

Mech 3471

Chapter 3471: Company Man

The final winner of the tournament turned out to be another familiar name to Ves.

[And the first place winner is... Mr. Erebien Seinlin! Despite a reluctant first win against the Pontifical Lance, the Dominant has ultimately proven its name right by utterly crushing its next two opponents!]

The entire audience cheered the loudest after they pretty much already knew who would win after revealing the second place winner.

There was only one missing name left, after all. Despite this little detail, the crowd still conveyed their great appreciation towards the mech designer that justifiably took first place!

Ves already had a feeling that Seinlin would take the top spot. Even if the Pontifical Lance had made the Dominant's life difficult during the first round of the fighting phase, this slightly embarrassing win ultimately didn't matter to the other Journeyman.

The Dominant achieved excellent scores by leveraging its defenses and mobility to such a degree that the subsequent two opponents simply stood no chance of winning. The ease in which the offensive knight mech demolished its opposition did wonders in maximizing its scores.

In comparison, the Pontifical Lance was a bit worse off in scoring terms.

The lancer mech achieved its most one-sided victory against the Lighthouse Keeper, which was a middling performer in the tournament.

Though the quick and easy victory undoubtedly showcased the Pontifical Lance's strength, the mediocre strength of its opponent did not provide a significant score bonus.

The Pontifical Lance's match against the Phazeon was a different matter. The Phazeon was a much more powerful opponent, and winning against it awarded a much greater score bonus.

The fact that a lancer mech managed to vanquish a light mech also played in the former's favor. Everyone expected the Pontifical Lance was expected to lose against its natural counter, but the mech somehow pulled through and defied everyone's expectations.

This was probably the single biggest contributor to propelling Ves all the way to third place.

The main reason why he hadn't climbed higher was because the Pontifical Lance clearly struggled to win its third bout. It had to perform extremely well to the point of relying on several 'miracles' in order to defeat its opponent!

While the scoring system did take into account that the Pontifical Lance was at a disadvantage, ultimately this point was also a significant part of the scoring formula.

In the end, Ereben Seinlin received the ultimate honor of winning the High Tide Tournament. His Dominant showed a great amount of excellence in its two best matches and no one disputed that he deserved to stand on top of the others.

Though Ves felt as if he missed an opportunity, he should be glad he managed to climb over 90 different Journeymen including several impressive figures from the galactic center to claim third place!

He did not waste his time here. Even though a part of him found it pathetic that all of the efforts only yielded a single second-class combat carrier, the worth of this ship was much greater in the Red Ocean than back at home.

"The combat carriers built in this region are also considerably better than the ones I'm used to back home." Ves reminded himself.

This was not a cheap vessel produced by a dinky private shipyard in a backwater state. It was an ultramodern starship that was produced in one of the early but hypermodern shipyards that had already set up shop in the Red Ocean!

Since everyone in the venue already stayed up for almost an entire day, no one was in the mood for drawn-out award ceremonies.

Nothing much happened after unveiling the ultimate winner. Ereben Seinlin briefly addressed the crowd before he accepted his impressive trophy.

As for Ves, he had to make due with receiving a small bronze cup that commemorated his third-place finish in the High Tide Tournament.

"What a crappy product."

Hysphalin Industries didn't even bother to put any effort into fabricating this trophy. Ves knew enough about craftsmanship to know that this was just a cheap, 3D-printed product that incorporated a number of randomized and completely uncoordinated design elements in order to avoid making it identical to other trophies.

Still, Ves didn't set out to sacrifice an entire day and display his design abilities to the public just to win a generic cup.

Winning third place provided him with two important gains.

Ves already experienced a substantial increase in reputation. Though few knew about his status as a clan patriarch, he had already made a name for himself as a Journeyman.

Sure, not a lot of people in the Red Ocean paid attention to short, generic competitions like the High Tide Tournament, but introducing himself properly to the audience was a good start.

All of the people in the stands would come away with an excellent impression of Ves and his work. They might talk about what they witnessed to others, which would further spread his name to Red Ocean mech community.

The explosive and dramatic performance of the Pontifical Lance might have already created Ves his first customers in the dwarf galaxy!

"It's too bad I didn't get first place." Ves sighed again as his mood temporarily dropped.

Winning the bronze cup was good, but his reputation didn't even come close to that of Ereben Seinlin!

Out of every participant, only one person managed to beat them all, and it was a given that Mr. Seinlin gained a massive reputation boost! He was the champion of a legitimate tournament and that counted for something in the new frontier.

With this title alone, Mr. Seinlin could easily gain the attention of powerful people and organizations and convert his status into actual benefits.

"He also won 5 combat carriers!"

The prize pool of the one-day tournament was quite top-heavy compared to other competitions. Fourth place and lower basically received trinkets compared to what the top 3 obtained.

Even then, the first-place winner received five times as much as the third-place winner!

It frustrated Ves a lot that such a tiny difference resulted in a massive gap in rewards.

One combat carrier wasn't enough to solve the critical shortage of sub-capital starships in the Larkinson Clan!

"These goddamn rules are so convoluted." Ves muttered.

He decided not to enter any more tournaments that determined the winners and losers through a complex mathematical formula. It was almost completely opaque and not intuitive in the slightest.

"Well, it's a good thing the next tournament I signed up for has a simple single elimination bracket."

The margin for error in that duo design tournament was much smaller, though. If any team of mech designers wanted to reach the top, their mechs could not afford to lose even once!

If the High Tide Tournament followed a similar format, then Ves could have likely been eliminated from the beginning after losing against Seinlin and his Dominant.

"Well, that doesn't sound so good either."

Ves broke out of his musings after the main show had finally ended. Gregory Haloscar approached him one last time.

Surprisingly, the older man and mech pilot leaned in to embrace Ves into a bearhug!

"Thank you, Mr. Larkinson. I never imagined that I would be able to get all the way up to third place this time." Gregory happily said. "With how well I fought against the three mechs, I'm bound to climb higher this time. Of course, most of the credit of my success belongs to you. Your mech did a lot more work than anyone realizes."

"I know. You don't have to feel guilty about it." Ves said as he patted the man's back before the two separated again. "The goal of the mech is to be of service to mech pilots such as yourself. Seeing you succeed is its greatest pleasure. Trust me on that, Mr. Haloscar."

The mech pilot turned around and stared at the dormant mech in front of them. It still managed to stand out amidst the rows of other competition mechs.

"I really want to pilot this mech more often, but..."

"It's a competition mech, not a proper combat machine. It's been designed to fulfill a specific purpose and has done so. It should not be piloted a fourth time or a fifth time. I can't guarantee your safety or the safety of any other mech pilot if you go against my recommendations."

"Ah, I have no chance to do that, sir. It is company policy to leave these mechs alone. We are no strangers to mechs that are designed to fight only a couple of matches before they have already degraded to the point where they become deattraps. I just..."

"You want to keep piloting living mechs, is that right?" Ves grinned.

"It seems I cannot hide that from you, Mr. Larkinson."

"My products have this effect on people like you. Piloting a living mech is truly a step up from piloting the cold and lifeless machines designed by my competitors. I have managed to win over millions of customers back in the old galaxy and I intend to exceed those numbers in this new frontier."

"I will put in a good word for you in the company, though don't expect much from me. I'm just a security employee."

"I know. I think many of the people in the audience will be able to do that, so don't worry about it. I hope that Hysphalin Industries will one day see the advantages of my products and replace its current lineup with living mechs."

"I hope that will happen one day." Gregory sighed. "To be honest, I... want to become a part of your clan. I've already looked it up on the galactic net and everything I've read so far makes me envious of all of those pilots who are able to make use of your work on a daily basis."

"Our clan is always open to new recruits."

"If I can apply to join your clan right now, I would have done so already. As it is..." The mech pilot's expression drooped.

"You're stuck with your current employer, correct?"

"Yes. I'm grateful that Hysphalin Industries brought me to the Red Ocean. It has allowed me to pilot entirely different mechs such as yours, but it has also locked me to the company for the rest of my life barring exceptional circumstances."

This was a standard arrangement for many employees that had been brought into the Red Ocean. Though it stank of slavery, it was actually okay as long as the employers took good care of their workers.

Still, if the Big Two bothered to properly enforce all of its rules, all of those dwarves in human space wouldn't have built up so many grievances about their ill treatment!

Ves chatted with Gregory Haloscar a few more minutes before they both had to go. Ves had to leave the venue so that it could be readied for another tournament. Gregory and the other mech pilots had to go back to their regular postings.

After bidding farewell to the mech pilot who had helped him win third place, Ves happily reunited with his honor guard and the Larkinson seeds before heading out. Different from many other contestants, an attendant from Hysphalin Industries invited him to move to a different part of Chance Bay where his biggest prize awaited.

"Wow. So this is the ship you managed to win." Maikel said as he and the rest of the group floated above a field of parked starships.

One of them was an uncoated combat carrier that was large enough to host 60 mechs.

Ves had learned that while combat carriers with a capacity of 40 mechs were standard in the galactic rim, it was a lot more common to see larger vessels in the more prosperous parts of the Milky Way.

Since the Red Ocean attracted a lot of money and also suffered from a shortage of carrier vessels, combat carriers that were capable of holding 60 combat-ready mechs were regarded as the minimum standard!

As a result, the prize that Ves had managed to win was actually a low-tier combat carrier as far as the people in the Red Ocean were concerned.

Ves didn't feel too bothered by that. A combat carrier was a combat carrier. Obtaining just one of them was a good start to his stay in the new frontier.

"The Solstice Runner shall be the first of many Red Ocean starships in my fleet!"

Chapter 3472: Beginning of the G-Aena League

While Ves toured the latest starship to join his fleet, another group of Larkinsons were readying themselves for their first big public display of might in the Red Ocean.

The G-Aena League was a much more massive affair than the High Tide Tournament!

