

Mech 2671

Chapter 2671: Auralis

The wave of energy seemed to travel a bit slow on the map, but in reality it moved incredibly swiftly for how much devastation it was able to wreak.

It was already absurd for a strange energy wave to knock out and possibly kill the minds of so many Bloody Herons and other elite mech pilots.

No one expected the reality-defying attack would go on to slaughter the entire crew of the Auralis.

This was one of the Gauge Dynasty's proudest fleet carriers! While she was certainly not the largest capital ship from the Friday Coalition, she possessed a rare deep strike configuration which allowed her to traverse much more distant stars at good speeds.

Unlike some of the other deep strike fleet carriers in Task Force Umbra, the Auralis was not a minimal effort.

The cheaper fleet carriers such as the Vanguard Group's Forward Momentum and the Puffer Clan's Orca Tyrant only carried the basics. They were thinner, lighter and offered less room for mechs. While that made them fairly maneuverable compared to other capital ships, this was hardly what military leaders sought in a vessel that was supposed to undertake dangerous missions behind enemy lines!

The Auralis was a true deep strike fleet carrier as far as everyone was concerned. She was clad in thick, premium starship hull plating that could take a heavy beating for a time. As long as the vessel rotated along her axis, she could absorb a huge amount of punishment as long as none of the incoming damage wasn't concentrated.

The Auralis was definitely the most expensive and impressive fleet carrier out of the five she traveled with. Not even the Konsu Clan's Amagi or the CRC's Eager Condemnation matched the luxuries that the Gauge Dynasty had foisted on the starship.

It was actually quite noteworthy that the Gauge Dynasty was even willing to supply such a valuable fleet carrier for this operation in the first place, but then again, it had many more capital ships to spare.

Yet for all of the defenses that granted the Auralis so much value, she possessed a least one major weakness.

Relative to the other deep strike fleet carriers, her mobility was abysmal. While her FTL range was commendable, that was solely due to the quality of her specialized long-ranged FTL drives.

Her sub-light propulsion system was actually quite powerful, but that was mostly responsible for allowing the lumbering vessel to keep up with ordinary transits. Her straight-line acceleration was barely passable, but her other maneuvering characteristics were wholly inadequate.

The Auralis was deliberately built to be tough enough to block and bounce off any damage with her powerful shield generators and heavy hull plating. There was hardly any capacity left to install powerful maneuvering thrusters that could help with turning her orientation or allowing her to dodge to the side in a timely manner.

The side thrusters were so weak relative to the mass of the lumbering vessel that it was as if a mouse attempted to move a chair.

Even though there wasn't any friction in space, it still took an awfully long time for these piddly thrusters to move or displace an object that massed an uncountable number of tons. Just like every other capital ship, the Auralis was so heavy that she was unable to land on a planet with standard gravity.

Considering all of these disadvantages, the Auralis was the perfect follow-up target for the energy wave. It was big, valuable, and difficult to defeat through conventional attacks.

Yet the death energy evoked by the Penitent Sister battle formation was not material in nature. Just like normal spiritual energy, it passed through every solid obstacle and only interacted with other forms of spiritual energy and spiritual phenomenon.

Aboard the Auralis, the only spiritual presence aboard the vessel was the inherited spirit of her crew. Over 20,000 crew members served aboard the well-staffed vessel. They serviced the mechs, ran the many functions of the vessel, facilitated the complicated and risky process of performing long-ranged FTL transitions and so on. All of these Fridaymen were highly-trained professionals with at least a decade of experience under their belt.

None of these Gaugers were weak!

Yet despite the prodigious defenses of the Auralis, the minds of all of these loyal and professional soldiers had been snuffed.

The vessel failed to evade the full breadth of the attack. While she had actually detected the danger and started to move in time to save at least a portion of her crew, she wasn't maneuverable enough to save them all entirely.

It turned out that it was pointless even if she succeeded. The energy attack exhibited enough control to correct its course, though it seemed to be a strenuous process.

Without being able to evade the mysterious attack, the crew was doomed. No shield generator and no hull plating was ever designed to block such an inexplicable attack method.

Only high-ranking expert pilots with expert mechs were supposed to be able to accomplish these kinds of feats!

Perhaps the only consolation for Task Force Umbra was that the absurd energy was not endless.

The death energy had already expended a lot of effort. It weakened faster passing through the massive fleet carrier of the Gauge Dynasty. This proved that the attack definitely had other limitations.

The green resonance corona vanished shortly afterwards, and with its passing the wave of energy dissipated in short order.

The incredibly magical and confounding effect shocked the entire battlefield for a time.

But only for a time.

"Finish off your opponent first! Leave the rest to the eggheads! Let the nerds puzzle it all out!"

The fight soon resumed as if nothing had happened. No matter how much everyone wanted to learn about how less than two-hundred mechs led by a fake expert mech managed to accomplish such a feat and whether it was repeatable, they still had a battle to fight!

The only people paying attention to the Valkyrie Prime and its accompanying Valkyrie Redeemers were those who feared a repeat.

They didn't know whether the Valkyrie mechs could launch a second wave.

In truth, the Penitent Sister mech pilots were already nearing their mental limits. Connecting to the battle network and channeling more energy than ever before had taken a very great toll on their minds.

To be honest, the power and reach of the energy surpassed their expectations! Even Ves was surprised that the attack actually managed to succeed in sweeping through the Auralis.

While he was very pleased with the unsurpassed power and scale of the earlier attack, the price was also considerable. When Ves accessed the pilot telemetry of the Penitent Sisters, he immediately noticed signs that they were completely spent.

It was hard for them to concentrate on piloting mechs after such a heavy exertion!

"This is strange.." Ves briefly frowned. "It wasn't like this before."

In previous tests, every activation of the battle formation took a lot of the Penitent Sisters, but they still retained at least some strength to fight for a time.

This was different.

As Ves tried to find an explanation, he recalled one of the experiments he performed.

He connected the Valkyrie mechs to the battle network as well!

As 'living' entities, why shouldn't they be able to participate in the battle network? The Valkyrie mechs may not be human Hexers, but they were completely designed as an extension of a specific aspect of the Superior Mother.

While Ves hadn't been able to observe how the mech interacted with the battle network when the mech pilots prayed to the Supreme, he reasoned that some of the extra power must have been brought by the mechs.

As for that weird homing function at the end, Ves guessed that the Superior Mother was able to maintain a connection to the wave attack. Whether the death energy had always been under her control or whether the resonance bestowed by Venerable Joshua added that capability was something that Ves would look at later.

Right now, they still had a battle to win!

"The Fridaymen are wavering!" Major Verle sounded both amazed and excited. "Their resolve is clearly shaking. Look at how their mechs are fighting at the moment. They look as if the wind had taken out their sails. Even their Praetor and Planat compatriots fighting on the right side are flustered!"

The Fridayman mech pilots who had been closest to the passing death wave were affected more than most. Their very souls had trembled as the soundless doom attack had caused them to experience fear on a primordial level.

Their excellent training, discipline and determination quickly reasserted themselves. As some of the best mech pilots of a powerful second-rate state, their wills were not so easily broken!

While they were still suffering from the afterattacks of escaping a brush of death, they managed to pick themselves up to an admirable degree.

Yet no one, not even the iron-willed Silent Swords, were able to fight as confidently as before.

The momentum of battle was a very nebulous concept. It swung back and forth according to many different variables, the most important of which was morale.

The elite Fridaymen did not easily lose their morale. They also did not break and rout even if the situation looked a lot more hopeless than before.

Yet that didn't mean they were emotionless robots. Aside from the shadow the extraordinary energy attack had left in their hearts, the Fridaymen mech pilots were also being pushed back for another reason.

A giant hole had been blasted in the middle of their battle line!

Once the mechs of the Bloody Herons and some of the other Fridayman mechs in the vicinity had lost their mech pilots, they became as useful as scrap metal. Even if their AIs took over control for a time, they were never designed to assume permanent control.

That was too dangerous.

Therefore, once their mech pilots had become braindead, the machines gradually powered down and silently drifted out of formation.

The void that had formed in the middle was not so easily filled.

Just like how the morale of the Fridaymen had sunk, the confidence of the expeditionary forces had risen to its highest level!

With the power of a death god on their side, the defenders eagerly pounced on the advantages created by the enormous move!

Mechs quickly filled up the gap and tried to split the off-balanced Fridayman mech units apart. Their goal was to cleave the enemy's carefully-arranged battle lines and put even more pressure on the enemies that remained!

"Cleave their formation apart and sandwich them from multiple flanks!"

"We've already wiped out over 200 of these bastards in an instant! If we can't capitalize on this advantage, then we will shame ourselves in front of the Superior Mother. Attack!"

The Larkinson and Crosser mech pilots fought as if they already saw light at the end of the tunnel. The reduced pressure from their enemies also contributed to their increasing confidence.

As for the Glory Seekers, their swing in momentum was much more drastic. As soon as they beheld the giant energy silhouette of the Superior Mother coming to life, they had already gone through a rapturous moment.

The Superior Mother was with them! Not only did she descend on the battlefield to inspire the righteous Hexer mech pilots in person, the Supreme also punished the wicked Fridaymen by waving her hand!

"For the Hegemony!"

"For the Wodin Dynasty!"

"For glory!"

Even though the Glory Seekers had suffered heavy casualties prior to this moment, the surviving mech pilots didn't care about that anymore. Their faith was so invigorated that it practically propelled them all forward.

No one thought about retreat at this time!

The huge swings in morale had a devastating effect on the Fridaymen elites who had previously acquitted themselves well. Slight disadvantages cascaded into major disadvantages. The old status quo had broken. The left side of the battlefield had firmly swung in the favor of the Golden Skull Alliance!

Yet before Ves could maintain his satisfied grin, a bridge officer conveyed shocking news.

"The Leskin has fallen! Venerable Banner Cross has been overwhelmed by the Jaenne D'Arc!"

More bad news poured in a moment later.

"The surviving Fridayman expert mechs have altered their battle posture! It looks.. it looks as if they are attempting to break through our lines at all costs!"

Chapter 2672: Correcting A Mistake

"This is impossible... the Bloody Herons shouldn't have died so easily..."

Lady Aisling Curver simply couldn't believe what her console was telling her. The Bloody Heron mechs had become completely unresponsive. She patched into the cockpit feeds and looked at the bodies of the pilots.

Not a single one of them moved. Aside from performing unconscious body functions such as breathing, the pilots seemed to have gone completely still.

According to the brain monitoring systems, the mech pilots were no longer alive according to the Friday Coalition's interpretation of what constituted a living being.

It was as if the bodies had turned into clones. Aside from containing a self-maintaining system of blood, flesh and bone, the collection of organic tissue was no longer alive in the truest sense of the word!

This was impossible. No attack should have been able to bypass every defensive barrier and strike straight at the minds of the Bloody Heron mech pilots.

Even if such an odd attack was able to affect normal mech pilots, the proud elites hand-picked and nurtured by the great Master Huron himself shouldn't have perished so easily!

They were some of the most excellent mech pilots of the Gauge Dynasty and by extension the Friday Coalition. Even if they weren't expert pilots themselves, they were the very best among the standard mech pilots that served in the Sundered Phalanx.

For them to fall over like this en masse was a huge injustice!

Aisling simply couldn't comprehend how the Larkinson Clan was able to kill them all in an instant.

It was one thing to defeat the Bloody Herons through ordinary combat. No matter how well they fought, they were still mortals who piloted mechs that were significantly worse than expert mechs. It was normal for the Bloody Herons to sustain casualties, especially against opponents who were close to them in strength such as the Glory Seekers and the Cross Clan.

Yet the mechs responsible for triggering the devastating losses did not belong to the Hexers, but the mech designer who created them in the first place. The Valkyrie Redeemers led by a strange variant had displayed a power that was completely unprecedented in the history of this mech line!

Was every Valkyrie mech capable of evoking this mysterious power? Why were the Valkyrie mechs in the hands of the Larkinsons much more special than the ones in the hands of the Hex Army? What role did the custom Valkyrie mech in the lead assume in their odd formation?

So many questions whirled in Aisling's mind that she had completely forgotten about her earlier responsibilities.

While there weren't many living Bloody Herons that needed her monitoring and support, Venerable Ghanso Larkinson clearly noticed the lack of attention.

Whenever he fought in a serious battle, he frequently received support from the rear. As the mech designer responsible for maintaining the Charlemagne and the Scarra mechs, Aisling provided considerable technical support to him in many different ways.

Whether it was unlocking some of the limiters of his expert mech to advising him how to best dismantle an enemy expert mech, Venerable Ghanso could not have achieved as much success as he did without the support of an excellent Journeyman mech designer.

"Aisling!" Ghanso gritted his teeth as his Scarra mechs kept getting picked off by his invigorated opponents. "Get your head back together! We're switching to plan F!"

"Wait, what?" Aisling suddenly shook.

Her hazard suited form sat up straighter in the seat as she brought her mind back to the present.

This was no time for her to wonder how in the hell her beloved Ves had managed to turn his Valkyrie design into literal engines of death.

They still had a mission to perform!

"General Pierce has just relayed the order!" Ghanso quickly continued as he fended off a squad of rabbidly-fanatical Glory Seekers. The crazy women willingly launched suicide attacks under the belief that the Superior Mother was watching their performance! "We're unlikely to achieve a conventional victory at this rate. The best-case scenario is no longer attainable. We've all agreed to switch straight to our most desperate plan. Only this way will we be able to maximize our remaining chances."

The mech designer couldn't keep up with the changes. So much had already happened that she was barely able to wrap her mind around the decision to switch over their last, most desperate plan.

"That will mean..."

Venerable Ghanso did not hide his ferocity and desperation.

