for the Blueshift to avoid them. Yet amazingly, the Blueshift phased right through the energy hazards as if they were nothing but illusions!

This was because Tusa's force of will did not center around speed, but rather freedom!

"No obstacle shall bar my way! No wall can cage me in! Your tricks are useless, monster!"

No matter how much the Inexorable One tried to get rid of this annoying mech, her measures failed. No matter how much she tried to fly away, the Blueshift exceeded her speed!

With the help of Venerable Orfan and Venerable Tusa, the two additional dark gods had no time to wreck the Larkinsons!

However, Ves knew that this situation was very precarious. The temporary boost in power that accompanied every expert pilot's emergence only lasted for a limited amount of time.

Once the two expert pilots lost their steam, the dark gods could easily retaliate!

The Gravada Knarlax suddenly fired her main cannons. The volley she unleashed thudded against the Greenfeather, annihilating the fragile light carrier that was home to the Second Spaceborn Mech Company!

Though much of her crew had already preemptively evacuated the vulnerable ship, a handful of essential crew never had the chance to flee as their bodies instantly broke from the enormous impacts!

The other warships resumed firing as well. Their powerful laser beams surgically dismantled ship after ship.

"Damnit! Someone take care of the enemy ships!"

"Take our swords!" A group of women roared!

A battle formation consisting entirely of Swordmaiden mechs stabbed forward through space!

The energy silhouette and projection of a giant sword overlapped the formation. Each Swordmaiden had become of one mind as they maintained a connection to the active battle network that was exclusive to the women!

The sharp battle formation quickly closed in on the Ailing Frey, but the pirates did not let the strange formation approach without a response.

The pirate destroyer's secondary ballistic gun batteries began to fire a downpouring of shells at the incoming mechs. Yet as soon as these shells were about to impact the vanguard of the formation, a dark blue glow blocked most of them from inflicting any harm on the swordsman mechs!

The Swordmaiden mechs blocked the remainder of the attacks by using their swords as shields. None of them sustained any damage as their battle formation finally reached the pirate destroyer!

In the final stretch, the glowing mech at the tip of the formation pointed its Unending greatsword forward.

"Pierce!"

The Swordmaiden battle formation rapidly burst forward! Within the blink of an eye, the Swordmaiden mechs stabbed through the port side of the pirate destroyer and quickly emerged from the starboard side!

A cascade of secondary explosions erupted inside the Ailing Frey as the passage of the Swordmaiden battle formation inflicted substantial internal damage! Half of her guns stopped firing and her propulsion system sputtered.

The ship could not handle too many attacks of this magnitude!

The battle formation circled around and was about to commence another destructive attack run.

Yet before the Swordmaidens could finish off the heavily-damaged Ailing Frey, a large number of highly-organized pirate mechs attempted to intercept the Swordmaiden mechs.

"It's the Allidus Archons! They're the elites of the Allidus Alliance!"

Up until now, the Allidus Archons were held back as reserves. Now that the destroyers of the pirate armada were under threat, the Archons finally moved into action!

While the Archon mechs weren't able to match the Swordmaiden mechs on an individual basis, they consisted of over 500 mechs, thereby outnumbering the Swordmaidens by fourteen-to-one!

Yet despite the enormous disparity in numbers, the Swordmaiden mech pilots under the lead of Commander Dise did not shy away from the challenge.

"Sisters! Sweep these rabble away!"

"Yes, commander!"

The Swordmaiden battle formation shifted. Instead of pointing its tip straight forward, it began to orient so that its blade faced the enemy mechs. Once the formation closed in, the giant sword rapidly slashed across the formation of Allidus Archon mechs!

Just a moment later, over a hundred Allidus Archon mechs exploded or simply split apart as an enormous cut seemed to have cut most of them in half!

"CUT THEM APART! LEAVE NO PIRATE INTACT!"

Chapter 2397: The Power of Life

The titanic battle between the Larkinson Clan and the Allidus Alliance unfolded completely outside everyone's expectations!

Many mech pilots felt increasingly small as the manifestations of several dark gods fought openly against each other or the heroes that had risen up from the ranks of the Larkinsons!

The simultaneous breakthroughs of Venerable Tusa, Orfan and Dise challenged the supremacy of the pirates.

It sounded impossible, but two of the new expert pilots of the Larkinson Clan successfully entangled two of the dark gods!

The pirates and the Larkinsons both viewed this sudden turn of events with different levels of astonishment.

To the pirates, the power of the dark gods was something that was unquestionably great! The highest leaders such as Lord Hivex knew that the terrible deities of the Nyxian Gap possessed powers beyond anyone's imagination.

Even if the dark gods hadn't actually descended in full, their fog manifestations already represented a considerable portion of their power.

Yet despite this fact, the Banthar and the Blueshift continually challenged the Blinding One and the Inexorable One, proving that humans and mechs were capable of fighting against literal gods!

While the Larkinsons largely did not believe in the existence of actual gods, they still possessed a lot of fear towards these giant entities. In fact, the more the dark gods demonstrated their might, the more the Larkinsons began to question whether these powerful entities were truly divine.

"This is not a battle between mechs and ships anymore." An Avatar officer gasped.
"This is a battle between gods and heroes!"

"Those aren't gods! They're demons! We're fighting against demons!"

"Then what does that make our mech pilots?"

"Isn't that obvious? They're the real gods on the battlefield!"

"They're demigods, not actual gods."

"Semantics!"

The perspectives of every Larkinson taking part in this battle shifted in real time as the multiple confrontations between gods and expert pilots enlightened them to the true power of mech pilots!

This wasn't all! Not only did Venerable Tusa and Venerable Orfan prove that humans were capable of fighting against gods, but Venerable Dise and her linked Swordmaidens were wreaking havoc amongst the ranks of the Archons!