The latter was a small-scale affair that was mainly organized by a single company and lasted only a single day. Mech design tournaments centered around Journeymen also weren't as significant as those where Seniors and Masters displayed their formidable prowess.

In the same way, most single mech tournaments generally didn't attract too much attention either. While they were cheaper and easier to organize, the entertainment market was flooded with countless different tournaments that simply pitted a single mech against another mech.

What truly got people's blood pumping was seeing armies of mechs colliding against each other!

Humans generally feared war, but loved to witness the action at a safe distance. Large group mech battles might not be as real as actual warfare, but they were still thrilling enough to satisfy the same urges!

On the opening day of the G-Aena League, the huge Fortas Major Arena had been transformed into a massive parade ground.

Sixteen different battalions dispatched by various pioneering organizations introduced themselves in front of a crowd of tens of millions of fans and hundreds of millions of remote spectators from both the Red Ocean and the Milky Way!

The sheer amount of people viewing this massive competition was completely unlike anything the Larkinsons had experienced!

If not for the fact that they trained and rehearsed their public performances, the Larkinson mech pilots taking part in the parade would have collapsed from stage fright by now! Just because their clan patriarch was good at playing to the crowd didn't mean these clansmen could keep their cool.

Just a single mistake during the parade could cause the Larkinson Clan to become a laughingstock in two different galaxies!

"We can do it, men." Commander Casella Ingvar addressed the mech pilots that were about to show up in front of the enormous audience. "We have fought against pirates and military forces. We fought and survived an encounter with a powerful ace mech. How can these threats possibly compare to a distant crowd? Remember your training and focus on your mech. We're only walking around in a circle. Nothing more."

Certain mech pilots needed more encouragement than others. While the Avatars and Vandals still tried to repress their nervousness, the Swordmaidens, Penitent Sisters and Ylvainans displayed no doubts.

Casella quietly shook her head. There were still too many differences between the mech legions. Mental fortitude was an important quality and it appears that the latter three groups were significantly ahead in this aspect.

Though the Avatars and Vandals obviously needed to work on this area, she knew that her Sentinels fared even worse. Once this tournament was over, she intended to go back to her mech legion and find ways to address this shortcoming.

As the loud and dramatic media personalities continued to hype up the audience of the G-Aena League, the time had finally come for the mech battalions to hold their short but important parades!

Five different battalions went ahead and moved onto the massive open field of Fortas Major Arena. A diverse array of mechs bearing different colors, markings, mech types and symbols moved forward in neat, perfect columns.

Each of them were dispatched by pioneers that came from different parts of the old galaxy. Two came from the galactic center, 5 came from the galactic heartland and 9 came from the galactic rim.

Clearly, pioneers who originated from the more prosperous parts of the old galaxy possessed less of a desire to take part in this spectacle.

Although the publicity was nice and the prize pool looked juicy, anything could happen in these chaotic battles. There were plenty of incidents where ugly defeats or embarrassing displays dealt considerable reputational damage.

What made large-scale group mech combat tournaments so special was that the emphasis laid on the collective rather than the individual.

In solo tournaments, a floundering mech pilot who got knocked out in the first round mostly bore the blame for his bad showing.

In group tournaments, more emphasis was placed on the organization the mech pilots hailed from. In a huge tournament like the G-Aena League, the hundreds of mech pilots were largely anonymous faces to the audience.

It was a lot easier for people to regard them as extensions of a larger group!

This was why only 16 battalions ultimately applied to take part in the G-Aena League. A lot more pioneers could have submitted their own forces to the roster but balked at the risks.

The richer and more well-connected pioneers had better channels to complete their objectives. Only the more desperate and fame-hungry pioneers accepted the opportunity to perform in events like these.

"You're up, Larkinsons!"

Commander Casella Ingvar transmitted a simultaneous command to all of the mechs. Each of them began to step out of the large waiting hall and entered the main field of the arena that they would soon fight their first arena battle.

The scale of the arena was enormous and unlike anything the Larkinsons had seen before. A hundred cubic kilometers offered plenty of space for a thousand mechs to maneuver against each other. Combined with the advanced terrain transformation features, the arena could prepare any possible battlefield for the combatants!

As the column of Bright Warriors, Ferocious Piranhas, Valkyrie Redeemers and other machines entered everyone's vision, the Larkinsons attracted a lot more attention than the other tournament participants!

[What are those mechs and why are they so special?!] A layman commentator asked.

[The sixth battalion of the G-Aena League consists of mechs and mech pilots dispatched by the Larkinson Clan. Though the clan is new, it is led by a unique

Journeyman Mech Designer with several accomplishments to his name. The mechs you see before you are the household machines of the clan. Each of them are so-called living mechs, which have become popular in the Larkinson Clan's home market.]

[Living mechs are noted for their excellent responsiveness and piloting comfort. They are also distinguished by their ability to influence the minds of mech pilots via their 'glows', which can best be described as auras that project in fields around the individual mechs. The reason why the Larkinson Battalion is attracting your attention so much is due to the concentration and overlapping effects of all of the glows projected by the Larkinson mechs.]

[How mysterious! There are truly an endless variety of mechs in human space. Does this have any effect in battle?]

[Why yes. There are several notable wars and conflicts in the galactic rim where glows have played a pivotal role...]

The expert commentators working for the G-Aena League had clearly done their due diligence. They performed a proper investigation on the Larkinson Clan and succinctly conveyed their findings.

It helped a lot that there were only 16 battalions taking part in this large scale tournament this time. Each of them would fight at least 3 battles in the G-Aena League at minimum, so it was not a waste to highlight each of their stories.

In the 1st round of the competition, every battalion would be randomly split into 4 different groups.

Each group of 4 battalions would fight each other in a round robin arrangement in order to advance a single one of them to the semifinals.

Once the G-Aena League was left with the 4 best battalions of their respective groups, they would fight a single time to determine the 2 battalions that earned the right to enter the finals.

Every participant wanted to reach the finals. No matter whether they won or lost, the huge amount of people watching this epic clash was a great opportunity to build up a lot of fame!

"Three battles." Commander Casella murmured under her breath even as she led her battalion with the Quint. "We must win them all in order to guarantee advancement into the next round."

WE SHALL PREVAIL.

The Quint conveyed absolute confidence borne out of the numerous battles by the Larkinson Clan. The battalions taking part in the G-Aena League were all supposed to be roughly equal when it came to the strength of their mechs.

This was good news to the Larkinsons because they had often fought battles while outnumbered or outmatched by their opponents. It was quite a breath of fresh air to fight 'even' battles this time!

"Don't be so happy yet, Quint. We can't employ many of the trump cards we've relied upon to win against the Fridaymen or the Vulcanites."

The Larkinson Battalion that had been especially prepared for this competition was lacking in several areas.

First, it didn't contain any expert mechs and expert pilots.

Second, it didn't contain any prime mechs either.

Third, the Larkinson Clan was highly reluctant to show off its battle formations in such a highly-publicized occasion.

Even if the Larkinsons did want to employ it, their numbers were too small to achieve an enormous effect. While it was still possible to activate a battle formation with 40 mech pilots, they could not single-handedly wipe out their opposition.

In fact, the Larkinsons had to be careful about not employing the Penitent Sister's death formation, which could bypass nearly every form of barrier or protection!

While Casella wondered whether the Larkinson Battalion could still compete given all of these limitations, her living mech only grew more eager to fight.

WE CAN VANQUISH OUR ENEMIES BY RELYING ON SKILL OF OUR MEN AND THE STRENGTH OF OUR MACHINES. NOTHING MORE.

That was the most the Quint had ever conveyed in words to Casella. The Sentinel Commander didn't expect her mech to be so talkative. This occasion probably meant more to it than she realized.

Since she didn't want to disappoint her own mech, the expert candidate quickly adjusted her mentality.

"We will reach the finals." She vowed. "With all of our living mechs, there is no excuse if we fail to advance into the third round."

They would have to struggle for two weeks in order to get to that point.

As the Larkinson Battalion successfully paraded throughout the massive arena, they waited in place alongside the other battalions.

They waited and waited until all sixteen tournament participants had introduced themselves to the viewers!

[Now, the moment that you have all been waiting for has arrived. Our lovely assistant shall now draw out the names that will determine their placement in the four groups!]

A gorgeous woman pulled her hand in a projected bowl and pulled out a colorful ribbon that displayed the names of one of the participants.

[The Ginetzy Battalion has landed in Group A!]

[The 15th Battalion is a tricky opponent to fight against. The Ginetzy Family's combat doctrine is all about defense and bombardment. Their mech roster practically contains no melee mechs. Instead, the Ginetzy members deploy a large amount of shield generating mechs to erect multiple layers of strong energy shields over their entire formation. Once their defenses are set up, a large number of misseleer and cannoneer mechs bombard their opponents into pieces!]

[What a destructive combat doctrine!]

The draw continued. More names emerged from the projected bowl.

Soon enough, the Larkinsons received their turn as well!

[The Larkinson Battalion is allocated to Group A! It must fight against the Ginetzy Battalion, the Quizlam Battalion and another yet-to-be announced opponent.]

[I cannot say anything yet about the Larkinson Clan's third opponent, but the Ginetzys and the Quizlams are both tricky and frustrating to fight against. The Ginetzy Battalion will bomb mechs into scrap before the Larkinson mechs can approach. The Quizlams on the other hand will employ their advantages in electronic warfare to the utmost in order to blind, sabotage and confound the Larkinson mechs. I would rather enter the group of death than to fight against these two specialized battalions!]

The faces of many Larkinsons grew ugly when they heard who they had to fight against in the first round... The previous expert commentator was right. The Ginetzy Battalion and the Quizlam Battalion would definitely torment the Larkinson Battalion!

Chapter 3473: Ginetzy Battalion

The draw nearly came to an end when Group A finally welcomed its fourth battalion.