"WE HAVE NO OTHER CHOICE! In order to take down Ves, we must be willing to sacrifice everything! None of us joined this operation expecting to make it back alive, remember? We have made a vow to complete our mission to the best of our ability or die trying, and I am not about to go back on our word. Are you with me or not, Aisling?!"

Her body shook again. She thought about the expectations of her state, the suffering she enabled by letting Ves escape from her grasp and the deaths of all the Bloody Herons she previously supervised on behalf of her Master.

As her gaze centered around the lifeless and immobile mechs of the Bloody Herons, her eyes hardened.

Letting Ves go was one of the greatest oversights she had ever made. If not for her inability to bring her back to the Warsaw Giant System, she could have prevented him from introducing the power of glows to the Hex Army. Without glows, the aggressive and overconfident Hexers would have never been able to overrun the hinterland of the Carnegie Group and the Vermeer Group!

How many trillions of Fridaymen civilians had suffered from the Hexer incursions?

How many brave Fridayman mech pilots had died from facing Blessed Squire and Valkyrie Redeemer models?

How could the Bloody Herons attached to Task Force Umbra have died so suddenly without any chance of mounting a proper defense or counterattack?

The deaths of all of these fellow people weighed heavily on her conscience. Her carelessness and selfishness resulted in a huge chain reaction that had ruined the lives of many people she considered her friends and comrades.

There was only one chance left to earn her penance. In order to serve the greater good, she had no choice but to sacrifice her happiness, her goals and possibly her life.

As a human, she didn't want to go this far.

As a loyal member of the Gauge Dynasty, her duty compelled her to set aside her individual desires.

She closed her eyes, calmed down her conflicting emotions, and regained her focus.

"Tell me what you need from me, Ghanso." She spoke with determination.

Venerable Ghanso briefly shared his idea with her. The moment she heard what he expected from her, she became shocked.

"That's not supposed to work! You're asking me to go outside the boundaries of Master Huron's work! This is one of his masterpieces!"

"Then contact him and get his help instead if you can!" Ghanso heatedly retorted. "Time is short! We're launching our breakthrough attempt soon! I need you to put all of the pieces of the puzzle together before it's too late. If you fail, our mission will very likely fail! I am counting on you, Aisling. One way or another, we must correct the mistake that is Ves' continued existence!"

Correcting a mistake. Was that how Venerable Ghanso thought of this situation? It aptly described her feelings on the matter.

Aisling Curver briefly paused before she nodded. "Very well. I will try and contact Master Huron as soon as possible in order to facilitate your plan. Do note that you and the Charlemagne were never set up for this. We absolutely cannot make any guarantees that it will work out the way you think."

The expert pilot displayed a savage grin. "Oh, it will work, one way or another. I don't need it to last very long. I just need it to work long enough for us to reach that blasted factory ship. Once we are there, it's game over for my corrupted cousin."

Shortly after the discussion ended, the Fridayman expert mechs changed their fighting posture.

From the start of the battle, they had continually been suppressed by the thousands of Glory Seeker and Crosser mechs tasked with wearing down.

The losses had been horrendous on the attacking side. Initially, 8 expert mechs along with a score of quasi-expert mechs worked together to fend off the flood of enemy attackers.

Even gods could be gnawed to death by an endless flood of ants!

Yet these expert pilots quickly learned to work together and utilize the utmost of their powerful machines to wear down the enemy. Their powerful machines remained mobile and constantly used their excellent mobility to stay out of the reach of the enemy.

The expert pilots rationally sacrificed the various resources at their disposal to kill as many opposing mechs as possible.

To be honest, without the intervention of the Star Dancer and the Leskin, the Fridayman expert mechs may have been able to succeed in defeating the thousands of enemy mechs!

Yet because of the addition of two additional opposing expert mechs, Venerable Ghanso and the rest had to work a lot harder in order to stay relatively even!

At this time, many of the Fridayman expert mechs were already at the end of their rope. The energy reserves, armor integrity and ammunition stores of their powerful machines were already running dry.

They should have returned to their motherships at this time. Yet there was no way they could do so under these circumstances.

Returning to resupply their spent and damaged mechs took too much time. The battle might very well be over once the half-replenished mechs deployed into space again!

Besides, how could the enemy allow the damaged expert mechs scurry back to their mothership in peace?

The Glory Seekers and the Crossers were already smelling blood! Too many of their comrades had died to reduce the expert mechs to this point! There was no way they would allow the job to remain unfinished!

Every expert pilot in the service of the Friday Coalition was already aware that there was no turning back.

Once they agreed to implement Plan F, they had already made their peace.

"We must break through all of our opposition no matter the cost." One foreign expert pilot stated in a fatalistic tone. "The Hexadric Hegemony must not be allowed to take over our star sector."

He reminded everyone what they were fighting for. They held no intrinsic loyalty to the Friday Coalition. Each of them agreed to fight to this extent to save their home states.

"Break out!" Ghanso shouted as he commanded the ten remaining Scarra mechs forward! "We must last as long as possible, but don't hesitate to give something up as long as we can advance forward!"

"The Larkinsons may have slaughtered our comrades aboard the Auralis, but we shall do the same to their fancy factory ship!"

When the surviving 6 expert mechs no longer tried to preserve themselves as best as possible, they could unleash surprising power.

Even though the expert mechs incurred significantly greater damage than before, they easily managed to bull through the mechs blockading their way forward and soar straight at the Spirit of Bentheim in the rear of the enemy formation!

"VICTORY OR DEATH!"

"THE FATE OF THE KOMODO STAR SECTOR RESTS UPON OUR SHOULDER!"

"SLAY THE DEVIL WHO HAS BEWITCHED THE HEXERS!"

The expert pilots all burst out greater power than before! Their mechs glowed bright as their exhausted resonance shields seemed to be revived all of sudden. The desperation in their hearts had fostered their willpower and boosted the strength of the force of will beyond their previous levels!

Expert pilots never accepted defeat!

Expert pilots never gave in to despair!

Their valiant performance as well as the orders to facilitate the breakthrough also affected the other troops on the battlefield.

The surviving Fridayman elites seemed to find new strength in desperation. They could not allow themselves to be slain without accomplishing their mission. They were better at this! Rather than allow themselves to get butchered like helpless lambs, they would rather go down in one final blaze of glory!

One of the few surviving Bloody Heron mechs even started to glow in an uncontrollable fashion. Its desperate mech pilot was breaking through to expert candidates all of sudden!

"THE HERONS SHALL NOT BE SILENCED!"

The space knight affected by forced resonance temporarily gained the power of an expert mech, allowing its evolving mech pilots to batter away any enemy mech.

The glowing Bloody Heron space knight charged into a formation of Avatar mechs and collided against a Tamris Stellar, crunching the cheap and inferior defensive mech as if it was made of sticks!

The final counterattack of Task Force Umbra had begun!

Chapter 2673: Stronger Resonance

The battle had taken on a crazy turn again!

Just when the expeditionary fleet thought it had gained a decisive advantage after unleashing one of the killer moves that Ves had in reserve, the defeat of the enemy strike force seemed to be set in stone.

Once the Bloody Herons, the Holvein Grenadiers, the Silent Swords and the other elite units had been wiped out to the last mech, the outcome of the battle shouldn't have been in doubt anymore.

Yet to the amazement of Ves and everyone else in the expeditionary fleet, the desperate Fridaymen seemed to have gained a second wind.

After shaking off every inhibition, the liberated mech pilots fought without regard of their lives or any other irrelevant concerns.

The mission had to be completed!

The soldiers could never allow themselves and their comrades to sacrifice their lives in vain. After incurring so much damage and suffering so many deaths, it would be the biggest shame if their primary objective remained unfulfilled.

The Fridaymen mech pilots fought with renewed vigor, if only to finish the job they were meant to perform.

This was their purpose!

This was how they were trained to fight!

They did not decide to fight to the death unknowingly.

They fought knowing full well that their efforts would have a profound impact on the future of their state.

The Friday Coalition must survive and win the Komodo War! Only then will this battle and their deaths have meaning!

"Do not fear death, friends! Our lives are incredibly short compared to the timeline of the cosmos. What does it matter to die a few decades ahead of time? It is only a blink of an eye from a cosmic point of view!"

"We are men!" Another mech pilot cried out as his mech pierced its spear straight into the chest of an opposing Avatar mech. "These enemies do not want us to lift up our heads anymore. Each and every one of our sordid opponents want nothing less but to emasculate the brave boys and men of the Coalition. If you have any decency left as a man, then stand up now and fight for equality and justice!"

Even though the outnumbered and increasingly more deranged mech pilots and mech officers were crowding the communication channels with lots of nonsense, their words inspired their fellow soldiers even further.

This was no longer a battle of wits!

What tactics? What formations? What maneuvers?

They already tried all of that and failed to gain the upper hand! The enemy may be inferior in terms of mechs and mech pilots, but the trump card unleashed by the Larkinson Clan had changed everything!

Against such an illogical and unreasonable attack, no amount of calculated tactics and strategies availed the Fridaymen anymore.

Only grit and determination availed them now, and it worked!

The sudden burst of ferocity took all of their opponents aback. The remnants of the Holvein Grenadiers, the Silent Swords and even the Corundian Giants took the lead and physically collided against the opposing mechs to forcibly swing the momentum back in their favor.

"We can't back off any longer! As long as we keep giving ground, they'll keep suppressing us with their numbers even further. Let us push into their lines and turn their own mechs into obstructions!"

The Holvein Grenadiers simultaneously threw their last grenades forward. They even gave up their final grenades which they usually reserved for their final moments!

The thunderous explosions blasted many of enemy mechs barring their way!

It did not matter if the expeditionary forces had pushed a wedge in the Fridayman formation. It didn't matter if the survivors were getting increasingly more outnumbered.

As long as the elites left standing occupied the opponents all around them long enough, they wouldn't have the opportunity to reinforce the depleted mech units that had been assigned to stop the Fridayman expert mechs in their tracks.

This meant that the breakthrough attempt by the expert mechs had a much higher chance of succeeding!

"Come on, Grenadiers! Come on, Silent Swords! Come on, Corundian Giants! Will you shame our mech regiments like this? Advance forward with me and avenge our fallen comrades!"

The battle spirits of the surviving Fridayman elites had spiked so suddenly that they had forcibly taken back the initiative they had lost.

One of the stars of the show was the Bloody Heron space knight that was undergoing forced resonance.

Although the surviving mech pilot wasn't abnormal enough to evoke complete resonance, the forced resonance enveloping the mech was so strong that it functionally became as strong as an expert mech, at least for the moment!

Even though defensive mechs such as space knights were famed for their lack of killing efficiency, once they reached the expert level, all of that changed.

Against a large quantity of normal mechs, the temporarily empowered space knight fought as if it was a god that had descended onto the mortal plain!

When it swung its sword, a large resonance blade extended many meters beyond the tip, allowing it to slice apart weaker mechs that thought they were firmly out of reach.

When the space knight moved, it accelerated considerably faster than what its design should be capable of. The abundant power of forced resonance granted the recently-advanced expert candidate the power to warp reality in his favor.

This was one of the most powerful and most sacred moments that mech pilots could ever enjoy in their lives!

There was no explanation of how forced resonance was able to channel so much power in a manner that comprehensively boosted the performance of regular mechs. Uncontrolled energy was very destructive, yet this strange phenomenon was capable of directing all of that power in an intelligent way that just so happened to turn a normal space knight into an unstoppable engine!

It was as if the resentful dead of the Bloody Herons had attached themselves to the mech in order to help their surviving comrade exact as much payback as possible!

Of course, all of this power was not limitless. Forced resonance only lasted for a varying amount of time depending on the accumulation of strength, so the space knight pilot who had turned into an expert candidate knew he needed to make the most of this precious moment.

The more he kept his surrounding opponents busy, the more his efforts contributed to the completion of the mission!

"I have to last." The expert candidate gritted his teeth. "My mech won't be able to make it much longer."

The Bloody Herons were equipped with excellent and highly-robust mechs. Their space knights were tougher and could take a lot more punishment than other mech types.

Yet the mech that was currently glowing according to the will of the surviving Bloody Heron had already been through an arduous battle beforehand. Its frame was already damaged in some portions, and the incredible stresses that it was currently going through to maintain the forced resonance state wasn't making matters any better.

The expert candidate's wondrous connection to his mech already allowed him to know that his overburdened space knight was destined to collapse once the after-effects of his breakthrough ran their course.

Once that happened, his defenseless mech would definitely be subject to lethal retaliation.

It didn't even matter whether the expert candidate was able to eject from his cockpit beforehand. His opponents would never allow an expert candidate to flee to safety.

"Get out of the way!"

The Bright Spear Prime suddenly charged forward while driving its spear forward. While the mech was not designed to be a lancer mech, it was still capable of empowering its stabs with forward momentum!

The Bloody Heron pilot instinctively felt a threat from the opposing mech. Even though it did not appear to be a genuine expert mech, the mech had already felled many Fridaymen mechs by abusing its abnormally strong glow.

Even the expert candidate felt pressured by the Bright Spear Prime's dense glow!

"Tch!"

The space knight actually chose to evade the charge at the last moment! Once the Bright Spear Prime missed its charge, the glowing Bloody Heron mech slammed the surface of its shield against the prime mech.

The silent crunch forcibly threw the Bright Spear Prime aside! Even though its Unending armor plating did not exhibit a single dent, Venerable Rosa Orfan still felt a bit dizzy from the sudden shock.

"You damn Fridayman. Accept your defeat already!"

The scrappy Bright Spear Prime advanced towards the empowered space knight and began to launch a series of stabs. The target easily fended off the one-directional attacks with its shield. It even managed to retaliate by swinging its sword at the prime mech!