Ordinarily, the intensive battle formations of the Swordmaidens should have drained the female mech pilots straight away. Yet to the mild surprise of Ves, the battle formation led by Venerable Dise successively employed her draining battle formations with no end in sight!

This was all due to several reasons. Her breakthrough supplied her with an ample amount of energy. Her bond with Qilanxo also allowed her to borrow the design spirit's powerful energy. Finally, the convergence of the imaginary realm and the material realm amplified every spiritual exertion!

"CUT!"

A sword-shaped battle formation superimposed by the illusion of a giant greatsword slashed through the ranks of the remaining elite pirate mechs.

To the credit of the Allidus Archons, none of the elite mech pilots had broken and fled. Their superiors had drilled so much obedience and discipline into their heads that they were reluctant to act outside of orders.

That was a mistake.

Their relatively tight formation and high concentration had made it easy for the astonishing Swordmaiden battle formations to sweep through their ranks. The pirate officers belatedly ordered their subordinates to disperse, but it was too late at this point!

Chaos spread through the rest of the battlefield. Anomalous hazards occasionally afflicted a number of mechs. Though their frequency had lessened, they still caused a lot of grief to pirates and Larkinsons locked in battle.

While the thousands of pirate mechs continually suffered losses from the unstable environment, the Penitent Sister battle formation that had dove in their midst were exempt from this threat!

With the giant form of the Superior Mother watching over the Penitent Sisters, her presence protected the Hexer mechs from many anomalous hazards!

Along with other advantages, the Penitent Sister mechs were able to butcher the pirate mechs at an unimaginable rate!

Though the Penitent Sisters hadn't become gods, they nevertheless received the Superior Mother's blessing. With the Supreme lending her power to her devoted, the Penitent Sister mech pilots had become more and more fanatic in their beliefs! Their minds and spirits united as one as their increasing fervor enhanced their connections to the battle network even further!

Yet even as the pirates suffered great losses, Ves did not assume the battle was over and done. Multiple pirate warships remained intact. Their turrets and gun batteries had already inflicted significant material damage to the Larkinson fleet and were in the process of inflicting even more damage.

The Gravada Knarlax was slowly recovering. She had already restored a portion of her propulsion systems and her huge turrets were slowly swiveling towards the remaining Larkinson ships.

The Larkinsons needed a way to break the spirit of the Allidus Alliance! The trump cards that Ves had deployed up until now were not enough to win the battle!

It was at this time that his body slightly shook. Some sort of echo had struck his spirit, causing him to interrupt all of his thoughts.

"What is..?"

His heart beat faster. It began to catch up to the pace of the foreign impulses that affected his body. Soon, he discovered that his heart was not beating faster without a reason.

It was resonating and matching its beat with another heart!

Just outside the Redfeather, a single resplendent golden mech had been hovering in space for several minutes.

Inside the cockpit, Joshua Larkinson sat motionless with his eyes closed and his mouth curled in a blissful smile.

"I have waited so long for this moment."

The Quint responded. Through his unprecedentedly close connection to his mech, Joshua felt as if he truly understood the full profundity of the life within the masterwork mech.

"You are.. so wonderful, so magnificent. Is this who you truly are? Let us join forces and open ourselves up to each other!"

The man-machine connection between Joshua and the Quint took a life of its own. Its parameters instantly shot up, so much so that it forcibly exceeded the safety limits imposed by the neural interface.

The extraordinarily deep connection allowed Joshua and the Quint to exchange with each other to a degree that would have ordinarily fried the young expert candidate's brain. Yet at this time, Joshua felt no strain at all. No matter how much data and other input poured into his head, it did not come close to exploding.

Instead, Joshua felt as if his will and mind were expanding at a stupendous rate. His awareness of his surroundings extended far beyond the cockpit and swept a wide area around the motionless Quint!

Like a seed sprouting from the ground after a shower of rain, Joshua felt his consciousness rising to a level that was far beyond what he could have imagined as an expert candidate.

As this pure moment of bliss overtook his mind, his consciousness ran through his memories, his experiences, his ideals and his desires.

Different mech pilots possessed different reasons for fighting.

Some fought for family.

Others fought for honor.

Many mech pilots never truly discovered their reasons to fight. Expert candidates were different because they were in the right direction.

However, to take the final, crucial steps, an expert candidate had to clear all of their doubts and commit wholeheartedly to a single conviction!

Joshua needed no thinking to dial in his principles. At this time, he interfaced with one of the most impressive and liveliest mechs he had ever had the pleasure of piloting.

After Ves upgraded the Quint and enhanced its spiritual foundation, the life contained within the masterwork mech had evolved to a higher state.

Now, the Quint provided Joshua with the clearest vision of the benefit of piloting a mech designed and made by Ves. Pure love and respect flooded through Joshua's mind as he became more and more integrated with the masterwork mech.

Of all the possible machines that expert candidates could break through in, a masterwork mech offered some of the most sublime experiences for these lucky individuals!

As Joshua finally obtained his long-awaited chance of apotheosis, his force of will bloomed and resonated with the Quint!

In turn, the Quint benefited considerably from Joshua's breakthrough. The mech seemingly gained a bit of will of its own! Though miniscule, this was something completely unheard of. It was impossible for a mech to gain its own will. That would imply that it was a living, thinking entity that could develop its own wants and needs.

While Ves had laid the seeds to such a development, it was very difficult to accomplish this state. Yet under these exceptional circumstances, the Quint received a unique benefit that caused it to become even more filled with life!

With the extraordinarily close bond that Joshua forged with his mech, they resonated with each other to such an extensive degree that something rare was taking place.

Even as Joshua ascended to the rank of expert pilot, he had become completely in sync with his mech.

The complete and utter alignment between mech and mech pilot resulted in complete resonance, which was a state that only Venerable Jannzi had achieved in the history of the Larkinson Clan!