[The Heartfall Battalion is the most normal among the tournament participants in Group A. It is comprised of mechs and mech pilots from the Heartfall Security Enterprise, a large and renowned mercenary organization from the galactic heartland.]

[As is typical for mercenaries, their mech roster is fairly balanced and devoid of any eccentric machines. All of the mechs of the Heartfallers are fairly mobile. With nothing slowing them down, the Heartfall Battalion can maneuver quickly on any battlefield. This can help them occupy favorable terrain or attack their opponents from difficult angles.]

[That sounds good, but doesn't the Heartfall Battalion suffer a disadvantage in direct combat? Its mechs can move around all they want, but without any pronounced attack or defensive power, they will have difficulty in defeating opponents such as the Ginetzy Battalion.]

[This may be true, but the Heartfall Security Enterprise is not an ordinary mercenary organization. Any mercenary group that has managed to grow to this scale must have developed an effective and mature combat approach. Let us see how they fare against the three other battalions in Group A.]

The Larkinsons sighed in relief as their third opponent in the third round was not that scary. They were not afraid of strong opponents, but they were quite wary to fight against those with strange and unorthodox battle strategies.

The Ginetzy Battalion with its protected ranged mechs and the Quizlam Battalion with its stealth mechs were both opponents that no one wanted to fight against! They fought so differently from other mech forces that the Larkinsons had to make specific preparations.

"Luckily, we didn't end up in the group of death." 1

The so-called group of death referred to Group C, which just so happened to include the 1st Battalion.

The Zpoeze Battalion was set up by the strangely-named Zpoeze Group. Nobody knew much about this private organization other than that it was founded just half a year ago somewhere in the galactic center!

The Zpoeze Group did not have any prominent leaders. None of their members were famous back in the old galaxy. The galactic net didn't even contain any word about where this obscure organization got its funding and how it was able to obtain passage to the Red Ocean.

Of course, that hadn't stopped people from spreading gossip and unfounded rumors.

"I bet these pussies are secretly working for Rubarthan prince!"

"Why would such a powerful person bother to play with second-class mechs? It makes no sense at all! It's much more likely that the Zpoeze Group is secretly testing out new and unannounced mech models on behalf of a mech company."

"That makes no sense either. If mech designers want to test out their products, they can just do that directly."

"All of you are wrong! The Zpoeze Battalion is clearly a fake organization set up by the MTA! All of its pilots are most definitely mechers who got bored and decided to have some fun by bullying second-raters in this group tournament."

Millions of people speculated about the truth behind the mysterious Zpoeze Group. No matter what outlandish theories they came up with, few of them thought that it was just a normal organization from the galactic center!

For their part, the Zpoezers never bothered to address the rumors. They avoided every possible media interaction and did not seem to chase after fame like the other tournament participants.

That didn't lessen the public's attention on them. The harder they tried to remain in the shadows, the more they came under scrutiny. Their presence certainly brought a lot more variety to the G-Aena League!

Once the pompous opening ceremony had concluded, the Larkinsons no longer had any obligations for the day.

The schedule that the tournament had just passed on to them revealed that they would fight their first match tomorrow.

Several leaders met in a private meeting room at one of the temporary bases that were expressly reserved for tournament participants. The five-hundred mechs of the Larkinson Battalion were all housed in various underground hangar structures.

Commander Casella looked at the schedule and frowned.

"Our first match will pit us against the Ginetzy Battalion." She began. "This is bad for us due to one big reason. Whether we win or lose, the massed firepower of our first opponent will most likely ruin hundreds of our mechs. Even if we can recover or replace our machines, there are always wrecks that are too gone for us to put back together. If we want to save enough mechs for the finals, we must not only defeat the Ginetzy Battalion, but do so in a way that minimizes our cost. Do you have any ideas?"

The other commanders and strategists in the room remained silent for time.

Director Raella cleared her throat. "Let's figure out the story behind the Ginetzys first. Let's take a look at their record and what the galactic net has to say about the Ginetzy Family."

The family turned out to be a fellow immigrant group from the galactic rim. The Ginetzys happened to come from a completely different star sector where the locals heavily favored ranged combat due to special reasons.

The Ginetzys didn't randomly decide to throw out all of their melee mechs and rely solely on shielding mechs and artillery mechs one day. They inherited their mech doctrine from their native star sector which had brought this mode of warfare to a greater height.

"The Ginetzys shouldn't have fought against a lot of forces that mainly deploy melee mechs. Maybe we can take advantage of their lack of experience."

"I don't think it's that simple. If the Ginetzy Family thinks it is good enough to take part in the G-Aena League, then it should definitely have countermeasures ready. Many of our mechs will probably be torn to shreds before they can even reach a Ginetzy mech."

"Then how else should we beat these missile fanatics? We brought too few Transcendent Punishers and we have no specialized shielding mechs to beat the Ginetzys at their own game. Our other ranged mechs simply doesn't have the firepower to wear down the enemy energy shields fast enough before they get blown up by a flood of missiles."

"Can't we hack or fool the missiles somehow?"

"Perhaps the Quizlams can do so, but electronic warfare is not our strength." Commander Casella stated. "We'll need the Black Cats for that, but they are not part of the Larkinson Battalion. Besides, even if they did join our lineup, they don't have the right tools."

The Black Cats possessed formidable information warfare capabilities if they were able to utilize the Blinding Banshee. It was impossible to leverage a capital ship in the G-Aena League, though. The mechs could only rely on their own capabilities to battle their opponents.

"No competitor is good at everything." Raella said. As the most authoritative voice on competitive mech battles, her opinion carried a lot of weight in strategy sessions. "Even if the Ginetzys have prepared a countermeasure against direct assaults, we shouldn't let that fear prevent us from pursuing the best possible strategy. It is a fact that the Ginetzy Battalion does not field any significant melee mechs. It is a fact that the Ginetzy mechs are all sitting ducks when they are attacked up close. It is a fact that our own battalion contains a lot of melee mechs. Let's not ignore these conditions and instead think about how we can smash these Ginetzys."

She set the right tone for this meeting. The Ginetzy Battalion might be nasty opponents, but their Larkinson Battalion was not weak!

They began to discuss specific countermeasures against the known methods of the Ginetzys.

"You know, these Ginetzys mainly large and relatively immobile landbound mechs. They don't even move when they launch their attacks. Our battle formations should easily be able to sweep them up en masse."

"That won't work as well as you think." Commander Casella shook her head. "We're not allowed to employ our death formation and the other ones can be blocked by energy shields. With how few mech pilots we have, we cannot be certain that our battle formation attacks will break through the enemy's defenses. Don't forget that the mech pilots that have engaged their battle networks will become exhausted when they are done."

"Hey, don't we have those new luminar crystal rifles? If I recall their specs, they have a firing mode that is especially effective against neutralizing energy shielding. What if we're able to overwhelm the main defensive measure of the Ginetzy Battalion faster than anyone expects? The Ginetzy mechs will become sitting ducks once their big barriers are gone!"

Many people's eyes lit up at that news.

Though the Larkinson Clan used to have problems supplying enough luminar crystal rifles to its mechs, that was no longer an issue once it pared down its fleet. The Larkinsons may have been forced to discard many of their living mechs, but the clan made sure to retain useful gear such as all of the luminar crystal rifles it produced!

Luminar crystal technology was one of the trump cards of the Larkinson Clan. Since Ves relied upon it to become a technological contributor to the MTA, there shouldn't be any legal problems with using it in this tournament.

"Okay, let's say we manage to break their energy shields quickly, thereby exposing their entire formation. Now what?"

"Our ranged mechs will switch firing modes and do their best to suppress the enemy missileer and cannoner mechs." Another officer said. "In the meantime, our melee mechs will press forward and cross the distance as fast as possible so that they can tear down these threatening ranged mechs. We can ignore the shielding mechs since they're just auxiliary mechs. Even if they can put up a fight, they probably aren't very good at it, so we only have to divert a small amount of mechs to pin them down." 1

"I don't know. It sounds too simple. No one who has managed to enter the Red Ocean is that simple. The Ginetzys have to be readying additional surprises against these occurrences."

"What if... they blow up their own explosive payloads?"

That was a terrible scenario! If they utilized their missiles and explosive shells as mines, they could easily blow up both themselves and all of the melee mechs that had been drawn into their formation!

"Those bastards!"

"Even if we win, we'll lose all of our mechs as a result!"

"This strategy is suicidal if employed outside of the arena!"

The Ginetzy Family would only have guts to employ such a destructive strategy in a place like the Fortas Major Arena. The venue was packed with advanced technologies that made sure that no one actually died.

Since the cost of self-destruction was not that serious, then it made sense for the Ginetzys to employ such a trap!

As long as the Ginetzys won the match, they had a chance of getting further in the G-Aena League. The top prizes more than made up for any material damage they might suffer!

"So we're not going to overrun the enemy position with melee mechs?"

Casella shook her head. "Let's not rule any option out. The Ginetzys might not resort to this measure, but even if they do, we can beat as long as we have a plan. Let us go through our options. We have less than one day to prepare, but so does the enemy."

The Larkinsons tried to make good use of the time before the start of their massive arena match.

The next day, the Fortas Major Arena became packed again as everyone eagerly looked forward to enjoying a full day of large-scale battles!

The Larkinsons performed last-minute checks on their mechs before they entered the massive arena field.

Many of them were nervous. Others were excited.

The Quint was eager to defeat the Ginetzy Battalion. Commander Casalla could practically feel the battle lust from her own mech!

Equipped with a custom-built luminar crystal rifle, the masterwork mech did not intend to sit in the back for this battle!

Chapter 3474: Missile Rain

The big day had come! Before the Larkinson Battalion fought its first match against the Ginetzy Battalion, the other two competitors in Group A fought against each other first.

The Quizlam Battalion and the Heartfall Battalion both put up a good fight.

As their future opponents, the Larkinsons studied their mechs and strategies carefully.