When the extended blade formed out of forced resonance struck the spearman mech, the resonance shield popped in an instant. The Unending alloy managed to repel the attack, but not before inflicting some form of damage to the energy stored inside the alloy.

"Ahhh!" Venerable Orfan cried out in pain as she felt as if her current opponent had managed to hurt the Bright Beam Prime on a deeper level! "Don't get hit by that resonance blade! It's too powerful. Not even the armor of my prime mech can withstand the damage!"

The prime resonance acting upon the Bright Spear Prime visibly weakened. The Bloody Heron pilot also sensed that his attack had inflicted real damage onto the spearman mech. The threat he sensed from the opposing machine had dropped!

"Hah! I'll just have to hit you over and over again if this is the case!"

The difference between a prime mech and a mech empowered by forced resonance became very clear.

The latter immediately gained the upper hand against the former! Even though Venerable Orfan was unquestionably the better mech pilot, the Bright Spear Prime was closer to a standard mech than an expert mech. Many of its performance characteristics simply couldn't keep up with the moves that she wanted to perform.

As a result, the mech that performed much closer to an expert mech at this time immediately managed to land continuous hits on the Bright Spear Prime!

The only response that Venerable Orfan could make was to make sure that her unstoppable opponent did not manage to stab a blade through the joints and other weak points of her prime mech.

Her efforts barely allowed her Bright Spear Prime to remain intact. Even so, her mech seemed to scream every time it came in contact with the enemy's resonance.

Forced resonance was unquestionably more powerful than prime resonance!

"Damn it, where's my support?!"

Even though all of the shield bashes, kicks and sword slashes failed to break apart the Bright Spear Prime, its internals were already starting to malfunction from all of the shocks they endured. These components weren't made out of Unending alloy so they were unable to withstand so much abuse!

Just as the empowered space knight accelerated forward at an unreasonable level for a defensive mech, it suddenly turned around and braced its shield just as a pair of daggers clanged against the surface!

"It was worth a try!"

The Piranha Prime had arrived!

The light mech did not look in good shape anymore. Previously, it had constantly harassed and worn down the Fridayman elites. While its superior mobility allowed it to evade many attacks, it was not able to avoid everything. Its ruined coating, blackened surface and precarious-looking flight system showed that not even Unending alloy could guarantee the mech's safety.

Fortunately, now that two prime mechs were ganging up on the mech piloted by the newly-advanced expert candidate, the rampaging space knight was much more contained!

The Bright Spear Prime looked listless and faded after suffering several corrosive resonance attacks. Yet Venerable Orfan did not lose any of her battle spirit. She looked forward to any clash against any challenging opponent, and this one happened to be just close enough for her to deal with at the moment.

As for the Piranha Prime under the control of Venerable Tusa, it constantly tried to face the back of the space knight. Even though the light skirmisher did not launch too many attacks, just the threat it posed was enough to make the Bloody Heron pilot feel shackled in his actions.

"You dishonorable Larkinsons!"

Chapter 2674: Advancing Wedge

The Fridayman expert mechs were breaking through!

Dozens of mechs crumbled as an expert mech wielding an axe called the Ulver Quinn unleashed a sweeping diagonal chop that unleashed a sharp and destructive resonance slash!

The expert axeman mech hailed from the Auralis. Its expert pilot was besotted by grief at the realization that the entire crew of the ship he had been travelling abroad for months had perished at once!

"I will carve out a path with my own body if need be!" The raging expert pilot roared as he summoned up greater strength from his mind and will than ever before! "Let justice fall upon these forsaken Larkinsons!"

The mech pilot of the Ulver Quinn should have been exhausted after fighting so much. The frame of the mech had incurred numerous scars and even holes due to all of the punishment it endured. Yet the valiant axeman mech exhibited none of the weaknesses of before!

An expert hybrid mech called the Prava Lonestar arrived just behind the Ulver Quinn and began to raise its wrists before firing an array of piercing laser beams that tore through some Crosser rifleman mechs that had been putting them under pressure.

"Let me advance with you as well, my friend! We shall sing our final song today before we accompany our comrades in the afterlife!"

"Your mech is already depleted of energy and ammunition!" The expert pilot of the Ulver Quinn protested. "You're little use to us anymore at this point."

"I can still fight with my limbs, my friend. While melee combat is not my forte, it is more than enough to help you carve a path forward!"

The expert hybrid mech pulled out a thick rod from the back of its frame. The rod telescoped in both directions to form a thick but hollow staff that glowed with the resonating will of the vengeful expert pilot.

The hybrid mech extended one of the ends of its new staff towards the surviving Glory Seeker and Crosser mechs that stood in its way. Its resonance shield continually blocked every attack that was fired in its direction!

"Murderers! You shall pay for slaughtering the crew of the Auralis! We shall not stop until your precious patriarch has met his end at our hands!"

The two expert pilots didn't actually know each other well before this battle. They were both third-raters who were originally 'persuaded' to fight on behalf of the Friday Coalition.

Yet as humans, they spent months befriending and getting familiar with the Fridaymen who served alongside them aboard the Auralis.

The realization that tens of thousands of earnest, loyal Fridaymen had been wiped out to the last man was too much for them to bear. Their despair darkened their emotions but also stimulated their wills!

Their inability to pass through the quagmire that the enemy had formed around them was the reason why the battle had remained static for so long.

They could have prevented the tragedy from happening if they fought harder and got rid of their opponents faster!

There was no medicine for regret. Only vengeance was able to soothe their guilt!

The axeman mech and the hybrid mech wielding a staff both stormed forward, using their ferocity to blow open a hole through the enemy ranks!

Even though they fought admirably, their valiant performance also attracted a lot of enemy fire.

The Transcendent Punishers trained their fire onto the two Fridayman expert mechs! The constant barrage of gauss rounds and positron beams took a great toll on the resonance shields. The confrontation directly pitted the willpower of the vengeful of the expert pilots against the indomitable firepower of the surviving artillery mechs of the Larkinson Clan!

More artillery fire rippled onto the other expert mechs as well. The Charlemagne, the Scarra and most notably the Jeanne D'Arc came under heavy fire.

The expeditionary forces wanted to stop the enemy expert mechs from advancing at all costs!

At this point in the battle, the efficiency of the Transcendent Punishers had declined. Their weapons had fired hundreds of times in a very short period of time. This

generated a lot of heat that turned the entire bunker into an oven. The weapon systems had endured continuous stresses, causing them to reach their breakdown thresholds. Without immediate servicing and cooling, the Ylvainan mech pilots did not dare to fire their weapons too frequently.

Even so, well over 250 Transcendent Punishers still remained active. The other Larkinson heavy artillery mechs had either been smashed by counter battery fire, suffered retaliation from the surviving ranged mechs of Destiny Hammers and Witch Slayers or had become crippled as their weapon systems failed.

The continuous bombardment soon resulted in the demolition of another Scarra mech. Only 9 of them were left!

"I HAVE HAD IT WITH YOU LONG ENOUGH!" Venerable Ghanso roared, his rage and will echoing throughout the battlefield!

Seeing that opposition closer to the expert mechs were being handled by his fellow battle partners, Ghanso directed the rifles of his Charlemagne and all of his surviving Scarra towards the red-coated starships in the distance.

Bright white positron beams surrounded by a pale yellow glow precisely struck 10 different bunkers at the same time!

The resonance-empowered attacks drilled straight through the tough roofs of the bunkers and retained enough power to inflict heavy blows on the heavy artillery mechs taking shelter inside!

Even if the attack hadn't destroyed the sturdy Transcendent Punishers, the attacks definitely took them out of the fight due to the excess heat and energy that overwhelmed their frames!

Venerable Ghanso did not waste his time and energy on finishing the job. The still-active Transcendent Punishers had become incredibly riled up! They struck the Scarra mechs with a vengeance, demolishing one after the other with concentrated fury!

The exchange of fire turned all of the space between the two sides into a no-go zone. The Ulver Quinn, the Prava Lonestar, the Jeanne D'Arc as well as the other two surviving expert mechs all formed a protective circle around Venerable Ghanso's mech.

The remaining Fridayman expert mechs forcefully drove their formation, letting no enemy bar their way forward!

The exhausted and diminished Glory Seeker and Crosser mechs no longer had the power or numbers to put up an adequate fight!

The entire will of the Friday Coalition and the states who opposed the hegemony of the Hexers had gathered around the expert mechs!

As this dangerous group advanced, the expeditionary forces incurred great casualties, yet managed to get their hits in as well.

The Ulver Quinn and the Prava Lonestar served as the vanguard and suffered the brunt of all of the frontal attacks.

The exchange of fire between the Transcendent Punishers and the Scarra mechs went unabated. Despite Venerable Ghanso's best efforts, his final Scarra mech eventually collapsed.

In contrast, over 180 Transcendent Punishers still remained battle effective, if only barely!

The aberrant Larkinson did not seem too saddened by the loss. The Scarra were expendable mechs from the start. It was not a waste to trade them away for an opportunity to advance forward.

Besides, the pseudo-expert mechs had almost run out of energy. Their energy reserves were considerably less extensive than the Charlemagne, which still had plenty of power left to support this final attack run.

Venerable Ghanso felt incredibly liberated at this moment. His connection with the Charlemagne soared as his mind no longer became burdened by any additional connections.

Unfortunately, the artillery attacks that slammed against his expert mech's resonance shield ruined this pleasurable moment!

Without any vulnerable targets left, the Transcendent Punishers directed their fire on the Charlemagne. With the other expert mechs including the powerful Jeanne D'Arc occupied with fending off the enemies that sought to stop them in their tracks, the Charlemagne would soon exhaust all of its defenses!

No matter how much firepower the Charlemagne possessed, it was impossible for it to eliminate all of the artillery mechs by itself. It had to expend too much energy to drill through all of the bunkers and inflict enough damage to take down an undamaged heavy mech.

"We need more mechs!"

The Fridayman expert mechs managed to advance both forward and downwards until they reached the edge of the battlefield where the remnants of the Holvein Grenadiers,

the Bloody Herons, the Silent Swords and the Corundian Giants were putting up a valiant fight.

Despite their final outburst of power, there were too many Larkinson, Glory Seeker and Crosser mechs preventing them from linking up with their expert mechs.

The 180 Valkyrie Redeemers that previously unleashed the death attack that changed everything were also putting up a fight.

While the mentally-exhausted Penitent Sisters no longer had the strength to fight an intensive battle, they forced themselves to stay. With permission from Major Verle, their piloting suits injected a potent stimulant in their bloodstream that forcibly stimulated their brains and temporarily shook away some of their fatigue.

While this drug would definitely cause the female mech pilots to crash after a short time, this was but a small price to pay for continuing to contribute to the battlefield!

Their Valkyrie Redeemers fired their pulse submachine guns in the direction of any enemy within reach. This was the most they were able to accomplish. Even though their firepower was weak and scattered, every attack counted.

Not even the space knight empowered by forced resonance was able to change the result! The recently-advanced Bloody Heron expert candidate still possessed a lot of power, but three prime mechs had come together to stifle his options!

"Too much power, not enough skill!" Venerable Orfan taunted as her dimly-glowing Bright Spear Prime pressured the space knight from the front.

After several costly exchanges of blows, the former Vandal Commander finally figured out her opponent's fighting style. She no longer allowed her prime mech to get hit by the resonance blade.

Even though her cautious approach lessened the pressure onto the glowing space knight, the Valkyrie Prime had come to lend a hand!

Throughout the entire clash, the Valkyrie Prime's pupil precisely analysed the entire frame of the rampaging space knight.

Forced resonance was a violent process. The mech that became empowered by it always strained their physical components beyond their limits, thereby introducing hundreds of hidden dangers!

While it wasn't easy to identify the majority of them, the Odineye continually relayed a lot of information back to the analysts on the fleet.

A vengeful Gloriana personally analyzed the data and quickly marked out all of the weak points.

The Bloody Heron mech's resonance shield finally broke after blocking another attack from the Bright Spear Prime.

"A chance!"

Venerable Joshua moved into action as the space knight was just recovering from another attack.

The Valkyrie Prime soared forward and jabbed its spear through the shield arm of the space knight.

A second later, the Bright Spear Prime stabbed the partially-crippled space knight through a weak point on its abdomen, causing it to freeze!

"Tusa!"

"I'm already on my way!"

The Piranha Prime stabbed its daggers through the upper back of the space knight! According to the fleet network, Venerable Tusa had managed to pierce through a pair of crucial power lines that were each responsible for keeping the flight system fed with energy.

Now that those lines were cut, the backup lines no longer supplied enough juice for the mech to fly and maneuver at its fullest extent!

The touch and heavy space knight instantly slowed down. No amount of forced resonance amplification was enough to turn the thick and sluggish mech into a ballerina.

Subsequent attacks completely disabled the exposed flight system, causing the mech to lose almost all of its mobility in space. It had turned into a useless mech!

"No!"

Without the obstruction of this anomalous machine, the fate of the remaining elite Fridayman mechs was sealed!

However, the enemy expert mechs had something different in mind!

The Ulver Quinn raised its axe in a heroic fashion before chopping it down, unleashing a vertical resonance wave that slammed into the Bright Spear Prime and caused it to crumble away!

"Ahhh!" Venerable Orfan cried!

Even though its Unending alloy exterior remained intact, its prime resonance state had completely collapsed as all of the spare spiritual energy inside had been depleted.

The Piranha Prime and the Valkyrie Prime barely evaded the other attacks!

Chapter 2675: Final Wish

"Ghanso Larkinson!" Venerable Joshua transmitted on an open communication channel. "What are you doing?! You are already responsible for the deaths of hundreds if not thousands of Larkinsons. Will you persist in your madness and slay even more relatives?"