When Joshua raised his fist, the Quint simultaneously raised its fist as well!

A powerful green glow spread from the Quint! Unlike the Blueshift or the Banthar, the Quint's radiance vastly exceeded that of the other mechs!

"With my heart and soul, I shall always fight with mechs like you!" Joshua generously declared as his eyes glowed with green! "Each and every mech designed by the clan patriarch is alive, but only I can utilize you to the fullest!"

Nyaaaaaaaaaaaaa!

The green glow expanding from the Quint finally pulled in the design spirit of the Bright Warrior model!

For the first time in their lives, the Larkinsons were finally able to see the ancestral spirit that symbolized and watched over their clan!

The green-golden radiance of a giant cat proudly came into existence, thereby adding yet another god in a battle that became increasingly more centered around deific heroes and manifestations.

With Goldie's appearance, Joshua's bond with her had intensified. He gained a greater understanding of the young ancestral spirit and even felt the hopes and fears of the Larkinsons connected to the Larkinson Network!

The weight on his shoulders was immense. The members of the clan looked upon expert pilots like him for hope.

Everyone knew that the Larkinson Clan would never be able to survive if he failed to stop the pirates. Joshua solemnly accepted this responsibility, and so did the Quint and the Golden Cat.

"Let us end the threat at the source!"

Both Joshua, the Quint and the Golden Cat set their sights on the Gravada Knarlax. The heavy cruiser was damaged, but far from taken out of the fight.

Fog of different shades continually spewed from her depths. This fog not only offered supernatural protection to some of the pirate assets, but also sustained and empowered the giant manifestations of the dark gods!

The Quint finally moved. The masterwork mech accelerated far beyond its usual rate as Joshua's breakthrough along with the attainment of complete resonance provided it with capabilities that went far beyond the limitations of its parts!

The mech thrust forward, its third eye glowing as bright as a lighthouse in the dark! The giant energy projection of the Golden Cat looked eager as the Gravada Knarlax's formidable bulk came closer and closer!

The masterwork mech charged forward with such great speed that the pirates didn't even have any time to respond to this latest development! The Quint raised its lance just before the mech and the Golden Cat collided right into the bow of the Gravada Knarlax!

NYAAAAAAA!

A collision of immense proportions shook the battlefield! Even the dark gods had to pause as the Allidus Alliance flagship's very nose crumpled inward as the glowing manifestation of the Golden Cat physically slammed into the ship!

She did not rest after she collided into the Gravada Knarlax. After gathering her wits, her head darted forward and took a huge bite out of the ship! It was as if a supersized version of Lucky was snacking on the vulnerable vessel!

Just as the energy manifestation of the Golden Cat attempted to tear even deeper into the ship, a powerful explosion of dark energy blasted her and the Quint back!

Every Larkinson suddenly felt nervous as they felt a huge pressure descending upon them. They watched with amazement as three huge shadows emerged from the ships and merged with the fog manifestations fighting against the Larkinson Clan.

The manifestations rapidly transformed. They became more solid and lost their fog-like consistency. The pressure emanating from them had grown so powerful that everyone aside from the expert pilots were suppressed!

Ves instantly shot up from his chair. "Not good! The dark gods have arrived in person!"

The Unending One, the Blinding One and Inexorable One had grown so angry that they decided to descend upon the battlefield with their main bodies!

The dark gods were ready to unleash their full power!

Chapter 2398: Devouring Abyss

The battle between the Allidus Alliance and the Larkinson Clan began as a struggle between humans.

Through the use of great and powerful mechs and starships, they clashed against each other with the weapons familiar to any human.

Yet from the moment that Ves flipped the board, the battle quickly morphed into a battle that no longer had any place for mortals.

Through several means, the Larkinson Clan called down powerful, titanic energy projections that were so powerful and unfathomable that they appeared to be no different from gods!

The design spirit of the Aurora Titans roared with rage as her space barrier shielded the intact remnants of the Larkinson fleet from the pressure emanated by her enemy counterparts.

The Larkinsons and Penitent Sisters had lost almost fifty ships from the massive guns of the Gravada Knarlax and escorts. Though this had led to an enormous loss of materials, prompt evacuation had allowed much of their crews to escape alive.

Now, these vulnerable people crammed into the ships that remained intact and huddled behind the shield of the lizard-like god that hovered behind the valiant Shield of Samar.

With Venerable Jannzi doing her utmost to protect her family, no one gave in to despair!

Further ahead, three more extraordinary entities appeared to be fighting on behalf of the Larkinson Clan.

The Swordmaiden mechs numbered less than forty, but the one-sided destruction the women inflicted on the Allidus Archons was completely out of proportion!

Commander Dise's breakthrough to expert pilot certainly helped, but she could have never destroyed over five-hundred elite pirate mechs by herself if not for the favorable circumstances empowering her will.

First, the convergence of the imaginary and the material powered her up beyond what was usual.

Second, her bond with Qilanxo had provided her with a powerful boost, especially since she finally found a reason to fight that was compatible with the sacred god's ideals.

Third, her living sword intent actively concentrated her will, thereby putting her ahead of other newly-advanced expert pilots.

Fourth, her living sword intent also functioned as a battle network. After the connections became active, her strong will flowed into her subordinates!

The sword projection that superimposed itself onto the battle formation of the Swordmaidens seemed unimaginably real. I was a sword that completely surpassed anything that could have existed for real. Though it was for all intents and purposes an illusion, when the imaginary and the material became intertwined, even illusions could cut mechs in half!

"OUR SWORD IS UNBREAKABLE!"

"OUR SWORD IS THE SHARPEST!"

"OUR SWORD IS ETERNAL!"

While the Swordmaidens were backed by a giant greatsword manifested from Commander Dise's force of will, the Penitent Sisters enjoyed the support of an even greater entity!