The random battlefield generated by the arena settled upon a cratered, airless planet environment.

While much of the terrain was fairly open, the many craters along with the high amount of hills and slopes resulted in plenty of shallow cover.

Aerial mechs could easily gain a good view over the battlefield, but there was nothing for them to hide behind if they got targeted.

The Heartfall Battalion initially deployed a wave of light mechs in the air. However, as soon as they flew high enough, they immediately came under withering fire from well-entrenched rifleman mechs!

The Quizlam Battalion deployed a mix of mechs and brought plenty of ranged mechs to snipe the exposed Heartfall scout mechs!

This forced the Heartfallers to recall their light mechs down to the ground before they got shot to pieces.

That was the beginning of a pattern. In the subsequent hour, the Quizlam Battalion essentially waged guerilla warfare against the Heartfall Battalion.

The former obfuscated the sensors and the information-gathering ability of the latter as much as possible.

From flooding the arena field with lots of jamming to launching sensor-scrambling smoke shells, the Quizlam Battalion turned the entire cratered battlefield into a misty horror drama.

The Heartfall Battalion's mechs possessed decent sensor systems but none of them were capable of overcoming through all of the interference. Their strongest sensor and scanning systems were only effective at shorter ranges.

While this was sufficient to scare away raiding parties, the Quizlams still brought a lot of ranged mechs!

In order to keep themselves as elusive as possible, the Quizlam's eschewed artillery mechs and relied solely on rifleman mechs to pepper the Heartfall mechs with projectiles.

Since the Quizlam rifleman mechs did not employ any energy weapons, they generated a lot less heat than their opponents. That helped with keeping their energy signatures as low as possible, making it hard for their opponents to detect the mechs at a distance.

What was even more infuriating was that the Quizlam rifleman mechs relocated every time they fired a heavy shot. Before the Heartfall mechs fired their weapons in the direction where the projectiles came from, the Quizlams had already fallen back behind cover or stepped aside!

Eventually, the Heartfallers figured out that staying put would only grind them down. They opted to make use of their mobility advantage and advanced in three large formations.

This not only forced the Quizlams to keep up, but also had to exert greater effort to take down the moving mechs. Each time the elusive Quizlam mechs exposed their positions, one of the three Heartfall formations charged straight at their targets and overwhelmed the sneaky mechs before they could run!

In the end, the Heartfall Battalion did the best they could to eliminate the Quizlams one by one, but they constantly suffered attrition while they performed their maneuvers.

"The Quizlams are going to be a difficult challenge." Commander Casella murmured.

The Larkinsons still needed to overcome Ginetzy Battalion first before they could move on to strategizing against their next opponent.

At least the clan didn't have to fight against the Quizlams first. Now that these tricky bastards showed off all of their tricks against the Heartfallers, the Larkinsons could make much more targeted preparations against the electronic warfare specialists!

"You're up, Larkinsons! Hurry up and head outside!"

All 500 Larkinson mechs simultaneously stepped onto the main arena.

The first ones to step onto the field was the Avatars of Myth. They constituted the main body of the Larkinson Battalion and amounted to as much as 239 mechs.

Although the Larkinson Clan no longer revered the Bright Warrior model as much as before, it was still its mainstay. The Bright Warrior not only reinforced teamwork, but also gained a lot more value in the hands of the Avatars of Myth.

Of course, the main reason why the Larkinson Battalion leaned so heavily on the Bright Warriors was because they could fulfill each basic role.

After weighing the importance of quickly tearing down the energy shields favored by the Ginetzy Battalion, the Bright Warriors mainly deployed Bright Warriors in rifleman mech configuration this time.

Each of them were armed with highly flexible luminar crystal rifles. Loaded with four separate attack phase luminar crystals, the Avatar rifleman mechs were able to respond effectively to several different situations.

Aside from Bright Warriors in rifleman mech configurations, the Avatars also deployed a decent amount of knight mechs in order to guard the more vulnerable artillery mechs of the Larkinson Battalion.

Though Commander Casella also wanted to bring lancer mechs, she couldn't bring enough of them for them to make a difference.

"Besides, we have the Penitent Sisters."

The Penitent Sisters brought a large number of Valkyrie Redeemers. The recently-upgraded marauder mechs were all armed with reduced versions of luminar crystal rifles. While their weapons were smaller and weaker, they suited the more mobile mechs well.

The Sisters also opted to deploy a small number of Eternal Redemptions, but their extremely lacking mobility meant that the cannoner mechs were better off with sticking with the Eye of Ylvaine.

The youngest and newest mech legion of the Larkinson Clan was a risky addition to the Larkinson Battalion.

Even if they brought just 20 Transcendent Punishers, their high importance and low mobility turned them into strategic assets that needed protection at all times. They also anchored the other Larkinson mechs to an extent.

Opposite to the Eye of Ylvaine, the Flagrant Vandals deployed with a full lineup of light mechs.

Due to the relatively static battle approach of the Ginetzy Battalion, the Vandals only brought 40 Ferocious Piranhas this time.

The light mechs were there to hunt down enemy scouts, monitor enemy positions and test the enemy's countermeasures.

If the Ginetzy Battalion failed to repel the Ferocious Piranhas, the Flagrant Vandals were free to press their attacks against the vulnerable enemy mechs!

As for the Swordmaidens, they exclusively deployed Bright Warriors in swordsman mech configuration.

Originally, the Swordmaidens didn't find the Bright Warrior model to be a comfortable fit for their fighting style.

Before they received a proper swordsman mech designed by Ketis, they improvised by customizing and altering the existing Bright Warriors to accommodate their needs.

The Swordmaidens even painted over the golden coating of the Bright Warriors into a muted green tint. Together with their greatswords, the Swordmaiden mechs exuded a lot more menace than the Bright Warrior mechs!

Every Larkinson thought highly of the Swordmaidens. While they were useless in ranged combat, as long as they got close to the enemy, they could easily chop their opposition apart, especially if they attacked from a flanking angle!

The Swordmaidens weren't expected to play a role in the beginning phase of the battles. If they just charged up at the Ginetzy Battalion, they would probably lose most if not all of their 80 machines before they could hack their weapons against the energy shields of their opponents!

No, the ranged mechs armed with luminar crystal rifles had to make the first move.

Once the match commenced, Commander Casella quickly issued a round of orders.

"Vandals, scout the enemy position! Keep as low to the ground as possible but don't hesitate to hunt down the enemy scouts!"

"Aye, commander!"

The enemy scout mechs played a crucial role in transmitting precise targeting data to the Ginetzy missile and cannon-carrying mechs.

Due to this important role, the Ginetzy scout mechs remained as flighty and elusive as possible.

Unlike the Vandals, the Ginetzy light mechs avoided battle as much as possible. Each time they came under threat, they quickly retreated to the Ginetzy Battalion's main formation.

The Larkinsons already expected the Ginetzy scout elements to play hard to get. Casella didn't think it was crucial to take them out straight away. As long as they stopped peeping on the Larkinson mech elements, the Ginetzy ranged mechs weren't able to bombard as much as they liked!

"So far, so good."

This time, the battlefield turned into a hot, sandy desert environment. With low, rolling hills and occasional rocky outcroppings, the circumstances of this match resembled that of the previous battle.

The only true difference was the heightened temperature. Commander Casella and many other Larkinsons frowned when they realized that their heat-generating mechs would reach their limits faster in the current environment.

"We'll need to end this battle quickly. The longer it goes on, the more the Ginetzy Battalion are able to build up their advantage."

Of course, the Ginetzys were able to bring only so much ammunition to the fight. Once their ranged mechs ran out of missiles and explosive shells, they became a lot less scary!

The Larkinsons couldn't afford to bet on outlasting their opponents. By almost entirely forgoing melee mechs, the Ginetzys brought more than enough ranged mechs to kill double their number if left unopposed!

"We've identified the Ginetzy Battalion's main position! They have entrenched themselves in the middle of a rocky outcropping!"

Casella accessed the live feed that was relayed back to the main Larkinson formation. She could see that the Ginetzys had not settled in place but instead sought the more favorable terrain in sight before setting up shop.

The enemy missile mechs and cannon-wielding mechs both warmed up their weapon systems.

Even if the Ginetzy scout mechs were unable fly too far from their friendlies, they still relayed plenty of relevant sensor readings.

"Damn it, we're under fire!" A Flagrant Vandal mech pilot roared! "There's a dozen hunter-killer missiles behind my back! I can't break their locks! Ahhh!"

The unlucky Ferocious Piranha exploded into several different pieces as multiple missiles struck the mech without any difficulty.

A small energy shield generated by the arena protected the cockpit against any damage. The protected cockpit soon zipped upwards until it passed through the extremely powerful barrier that marked the boundaries of the arena field.

This phenomenon happened several times. Both sides largely ignored it as they knew it was just the mech pilots of the destroyed mechs being brought to safety.

In the meantime, more Ferocious Piranhas got blown up after being chased by missiles. The Larkinson light mechs did not carry any machine guns or other ranged weapons that could be used to shoot the missiles before they reached their targets.

In fact, even if the Ferocious Piranhas were able to intercept the incoming ordnance, many of the hunter-killer missiles simply flew too fast to shoot them all down!

"These missiles and shells keep pouring in from afar!"

"If this continues, we can't hold back the Ginetzy scout mechs much longer!"

The Flagrant Vandals had to retreat their Ferocious Piranhas from the main enemy position before they were wiped out in their entirety!

"Careful, folks! These Ginetzy missiles are not only good at locking in our mechs, but none of our ECM systems managed to divert them. I suggest we either intercept the missiles or cut them off at the source!"

This was unsettling information to Commander Casella, but it did not stop her resolve. The Larkinsons needed to advance towards the Ginetzys.

Minutes passed by as the huge audience felt the tension. The Larkinsons knew where their enemies were located but did not dare to commit an assault until they came closer.