"SHUT UP!"

The Charlemagne unleashed a powerful beam at the Valkyrie Prime!

Fortunately, Joshua had anticipated the attack and already moved his mech aside, evading the dangerous attack!

"You are no Larkinson!" Ghanso scowled as he saw his attack had missed. "Just because Ves is selling out our family name like cheap garbage doesn't mean you deserve to carry our heritage forward. You and the rest of your so-called adopted Larkinsons are a mockery of everything that true Larkinsons stand for. Now get out of my way!"

The Charlemagne kept putting pressure on the Valkyrie Prime, but none of its attacks connected. The prime mech was constantly backing off while focusing its utmost on evasion.

Venerable Joshua did not dare to get hit by a direct attack from an expert mech! He had already seen the consequences of letting this happen.

Eventually, Ghanso gave up on trying to kill the annoying Valkyrie mech and proceeded to attack the mechs that belonged to the Avatars of Myth.

The reflexes and intuition of an expert pilot was too sharp. Even though the odd Valkyrie mech did not appear to be a true expert mech in his eyes, an expert pilot could still perform some small miracles with a good machine.

It would have been a lot easier for Venerable Ghanso to take down these annoying opponents if he still had his Scarra at his beck and call!

His eyes narrowed as he was about to implement the most crucial part of his own plan. While Plan F never accounted for this specific situation, an opportunity had opened up to increase its chance of success.

"Foster! I don't care what you are doing, but cover me while I focus! I can't afford to get distracted at this point!"

"Got it!" She replied.

At this crucial time, they completely put down their rivalry and animosity towards each other. The ideals they were fighting for trumped every other consideration!

This was why Venerable Relia Foster did not hesitate to play bodyguard to a Larkinson and a Brighter. Her Jeanne D'Arc long lost the protection of its blue resonance shield, but the sword-wielding expert mech simply withstood every attack without exhibiting too much concern.

Even though the attacks from the expeditionary forces constantly poured onto its frame, its weak points never seemed to succumb to the pressure.

The Jeanne D'Arc was one of the most difficult mechs to take down in a fight! It sacrificed versatility, offensive power and many other useful functions in order to make room for as many energy cells as possible.

With a frame infused with a deliberate amount of Rorach's Bone, the mech constantly drew on its abundant energy reserves to regenerate its damage through a very opaque process.

Though Venerable Foster didn't even pretend to understand how Rorach's Bone was able to repair broken components and even reproduce them if they were missing, that did not prevent her from utilizing her expert mech like a zombie!

She feared no attack! While she still tried to evade as many attacks whenever she could, she did not mind it when her expert mech incurred damage.

It would all regenerate back to normal anyway!

She only needed to take care not to deplete the Jeanne D'Arc's energy reserve too quickly.

With the undying swordsman mech covering for the Charlemagne, Venerable Ghanso closed his eyes and connected deeply to the systems of his expert mech.

He had piloted Charlemagne for many months. He used it to take part in dozens of large-scale battles in the Komodo War. He had grown extensively familiar with all of its core systems.

One of the most dangerous but innovative among them was the heavily customized neural interface. The Charlemagne was the central node of the asymmetrical neural network. In order to assist Ghanso in the difficult process of controlling several dozen pseudo-expert mechs at once, the expert mech possessed a lot of processing power as well as other related systems.

Now, all of this power was coming to life yet again. Venerable Ghanso opened his mind and reached out his will through the neural network that had put such a heavy burden on his head.

His actions made no sense. While he entered the battle with 44 Scarra mechs, the expeditionary forces had taken out each and every one of them. The final one had succumbed not too long ago after getting bombarded by over a hundred Transcendent Punishers!

Yet despite the lack of Scarra mechs, Venerable Ghanso reined in his impatience and kept extending his mind.

Soon, his patience was rewarded. Twinkling lights appeared in the fog. The new presences felt dim at first, but soon they grew strong enough for Ghanso to establish a connection with the new nodes.

Not too far away, around a hundred drifting mechs came to life. The Bloody Heron mechs were surprisingly intact. After Aisling Curver contacted Master Huron, she received special permissions that allowed her to gain limited control over some of the systems of the silent machines that carried the braindead bodies of their mech pilots.

The control she gained was very limited. Rather than controlling the mechs themselves, Aisling's elevated permissions actually allowed her to exert control over their exclusive neural interfaces.

Normally, hijacking the controls of the mechs was impossible, but for safety reasons, Master Huron implemented a limited remote control function in case that any of his neural network mechs went haywire.

An active mech pilot could easily block and resist the external influence. No matter what, the mech pilot should be the ultimate controller of any armed mech. This was a universal standard that the MTA heavily recommended throughout all of human space. Even Master Huron did not dare to challenge this rule.

Therefore, Aisling couldn't do more than boot up the mechs again. There was no way for her to remote control any reactivated Bloody Heron mech to the point where they could move and fight according to her instructions.

She wasn't asked to do this much. Turning the mechs back on was all she needed to do. More crucially, the neural interfaces of the Bloody Heron mechs successfully connected to the minds of the braindead mech pilots.

Obviously, this didn't change much as the mech pilots did not generate any brainwave activity that could pass on instructions to the mech.

"I've given you a chance." Aisling whispered as she made sure to maintain the current state of the reactivated mechs. "Now reach out and show them the might of an asymmetrical neural network!"

Venerable Ghanso did not disappoint her expectations! Once he grasped the connections to the new presences, he steadily gained control over them with his powerful mind and will!

77 Bloody Heron mechs had come to life! They slowly activated their flight systems and gripped the weapons that were still in their grips before forming up in front of the Charlemagne like a resurrected honor guard!

Many observers were shocked at what had taken place!

"What?! How the hell is Ghanso able to pull that off!" Ves almost stood up from his observer's seat! "A conventional neural network is supposed to be different from an asymmetrical neural network! They are two different species!"

He underestimated Master Huron's work. An asymmetrical neural network worked in a different manner from a conventional network but shared many of the same principles. They even used much of the same modified neural interfaces.

As long as the neural interfaces of the Bloody Heron mechs received a software update that added a new operation mode, they could easily turn into Ghanso's new slaves!

The only major hindrance that could truly cause Venerable Ghanso to fail was whether the minds of the Huron mech pilots resisted his attempts to take control.

Normally, this procedure was madness, but this was different! Their minds were already wiped out, leaving Ghanso with a clean slate.

Not only that, the expert pilot also felt as if his new slave welcomed his embrace. As the mech pilots loyal to Master Huron, each of them hoped that Venerable Ghanso would be able to make use of them to take revenge on their killers!

Venerable Ghanso was under incredible pressure! Even with the lack of resistance from his new slaves, he had never controlled so many mechs at once! It took all of his willpower to remain cognizant of the situation!

"Go.. forward! Advance! I can't hold this state for too long!"

The other expert mechs had been waiting for this. The resurrected Bloody Heron mechs immediately assisted the expert mechs and helped them break through the blockade!

Even though the Bloody Heron mechs were being sliced by swords, stabbed by spears, shot by rifles and bombarded by artillery cannons, they still managed to do their jobs!

Ghanso displayed a much greater degree of control and multi-tasking than ever before as his surging force of will raised his capabilities as a master to an unprecedented degree!

"Hahaha! You can't stop us, Ves! My army is already dead!" Ghanso maniacally laughed as he forcefully drove the undead Bloody Heron mechs forward.

Since their mech pilots were already dead, Venerable Ghanso had no qualms about using them to launch his-risk attacks and trade blows for blows. The expeditionary forces could not handle the ferocious fighting style displayed by the resurrected mechs!

"We've created an opening!" The mech pilot of the Ulver Quinn yelled. "Get through before it closes! We'll stall the remaining opponents here. Don't let our comrades die in vain!"

The other expert mechs did not delay. They passed through while the Ulver Quinn and the Prava Lonestar desperately attempted to black as many enemy mechs as possible.

It wasn't enough!

Hundreds of mechs still chased after the remainder. They attacked the unnaturally-controlled Bloody Heron mechs from behind while the artillery mechs inside the expeditionary fleet attacked from the front.

The 4 remaining expert mechs were surrounded by the zombie machines, protecting their damaged frames and conserving their power for the final effort that was needed to complete their mission.

"There are too many enemies chasing behind our heels! We'll go and help out the other two! Take care and finish the job!"

The two additional Fridayman mechs purposefully moved out of the protective envelope and began their epic struggle to hold back the enemies that were trying to stop the final attack run.

One expert mech crashed into the formation of Valkyrie Redeemers. The weakened Penitent Sisters weren't able to contend against the power machine and tried to spread out as much as possible, but all of that took time!

"No! Don't let them go forward! Kill them before they get close!"

Every single member of the Golden Skull Alliance feared what the Charlemagne and the Jeanne D'Arc might do once they reached their destination.

Not a single ship wanted to fly next to a hostile expert mech!

Fortunately, the Larkinson Clan recognized the threat and formed a response.

While the Fridayman expert mechs were fighting past their opposition, the Valkyrie Prime had quietly fallen back and linked up with another group of Valkyrie mechs.

This time, Venerable Joshua no longer flew with the exhausted Penitent Sisters. His prime mech had joined up with the surviving Valkyrie Interceptors and Valkyrie Hurricanes piloted by the Glory Seekers!

"Are you ready?"

"We are at your disposal, boy." Mech Captain Serena Valeis answered on behalf of her fellow Hexers. "Please lead us to victory. We are all willing to lend our power to you. Let the Superior Mother punish these wicked enemies of the Hegemony once again!"

"Then do what I have just said and pray!" Joshua quickly instructed.

As the Glory Seekers tried their best to evoke the same phenomenon that the Penitent Sisters had previously accomplished, the Fridaymen all recognized the threat.

Venerable Ghanso's eyes burned as he spotted a very familiar formation mechs doing something very shady in front.

"I WON'T LET YOU FINISH!"

The Charlemagne and the ranged Bloody Heron mechs immediately opened fire on the Valkyrie Prime, causing the mech to be blown back while interrupting Joshua's concentration!

Yet before the mechs under Ghanso's control could get more hits in, some of the Glory Seeker pilots deliberately stopped praying and instead piloted their mechs protectively in front of the Valkyrie Prime!

"Go on! Do not hold back! We'll cover for you all!" They called.

Even though Valkyrie mechs were dropping at a worrying rate, they succeeded in buying enough time.

Since this was their first time, the Glory Seeker pilots needed a longer time than normal to connect to the battle network. Yet they eventually got the knack and managed to connect to the crown of the Superior Mother.

Their Valkyrie mechs activated their bonds as well.

In just half a minute, the Glory Seeker mechs was beginning to fly forward while adopting a V formation that sent chills through the spines of the Fridaymen taking part in the battle.

The deep strike fleet carriers were already altering their course to the side as a precaution!

The energy silhouette of the Superior Mother had manifested yet again. The weakened but still vigorous prime resonance generated by Venerable Joshua even surrounded it with an eerie green corona!

"The Superior Mother has descended once again!"

Despite facing a god-like figure, neither Venerable Ghanso and Venerable Foster despaired. Instead, they burned with greater determination than ever before.

Mortals may fear the power of gods, but demigods like them were not afraid of facing it head-on. Their will did not allow them to falter at this critical time!

The Jeanne D'Arc pointed the tip of its sword against the giant projection of the Superior Mother.

"I am not afraid!"

Chapter 2676: The Proudest Larkinson

The entire battlefield rippled when the Valkyrie Prime reprised its earlier role.

Even though the entire support cast had been swapped by first-timers who were still new to this greater stage, the Glory Seeker mech pilots stepped up when it counted.

The Hexer mech pilots forcefully brushed aside all of their anxiety and insecurity. They tried their best to enter into the best possible state of mind to channel the Superior Mother's might.

As proper Hexers, they were extremely jealous of the Penitent Sisters for being able to serve as the vessel of the Superior Mother's judgement.

"We can't let those criminal exiles upstage us all." Captain Valeis told her fellow earlier. "Forget about all of your contempt and ill feelings towards Venerable Joshua. Even if

he's a boy and not a Hexer, he is still blessed by the Superior Mother, just like her son. So forget about everything your mothers and your teachers have taught you about boys and treat him as if he is the Superior Mother's personal envoy."

The Glory Seekers may be Hexers, but they were also accustomed to following orders. Even if their instincts and their minds warred with their instructions, whenever they recounted how the exiled cultists of their state managed to strike a blow to the very souls of the Fridaymen, they no longer let their inner turmoil get in the way of this moment of supreme glory.

The Superior Mother already appeared to be prepared. As soon as the earnest Glory Seeker mech pilots had engaged their connections in the battle network, the ancestral spirit actively extended her influence and smoothed out the fluctuating emotions of the Hexer mech pilots.

For a moment, most of the Glory Seeker mech pilots as well as Venerable Joshua had become one in mind and with the battle network!

With the strengthening of the connections, the Superior Mother was able to exert greater control over the mechs and mech pilots than before.

Her power channeled into them, causing them to move in a mysterious fashion before they successfully formed into a V formation.

The Valkyrie mechs advanced slowly. Due to the slightly weaker spiritual foundations of the Valkyrie interceptors and the Valkyrie Hurricanes, the momentum of the overall battle formation was a little weaker. There were also slightly less mechs than before, and Ghanso's active attacks weren't helping.

Even though the attacking expert pilots put up a brave front, they were still vigilant towards this extraordinary manifestation.

Yet despite what their instincts told them, there was no way that Venerable Ghanso and Venerable Foster were willing to turn back at this point!

"Push through, Foster!" Ghanso called out.