The Superior Mother had seemingly come to life and descended over the mechs piloted by the former cultist Hexers.

Though they had left the Hegemony in disgrace, not a single shred of shame or defeat graced the excited faces of the Hexer mech pilots!

Despite grossly outnumbering the Penitent Sisters, the mechs piloted by the pirates all flew away in terror. Being besieged by incredibly powerful second-class mechs was a frightening prospect to any Nyxian scum!

While it should have been possible for the pirates to organize themselves and mob the Penitent Sister mechs with overwhelming numbers, the energy projection of the Superior Mother put that plan to rest!

Each time the pirate mechs attempted to group up, the Superior Mother stretched out with her arms and clawed her fingers through the mechs. Each time she did so, the mech pilots inside felt drained as they lost sort of energy!

The appearance of this Hexer 'god' completely broke the pirate conscripts. Even the rank and file of the Allidus Alliance quaked in their boots when faced with this Supreme come to life.

How could mere humans like them ever stand a chance against gods? Each time their mechs attacked the Superior Mother, their blows just went right through her projected body!

"We messed with the wrong people! These Larkinsons are crazier than some of the cults back home!"

"Only gods can fight against gods!"

Though the Superior Mother made a very big impression on both sides, she had only come into existence due to the activation of a battle network.

The most real entity that fought on behalf of the Larkinson Clan was no one else than the Golden Cat!

While every Larkinson knew of her, they initially thought that she was just a symbol. Though every clansmen were constantly in touch with her, they mistakenly thought that the cat that adorned their clan emblem was just a cute mascot.

Never did they think that the Golden Cat was truly real and able to manifest into reality in such a dramatic fashion!

Conjured onto the battlefield through Joshua's exceptionally powerful breakthrough, the complete resonance he achieved with the Quint allowed the Golden Cat act on her desire to fight against the pirates that threatened the lives of her precious Larkinsons!

After wreaking havoc on the forward sections of the heavily-damaged Gravada Knarlax, the Quint and the giant cat looked ready to destroy the most central asset of the Allidus Alliance by themselves!

Yet one single event changed everything.

Deep inside the Gravada Knarlax, a single hidden compartment shook from the damage inflicted on the warship. The compartment was home to a shrine that was more elaborate than at Ulimo Citadel.

Inside, three central statues loomed over a crowd of robes figures. Dozens of White Watchers, half-a-dozen of Grey Watchers and a single Black Watcher presided over an elaborate ceremony.

On the deck, an elaborate ritual circle drawn from blood glowed with an ominous red glow. The strange inhuman markings and lines stretched all across the deck and even crept onto the bulkheads and ceiling!

The Watchers whispered strange alien words as they prostrated over the three obsidian statues.

Each of them depicted a different dark god. Each of them released a mysterious fog that was rich with dark energy. Amplified by the spiritually chaotic environment, the statues released more fog than ever!

Yet despite the intervention of three avatars of the Dark Gods at once, the Larkinson Clan somehow managed to push them back. With the flagship of the Allidus Alliance being preyed upon by a giant cat, Black Watcher Ortis looked unprecedentedly solemn as he received a silent instruction from the dark.

He drew one of his wrinkled hands into the pocket of his robe and drew out an alien ritual dagger. The blade was green and sinuous as it absorbed some of the dark energy flowing out of the compartment.

After reciting an unintelligible invocation, the Black Watcher rose the dagger and stabbed it downwards!

Despite hitting nothing but air, the hearts of every White Watcher and Grey Watcher tending the ritual froze. Shortly afterwards, violent spouts of blood poured out of their chests.

Hole had formed over every cultist's heart! Through some unknown force, all of the lifeblood that circulated through their bodies forcibly exited their bodies and entered the elaborate ritual circle.

The blood of the Watchers was far more precious than that of random pirate scum. Even though the quantity of blood that entered the ritual circle was not that much, the activity emanating from it had risen substantially!

"Awaken, and show these infidels the might of the abyss!" The Black Watcher cried as he raised his ritual dagger again.

With a dramatic stab, he buried the blade deep within his own chest. After brutally pulling his weapon out, thick black blood that was seeped with foulness joined the ritual circle.

For a moment, nothing happened aside from Black Watcher Ortis's lifeless body falling onto the deck.

Then, the statues pulsed and glowed as more fog than ever poured out of them! Soon enough, three immense existences squeezed out of the statues and rapidly moved out of the Gravada Knarlax.

Upon arriving at their respective fog projections, the existences merged with them, causing them to manifest in their entirety!

The simultaneous descent of three dark gods exerted more pressure over humans than anyone could withstand. Many pirates lost consciousness as they were unable to cope with the raw power radiating from the three immensely powerful entities.

Some Larkinsons fell unconscious as well, but the protection offered by Venerable Jannzi, Qilanzo, Goldie and the battle networks prevented the rest from following suit.

Even so, the pressure from the dark gods was so great that hardly any normal mech pilot could even think about fighting against gods that had practically showed up in the flesh.

A dark fog emanated from the near-physical body of the Unending One. Nyxie, the enraged alien tyrant, kept attacking the tentacled whale with savage punches and brutal energy attacks as if all thought of restraint had disappeared!

Yet the Unending One that Nyxie beat up before was not the same anymore. The tentacles on the Unending One not only blocked his opponent's attacks with ease, but also entangled the limbs, thereby immobilizing the maddened entity!

With one huge bite, the Unending One opened his enormous maw and bit off half of Nyxie's energy body!

A pained, inaudible roar escaped Nyxie's form as the remnant of his existence quickly cut itself off from the trapped limbs and shifted several kilometers backwards before reforming into a considerably smaller and weaker energy body.

All of his rage and fury had drained from his unstable consciousness. A chillingly cold fear had descended upon Nyxie.