The Ginetzy Battalion's position was covered entirely by energy shields. While they had become a lot more vulnerable now that they exposed their location, their missileer and cannoner mechs were already firing their weapons at any Larkinson mech that exposed their whereabouts!

As the freed-up Ginetzy scout mechs became bold enough to explore again, they continued to relay the coordinates of the advancing Larkinson mechs.

Hundreds of missiles and explosive shells flooded the Larkinson Battalion!

Even spreading out their formations didn't help that much. The enemy artillery mechs merely concentrated their fire in a single zone and wiped everything out that was inside.

In just a short span of time, the Larkinsons had already lost over thirty mechs while the Ginetzys only lost a smaller amount of scout mechs!

Chapter 3475: Undermining a Castle

Against an opponent like the Ginetzy Battalion, the Larkinson Clan had little choice but to meet force with force.

The enemy did not engage in maneuver warfare at all. This was usually bad because remaining rooted in place made it easy to bombard their stationary mechs.

Yet the Ginetzy Family had an answer for this. They brought along a lot of auxiliary mechs that weren't good at fighting but could perform one job well.

They carried powerful wide-area shield generators that could project strong energy shields over an area.

While one of these shield mechs weren't that particularly strong, it was a different story when there were over a hundred of them! What made the auxiliary mechs even more impressive was that the tech of the shield mech allowed for them to merge with each other.

Instead of overlapping their energy shields like the scales of a dragon, they instead linked up with each other and merged their efforts into a single, powerful dome that was supported by all of the shield mechs involved!

The advantages of this were obvious. Gaps in the massive shields wouldn't occur just because one of the supporting mechs malfunctioned or ran out of energy.

The drain on the energy shields was also shared among the entire group. If the collective energy shield ever came under heavy attack, the energy control systems of the shield mechs made sure to share the burden as equally as possible.

This way, every mech would be able to contribute to the upkeep of the energy shield without any of them dropping out prematurely!

Shield linking technology was fairly common in first-class combat. Counters to it were also fairly common, so it was not that impressive.

However, this form of high technology was a lot less common in second-class combat. The main shortcomings were that it was too inefficient. The strain on the mechs was too great over time and the energy requirements were extreme. It was too impractical to be employed on a real battlefield!

Only an arena environment and other special circumstances could make this tech viable. If a typical match only lasted up to an hour, the shield mechs could fulfill their function for a significant fraction of that time!

That was enough for the missileer and cannoner mechs of the Ginetzy Battalion to wreck hundreds of mechs with impunity!

Even if the energy shield eventually broke from all of the strain, so what? The attacking force would have lost most of their combat strength by then and could no longer fight on equal terms against the fully-intact Ginetzy mechs!

The Larkinsons were quite disgusted at being forced to fight such an opponent. The Ginetzy Battalion's strategy was simple, stupid but effective. Larkinson Battalion had already lost over 50 mechs and they still hadn't reached the enemy position!

Missiles and explosive shells kept pouring down from above. Although the power of an individual payload wasn't too great, when a dozen of them impacted a mech in quick succession, not even a knight mech could remain unscathed!

"Damnit, how the hell can the Ginetzys carry so much ammunition with them?! Will they ever even be able to run out? This is crazy!"

"Shut up and keep going forward. We're almost there, now. Those Ginetzys may have the upper hand for now, but soon we'll be able to turn the tables on them, hehe. They're not the only ones who possess advanced technology."

Commander Casella Ingvar remained stoic as she continued to keep up with her men. Her mech along with all of the other ones flew low to the ground, not hesitating to overload their flight systems a little bit in order to close the distance faster.

The downside to that was that flying at such intensity caused their mechs to rapidly heat up. This increased their energy signatures and made it easier for the enemy to lock on to their machines.

"It can't be helped." She sighed.

The enemy specialized in ranged bombardment. The Ginetzy ranged mechs would have ways of making sure their attacks landed on target.

The only way to stop the damage from piling up further was to stop the Ginetzy mechs as soon as possible.

This was also why Casella opted to go for an all-out offense rather than a more conservative strategy.

She could have asked the Avatars to bring a lot more knight mechs to this fight. They could mitigate a lot of incoming firepower with their thicker defenses and heavy shields.

The problem with that was that it would slow down their offensive.

Not only would the knight mechs drag down the advancing speed of the main force, but they also took the place of rifleman mechs armed with luminar crystal rifles.

Under these circumstances, the only role that knight mechs could play was to delay a defeat. Greater offensive power was needed to quickly chew through the defenses of the Ginetzy Battalion, so the Larkinsons had made the difficult but correct decision to bring a lot of rifleman mechs instead.

The only way for the Larkinsons to beat the Ginetzys was to bring a lot of attack power!

"We're finally in place! The collective energy shield is just behind those rocky outcroppings!"

The rocky and sandy desert terrain favored the Ginetzys more than the Larkinsons. If there weren't so many hills and slopes in the current environment, then the Larkinson ranged mechs would have been able to fire their weapons at the opponents from kilometers away.

It was too bad that the Larkinson Clan's entire ranged arsenal could only fire straight for the most part. They lacked the missiles and howitzers of the Ginetzys that could fire over hills and other obstacles.

Even the Transcendent Punishers and the Eternal Redemptions had to march forward and occupy an elevated position in order to get a viable angle on their targets!

Due to their slower traversal speeds, the Eye of Ylvaine wouldn't be able to join the battle at this time, but Commander Casella didn't intend to wait for the Ylvainans to get into place.

"We don't need our heavy guns to take down this shield."

Many of the participants in the G-Aena League would probably despair after encountering such a strong and all-encompassing energy shield.

Not the Larkinsons. They happened to have the right tool for the job. Without any further delays, the Larkinsons quickly opened fire on the domed energy shield!

Hundreds of Bright Warriors and Valkyrie Redeemers fired their luminar crystal weapons at the same time.

What was special about their guns was that they had already loaded the crucial disruptor beam attack phase crystal.

This crystal type modulated the energy output of the luminar crystal rifle in a special way. When the odd energy beams instantly struck the massive energy shield, the Ginetzy mech pilots became alarmed when their protective barrier visibly wobbled!

"It's working!" Commander Casella grinned as she commanded the Quint to fire another shot at the energy shield. "Our disruptor beams are wearing down the enemy energy shield five times faster than normal. Keep up the pressure and don't let the enemy ordnance stop you from getting off another shot!"

The situation of the Larkinson Battalion was especially grave now that they had entered into line of sight of the Ginetzy mechs.

Before, the Ginetzy ranged mechs needed to rely on the targeting data transmitted by their scout mechs in order to hit their targets.

Now, they could just rely on their own sensors to guide their attacks to the right destination! The effectiveness of their massive projectile volleys increased remarkably, causing over a hundred mechs of the Larkinson Clan to crumble!

Even so, the harder the Ginetzys fought, the more the Larkinsons smelled blood!

The Bright Warriors and Valkyrie Redeemers that were armed with luminar crystal rifles took the brunt of the enemy firepower, but the energy shield drained so quickly that the Larkinson melee mechs were already beginning to charge forward!

[Those crystalline energy weapons are insane! How can they possibly drain the famed Ginetzy energy shield so quickly? The energy beams are inflicting far too much damage considering how much power is being expended. Those rifles aren't even building up that much heat!]

The efficiency of the luminar crystal rifles impressed the expert commentators, but the real value of the weapons lay in their ability to tear down an energy shield with ludicrous effectiveness.

Another commentator finally figured it out. [According to my analysis, the energy shield isn't being worn down by brute force. The strange energy beams that are impacting the Ginetzy shield are destabilizing the energy field that sustains the shield.]

[What does that mean, exactly?]

[Think of the energy shield like a castle. The most conventional way to break it is to attack its walls. This is difficult to do because castles are made to resist damage in this way. What the crystal rifles are doing is not just attacking the walls. The disrupting energy beams are also wearing down the foundation of the castle! The more they attack the castle, the faster the ground it rests upon will collapse, thereby tearing down the walls with it as well!]

Although this analogy didn't accurately describe the effects of the disruptor beams, it still gave the laymen in the audience an easy way to understand their power.

The Ginetzy Battalion became a lot more flustered now that its main form of defense and key element of their battle strategy was faltering before their eyes!

Their shield mechs, which had all been rooted and anchored to the ground, showed visible strain as they struggled to stabilize their collective shield.

Their missileer and cannoner mechs fired their weapons as fast as possible at the Larkinson ranged mechs.

The Ginetzys were actually in a dilemma as well. The enemy ranged mechs inflicted a lot more damage to their energy shield than expected, but they weren't the true killers of the Larkinson Battalion.

The waiting and eager Swordmaidens and Penitent Sisters were just waiting for the enemy's castle walls to go down before they could charge into the enemy ranks without encountering any obstruction!

Still, the Ginetzys opted to direct all of their firepower towards the Larkinson ranged mechs.

This caused the energy shield's deterioration to slow down a bit as there were less mechs with luminar crystal rifles still in the fight.

Regardless, the Larkinsons brought too many ranged mechs for the Ginetzys to take them all down in a short amount of time.

"The shield... it's breaking!"

The massive energy shield didn't break in an explosive or spectacular manner. Instead, the disruptor beams hitting it from multiple angles caused it to become so unstable that it simply fizzled out as if someone cut the power cord!

The shield mechs that had all tried their best to sustain the collective energy shield looked as if they had all been cooked until they began to steam!

The auxiliary mechs had overloaded their shield generating systems as much as possible in order to keep the protective barrier up. Now that they had reached their limits, they were unable to play any role in this battle, thereby making their presence useless in the coming battle!

"The Ginetzy Battalion is vulnerable now! Follow the plan and attack in waves! Be cautious about surprise attacks and try your best to draw out their subsequent responses!"

Although the Ginetzy mechs looked incredibly vulnerable now, the Larkinsons tried their best to remain steady. They were wary of any traps their enemies might have prepared.