"Hah, I was just about to say the same." She savagely grinned inside the cockpit of her regenerating expert mech. "In fact, let's split up. If this attack is the same as the one before, then it shouldn't be able to go after two separate targets that are located too far away from each."

There was a good reason why they stuck together up to this moment.

The Charlemagne was a powerful ranged mech but it was not designed to fight at point blank range. While it wasn't strictly helpless against melee mechs, it performed at its best when it attacked its targets with its rifle.

The Jeanne D'Arc was the opposite. It was very deadly up close and could endure a lot of punishment to boot. It served as an excellent complement to Venerable Ghanso's expert mech.

Yet as they were making their final end run, sticking together would only do more harm than good, especially against a powerful new attack method that had already slaughtered tens of thousands of Fridaymen!

"I'll go up, you go down!"

The Charlemagne and its zombie Bloody Heron mechs distinctly changed their course to an upward trajectory.

Meanwhile, the Jeanne D'Arc left the protective formation and angled downwards as if to approach the Spirit of Bentheim from below.

The two expert pilots separated from each other very fast! Long before the Glory Seeker battle formation was ready to unleash its attack, the two primary targets had already split several kilometers apart from each other, which was too far away for the Superior Mother's death attack to reach them both.

With each second that passed, the two Fridayman expert mechs flew even further apart!

Venerable Joshua, who was still able to exert a huge amount of influence on the battle formation due to the entrustment he received from the Glory Seeker mech pilots, briefly fell into a dilemma.

However, he instantly regained his focus. He and the other Hexer mech pilots knew they needed to achieve the greatest possible result.

If their efforts weren't able to touch both targets at once, then they would settle for the second-best option!

The battle formation oriented upwards in order to prepare an attack against Venerable Ghanso and his new slave mechs!

When Ghanso saw this happening, he briefly cursed but soon controlled his expression. He knew he was the more attractive target because there were around 60 Bloody Heron mechs that were flying alongside his Charlemagne.

He had already begun his preparations to meet the incoming attack. He spread the slave mechs out to the edge of his control range, which was actually just a couple of hundred meters.

"Come and hit me, Hexers!" Ghanso taunted as his mech fired straight at the Valkyrie Prime that had exposed itself by holding the center position of the V formation. "I am not afraid of a fabricated deity!"

The Superior Mother didn't exist. The huge robed woman that appeared above the formation of Valkyrie mechs was clearly a projected illusion according to the sensors of the Charlemagne.

It was all smoke and mirrors aside from the actual attack!

Even though the Charlemagne's attacks were having some effect against the Valkyrie Prime, the Superior Mother merely pointed her finger at it. Seconds later, the mech seemed to have been recharged to full strength!

The two opposing formations were moving forward. Venerable Joshua did not want to unleash the attack until he was close enough to prevent any chance of missing.

As the critical moment neared, Venerable Joshua briefly mustered up enough focus to transmit a message to Venerable Ghanso.

"I pity you, Ghanso."

"Don't bother to break my attention, you false Larkinson."

"You may want to pay attention to this. Do you know that the Superior Mother is Ves' mother?"

"What nonsense are you talking about?"

"I'm just telling you a fact." Joshua said. "Let me tell you another fact. Not a single Larkinson supports you. Nobody in the Larkinson Clan or the Larkinson Family wants to follow your vision. Do you know what that means?"

"I will correct every mistake that Ves has made as soon as I slaughter him myself!"

Venerable Joshua ignored Ghanso's outburst.

"You don't get it, Ghanso. What I am trying to say is that the Superior Mother is much more of a Larkinson than you! She is our true family, while you are a traitor who has stooped to killing your relatives!"

"What?!"

Venerable Ghanso's rhythm froze a bit as he made the mistake of falling into his opponent's narrative.

Joshua grinned. "Your aunt says goodbye!"

The Valkyrie mechs finally unleashed the extraordinary attack that had shocked the battlefield!

This time, the giant projection of the Superior Mother seemed to glare at the Charlemagne. She swept her sleeves at the offending mech, causing the Valkyrie mechs to unleash a more radial-shaped energy attack that happened to sweep over Ghanso's expert mech as well as every single Bloody Heron mech.

Though the death energy contained within the attack looked intimidating, Venerable Ghanso knew enough about physics that an attack that was dispersed over such a wide area was not actually that concentrated.

With his exceptional will, he feared no assault against his mind! His instincts also hinted to him that while the strange attack was very deadly against mortals, an expert pilot like him would only experience a bit of discomfort at most.

As the wave hit the Charlemagne, his suspicions turned out to be true. Ghanso remained as confident as ever as he withstood the foreign energy battering against his mind and will.

What aunt?

What Superior Mother?

This was nothing but a wide area mental attack activated through unknown means! His opponents should have concentrated the energy to a single point if they wanted to kill him with this method.

As for the Bloody Heron mechs, the attack shouldn't be able to do anything to them either. The minds of their mech pilots were already wiped out once. There shouldn't have been anything left for the second wave to affect.

Unfortunately, Ghanso and his sharp intuition overlooked one crucial detail. Aisling and the Fridaymen who supported him from behind also missed something important.

The Charlemagne was still supporting the asymmetrical neural network!

At the time the huge wave of death energy washed over the roughly 60 surviving Bloody Heron mechs, the minds of the mech pilots all received it at full blast.

With the help of the active man-machine connections, that energy entered the asymmetrical neural network through obscure means.

The dutiful slaves were unwittingly passing on their suffering to their master. The results came instantly.

"AHHHHHH!"

Venerable Ghanso was in more pain than ever before! His mind almost split apart immediately as the amount of pressure he had to endure suddenly amplified by 60 times!

Expert pilot or not, the concentration of energy that was battering at him was corroding his own will!

Fortunately, before a second had even passed, the emergency safety systems of his Charlemagne instantly shut down the asymmetrical neural network regardless of what was happening. The anomalous and incredibly concerning brain activity of his mind had instantly subsided a bit as Venerable Ghanso quickly gained a reprieve.

His will was crumbling and burning!

His mind felt as if it was about to shatter in pieces!

His body was shaking from the agony he just endured!

He miscalculated!

He never thought that the asymmetrical neural network could channel something as strange as the death energy to him. Even Aisling back onboard the Eager Condemnation was stunned.

According to the telemetry of the Charlemagne, the neural network did not transmit anything anomalous. How come they were able to channel something that bypassed every safeguard and limiter and directly impacted Venerable Ghanso's mind?

While Ghanso was trying to recover from getting mentally slammed, the Valkyrie Prime had suddenly flown up to the Charlemagne and slammed its spear straight through the exposed abdomen of the rifleman mech!

If the stricken expert pilot had managed to shake off his pain, he would have been able to avoid the charge.

Yet his slow recovery at this point proved fatal!

"H-How?" Ghanso felt confused as he felt his mech lose a lot of functionality from the damage. "A cheap trash mech like yours shouldn't have been able to penetrate through the frontal armor of my Charlemagne in one charge."

He was piloting a genuine expert mech! Even if it was mostly geared towards ranged combat, the mech's armor was still strong enough to bounce away attacks from regular mechs!

Unfortunately, Ghanso wasn't facing any normal mech.

Venerable Joshua's lips curled into a cruel grin. "Your biggest mistake is that you have always looked down on Patriarch's Ves work. If you just accepted Ves' greatness, all of this could have been prevented."

The Charlemagne's lifted a shaking arm. It was attempting to bring its rifle to bear against the Valkyrie Prime that was still holding onto the unmoving spear.

The prime mech easily battered its shield against the rifle, physically wrenching it away from the grip of the damaged expert mech.

"So this is.. Ves' greatest work?"

Joshua shook his head. "So far, at least. He has many other wonders in store for us. Only true Larkinsons get to enjoy his best creations."

Obviously, Ghanso wasn't among them. Even if Ves offered his cousin a mech, Ghanso would never accept!

Seeing that a melee mech had managed to defy his expectations and critically damaged one of Master Huron's unique works, Venerable Ghanso lowered his head and slumped into his piloting seat.

"You're right." He sighed as his aching pain and the sudden turn of events seemed to have sapped all of his anger out of him. His mind was still pounding like a drum and his will seemed to fray more and more as time went by. "I underestimated Ves. He's a good mech designer. I'll give him that. I should have respected his abilities more. What a Larkinson..."

"It's over, Ghanso. Shut down your mech."

"Heh. And give up the Charlemagne so my cousin can get his grubby hands over it? DREAM ON! A TRUE LARKINSON SHALL NEVER LET ANYONE GET AWAY WITH DISGRACING OUR NAME! COUSIN! I KNOW YOU ARE LISTENING TO ME! A RECKONING WILL COME! IF NOT FROM ME, THAN FROM SOMEONE ELSE! YOU WILL GET WHAT YOU DESERVE AND I WILL HAVE MY JUSTICE!"

One of the Charlemagne's wrists extended a long blade. Yet before it could be thrust into its target, the Valkyrie Prime easily blocked the feeble attack.

The prime mech simply pulled out its spear and stabbed it into the expert mech again!

There was no contest!

However, as Venerable Joshua finished the job that he had set out to do, the Jeanne D'Arc was still intact!

Even though the Transcendent Punishers bombarded it with all of their remaining strength, the expert mech remained undaunted as it approached the expeditionary fleet!

"It's useless, Larkinsons!" Venerable Foster confidently taunted. "There's hardly any mechs left in my way! Your precious factory ship will soon taste my blade!"

It seemed that some clansmen took issue with her statement. Seeing that the Transcendent Punishers weren't strong enough to stop the Jeanne D'Arc in its tracks, the Larkinson Clan finally called upon one of its final reserves.

The Bright Sword Prime and a mech company of swordsman mechs emerged from behind the Spirit of Bentheim.

The Swordmaidens knew exactly who was piloting the Jeanne D'Arc. They had been looking forward to this confrontation for a very long time.

Venerable Dise took a deep breath as she focused all of her sights on the Fridayman expert mech that was getting closer and closer.

"Commander Lydia... you can rest easy now. I will take revenge for your death and the death of our sisters today!"

The Bright Sword Prime brandished its sharp sword at the Jeanne D'Arc in a challenging fashion!

"SWORDMAIDENS! LET US DO COMMANDER LYDIA PROUD!"

Chapter 2677: Heating Up

While the enormous confrontation on the left side of the battlefield neared its conclusion, the high-stakes clash at the right side was also reaching a critical condition!

When the Jeanne D'Arc piloted by Venerable Relia Foster rammed her blade through the cockpit of the Leskin, the remaining three Crosser expert pilots had become maddened with rage!

The Bolvos Rage pilot turned into a veritable demon in battle! The advanced hybrid mech continually pressured its opponents by chopping them with its axe while at the same time peppering them with its other weapon hardpoints.

"WE WILL NEVER FORGIVE YOUR TREACHERY!" Patriarch Reginald Cross boomed as the blade of his glowing axe crashed into the side of the Imperial Verdict!

Normally, the melee mech should have been able to evade or block the attack with its trident, but Venerable Albert Praetor had fallen into a trap that caused one of the arms of his Imperial Verdict to be grappled by a chainsword!

The Amphis was an unusual expert mech. It was a fairly typical space knight with strong defense and low offensive compared to other expert mechs. The secondary laser shoulder mounts might threaten a standard mech, but their accurate firepower merely tickled the armor of its current opponents.

However, the expert space knight possessed one powerful feature that caused it to become a mech to be reckoned with. When paired with the unique strengths of Venerable Linda Cross, the mech gained an unnaturally heavy quality.

Her unique domain appeared to be related to gravity, mass or momentum. In other words, every resonance-empowered move made by her mech made it seem as if it had twice the mass!

Yet despite this added heaviness, the Amphis still retained the mobility characteristics of a medium mech!

In combination, this caused the unusual expert space knight to become a terror to fight against at close range. A normal attack that could easily be blocked could easily turn into an unstoppable blow that could breach the chest armor of an expert mech!

For this reason, none of the three opposing expert pilots wanted to enter into a contest of strength against the Amphis. It took several times more effort to block a casual blow from Venerable Linda Cross!

This was why the battle between the six powerful expert mechs was a constant moving affair.

The Amphis constantly chased after the Erin Tear, the Trost and the Imperial Verdict as if it was a machine that heralded their doom!

In the meantime, the Bolvos Rage and the Conavis Mer piloted by Venerable Imaris Cross did everything in their power to constrain the movements of the Imperial Verdict.

The two swifter Crosser expert mechs did not have to fight the Imperial Verdict to a standstill. It was already enough to slow down the trident mech so that the Amphis could catch up and attempt to use its strength to achieve greater advantages.

Yet even as the Praetor and Planat expert mechs kept their distance, they did not forget about punching back.

After they learned the hard way that the Amphis was much more difficult to deal with than anticipated, they abandoned their initial intentions and focused their efforts on the Conavis Mer instead.

The expert light skirmisher might be fast and incredibly difficult to attack, but it possessed the lowest defense out of all of the expert mechs. As long as the Praetors and Planats could land one solid attack, the Conavis Mer would definitely be impaired!

A light skirmisher must never get hit! If Venerable Imaris Cross had his way, then he would keep his mech in the periphery and exert pressure by his presence alone.

Every opponent feared getting stabbed in the back while they were preoccupied with another action! Just the existence of the threat alone was enough to constrain someone's behavior.

Yet the situation right now did not allow for the Conavis Mer to remain passive. If the light skirmisher did not take risks and become proactive, then Venerable Damira Planat and her two Praetor peers would just ignore its existence and focus on the Bolvos Rage!

While Patriarch Reginald Cross was arguably the most powerful expert of the six, he was only able to draw even on the Erin Tear. If the other two enemy expert mechs ganged up on the Bolvos Rage as well, then the situation would quickly run out of control!