The strength of a dark god in his prime and a long-imprisoned alien entity was not comparable at all! This was especially after Ves continually cut off chunks of spirits and inflicted a lot of wounds earlier.

Now that the Unending One had engulfed half of his spirit, Nyxie was in no shape to fight any further! Without a hint of shame, the wounded entity desperately attempted to

flee, only for the Unending One's tentacles to stretch out once again to catch the cowardly spirit.

Roars of unwillingness escaped from Nyxie as the tentacles slowly but steadily dragged him to a waiting maw!

With one decisive bite, an eons-old spiritual entity disappeared into the Unending One's stomach!

Across the Komodo Star Sector and beyond, millions of Doom Guards abruptly lost much of their fearsome potency as their glows had suddenly become a lot more stable!

The mutual interaction between Zeigra and Nyxie ceased to exist because the latter was no longer alive!

Complaints abruptly flooded the offices of the Living Mech Corporation. The sudden and unexpected failure of the Doom Guard model produced an unprecedented huge scandal for the LMC. If any of its products failed like this again, then why should mech pilots entrust their lives to the apparently-unreliable mechs.

Ves, who helplessly witnessed the ignoble death of one of the LMC's most important design spirits. He knew exactly how bad the consequences would be if Nyxie's death robbed one of the LMC's bestselling mech models of its pillars.

If there was one relief, it was that the spiritual products he created from Nyxie's spiritual fragments were still alive and well. Yet that did not change the fact that the sudden death of the hostile entity would surely impact his reputation!

Fortunately, he already prepared some contingency plans. He never assumed that he could use Nyxie as a design spirit forever.

He quickly inserted a substitute design spirit in the vacated space of the Doom Guard. After contemplating a few options, he selected Lufa to take Nyxie's place.

The Angel of Tranquility may be young, but he had already reached a respectable amount of strength due to the circumstances of his birth. Not only that, but his peaceful mindset completely rubbed the aggressive Zeigra the wrong way.

The two hostile spirits instantly began to fight, causing the Doom Guard's glow to regain its strength in a different form!

Ves had no time to inspect the Doom Guard's changes. After establishing a sloppy equilibrium in the mech design, he drew himself back and tracked what the two other dark gods were doing.

"Not good! Venerable Tusa and Venerable Orfan are in trouble!"

Chapter 2399: Reign of Monsters

The Unending One's full might was more terrible than Ves had ever imagined. Previously, he fought against the avatars of the tentacled whale. These projected vessels only contained a fraction of the dark god's strength, so overcoming them with the Larkinson Clan's existing means shouldn't be too challenging.

Yet how could Ves ever expect that the dark gods worshipped by the Hallowed Abyss Temple would ever condescend to arrive onto the battlefield with their real selves?

This was a catastrophe for the Larkinsons! The strength of these dark gods in the 'flesh' exceeded that of every entity on the side of the Larkinson Clan!

When the Inexorable One's true spirit descended upon her projection, the pinprick attacks inflicted by Venerable Tusa custom mech no longer managed to pierce her feather and hide.

Though fast and untouchable, the Blueshift's offensive capabilities were too weak! Light skirmishers were some of the worst mechs to employ against huge god-like creatures. Not even the exceptional nature of the Blueshift's Unending daggers changed the fact that they resembled pinpricks when compared to the enormous grey bird's bulk!

It didn't help that of the four expert candidates who underwent apotheosis, Venerable Tusa's breakthrough was weaker than the others. No spirit boosted his advance. Only his Blueshift supported him in his transformation, thereby leaving with precious little help in his attempts to hinder the hostile grey bird!

"Why are you so strong?! Why can't I hurt you anymore?!"

After adjusting to her new circumstances, the Inexorable One no longer bothered with the annoying fly that previously hindered her from displaying her might. Even as Venerable Tusa desperately directed his mech to stab the big grey bird in the eyes, his daggers barely sank into the spiritual body before stopping.

As a spiritual existence, the Inexorable One did not suffer any vision loss. To the dark god, such attacks were incredibly trivial, so much so that the grey bird already set her sights towards a worthier foe.

With a single powerful flap of her wings, the Inexorable One dashed forth with unimaginable speed!

The Blueshift, which kept stabbing its Unending daggers through the flesh and feathers of the grey bird in futility, tumbled away in an uncontrolled spin.

Venerable Tusa almost lost consciousness from the physical and spiritual forces assaulting his body and spirit. His force of will no longer empowered his mech as his

debilitated state left him in no shape to fight any further! He vomited inside helmet, forcing his piloting suit to work overtime to remove the foul-smelling substances.

Nobody paid attention to the unfortunate expert pilot's plight as the Inexorable One rapidly reached her destination!

With her sharp talons stretching out, the Inexorable One attempted to slice and crush the Princely Jackal!

She would have succeeded if not for the timely reaction of Qilanxo. The giant lizard energy projection roared a warning at the Inexorable One as her talons tore through the space barrier hastily put up in her path.

Ves widened at the sight. Qilanxo's space barriers were usually powerful enough to negate any attack. Not even the main cannons of the Gravada Knarlax could overcome the barriers under normal conditions.

However, the difference in strength between the two god-like entities was too wide this time!

Though Jannzi managed to conjure Qilanxo's energy projection a second time, she was not sustaining it with perfect resonance at the moment. It was only because the imaginary and material realms were so close that Qilanxo was able to project her existence onto the battlefield to a degree.

She was no match against a genuine dark god in the flesh!

With a couple more strikes, the Inexorable One broke through all of the space barriers, allowing her to soar towards Qilanxo's energy projection!

With a mighty collision, the two great entities exchanged blows! Qilanxo roared in pain and jerked backwards, taking the Shield of Samar with her. Deep claw marks marred her reptilian head and shoulders as she gazed at the Inexorable One with deep respect and fear.