The Flagrant Vandals moved first. Although they had lost a hefty chunk of Ferocious Piranhas, they still had enough machines left to test the waters.

The light mechs rapidly zipped forward and attempted to close in on a squad of big and juicy missileer mechs.

Yet before the Ferocious Piranhas could get close enough, the Ginetzys finally unveiled their next surprise.

Many of their missile artillery mechs fired special rockets into the surrounding terrain. A huge amount of sensor-blocking smoke and particle dust obscured the entire Ginetzy Battalion!

"This again!"

"What the hell are they doing?!"

"I thought we were fighting against the Ginetzy Battalion, not the Quizlam Battalion!"

"CAREFUL! The Ginetzys must be doing something inside this obscuring field! Get in there and find out what they are doing next!"

Chapter 3476: Terrible Attrition

The Ginetzy Battalion wasn't as good as the Quizlam Battalion when it came to information warfare.

That didn't mean that the Ginetzys were prohibited from employing the same methods.

In the previous group arena battle, the Quizlams showed such great proficiency and mastery of ECM technology that they managed to turn a huge part of the battlefield into a blindspot for the enemy.

The Ginetzys didn't have the tech, the expertise and the numbers to accomplish something so exaggerated.

However, it was not a problem for them to turn a small area of the arena into a site where the enemy had difficulty penetrating with their sensors.

All of the smoke and interference successfully turned the location of the Ginetzy Battalion into a void to the Larkinsons!

Although the Ginetzy Battalion's own mechs were blinded as well, they had already made the appropriate preparations to remain in contact with each other.

Not only were their mechs situated relatively close to each other, but they also buried communication lines underneath the ground. This ensured that the Ginetzy mechs were able to keep coordinating their actions with each other.

The story was much different for the Larkinson mechs. The Flagrant Vandal mechs that had swept inside this obscuring cloud were practically blinded due to all of the interference and jamming that had emerged.

The Ferocious Piranha's sensor systems might be better than average, but they were ultimately unable to peer too far into the fog. They weren't true scout mechs that possessed specialized sensor and scanning arrays that could power through much of the interference!

Although the Vandal mechs kept charging forward to the last-known positions of the enemy ranged mechs, all they encountered in return was a volley of short-range missiles that easily fractured their relatively thin armor plating!

Though the Ferocious Piranhas were able to withstand a little more damage than other light mechs, dozens of Ginetzy missileer mechs were firing their missiles at the Larkinson light mechs with utter clarity!

"Damnit, retreat and relay the news back to Commander Casella!"

Only three Ferocious Piranhas managed to escape the constant missile barrage relatively intact. Each of them exhibited serious battle damage and one mech even lost both of its legs!

When the other Larkinson mech pilots learned what had happened, they frowned.

"It's like the energy shield all over again. These Ginetzys are really making it difficult to mop up all of their ranged mechs."

The problem was that as soon as the Vandal mechs retreated from the enemy position, the Ginetzy ranged mechs resumed firing on the entire Larkinson Battalion from within the smoke cloud!

The Ginetzys weren't bothered by all of the sensor-blocking measures they put up, but the Larkinsons were different!

Although the Bright Warriors and Valkyrie Redeemers already fired their luminar crystal rifles into the smoke cloud, the chance was great that their energy beams hit nothing but empty terrain!

Even if their attacks coincidentally hit a Ginetzy mech, the damage wasn't concentrated. It would take forever to rely on these occasional hits to defeat the Ginetzy Battalion!

Although the Transcendent Punishers were just about to open fire on the hidden Ginetzy mechs, there were just twenty of them in this fight. That was too few to rely solely on their firepower to demolish all of the Ginetzy mechs in time.

Commander Casella looked at the obscuring smoke cloud and knew that the Larkinson Battalion didn't have the means to neutralize it or render it ineffective.

The Larkinson Army was good at direct combat, but it was completely lacking in terms of auxiliary functions. Many more mature mech forces possessed at least some extra capabilities such as erecting shields, blinding enemy sensors, supplying energy and other functions.

The Larkinsons on the other hand were only good at attacking and nothing else. That might be sufficient against most ordinary enemies, but as the caliber of their opponents kept growing stronger, it became more important than ever to address these shortcomings!

That was something to consider for later, though. Right now, the Larkinson Battalion had a battle to win!

"We need to go on the offensive!" Casella decided! "Even if the Ginetzys have prepared a trap for us, staying in place will do us no good. Ranged mechs, concentrate your firepower on the right flank of the enemy position! Melee mechs, prepare to charge the left flank!"

More specific orders quickly followed suit as the various captains and other officers readied their men for an assault!

The surviving Bright Warriors armed with luminar crystal rifles continued to fire blindly into the smoke cloud.

Due to the fact that most of the ordnance unleashed by the Ginetzy mechs were indirect, it was difficult to trace the origin points of all of the missiles and shells. The missileer and cannoner mechs also changed their positions every so often, making it even more difficult to deduce their actual locations.

However, the constant stream of energy beams still had effect, especially when they raked a smaller part of the enemy formation.

Soon enough, the Transcendent Punishers got to work as well. Just like the other Larkinson mechs, their sensor systems failed to penetrate through the obscuring cloud.

However, unlike Avatars or the Penitent Sisters, over 80 percent of their shots hit the mark!

Every Eye of Ylvaine pilot had already triggered the Guided Aim ability. The familiar presence of the Great Prophet had descended on them, granting them an unnatural insight into the enemy position.

No smoke or mist could stop them from hitting their targets!

What was even better was that the Ylvainans didn't keep this advantage to themselves.

"Larkinsons, link into our targeting system! Align your weapons with ours!"

The Transcendent Punishers didn't focus on dismantling the enemy mechs by themselves this time. While their firepower was prodigious, they could contribute a lot more to the Larkinson Battalion by helping the other mechs identify the enemy positions!

The Ylvainan mech pilots didn't hesitate to spread their firepower. Rather than concentrating their shots on a handful of Ginetzy mechs, they fired their gauss cannons and positron cannons at dozens of different mechs.

The Transcendent Punisher attacks served as spotlights that helped the other Larkinson ranged mechs stay on target. The Ginetzy Battalion became befuddled why its countermeasures weren't working.

"How are they detecting our coordinates?"

"It's those artillery mechs! Before they came into action, these Larkinson mechs couldn't hit anything. Everything has changed now those artillery mechs have begun to fire on our mechs!"

The Ginetzys weren't stupid and immediately figured out the pattern. They directed most of their ranged mechs at the Transcendent Punishers, but how could it be so easy to defeat the Larkinson artillery mechs?

The knight mechs dispatched by the Avatars finally fulfilled their purpose. They blocked the majority of the incoming attacks. Even if their shields and frames were deteriorating at a distressing rate, they still bought valuable time for the Larkinson ranged mechs to take down a lot of Ginetzy machines!

In the meantime, the Larkinson mechs boldly entered into the mist.

Guided by the occasional attacks the Transcendent Punishers directed at the left flank, the Swordmaidens and Penitent Sisters had a vague idea where the enemy mechs were located.

Just as the first squad of Swordmaiden mechs were about to drive their greatswords through the cannoner mechs of the Ginetzy Battalion, the latter suddenly detonated all of the remaining shells in its magazines and blew themselves apart!

BOOM!

BOOM!

BOOM!

The Ginetzy mechs took themselves out, but it wasn't as if they had a chance of surviving an encounter against melee mechs up close.

The important part was that their self-destruction also took out their attackers!

All of the Swordmaiden mechs that had fearlessly charged into the enemy were either gone or so badly damaged that they could no longer put up a fight!

The Arena's safety systems worked quite hard to save the lives of all of the mech pilots. It was not easy to save so many mech pilots from the detonations of their own machines!

It was exactly because of the existence of this safety measure that the Ginetzys were so unscrupulous about launching suicide attacks!

"Dirty bastards!"

"They're exploiting the rules!"

"They're just making the best out of the situation. There's nothing wrong with their actions."

Not just the Ginetzy ranged mechs were able to self-destruct like this, but their auxiliary mechs were also loaded with explosives!

The seemingly exhausted and useless shield mechs charged at any melee mech that had entered the smoke cloud.

Before the Swordmaidens and Penitent Sisters could find the Ginetzy artillery mechs, they unexpectedly bumped into the shield mechs.

BOOM!

BOOM!

BOOM!

More Bright Warriors and Valkyrie Redeemers collapsed or retreated in a sorry condition as they failed to take down the crucial Ginetzy missileer and cannoner mechs.

As long as the latter two remained intact, the Ginetzy Battalion still had a chance of winning this match!

Commander Casella was distressed by the loss, but she did not waver in her resolve.

The Ginetzys had to blow up at least one of their mechs to take down an approaching Larkinson melee mech. The balance between the two battalions remained equal as a result.

What the Ginetzy Battalion actually sought to accomplish was to keep as many of its ranged mechs alive as possible in order to take out all of the Larkinson mechs.

If they were facing another typical mech battalion, then the Ginetzy Battalion's strategy might have worked.

It was a pity that the Ginetzys haven't accounted for the Eye of Ylvaine! The well-protected heavy artillery mechs kept marking the actual positions of the hidden Ginetzy mechs, causing the hit rates of the other ranged mechs to triple!

Though the Avatars and Penitent Sisters still missed plenty of their shots, their current effectiveness was much greater than before, which caused the Ginetzy mechs to experience much greater discomfort!

If nothing else happened, Commander Casella predicted that the Larkinson Battalion would eventually be able to win this match.

"The price is a bit big, though."

As the Sentinel Commander continued to oversee the battle, the Ginetzys finally launched their final measure.

If the Larkinsons were able to figure out the trend of the battle, then so did the Ginetzys. They needed to change the game somehow.

This was why a squad of Ginetzy light mechs suddenly charged out of the smoke cloud and headed straight to the formation of surviving Avatar ranged mechs!