Fortunately, the Crossers managed to achieve a breakthrough in the tenuous stalemate!

After launching a trap on the Imperial Verdict, the Bolvos Rage managed to land a direct attack on the Imperial Verdict's chest!

The powerful axe blow dug a trench into the side of the trident mech. At the same time, the Bolvos Rage's chest projector unleashed a powerful beam that struck the head of the enemy expert mech, destroying numerous sensors and other secondary systems!

"YOU'LL PAY FOR THAT REGINALD!"

With one arm trapped by the chainsword launched by the Amphis, the Imperial Verdict was still unable to retaliate properly. It was as if its opponents had tied it to an anchor that kept it just out of reach against the Bolvos Rage!

Venerable Albert Praetor knew the situation was critical. It was highly unlikely for his Imperial Verdict to wriggle away from its current bonds. The Erin Tear and the Trost were already coming to save him, but they were not in a position to do so at this time!

He decided to make an extreme decision. The expert pilot decisively activated an emergency command through the man-machine connection.

The instruction he issued was so drastic that a mental command was not enough for his expert mech to accept it. He had to reach out his physical hand and input a code on a console in front of his piloting seat.

Just to be certain that his mech would register his intentions, he also voiced his command!

"Detach and eject the right arm!"

The shoulder of the Imperial Verdict explosively cut off and pushed away its trapped limb! The decisive decision briefly caught Patriarch Reginald and the other two Crosser expert pilots off-guard.

This was because the ejected limb just happened to be the main arm that gripped the trident!

Venerable Albert was already making his next move. The Imperial Verdict's other arm did not draw a dagger from a hidden pocket or anything. His enemies would not allow such a sequence of moves to play out. The Bolvos Rage was already coming around to swing its axe a second time!

Since time was short, Albert pulled off a secret move without hesitation. The half-crippled mech burst closer to the Bolvos Rage while ramming its elbow against the hybrid mech!

Just before impact, a sharp blade extended out of the elbow, causing it to pierce through the Bolvos Rage's energy projector at the chest a bit faster than expected!

Patriarch Reginald had been too overconfident! He drove his Bolvos Rage to attack the Imperial Verdict at close range. That left it open to retaliation by a mech that was designed to excel at melee combat!

The two mechs quickly separated from each other.

The Imperial Verdict may have succeeded in landing a return blow, but its combat efficiency had dropped! The damage to its sides was considerable. Already, the mech was losing some power as well as a bit of other functionality.

Even though the mech had taken the time to withdraw a long dagger, the Crosser expert mechs were already focusing on their next target!

The Erin Tear came under heavy pressure. The weapon master mech constantly morphed its transformable weapon in order to cope with the combined attacks of the Bolvos Rage and the Conavis Mer.

The destruction of the chest projector severely curtailed the Bolvos Rage's threat level. While its other secondary weapon systems were able to damage and dent the Erin Tear's exterior, their penetration power was too low against a high-tier expert mech!

Venerable Damira Planat therefore opted to absorb the punishment and inflict as much damage as possible. The Erin Tear slammed its twin axes against the single axe wielded by the Bolvos Rage.

A small repeating plasma projector constantly sprayed the Erin Tear with hot matter, but its powerful armor did an admirable job of resisting the damage!

The Erin Tear quickly morphed its twin axes into a scythe that suddenly managed to hook onto the rear of the Bolvos Rage and carve out a chunk of its flight system!

The Bolvos Rage was not agile enough to keep up with the Erin Tear's movements! In his rage, Patriarch Reginald boldly instructed his expert mech to lean forward and hug the Erin Tear with its arms!

"Imaris! Do it now!"

The Conavis Mer had already recognized the opportunity beforehand and dove into the exposed rear of the Erin Tear without any hesitation!

However, before the light skirmisher could finish its attack run, the other two enemy expert mechs did not sit back!

The Imperial Verdict activated all of its boosters and overloaded its flight system at once, causing it to rocket forward under a very powerful impulse!

This forced the Conavis Mer to abort its attack run. If it did not alter its course, then it would collide head-on against an enemy mech at an unfavorable angle.

Yet this was what the Trost had been waiting for. The hybrid mech piloted by Kelvin Praetor had been biding its time. When the Conavis Mer was about to dodge exactly in the direction that Kelvin anticipated, his expert hybrid mech had come close enough to unleash a huge blast of flames from its wrists!

The Trost had been accumulating this attack for at least a dozen seconds! The flames it spurted out was not only hot enough to melt the weapon components just a few

seconds later, but was also amplified with as much will and true resonance that Kelvin was able to muster for a single attack!

He invested a lot of resources in this attempt. The Trost had concentrated the flames so that they managed to reach much further than normal while still maintaining enough power to threaten any expert mech!

Kelvin's gamble paid off. The concentrated flame blast successfully hit the Conavis Mer, inflicting heavy damage onto the lightly-armored expert mech!

"What?!"

Venerable Imaris Cross was utterly surprised that the Praetors had managed to predict his moves.

Even more astonishing was that the angle of the Trost meant that any attack that hit the Conavis Mer would also hit the Imperial Verdict. This was why Imaris was certain that the Trost would not attack the Conavis Mer at this instant.

Indeed, just as the Conavis Mer lost its critical flight system due to the flames, the Imperial Verdict was not that much better off either. The mech's surface had already started to melt, thereby ruining its previous valiant appearance.

Both mechs ejected their cockpits. Venerable Imaris and Venerable Albert had no choice!

"ALBERT!"

The Amphis launched its chainsword at the Trost and succeeded in landing a glancing blow on the hybrid mech. However, Venerable Kelvin Praetor was not concerned about the damage.

What he was actually worried about was the retaliation from the Bolvos Rage!

The more powerful hybrid mech was hugging the Erin Tear with its heavy limbs, preventing the weapon master mech from getting free!

"I won't let you win, Damira!" Reginald roared.

Even though the Bolvos Rage had lost its powerful chest projector, it still had other trump cards in store. An armor panel on the mech's crotch blasted away, exposing a hidden weapon port in a rather unconventional location!

A concentrated positron beam shot out from the underside of the Bolvos Rage and hit the lower waist of the Erin Tear!

Even though the attack was not that massive, the attack was continuous. The beam kept burning its way through the Erin Tear's exterior while also heating it up. Soon enough, the beam managed to reach into the internals and inflict major damage!

Venerable Damira Planat knew the situation was crucial. The Erin Tear lacked the leverage to free itself from the Bolvos Rage's embrace, so she didn't try to wrench her expert mech free.

Instead, it morphed its adaptable weapon into a drill-like implement before pressing the tip of it into the Bolvos Rage's rear at a tricky angle!

The powerful drill came to life and steadily dug its way into the Bolvos Rage until it approached the mech's power reactor.

The two expert mechs employed other weapon systems and tricks, but they both lost functionality at the same time.

"DAMNIT!" Patriarch Reginald slammed his fists against the consoles of the cockpit in his rage!

Venerable Damira Planat was similarly upset!

It was incredibly frustrating for them to be unable to finish the job and kill their respective opponents!

Chapter 2678: Sword of Lydia

The Bolvos Rage and the Erin Tear had mutually taken each other out of action!

Both of their expert pilots knew they couldn't proceed with their fight with their disabled expert mechs.

Their cockpits ejected from the backs of the two hugging machines at the same time!

The Trost attempted to shoot Patriarch Reginald's cockpit down by launching missiles from its shoulder mounts, but the Amphis quickly intercepted them before they reached their destination.

The hybrid mech piloted by Kelvin Praetor launched other attacks, but Reginald's cockpit was too fast and durable!

Venerable Linda Cross interfered as much as possible, causing Kelvin to lose the opportunity to kill the leader of the Cross Clan!

Only two expert mechs were left. The Trost and the Amphis squared off against each other for a moment.

A hybrid mech was generally weak against a space knight, and the rules weren't that much different at the expert mech level. Its ranged weapons lacked the punch needed to punch through the armor of a space knight.

While the Trost was armed with a short halberd that could accomplish what its other weapons could not, it was not as good as the Imperial Verdict up close.

In contrast, the Amphis was deadly at close range! Its unnaturally heavy blows and tricky chainsword moves made Kelvin reconsider his options.

He directed the sensors of expert mechs to the rest of the battlefield.

The Trost was unsuitable to fight against the Amphis. Why not direct its attention elsewhere?

Kelvin briefly considered intervening in the slow and grinding confrontation between the regular Crosser mech units and a group of obstinate defenders such as the Living Sentinels.

Yet the distance wasn't much. The Trost was considerably more mobile than the Amphis, but the difference in straight-line acceleration was actually not that drastic.

If Kelvin wanted to unleash the firepower of his expert mech without constraint, then he needed to increase the distance. The Amphis would have to take longer to catch up, giving the Trost plenty of time to unleash devastation!

The Trost suddenly rocketed to the ships of the expeditionary fleet. Venerable Kelvin had already spotted the advance of the Jeanne D'Arc and decided to link up with the sole surviving Fridayman expert mech.

As long as the Trost combined forces with the Jeanne D'Arc, they could easily gang up on the Amphis!

"Venerable Foster!" Kelvin quickly communicated to the distant expert mech. "Turn around and link up with my Trost!"

Unfortunately, Venerable Foster wasn't listening!

She had completely set her sights on her mission. As long as her Jeanne D'Arc was able to get past the measly reserves of the Larkinson Clan, she would be able to reach the Spirit of Bentheim!

Six other Fridayman expert mechs failed to make it this far. The Ulver Quinn, the Prava Lonestar as well as two additional expert mechs were already falling apart under the combined attacks of hundreds of enemy standard mechs.

She knew her peers wouldn't be able to last much longer!

The story would have been different if the Ulver Quinn and the other Fridayman expert mechs were still at their peak. Yet after depleting all of their ammunition, draining most of their energy reserves and resisting thousands of blows with their crumbling armor, they were only holding on through sheer grit and determination.

The four expert mechs were like flickering candles in the wind! It was only a matter of time before the numerous attacks finally collapsed their precious machines.

If they fought to preserve themselves, then they might be able to last a few extra minutes, but that was contrary to their purpose. Their goal was to stall the remaining expeditionary mechs as long as possible so that they wouldn't be able to catch up to the Jeanne D'Arc.

Venerable Foster briefly grew heavy as she realized how little time she had left. Her Jeanne D'Arc may be capable of regenerating its damage, but that took time and lots of energy.

Every second that passed, at least a dozen positron beams and gauss rounds impacted her expert mech!

It couldn't be helped. The mech had to reach the Spirit of Bentheim as quickly as possible, so Venerable Foster was unable to make too many evasive maneuvers. The Jeanne D'Arc had to reach the side of the factory ship before the enemies from behind caught up. Its durability was also nearing its end.

While Venerable Foster was heavily focused on reaching her goal, she was not unaware of the other events taking place on the battlefield.

Whether it was the fall of the Charlemagne or the urgent request issued by Venerable Kelvin Praetor, the Vesian expert pilot was aware of everything.

"I can't turn back!" She gritted her teeth.

Even though Task Force Umbra partnered up with the Praetor Clan and the Planat Clan, its goal was never to achieve a comprehensive victory. Their sole purpose was to kill the patriarch of the Larkinson Clan.

She could not give Ves anymore chances to run away or pull out another trick out of his bag! She had to grasp this hard-won opportunity and see it through the end. This was why she resolutely ignored every transmission that asked her to slow down or turn around.

"I don't have time!"

If she hesitated any further, then the Valkyrie Prime as well as other enemy mechs would probably be able to catch up and force her to a standstill.

The Jeanne D'Arc had no choice but to push through the storm of artillery fire without regard for surviving after this battle. The mech did its best to shield its vulnerable and critical sections as best as possible.

Aside from the enemy artillery mechs, her only concerns were the handful of Larkinson mechs that had remained in reserve. They served as the final backstop against enemies that sought to get close to the flagship of their fleet.

Venerable Foster did not think much of the remaining opposition.

The Bright Sword Prime was incomparable to a real expert mech.

The Princess Jeckas piloted by the Swordmaidens was an ordinary commercial second-class swordsman mech model.

The Shield of Samar was too slow and inflexible.

Perhaps the only mech that caused Venerable Foster some consternation was the rifleman mech huddling behind the Shield of Samar.

It had already fired a powerful energy attack before. That single attack managed to weaken an attack from the Charlemagne. This meant it had the power to threaten the Jeanne D'Arc, if only slightly.

"This rifleman mech shouldn't be able to fire too many supercharged shots. Otherwise, it wouldn't have bided its time. As long as you can block, evade or mitigate two or three shots, then you're probably in the clear." An analyst from the CRC aboard the Eager Condemnation personally instructed Venerable Foster.

"Understood." She nodded seriously. "I need as much ranged support as possible."

"We do not have enough available ranged mechs at our disposal, but we will redirect everything we have left to suppress the enemy bunker mechs. This will accelerate the downfall of our assets, so make the most out of this opportunity. Godspeed, Venerable Foster."

The artillery fire against the Jeanne D'Arc indeed slackened off, which made her feel a lot more relieved. She had much more confidence in her ability to reach the Spirit of Bentheim than before.

"Now, I only have to get past you lot."

Venerable Dise could sense her opponent's contempt. She grew furious!

"Relia Foster! I know it's you! We have waited years to avenge the deaths of Commander Lydia and our fellow Swordmaidens. Answer me and face the death that you deserve!"

Venerable Foster did not deign to reply or even pay attention to the bleating of her foes. They were just obstacles to her. She would have been worried if the Swordmaidens brought more mechs, but a single mech company of budget swordsman mechs was not enough to stop the advance of an expert mech!