Despite the disparity in strength, Qilanxo had not thought about fleeing at all. Her intent resonated with Venerable Jannzi and the Shield of Samar. All three of them wanted to protect the Larkinsons in the fleet, and the only way to do so was to entangle this horrible bird as long as possible!

"We are the shield of the Larkinson Clan!" Venerable Jannzi stated her convictions. "No brother or sister of mine shall suffer at the hands of this beast!"

Qilanxo attempted to put up a good fight, but the Inexorable One was too fast and powerful for the sacred god to fight against. The ancient bird delighted in the torture she inflicted upon the lumbering lizard.

Further ahead, the Blinding One that had become entangled by Venerable Orfan's Banthar was glowing brighter and hotter.

The Blinding One's presence was a lot more dramatic than his fog avatar suggested. Even without doing anything, the crystals adorning his robe were already outputting huge amounts of energy. The energy formed a radiant shield over the Blinding One, causing the Banthar to sustain considerable damage just by straying close!

Whenever Commander Orfan drove her mech forward in an attempt to stab its spear into her opponent, the Blinding One's radiance shield threatened to melt her machine!

In desperation, the Banthar drew its laser pistol and began to fire at the Blinding One, only for the radiant shield to absorb the laser beams!

"What the?!"

The Blinding One finally directed his attention at the impotent spearman mech that had stopped him from bombarding the Larkinson fleet with light beams. He lifted a single finger and pointed it at the Banthar. Just as he was about to launch a soul-searing piercing attack that Venerable Orfan instinctively felt would be fatal, a golden paw slapped the Blinding One's arm aside!

NYAAAAAAAAA!

Shortly afterwards, the Quint charged forth and pierced its lance through the Blinding One's radiance shield before penetrating his head!

The Blinding One's body automatically released a bright omnidirectional flash, causing both the Quint and the Banthar to be flung back while suffering considerable surface heat damage!

The giant Golden Cat was not as taken aback. She furiously clawed and bit at the Blinding One's radiance shield no matter how much it hurt to do so. Each of the dark gods were so powerful that they could each end the Larkinsons on the battlefield by themselves.

She could not allow the clansmen to die under watch!

Yet no matter how many times she struck the shield, the crystals on the Blinding One's robe kept transferring more power to it. The luminar god's protection was too strong!

After letting the Golden Cat understand how weak she truly was, the humanoid dark god raised his palm and unleashed a powerful light beam.

NYAAAAAAAAA!

The ancestral spirit uttered a painful yowl as the light beam carved straight through her projection body!

At the same time, many Larkinsons paused and screamed at the same time as some of Goldie's suffering spread across the Larkinson Network!

Only Ves and a couple of other Larkinsons managed to resist the pain.

"These dark gods.. are too powerful!" Ves helplessly uttered as he had no cards left to play.

He realized he had partially enabled this awful turn of events. If he didn't flip the board and forced the imaginary realm to overlap with the material realm, the dark gods wouldn't have been able to descend so easily with their main spirits!

Though he deeply wanted to reverse this condition and make the unsubstantial vortex disappear from the material realm, he had no way to do so. The chaotic energies that had escaped the confines of the Highly Unstable Chaos Essence gems had taken a life of their own. They were completely out of his control!

Though two of the three dark gods briefly encountered hindrances, the Unending One had just finished devouring Nyxie. With no Larkinson-aligned entities left to hinder the tentacled whale, the cruel dark god slowly set his sights on the Scarlet Rose.

Ves hitched his breath. His heart almost seemed to stop as he felt the pure malice and desire to destroy from the powerful entity. The Unending One's hatred for the Larkinson Clan was inestimable, and somehow he knew exactly who was in charge.

The Unending One surged forward with surprising speed! Though he wasn't as fast as the Inexorable One, he swam through the ocean of space as if he belonged in it. The closer the tentacled whale approached, the more Ves and the Larkinsons aboard the Scarlet Rose sensed their imminent doom!

Goldie couldn't help. Qilanxo couldn't help. The other entities were simply too weak to put up a fight against an entity that was as powerful as the Unending One.

"Is this the end?" Ves whispered to himself.

"GET BACK, FOUL BEAST!"

Just as the dark god was about to ram into the Scarlet Rose with fatal momentum, a giant, slender and scaled hand stretched out from behind the mobile supply frigate and released a purple beam energy blast that caused the Unending One to halt and rear back!

"Who?!"

Ves looked around to see one of the most frightening sights in his life!

A terrible but majestic entity appeared beyond a shaky, psychedelic portal that had emerged behind his ship. The giant energy projection looked fuzzy and unstable, but Ves could distinguish plenty of details.

Wearing a ragged, ancient-looking robe that was encrusted by dead alien plant growth, the giant female humanoid entity hovered forward while staring down the dark god that sought to crush the Scarlet Rose.

The giant woman looked terrible. Though Ves recognized plenty of unquestionably human features in her appearance, the strange uneven aquamarine scales covering her body made her look like a mutated monstrosity!

She didn't appear to have eyes. Instead, her sockets glowed with ominous bright purple lights that made Ves dizzy when he attempted to stare at them. Disbelief filled his head as he took in what he saw.

"Is that.. the real Superior Mother?"

"It can't be!"

As the monstrous woman's form began to stabilize a little, her purple eyes deliberately turned towards Ves, causing him to feel very uncomfortable. He quickly commanded his Unending Regalia to fold his helmet over his head, providing him some relief against the hostile stare.

However, the isolation effect of his suit did not block the massive entity from transmitting a message solely to his mind.

"VES! YOU IDIOTIC CHILD! IS THIS YOUR HANDIWORK!?" The mutated woman's voice boomed!

The woman gestured her hand in the direction of the Scarlet Rose's vault. Even through the insulating effect of his Unending Regalia, Ves could sense the spiritual construct he had attempted to grow had finally reached maturity.