"Shoot them down!"

The Avatar mechs tried to shoot down these odd light mechs, but most of their shots failed to hit their mark. The Ginetzy light mechs were not only fast, but were also controlled by skilled mech pilots.

"These aren't regular light mechs. Their performance is higher!"

"They're elites!"

"What are they doing?! They can't possibly take out all of our rifleman mechs by ourselves."

"They're... they're heading straight for the Quint! This is a decapitation strike!"

Decapitation strike!

As long as the Ginetzys took out Commander Casella with a blitz attack, they could inflict considerable damage to the Larkinson Battalion!

The Transcendent Punishers already redirected some of their fire to the threatening light mechs, but the enemy approached from a tricky angle that used the Avatar mechs as their own shields!

Though two-thirds of the Ginetzy light mechs failed to stay up during their attack run, the remaining third successfully made it through!

The lack of melee mechs in the Avatar formation and the risk of causing friendly fire made it a lot more difficult to take out these intruders!

One of the light mechs stood out from the rest. The light mech was not only considerably faster and more agile, but its mech pilot was head and shoulders above his comrades.

"Their expert candidate is among this group!"

"Damn, he or she is trying to assassinate our commander in person!"

"Stop this mech!"

"It's too late!"

The Ginetzy light mechs had acted way too quickly for the Larkinson Battalion to form a proper response. It would take at least a dozen seconds for a squad of Swordmaiden mechs to come to Commander Casella's aid, but the enemy assassins could easily complete their mission during this time!

Just as the surviving enemy light mechs almost reached their target, the Quint roared to life and took action.

Its luminar crystal rifle fired a barrage of thin and narrow slicer beams that nonetheless possessed a terrifying degree of penetration power.

The beams precisely struck the parts of the flight systems of the enemy mechs in the brief intervals they became exposed from the front.

This was an incredibly tricky move, but Casella and the Quint managed to land their shots without fail!

The light mechs aside from the one piloted by the Ginetzy expert candidate struggled to stay in control. Though they did not lose a lot of flight capability, the slight damage to their systems nonetheless interrupted their movements and caused them to incur a lot more hits!

Unfortunately, the luminar crystal rifle wielded by the Quint was only capable of firing so many shots at a time. Before it could fire another shot, the Ginetzy champion mech had already reached the Quint!

Seeing that time was critical, the enemy expert candidate did not bother to circle around the back. Instead, it thrust its twin daggers straight towards the chest of its priority target!

Yet before those twin weapons could take out the leader of the Larkinson Battalion, both of them were repelled when another weapon blocked their path!

The Quint and the Ginetzy assassin mech both bounced back from the force.

To the Ginetzy Battalion's utter surprise, the Quint had dropped its luminar crystal rifle and pulled out a sword that had been hidden behind its back!

Casella eagerly grinned as she faced her challenger.

"You messed with the wrong mech."

Chapter 3477: Savage Mech

The Quint locked its considerably powerful presence onto the nearby enemy champion mech!

The Ginetzy expert candidate was confused. Even though he already figured out that the enemy mech commander was also an expert candidate, that didn't mean that people like them could do everything!

While it was easier for expert candidates to branch out and learn the fundamentals of other piloting specialties, the Ginetzy expert candidate excelled in melee combat. His attacks shouldn't have been blocked so easily by what was clearly supposed to be ranged mech!

Still, the more he observed the Quint, the more he became afraid that the situation might spin out of control. For the sake of the Ginetzy Family, he could only set aside his doubts and do his best to complete his mission!

Although the surrounding Avatar mechs wanted to skewer the enemy light mech with positron beams, Commander Casella instructed them to back away.

"Leave this opponent to me! If you interfere in this match, he will just avoid me and tear you apart instead. Keep focusing on the other Ginetzy mechs and dismantle as many of their missile and cannon-bearing mechs as possible!"

Commander Casella was aware that this might not be the most rational command decision that she could make at this time, but the Quint compelled her to face this challenger by themselves.

It was strange. Casella wasn't an avid duelist like her brother Imon, yet the Quint insisted on dueling the enemy light mech!

"Do you really want to do this here?!"

WE MUST PROVE OUR STRENGTH. THIS CHALLENGER SHALL BE OUR WHETSTONE.

Though Casella could still override her living mech's demands if she insisted on it, a part of her was actually eager to fight this impromptu duel.

In any case, the Ginetzy Battalion's gambit had already failed for the most part. Even if the enemy champion mech managed to defeat the Quint, it couldn't reverse the current trend by itself.

The enemy light mech did not sit still. The Ginetzy expert candidate realized that his side would only grow weaker over time. He needed to achieve a quick result in order to have any hopes of salvaging a victory!

The Ginetzy light mech did not launch a frontal assault this time. The swift machine instead sought to circle around and attack the Quint's more vulnerable flank or rear.

Despite the enemy expert candidate's quick maneuvers, the Quint easily kept up and turned around to constantly orient its front towards the enemy threat!

Seeing that the Quint was not about to expose its vulnerable rear to its daggers, the enemy light mech stopped wasting time on this maneuver game.

"If I can't outmaneuver you, I'll outfight you more directly!"

The enemy expert candidate didn't believe that this ranged mech specialist with a ranged mech could fend off a light skirmisher!

The two mechs instantly clashed and exchanged blows!

Although the Ginetzy light mech was clearly faster and piloted by a more skilled mech pilot in melee combat, the Quint was still able to block or evade the incoming attacks.

While Commander Casella wasn't able to find any opportunities to launch a counterattack, it was already sufficient for her to fend off the enemy attacker!

What made her life considerably easier was the Quint was originally a Bright Warrior mech. This meant that all of its performance parameters were relatively balanced and even. Though the Bright Warrior model did not possess any distinct strengths, it didn't possess any major shortcomings either.

Only a balanced design was able to adopt multiple roles! Depending on the configuration, a Bright Warrior could wear any coat and fight in different ways.

What was also important to note was that the Quint was not a regular Bright Warrior mech. It had received multiple upgrades throughout its lifetime that elevated its base performance by a considerable margin.

All this allowed the Quint to fend off the enemy light mech despite deploying in a rifleman mech configuration for this battle!

The lack of progress not only frustrated the Ginetzy expert candidate, but also shamed him! Light skirmishers were supposed to slaughter rifleman mechs at close range!

"This Larkinson expert candidate is clearly not a melee specialist." He observed. "Her swordsmanship is too basic. Yet the performance of her mech is just good enough to keep up with my attacks. As long as she focuses on defense, I can't penetrate through her defenses!"

While the Ginetzy expert candidate struggled to defeat the Larkinson commander and expert candidate, his other comrades were losing mechs left and right.

The Larkinson Battalion's somewhat effective counterattack achieved good results. As the missileer and cannoner mechs hidden inside the smoke cloud kept getting taken out, the Ginetzy Battalion's attack volleys continued to weaken.

When the Ginetzys only had less than a 100 offensive mechs left, they lost all chances of defeating the enemy!

Not only were they running low on ammunition and supplies, they also had to fend off the Transcendent Punishers that had managed to weather much of the storm.

The Avatar knight mechs had performed their jobs admirably and blocked a lot of damage. Even if they had reached their limits, the Transcendent Punishers themselves weren't pushovers. They were designed to hold their own in artillery duels.

Their mobility might be terrible, but their thick armor and huge frames allowed them to withstand a heavy amount of punishment and keep going!

In the end, the Ginetzy expert candidate became aware that it was impossible for his efforts to reverse the Ginetzy Battalion's defeat.

Expert candidate or not, there was only so much he could do to resist all of the opposition!

The Avatar ranged mechs could have nailed his light skirmisher after a bit of effort. Instead, they focused their firepower on the remaining Ginetzy ranged mechs instead, thereby guaranteeing their victory.

Once the Larkinson ranged mechs directed their weapons back on the Ginetzy light mech, its end was certain!

"I can only try to win back some honor by taking down this Larkinson expert candidate! Masterwork mech or not, you're going down!"

Defeating the Quint became an obsession to the man. He fought harder and made more aggressive moves.

The light skirmisher continually exchanged blows against the ranged mech with a sword, but the Quint had yet to suffer any serious damage!

Although Commander Casella was comfortable with this result, her living mech wasn't content with this result. It did not want to rely on others to defeat this little fly!

ATTACK.

Under the urging of the Quint, Commander Casella was compelled to fight more aggressively. Though the Quint began to show openings that the Ginetzy champion mech took advantage of, the damage was still tolerable.

What was important was that the Quint finally posed an actual threat to its opposition!

Though Commander Casella was nowhere close as the Swordmaidens in melee combat, she had become increasingly more proficient in employing her basic sword techniques.

The constant threat exerted by the Ginetzy mech pilot pressured Casella into polishing her swordsmanship on the spot. Together with the support provided by her mech, she became increasingly more adept at blocking the enemy attacks.

"Is this... Venerable Joshua's swordsmanship?"

She saw shadows of Joshua's swordsmanship back when he was piloting the Quint.

"No. That's not all. There's also a hint of my brother in this style!"

The Quint was actually instructing her in the combat skills of its past mech pilots!

The form of guidance was quite mysterious. The living mech wasn't verbally teaching her these moves, nor did it upload all of the skills straight into her mind. Instead, it conveyed skill templates through the man-machine connection that she could easily absorb if she wanted to. Though not every skill template conformed to her style and ability, there was still plenty of material that she saw fit to absorb.

Her performance visibly improved over time. The Quint and Casella deepened their bond as they both struggled to defeat this light mech under adverse conditions.

Eventually, the crucial difference came when the Ginetzy expert candidate decided to make an all-out attack!

"I can't keep getting entangled by this ranged mech when its mech pilot is constantly improving in front of my nose!"

With that thought, the Ginetzy light mech forcibly surged forward and sought to damage the Quint's arms!