The lack of response made the Swordmaidens more indignant! If the arrogant Vesian expert pilot did not wish to acknowledge their strength, then the Swordmaidens were more than willing to correct this misconception!

The veteran Swordmaiden mech pilots quickly cleared their minds and began to channel their thoughts towards Venerable Dise.

Meanwhile, the Bright Sword Prime began to glow even brighter. The furious will of Venerable Dise combined with the spiritual energy donated by Qilanxo resulted in an odd and marvellous combination that made the prime swordsman mech appear like a warrior beyond compare!

Not only that, but through the combined efforts of all of the Swordmaiden mech pilots, a battle formation came into being.

Another energy silhouette appeared into existence. Compared to the energy projection of the Superior Mother, the manifestation of the greatsword was not as big or impressive.

The Swordmaidens were few in number, and the heart of the network centered around a low-tier expert pilot without an expert mech.

Another reason why the battle formation was weaker than before was because Commander Dise was no longer able to induce forced resonance. She was no longer able to slaughter thousands of clumped-up opponents at a time.

Still, Venerable Dise would take what she would get. With the help of the prime resonance she had managed to induce, the illusionary greatsword's edges became surrounded by a sharp, blue-tinted corona.

The Swordmaiden expert pilot decided to finish this bout in a single go! She directly chose to implement the most impactful battle formation to make up for the regret of her past and slay her demons.

Everytime she dreamed about the battle on Aeon Corona VII, she was always haunted by the sight of the Belisarius withstanding every attack while slaughtering Swordmaiden mechs with impunity.

No more. Venerable Dise's eyes bore straight into the approaching Jeanne D'Arc as the battle formation accelerated forward.

Since both sides were closing in on each other, it didn't take much time before they reached each other!

"The Sword of Lydia shall pierce your heart!"

The projected greatsword drove its tip straight into the chest of the Jeanne D'Arc!

When Venerable Foster saw the strange formation and its illusion closing in, she already sensed a fatal threat to her life.

Her evaluation of the weak swordsman mechs had abruptly changed. Unlike Venerable Ghanso, she did not dare to take this upcoming attack lightly. The two previous examples had already served as a stark lesson.

The Jeanne D'Arc briefly attempted to alter its course in order to evade the incoming blow, but the approaching formation simply adjusted as well.

There wasn't any time left!

As the giant greatsword was about to slam its tip into the Jeanne D'Arc, Venerable Foster's concentration had reached a peak.

"HAAAAAH!"

At the last moment, the Jeanne D'Arc abruptly dodged to the right and above!

The boosters on the expert mech spiked and overloaded as they tried to push the strained expert mech aside as much as possible!

Even though Venerable Dise expected her opponent to make such a move, she wasn't able to predict the evasion direction.

By the time she saw that the Jeanne D'Arc had moved, it was too late for Dise to react! The battle formation was too inflexible to make such a sharp turn!

The giant greatsword passed the Jeanne D'Arc in an instant. The battle formation quickly collapsed as the Swordmaiden mech pilots had exhausted themselves in their attempts to empower the battle formation.

Venerable Dise's expression sank as the sensors of her mech observed her target.

The Jeanne D'Arc managed to survive!

Certainly, the mech was not in good shape anymore. The mech managed to avoid fatal damage to its torso, but the Sword of Lydia still managed to slice off its left arm and leg!

Not only that, but a portion of its flight system at that side was cut off as well. The Jeanne D'Arc had lost a modest amount of mobility, enough to give Venerable Dise some ideas!

The Bright Sword Prime quickly turned around and pounced towards the Jeanne D'Arc!

The Princess Jeckas piloted by the other Swordmaiden mech pilot followed from a distance. Since the commercial mechs weren't alive, their mech pilots weren't as exhausted as the Hexers who performed a similar feat.

They could still fight, if only reluctantly.

Soon enough, the Swordmaiden mechs surrounded the damaged Jeanne D'Arc, forming a cage to hinder Venerable Foster from escaping.

The Swordmaidens did not intend to leave the job unfinished!

The Bright Sword Prime squared off against the Jeanne D'Arc. Venerable Dise had not decided to pounce upon her opponent immediately. She knew how much power the opposing mech still had left.

What made her even warier was that the Fridayman expert mech still retained its sword!

Venerable Foster had deliberately dodged her mech to the right because her mech was gripping its weapon from that side as well.

Even if her Jeanne D'Arc lost its left arm and leg, it still retained much of its lethality!

"Will you take us seriously now?" Venerable Dise questioned.

"Hmph. I have no time to entertain filth like you. Either get out of my way or be squashed like the bugs you are. Once I am done with killing Ves, I will immediately hunt down your mothership and kill every single friend, family and comrade you have."

"YOU'LL NEVER HAVE THE CHANCE!"

The two swordman mechs immediately swung their swords at each other!

Chapter 2679: The Hunted

Missing a limb was not a fatal impediment to a mech.

In spaceborn combat, it was much more important to keep the flight system intact. As long as the mech was able to fly, it was often able to fight.

Yet as soon as the flight system mounted to the rear no longer worked, a mech could do little but drift in space on a ballistic course!

Of course, most spaceborn mechs possessed secondary thrusters and boosters that were situated elsewhere onto the frame.

While they represented weak points, they added a small but considerable amount of maneuvering capabilities to the mech. At the right times, they could mean the difference between life and death!

It was with the help of these secondary maneuvering systems that the Jeanne D'Arc managed to evade the Sword of Lydia generated by the Swordmaiden battle formation.

Yet the strange sword was still sharp enough to cut straight through two of its limbs, which Venerable Foster found completely absurd!

Even if the Jeanne D'Arc was not in its best shape, a small group of standard mechs should still be unable to cut off the limbs of the mechs.

That this happened at all was very abnormal and caused Venerable Foster to become a lot more vigilant.

The Larkinsons appeared to be very confident in their swordsman mechs. Their artillery mechs no longer directed their firepower at the Jeanne D'Arc.

The Swordmaidens insisted on finishing off Venerable Foster themselves.

For this reason, the remaining Transcendent Punishers directed their firepower towards the Trost. The surviving Garlaner expert mech presented a much greater threat to the expeditionary fleet!

The previous clash between expert mechs had not consumed the Trost too much. The expert hybrid mech's armor integrity, ammunition levels and energy reserves were still in good shape.

Due to its greater power, stronger expert pilot and considerably greater destructive potential, the Trost had to be taken out before it managed to reach the Jeanne D'Arc!

At this moment, the Jeanne D'Arc fought back hard against the prime mech. Even if it had lost a substantial amount of strength and maneuverability, an expert mech was still a force to be reckoned with no matter its condition.

The expert mech was physically stronger and still possessed an edge in mobility.

As Venerable Dise quickly discovered, the force of a serious swing was already strong enough to overpower the guard of her weaker mech. In the first few exchanges of blows, the Jeanne D'Arc already managed to slam its sword against the shoulder of the Bright Sword Prime!

Unexpectedly, the Venerable Foster's powerful attack failed to slice through the shoulder and impair the sword arm of her opponent.

Just like almost every prime mech, the Bright Sword Prime was almost fully covered by Unending alloy. The Jeanne D'Arc may be able to slice a Princess Jecka in half, but its strength was not enough to dent Unending alloy!

Her attack merely bounced away the Bright Sword Prime, teaching Venerable Dise a profound lesson on the gulf between the strengths of the two mechs.

The former Swordmaiden Commander did not dare to tarry any longer. Though she wanted nothing more than to fight Venerable Foster in a sacred duel, she could not afford to underestimate an expert mech.

Besides, the greater battle was not yet won. The Trost could still do a lot of damage as long as it managed to outpace the slower Amphis.

"Commander Sendra!" She called her successor.

"Our blades are ready."

"Harass Venerable Foster's mech. Threaten its back and attack its flight system whenever possible. Don't take any risks. We will not give this woman the satisfaction of killing another Swordmaiden today. Just use your numbers to your advantage in order to constrain her actions."

"We understand." Commander Sendra grinned as she quickly passed on some instructions. "Let's wear her down just like we tackle the most dangerous exobeasts."

The duel had turned into a hunt. The Jeanne D'Arc may still be a vastly superior battle machine, but it was injured and all on its own! The Swordmaidens did not believe they would fail this challenge!

The Swordmaiden mechs attacked the Jeanne D'Arc with great coordination. The Bright Sword Prime still faced the damaged expert mech, but Venerable Dise no longer dared to engage into any contests of strengths.

Instead, the Bright Sword Prime became more elusive. It danced at the edge of the Jeanne D'Arc's range and used the extended reach of its greatsword to launch cautious but safe attacks.

"You craven rats!" Venerable Foster cursed as she came under heavy pressure all of sudden.

If the Jeanne D'Arc was facing the Bright Sword Prime alone, then she was confident she could destroy opponent within a minute!

However, the weak swordsman mechs that her expert mech should have been able to squash with ease were constantly targeting the flight system of her mech.

Naturally, the flight system of an expert mech like the Jeanne D'Arc was a lot more condensed and harder to destroy. It took more than a couple of hits to cripple the mobility of a powerful machine.

Yet the constant attacks added up. Despite Venerable Foster's skill, it was too difficult for her to fend off the Bright Sword Prime while at the same time defend against multiple attacks from the rear.

What was even worse was that some of the swordsman mechs had the gall to attack the amputated sections of the Jeanne D'Arc! The insides weren't as durable as the exterior and could easily sustain greater damage that further slowed the mech down.

"Fight me like a warrior!" Venerable Foster roared as her indomitable will spiked further!

A resonance shield briefly reformed around the Jeanne D'Arc, but it only lasted for a few seconds before a handful of Swordmaiden mechs successively attacked the bubble and forced it to pop!

Another wave of swordsman mechs swooped in from another angle and struck the rear of the expert mech.

The attackers did not dare to fly too close. Many of their greatswords missed the mark or bounced off the rear armor of the Jeanne D'Arc.

However, one lucky Swordmaiden mech pilot managed to score her blade over a small component that caused the Jeanne D'Arc to lose even more maneuvering power!

Venerable Foster gained more confidence as her prime mech cleverly evaded the swings of the opposing mech before attempting to cut off the Jeanne D'Arc wrist.

The attempt failed, but it kept the expert mech busy and opened it up to even more attacks from the rear!

No matter how many times Venerable Foster turned around her mech to attack the other Swordmaiden mechs, her opponents were too sharp and cautious. They instantly turned away as soon as the Jeanne D'Arc began moving.

This was an incredibly frustrating situation! Foster became more and more frustrated by her inability to pass through a blockade of weaker mechs.

She gradually realized what her opponents were doing. The Jeanne D'Arc was dying by a thousand cuts. The enemy swordsman mechs actually weren't that impressive, but their mech pilots were very skilled at dismantling a vastly powerful enemy.

"I need to break this game." Foster realized.

The Jeanne D'Arc no longer followed the rhythm of its opponents. It completely ignored the attacks of the Princess Jeckas and instead focused its sights on the Bright Sword Prime.

As long as the ringleader mech was taken out of the equation, the Jeanne D'Arc could easily wipe out the rest!

"I'll take you down first!"

"Don't think about it, Foster!"

The Jeanne D'Arc truly pressured the Bright Sword Prime at this time! Venerable Foster's unrelenting aggression forced Venerable Dise to employ as much skill as possible to evade or mitigate the incoming attacks.

Due to the inferiority of her prime mech, Venerable Dise simply couldn't avoid every blow. She tried her best to redirect the attacks towards its chest, shoulders and other areas covered with Unending alloy.

Of course, Venerable Foster knew she couldn't penetrate the absurdly resilient armor plating. She tried her best to land her attacks on the joints and other weak points that couldn't be entirely covered by Unending alloy.

In order to land a meaningful attack, Foster decided she needed to be even more aggressive and decided to trade blow for blow, assured that the frontal armor of the Jeanne D'Arc was able to fend off a direct attack from her current opponent!

Venerable Dise had actually been biding her time. When she recognized Venerable Foster's intention, she saw a golden opportunity!

"This strike is for Lydia!"

The two mechs struck each other at the same time!

The Jeanne D'Arc was the first mech in history to fell a prime mech. Its sword had stabbed straight through the axilla or the 'armpit' of the Bright Sword Prime.

Due to the necessity of making the arms of a swordsman mech flexible, the axilla area was protected by moving plates.

The Jeanne D'Arc's sharp and powerful sword managed to slip through these plates and overpower the imperfect layers of protection underneath. The weapon managed to damage the power reactor to such an extent that the prime mech forcibly shut down!

Unfortunately, the expert mech did not come out of this exchange unscathed.

An instant before the Bright Sword Prime thrust its sword into one of the damaged sections of the Jeanne D'Arc, Venerable Foster's instincts screamed.

She sensed a huge threat from the incoming greatsword!

What she wasn't aware of was that Ves had made the weapon out of Unending alloy shortly before the Battle against the Abyss. Not only that, but he had also filled it up with Qilanxo's spiritual energy.

At the decisive moment, Venerable Dize no longer held back and resonated with the blade! The stab dedicated to Commander Lydia glowed with blue and amazingly penetrated right through the enemy expert mech's chest!

The unnaturally sharp greatsword pierced through armor that had managed to withstand thousands of other attacks and still remained largely intact. Aside from getting marked by surface damage, the Jeanne D'Arc should have been able to block or bounce the incoming attack even if Venerable Foster failed to angle her machine away!

Unlike Venerable Ghanso, Relia Foster had no time to express her regret.

Venerable Dize expressly targeted the cockpit from the start. Her gambit succeed and the greatsword of her mech managed to pierce through the cockpit, inflicting until damage onto its occupant!

The surrounding swordsman mechs stilled. Their sensors already sensed the Jeanne D'Arc powering off. The fight was over.