Unfortunately, it looked considerably different from the design that his mother had initially passed on. Not only did Ves employ an unconventional growth-based production method, much of the energy of the construct came from Nyxie, whose spiritual attributes were filled with all sorts of strange and alien attributes.

If that wasn't enough, the proliferation of chaotic energies on the battlefield affected the spiritual construct as well, causing it to mutate further and further beyond its original parameters!

Whether all of these changes were responsible for summoning a giant version of his mother as an eldritch horror, Ves wasn't sure. All he knew was that he had screwed up yet again!

"Uhm.. could you please help me out? My clan and I are under attack right now and we won't be able to hang on for long without your help!"

The mutated woman scowled, causing her to inadvertently reveal her pointed, carnivorous teeth.

"You brat! If you aren't my son, I would have turned away already!"

She looked away from Ves and turned to the Unending One. The dark god had grown incredibly furious as yet another enemy had appeared to stop him from taking revenge.

The giant whale opened his maw unleashed a challenging roar that rattled the spirits of everyone on the ship! Everyone aboard the Scarlet Rose aside from Ves lost consciousness!

For her part, his monstrous mother scowled deeper. She opened her frightening mouth and released a soul-rending shriek that made Ves feel as if his spirit was about to detach from his body!

Chapter 2400: Assaulting the Gods

After unleashing a powerful shriek, Cynthia Larkinson's mutated energy projection dove forward and began to do battle against the Unending One!

To his surprise, his mother was doing far better than Nyxie! While Ves was still trying to recover from all of the shocks to his spirit, he could still see how she was putting the Unending One through his paces.

Strangely enough, Ves sensed that his mother was significantly weaker than the tentacled whale. What actually gave her ability to contend against the dark god was that her utilization of power was far more refined than he had ever seen from any powerful spiritual entity!

Her ragged robe stirred as she lifted her clawed and scaled hands. After contorting her fingers in various shapes, a dozen giant vines appeared from in front of her and shot towards her target.

The Unending One released an angry roar and attempted to entangle the incoming vines with his tentacles. Yet as soon as the two met each other, the tentacles bled and tore as the vines suddenly released sharp spikes!

The vines soon wrapped around the immense bulk of the Unending One, causing him to roar with pain. His strong body thrashed and released a copious amount of dark fog. The vines eventually broke, but at that time, Cynthia had already launched her next attack!

A pair of ethereal creatures that looked like a cross between a wolf and a dragon surged forward and began to bite the Unending One's tentacles. Each time they bit, they chewed through the tentacles in their mouths with remarkable ease!

While the dragonwolves didn't actually look very very strong, each time the Unending One inflicted severe damage to them with his attacks, the summoned creatures rapidly regenerated their wounds.

Unless the Unending One crushed them completely, the dragonwolves would keep restoring to their peak and continue their harassment.

The dark god decided to ignore the annoying creatures and instead direct his ire at the woman in his way. The Unending One opened his maw and released a powerful dark beam at his foe, only for the mutated woman to disappear and reappear a distance away.

Her scaled arms and hands swirled in a smooth circle. Her glowing purple eyes glowed brighter as an incredibly complicated energy diagram appeared before her body.

Ves tried his best to study and record everything he saw into his implant, but for some reason his attempt completely failed! No matter how closely he wanted the details of his mother's mysterious diagram, his brain simply refused to record it. He tried multiple methods to record what he saw, but he had seemingly bumped into some sort of hard rule that stated that copying it was not allowed!

The diagram floated in place for a few seconds before fading away. In its place, a large sword made of energy manifested into existence.

Ves couldn't help but be fascinated by the sword's appearance. Though he couldn't glean too much details, he sensed the sword was not only an ancient relic, but one that had developed its own intrinsic life!

"This is a sword with a consciousness!" He gasped!

When his mutated mother grasped the handle of the sword, her entire aura changed. It became more focused and restrained, but that did not make her look any less deadly.

Without moving forward, she swung her sword, releasing some kind of energy wave that cut through some of the tentacles of the Unending One before cutting his flesh!

The dark god could not endure this affront! The Unending One darted forward with great fury, causing the two titanic entities to be locked in an intensive struggle.

All the while, the spiritual pressure they emanated caused more and more Larkinsons throughout the fleet to lose consciousness. If not for the automated backup systems keeping everything running, some of the surviving mechs and ships would have crashed against each other.

Still, Ves recognized that these circumstances were anything but ideal! His mother may have gained the power to duel the Unending One on even grounds, but there were two more dark gods on the battlefield!

The Blinding One continually blasted Goldie and the Quint with light beams and other attacks. His radiance shield glowed as strong as ever as he struck at the very heart of the Larkinson Clan. Goldie suffered so many blows that her body started leaking glowing blood-like essence. She was visibly weakening with every blow she suffered!

NYAA NYAAAA!

As for the Quint, there was no way for the masterwork mech to remain intact after suffering multiple blows from the dark god. Though the Blinding One directed most of his power against the Golden Cat, the Quint suffered its fair share of blows, causing its reinforced armor to succumb first before its regular armor began to degrade.

If not for the protection of the temporary resonance shield that Joshua gained after he had broken through, the Quint would have already succumbed!

Even so, Venerable Joshua's extraordinary breakthrough manifestation was already starting to lose steam. Complete resonance was far too demanding for him to sustain for long. The continuous damage inflicted by the Blinding One didn't help matters either.

No matter how much he, the Quint and the Golden Cat wanted to sustain this state, he was finally reaching the limit of his capacity!

"Nooooo! I can't.. hold... any.. longer!"

To his regret, his exceptional state had finally run its course. The Golden Cat's energy projection finally dissipated. Though this spared her from getting slain by the Blinding One, she was unable to block the luminar dark god any longer!