"We succeeded..." A Swordmaiden whispered.

"Commander Lydia has been avenged."

Bits of frozen blood had already leaked out of the cavity from the front of the broken expert mech as soon as it was exposed to vacuum. There was no surviving from getting hit by a giant, mech-sized sword.

Even as the veteran Swordmaiden mech pilots reminisced about the past, the battle was actually not yet over.

The Trost along with around a thousand Praetor and Planat mechs were still in the fight!

Venerable Kelvin Praetor actually only needed less than a minute to link up with the Jeanne D'Arc. With the weapon systems of his hybrid mech, he could have easily wiped out the swordsman mechs with much greater efficiency.

Unfortunately, he came too late.

"Damnable woman!"

With the Amphis right on the Trost's heels, Kelvin was faced with a very difficult decision. What should he do? The Trost couldn't turn back. The Amphis along with the mechs that had won the battle at the left side at great cost would soon block its escape route.

"We can no longer achieve victory." He realized.

Even now, Task Force Umbra and the starships of the Praetor Clan and Planat Clan were already turning away in order to distance themselves from the soon-to-be-victorious Larkinsons, Glory Seekers and Crossers.

This was no longer a matter of winning a battle! At this time, the Praetors and Planats who had been roped into taking part in this disastrous ambush needed to preserve as many lives and assets as possible.

They did not want to go down to the last man! Even if it was slightly dishonorable to flee the battlefield, their two clans could not afford to lose so many combat assets.

"Venerable Kelvin Praetor!" A commanding officer directly contacted the expert pilot. "The Soaring Eagle, the Vindicator 35 and the Palmis Crislin must not fall into enemy hands. We do not have the resources to rescue you back while at the same time safeguarding our crucial fleet carriers and combat carriers."

"What is your request?"

"...We have ascertained that our opponents highly value the Spirit of Bentheim. I would like you to do your best to complete the goal the Fridaymen have been trying so hard to achieve. Attack their factory ship. Do as much damage to this vessel as possible. Find and kill Patriarch Ves Larkinson if you can. Whether you succeed or fail, it is all worth it. The more distress you cause, the more our opponents will seek to tighten their defenses, leaving them with less opportunities to chase after our fleet."

"I shall keep the enemy busy as best I can." Kelvin replied in a heavy tone. "Must I truly seek to kill their leader?"

"It's the only way for us to recoup our losses from this disastrous battle. Our clan has signed a secret agreement that compels the Friday Coalition to transfer a heavy sum of money and a substantial amount of strategic materials as long as we have materially contributed to Ves Larkinson's death."

"Understood. We will not let our opponents have the last laugh!"

The powerful Praetor expert mech decisively advanced towards the Spirit of Bentheim, which startled the defenders!

The Trost bypassed the Swordmaiden mechs, not that the latter could put up any fight at this point.

The Bright Sword Prime was out of action.

The other prime mechs were too far away and had wasted too much time trying to defeat the Ulver Quinn and the other stalling expert mechs.

The slower Amphis needed too much time to catch up to the Trost.

Venerable Kelvin suddenly discovered there were very few opponents left in his way!

Sure, the enemy artillery mechs were constantly bombarding the Trost. However, their firing rate at this stage of the battle had slowed down considerably. While their attacks were still heavy, the Trost was a medium-tier expert mech that was designed to survive constant warfare in Vicious Mountain!

The Trost's condition was still fairly good. The Crosser expert mechs had dismissed its threat and focused their attacks elsewhere, leaving Venerable Kelvin with an almost intact expert mech!

"Hahaha!" The expert pilot laughed as his Trost easily withstood the rain of fire from the enemy artillery mechs. "I'll crush all of your ships!"

The Spirit of Bentheim had too few defenders remaining to block the Trost's approach!

Chapter 2680: Final Defense Line

After a long and harrowing battle, victory was in sight!

Aboard all of the ships of the expeditionary fleet, every member of the Larkinson Clan, the Glory Seekers and the Cross Clan felt jubilant at what they accomplished.

Their combined forces accomplished a legendary feat!

They fought against a force that comprised entirely of military mech pilots and gained the upper hand. The Friday Coalition even fielded some of their best elites to no avail!

Yet before the Golden Skull Alliance could celebrate their first official victory in combat, the enemy still had one card left to play.

A single surviving expert mech was racing towards the Spirit of Bentheim as fast as possible!

The entire Larkinson Clan trembled in fear as they realized what was happening.

"No!"

"The enemy wants to spite us! Damn these barbaric Vicious Mountainers!"

No vessel ever wanted to be approached by a hostile mech. It didn't matter what mech type it was or how much it cost. As long as the mech managed to fly right next to a starship, then they could easily employ several ways to damage, cripple or doom the ship entirely.

This was especially the case for expert mechs. Their destructive potential was at least an order of magnitude above regular mechs and they were extremely difficult to fend off due to their excellent defenses.

What concerned people like Ves the most was that artillery mechs mostly became invalid when a hostile mech came close.

Most of the surviving bunker mechs on the Spirit of Bentheim wouldn't even have a good angle to shoot at a target that stuck close to a hull.

In fact, a considerable number of bunkers would likely be situated on the opposite side of the ship, thereby rendering them completely useless!

"I should have acquired more missile mechs!" Ves cursed as he tried to rein in his panic when he saw the Trost flying closer.

"Stop it! Our families are aboard the Spirit of Bentheim!"

This was bad. Before the start of the battle, the Larkinson Clan preemptively moved every civilian and non-essential crew member aboard the sub-capital ships to the Spirit of Bentheim.

The factory ship was by far the toughest and most defensible ship of the Larkinson Clan.

The decision made a lot of sense. The Larkinson Clan had lost around a dozen combat carriers from enemy bombardment. While most of their crews were able to evacuate in time, casualties were unavoidable.

If those vessels were still occupied by family and an excess of personnel, then the casualty figures would have risen by a couple of thousand.

However, now this decision might easily kill over half of the members of the Larkinson Clan at once if the Trost was able to finish the deed!

Ves quickly turned to Captain Vraken, who was urgently trying to button down the capital ship she commanded as much as possible.

Shield generators were ready to be overloaded.

Peripheral compartments were being evacuated and filled with ballistic foam in order to form additional barriers.

Damage control teams were being moved around to critical sections.

Maneuvering and orientation thrusters were trying to put the Spirit of Bentheim into the fastest spin it could manage in a short time.

If Ves patched into a feed that looked out of the side of his flagship, then he probably would have become dizzy pretty quickly. It was not easy for someone to keep their bearings when the ship they were on was rolling like a drill!

However, this was the only way to make it more difficult for the Trost to reach the side of a ship and attack a single point in order to excavate a hole through the hull.

"This isn't enough!" Captain Vraken concluded. "Our bow and sterns are still easy targets."

The only way to fix this was to spin the ship like a thrown axe. Soon enough, powerful thrusters came to life which caused the Spirit of Bentheim's nose to dive down while lifting her rear end upwards.

Through precise calculations, the thrusters activated when they reached the right orientation and deactivated when the angle was no longer right.

Anyone looking out of the ship would quickly become dizzy regardless where they stood!

"Deactivate the forward view!"

The panorama in front of the bridge had become so disorientating that it had to be shut down. The projections that simulated the front view instantly disappeared. In place of that, Captain Vraken summoned a giant map of the immediate area around the Spirit of Bentheim.

The tumbling and rolling representation of the Spirit of Bentheim attracted a lot of attention. It looked as if the helmsman had become completely drunk and started to take the capital ship on a chaotic joyride.

Even though the flagship of the Larkinson Clan looked as if it had gone completely out of control, in fact the grand captain, the engineers, the helmsmen and every other relevant professional completely had everything under control.

"This will buy a lot of time for us, but we cannot guarantee that the hostile expert mech possesses a means to penetrate the hull regardless of our measures."

You couldn't tell with expert mechs. Even though the Trost was a hybrid mech that didn't seem to possess any weapons that could quickly tear a hole in the hull of a capital ship, who knew what siege weapons it carried.

The Trost was not a basic expert mech. It was a fully-fledged mid-tier expert mech that was only a notch below the Bolvar Rage and the Erin Tear in quality and destructive potential!

Combined with a mature Garlaner expert pilot who possessed ample battle experience, neither Ves nor any other Larkinson dared to underestimate the Trost.

Ves, Gloriana and every other mech designer in the fleet urgently analyzed the current condition of the rapidly-approaching expert mech.

While the Valkyrie Prime was too far away to lend its Odineye, the expeditionary fleet already collected a wealth of data on the Praetor expert mech.

It had just come away from an intensive clash where it had fought and displayed a myriad of weapon systems against the Crosser expert mechs.

Ves rapidly accessed the footage through his implant and skimmed through the footage in order to get a quick impression of the expert mech in question.

"This mech is not damaged enough!" Ves banged his fist against the armrest.

This was bad. An expert mech without an armor breach somewhere was basically a closed shell. It took a lot of power and effort to overcome its armor. This was the first step to defeating any expert mech.

Yet this hurdle was also the most difficult and time-consuming step!

The Transcendent Punishers had already pounded the Trost with a continuous barrage of positron beams and gauss rounds. In fact, as the hybrid mech came closer, the artillery mechs even activated their secondary armaments, not that it did any good except to create extra heat. The weak rapid-fire pulse cannons did nothing except to splat against the exterior of the Trost like rain hitting an umbrella.

Ves made some quick calculations. According to his estimates, it would take at least 10 minutes of continuous bombardment to breach the exterior of the Trost!

This was way too much time!

"Gloriana!" Ves called out to his wife.

"I'm already on it! Don't disturb me!" She replied as she was directly processing a lot of observation data through her implant. "Right now, I haven't spotted any major vulnerabilities. In my judgement, it's too difficult to neutralize the threat by destroying it. The best way to handle an expert mech like the Trost is to impair its mobility! As long as we strip it of its flight system, it can't do much against our ship. The Amphis will be able to catch up to it and finish the job."

She was right! The Amphis was still trying to close in on the Trost. Unfortunately, the friendly expert space knight was just too damned slow!

"What assets do we have left to stall or block the Trost?!"

Precious few mechs were left. In fact, putting the Spirit of Bentheim in a complex rotation also made it more difficult for her bunker mechs to attack the Trost. The Transcendent Punishers couldn't adjust the aim of their heavy cannons fast enough to keep up with the change in angles.

The only way for them to hit their target was to keep their heavy cannons pointed at a single predetermined direction and fire the instant the Spirit of Bentheim's rotation happened to align their guns to the Trost.

Fortunately, many of the surrounding combat carriers also carried bunker mechs, but the drop in firepower was still noticeable.

"Artillery alone isn't enough." Ves already concluded.

He really wished he completed his Giant Killer design and fabricated a couple of hundred copies. The mech's penetrative cannons were much better suited to damage expert mechs and other ultra-armored targets.

"In fact, the Giant Killers don't have the firepower to threaten the Trost either." Ves muttered.

While the armor of the incoming hybrid mech was not as strong as Unending alloy, it was still leagues better than Breyer alloy. This was exactly what made expert mechs so difficult to defeat by ordinary forces. It was not a surprise that Gloriana suggested that they should target the Trost's flight system.

The expert mech essentially possessed no other weak points at this time!

Ves glanced to Major Verle. The military leader of the Larkinson Clan looked incredibly grave.

"I'm sure you already know that the Swordmaidens are spent." He quietly said. "Our best hope of defeating the Trost is to pit it against the Amphis and the Bright Sword Prime. However, the former is too slow and the latter is too weak against this remaining threat. Our other prime mechs are on their way but it will take even longer for them to reach our side. The Piranha Prime will arrive first, but I'm afraid it doesn't have the damage potential to harm a tough mech like the Trost."

That was his judgement as well. The Ferocious Piranha was fast, light and possessed an extremely effective glow. However, Ves already knew for certain that its thick and unbearable glow posed no threat to other expert pilots.

More reinforcements were on their way, but the mechs that had remained intact up until now were pretty much spent. Their conditions were poor and their mech pilots were almost on the verge of exhaustion. Pitting them against the Trost would likely result in another slaughter!

As Ves studied the overview, he found to his sinking regret that the final line of defense only consisted of three mechs.

The Bright Beam Prime.

The Shield of Samar.

And surprisingly... an obsolete third-class mech that Ves had already forgotten about.

After automatically writing off the latter, Ves focused on the two prime mechs.

While Ves was very impressed by the power of the Bright Beam Prime, he already calculated that its full-powered shot was unable to penetrate the frontal armor of the Trost.

In fact, Venerable Davia wouldn't even be able to pierce the rear of the Trost either! Only the most vulnerable sections of its flight system were weak enough, but it was exceedingly difficult to land a hit on them while the mech in question was moving.

The Bright Beam Prime had already shown what it was capable of, so the Trost would certainly not be stupid enough to expose its rear to the rifleman mech!

Another mech had to confront the Trost in order to stop it in its tracks and create opportunities for Venerable Davia to land a hit on its flight system.

That role should be taken by the Shield of Samar, but the mech was vastly slower than the Amphis! The Trost could just take a detour around the sluggish prime mech!

Already the Trost was arcing around the Shield of Samar. Its expert pilot did not waste any time on trying to take the defensive mech.

Perhaps the only consolation was that the Trost wasn't able to attack the Bright Beam Prime either. It already tried to shoot at the rifleman mech once, but Venerable Jannzi had already moved its heavy shield to block the attack.

"Damn! It's getting close!"

As the Trost came close, it was still under constant bombardment, but the mech still didn't pay any notice. Instead, it pointed the tip of its short halberd in the direction of the Shield of Samar and looked as if it was about to charge into its rotating target!