As for the Quint, the mech visibly dimmed as its resonance shield and other resonance effects faded away as well. Joshua looked exhausted in his cockpit as he felt as if he had squeezed every drop of potential from his mind and body.

There was nothing left for him to resist the Blinding One!

Without resonance, he was like an emperor without clothes. The Quint wearily raised its Unending lance, but Joshua knew it was futile. Not even this fantastic weapon could make a meaningful difference if he was close to losing consciousness himself!

"You have fought admirably, kid." A gruff transmitted over an open channel. "Now let a real soldier show you how to fight!"

Joshua wearily raised his head in confusion. "What? Who?"

Before he knew it, a rapid form flitted past the sensors of the Quint! The form quickly collided against the radiant shield of the Blinding One!

Different from last time, the charge actually penetrated through the dark god's protection!

To his astonishment, a winged bestial mech had shown up and boldly struck the Blinding One with much more effectiveness than he could have imagined.

As the tiger mech continued to claw and bite into the robe and particularly the crystals adorning it, the Blinding One released yet another omni-direction flash to get rid of the annoyance!

Yet despite releasing such a potent flash, the tiger mech avoided getting blown back. A rust-red glow surrounded the machine, causing it to resist and negate the attack!

"Expert mech!"

The Devil Tiger, the first true masterwork mech made by Ves, had finally appeared on the battlefield!

The mech emerged through the portal shortly after Cynthia Larkinson's energy projection had passed through.

Strangely enough, the Devil Tiger had passed through the portal without undergoing any mutations or abnormal changes. A strong aggressive will surrounded the extraordinary tiger mech as it began to savage the Blinding One!

The luminar dark god seemed to act increasingly more alarmed as he tried several ways to repel the expert mech. Yet all of his attacks, whether it was light beams, guided bolts or simple swipes with his hand, the Devil Tiger's powerful flight system allowed the mech to evade most of the attacks.

The few attacks that did land on the expert mech only weakened its resonance shield for a moment. The Devil Tiger's resonance shield was remarkably stable and abundant, signifying that it was piloted by a genuine expert pilot who was much more seasoned than him. The readings from the resonance meter only confirmed this observation!

"Where did this expert pilot and expert mech come from?"

While Joshua and many other Larkinsons had a lot of questions about the appearance of the bestial mech, they were still grateful for its intervention.

Though the difference in power between the Blinding One and the Devil Tiger was actually quite big, the latter was putting up an excellent fight!

The Blinding One's inherent weakness in close-ranged combat left him unable to deal any significant damage to the expert mech. The few times he managed to land a blow, the Devil Tiger mostly resisted the damage with its resonance shield.

In the rare cases the damage went through, the mech only suffered moderate damage before its structure automatically readjusted until none of the marks of damage remained!

Through the use of clever if not brilliant judgement, the expert pilot constantly attacked the Blinding One from angles that made it tricky for his large humanoid form to attack the pesky mech.

In fact, calling it pesky was an understatement, because the damage the Devil Tiger inflicted was very real!

Instead of focusing on the flesh of the dark god, the expert mech instead worked to damage and demolish the crystals adorning the shield.

Each time the Devil Tiger managed to crack another crystal, the defenses of the Blinding grew a little dimmer. It was clear that the expert pilot intended to weaken the Blinding One first!

With the Unending One and the Blinding One meeting their match, Ves and many Larkinsons sighed in relief. The unknown reinforcements that had emerged through the portal were not only on their side, but also strong enough to fend off the powerful entities!

Yet there was still another dark god arrayed against the Larkinson Clan. Space around the Larkinson fleet seemed to shatter as Qilanxo let out a pained roar! Her energy projection collapsed as the Inexorable One's talons slashed against the Shield of Samar with incredible force!

Though the Unending shield managed to resist the sharp blow, the curled talons of the grey bird reached around the tower shield and punctured deeply the side of the Shield of Samar!

Jannzi's personal mech instantly lost functionality on its damaged side! It no longer possessed the strength to hold up a sword and all of the other system failures caused it to retain only a fraction of its strength.

"Hold on, Shield! Our family still needs us! We can't fall!"

Yet no matter how much she wanted to continue the fight, her failing mech was unable to do what she wanted. If she piloted a real expert mech, then she wouldn't have ended up in this sorry state too soon. It was unfortunate that the mech she decided to partner with was ultimately not a genuine expert mech.

Just as the cruel-looking grey bird attempted to swoop in and cut the helpless Shield of Samar in half, a large volley of nuclear missiles impacted the Inexorable One's form!

Though the powerful explosions unleashed by the shoulder launchers of the Bright Warriors failed to inflict any serious harm to the Inexorable One, the huge explosions did stop her from delivering the coup de grace!

As the Inexorable One turned her avian head to see who had the temerity to challenge her, she saw a motley collection of more than a dozen mechs soaring forward!

A fair amount of them consisted of gold-coated Bright Warriors, but there were plenty of other mechs that belonged to the other mech forces.

What made them special was that each of them were surrounded by unstable resonance fields.

When Ves looked at the advancing mechs, his eyes almost popped out of their sockets.

"Expert candidates! They've broken through!"

The intense battle and the increasing pressure the mech pilots faced had caused many of them to faint or become so suppressed that they could barely lift a finger.

However, a few of them found themselves thriving under the pressure. With the survival of tens of thousands of Larkinsons at stake, they somehow rose to the occasion and condensed their nascent, prototypical force of wills!

The breakthroughs not only freed the mech pilots from much of the hostile pressure, but also powered up their mechs through forced resonance, thereby giving them the capacity to challenge gods, however briefly!

"Charge forth and clip this evil demon's wings!" Casella Ingvar roared over the channel.

"We're eating hot wings tonight!" Imon Ingvar excitedly added!