As long as the ranged mech's relatively fragile limbs were taken out, the Larkinson masterwork mech should no longer be able to block any further dagger strikes!

The plan was good, but the Quint responded quickly.

As the two daggers surged forward, the Quint blocked one of the daggers with its sword and allowed the other one to strike the arm!

Despite suffering significant damage to its limb, the Quint grew bloodthirsty. Its dense and heavy glow spiked as the masterwork mech kicked the enemy light mech!

Although the blow did not deal serious damage to the Ginetzy light mech, the force of the blow still launched away.

While the Ginetzy light skirmisher quickly managed to stabilize its flight, the Quint holstered its sword and accepted the luminar crystal rifle that a nearby Avatar mech tossed into its direction!

"It's over." Commander Casella grinned as she reveled in the moment.

The prepared rifle quickly unleashed several different positron beams that accurately hit the Ginetzy champion mech's arms!

Under ordinary circumstances, the enemy light mech would have been able to avoid the attacks by performing evasive maneuvers.

However, the light mech happened to be relatively stationary at this time! It needed at least a second to build up sufficient speed to evade the incoming attacks, but Casella and the Quint did not let that happen!

Although the positron beams weren't able to sever the light mech's limbs outright, they still dealt enough damage for the Ginetzy mech to lose a lot of strength in the affected limbs.

It was unable to attack as smoothly as before!

As the Ginetzy light mech closed in to make a final desperation attack, the Quint didn't bother to swap weapons again.

It used the body of its luminar crystal rifle as an improvised staff and easily blocked the slower and weaker dagger strikes!

As the Ginetzy light skirmisher failed to overcome its opponent's guard, the Quint abruptly batted aside an incoming dagger.

The masterwork mech subsequently jabbed the butt of its rifle against one of the light skirmisher's damaged limb!

The forceful strike disrupted the affected arm to such an extent that it had actually lost its grip of its dagger!

Casella and the Quint quickly repeated the same move before the increasingly less composed Ginetzy expert candidate could adjust.

Left without any sharp weapons, the light skirmisher no longer posed much of a threat to the Larkinsons!

Casella grinned as she indulged in her living mech's desires.

The Quint first fired a couple of precise shots at the retreating light skirmisher's flight system.

The Ginetzy expert candidate knew that he had to pick up another set of weapons from the battlefield in order to rescue his chances in this mech duel!

The damage to the light mech's flight system spoiled his plans. After losing a considerable amount of speed, the Quint soon caught up and reached out to grab the light skirmisher's frame!

"What are you doing?!"

The Quint proceeded to abuse the helpless light mech! It repeatedly punched, kicked and wrestled against the light mech in one of the most brutal and absurd displays of savagery in the G-Aena League!

[Is that ranged mech... beating up a melee mech?]

[It's a light skirmisher. It is an entire weight class lighter than the Larkinson masterwork rifleman mech.]

[Even if that's true, a ranged mech simply shouldn't be allowed to beat a light skirmisher at its own game!]

The Quint did not let up on the assault until the arena finally engaged the safety system. A powerful energy shield emerged that prevented the brutal mech from endangering the life of the enemy expert candidate.

At this time, the Quint had finally sated its battle lust!

[The Larkinson Battalion... has won!]

Chapter 3478: Overbearing Machine

The Larkinson Battalion had won its first match in the G-Aena League!

Although the Larkinsons struggled to overcome the unusual strategies and tactics employed by their opposition, they managed to defeat the Ginetzys by relying on their superior attacking prowess.

The massive audience was able to view more than the combatants throughout the match. The obscuring smoke formed no obstacle as the arena automatically provided them with an augmented view that allowed them to see exactly what went on inside.

This allowed each of them to appreciate the performance of both sides!

"Larkinsons! Larkinsons! Larkinsons!"

"Ginetzys! Ginetzys! Ginetzys!"

Although the people cheering for the Larkinson Battalion ultimately overwhelmed the voices backing the quirky Ginetzy Battalion, none of them were dissatisfied with how the battle unfolded.

At this stage in the tournament, hardly anyone was familiar with the sixteen groups that participated in the G-Aena League. The people who supported the Larkinson Battalion were still shallow fans that could easily convert to another competitor if the Larkinsons started losing.

Even so, the Larkinson Clan already attracted a lot of attention after winning their first bout in this massive, highly-publicized media spectacle!

The amount of people who followed the G-Aena League vastly exceeded that of the High Tide Tournament and other smaller events. In an instant, the Larkinson Clan became flooded with inquiries, most of which had to do with purchasing the mechs that the Larkinson Clan showcased in battle.

It was too bad that many of the models in the field such as the Transcendent Punishers weren't for sale.

In fact, the Larkinson Battalion hadn't even shown the full capabilities of their mechs as of yet. The odd combat approach of the Ginetzy Battalion prevented the Larkinson mechs from showing off their full capabilities.

When the mech pilots of the Larkinson Battalion finally returned to the backstage and joined up with their other compatriots, their gazes turned heavy as they looked at the aftermath of their victory.

"How many?" Commander Casella asked as she looked out at all of the piles of wreckage that the arena had swept in this corner.

"We're still judging which mechs can be restored and which ones should be salvaged, commander." A Larkinson chief technician told her. "Even if we are able to make use of the services offered by the tournament, we're still looking at a total loss of up to 150 mechs. Then there are about 200 mechs that require light to moderate repairs to return them to their best conditions."

"That much?"

"The weapons employed by our opponents are too destructive, ma'am. The mechs that got blown up by dozens of missiles and the machines that got too close to the self-destructed Ginetzy mechs lost too much integrity. There are more broken and ruined

parts than intact frames in those cases. We're better off recycling all of this junk and shipping them back to the Spirit of Bentheim so that we can build new mechs."

The Larkinsons already expected that they would lose a lot of mechs per match. In order to prevent them from running out of mechs entirely, they needed to preserve as much materials as possible. The more scrap they recovered, the more mechs they could produce to make up for the losses.

Casella realized that their losses this time were fairly light this time. If they lost a match or fought against a tougher opponent, the mechs that were ruined beyond repair could easily reach an excess of 300 mechs!

She had to do better in order to prevent that outcome. All of her fellow Larkinsons had to do better to win their subsequent arena matches.

The Larkinsons began to wound down and evaluate their previous performance. While these discussions went on, Commander Casella met with Director Raella in a private hangar where the Quint was being serviced with great care.

Due to the great importance of the masterwork mech, a team of assistant mech designers from the Design Department had volunteered to service the powerful machine.

The strong and heavy glow of the Quint made it unbearable for ordinary people to stay in its presence for long, but the Apprentice Mech Designers could just bear it without relying on any remote repair equipment.

This was a great opportunity for the likes of Miles Tovar, Moltar Ringer and Catherine Evenson to get up close to one of their head designer's best works.

The mech designers treated the Quint as an artifact and did their best to complete their repairs as flawlessly as possible.

"You know, I grew nervous for a moment when I saw that the light mech piloted by the Ginetzy expert candidate tried to assassinate you." Raella remarked. "It turns out you expert candidates are more versatile than I thought. I'm impressed with the way you humiliated that guy. It's great showmanship and you certainly managed to stand out in front of the crowd."

"I didn't intend to duel the enemy expert candidate." Commander Casella admitted with a grimace. "We're participating in this tournament in order to win the top prizes. If we cannot obtain third place or higher, then our losses will exceed whatever we can obtain from this tournament."

Earning fame was just a secondary objective to the clan. The real reason why the Larkinsons were willing to endure so many losses to their mech roster was because of the promise of winning lots of carriers!

The prize pool of the G-Aena League was considerably bigger than usual and much more suitable for larger pioneering organizations.

The champion of the tournament could obtain an entire fleet carrier as well as 20 combat carriers.

The second-place winner could obtain 20 combat carriers.

The third-place winner had to make do with 10 combat carriers.

The fourth-place winner could only obtain a paltry 5 combat carriers.

With the distribution of the prizes of the tournament, all 16 participating groups were aiming for the top 2! Just getting into the finals already guaranteed them 20 combat carriers that were able to hold 60 mechs each!

That translated to a total mech capacity of 1200 mechs, which was actually considerably more than what a fleet carrier was able to hold!

Of course, fleet carriers brought a lot of value in other aspects such as greater cargo space, better support facilities and better living conditions. Even so, many pioneering organizations were willing to forgo all of those luxuries in order to bring additional mechs!

With such high stakes, how could Commander Casella possibly risk a reversal by fighting a needless duel?

As an expert candidate, a part of her craved to test her mettle against strong opponents.

As a high-ranked officer of the Larkinson Clan, she felt obliged to make the most optimal decisions that maximized their chances of victory. Throwing herself into battle for more selfish reasons did not conform to her mentality.

Why did she foolishly challenge the enemy expert candidate to a duel?

Why did she not order her fellow Larkinson mech pilots to skewer the Ginetzy light skirmisher with energy beams?

Why did she forget about her responsibilities and revel in the excitement of matching her skills against an equal?

The answers to all of these questions lay in the mech in front of her. The Quint was the root of her current issue.

When Raella stared at her fellow Larkinson, she understood that Casella was not happy at the moment.

"Is the Quint giving you problems?"

"Yes." Casella admitted. "The Quint has... a temper. It is a great fighting machine, but it is not a suitable command platform. It wants to fight. Although it cares about the Larkinson Clan, at its heart it just wants to beat its opponents."

"If you don't want to fight, why can't you just say no? You're the mech pilot here. You're in control."

The Sentinel Commander responded with a rueful smile. "I'm not so sure about that. Right now, the Quint is definitely stronger than me. If it really opposes my decisions, it can force me to go along with its desires. I don't have much choice to go along for the ride in those cases."

That was a troubling admission!

Previously, the Larkinsons all worshiped their living mechs. They experienced the benefits of piloting them and developed close bonds with their growing and evolving machines.

What they had overlooked was that living mechs came in many different forms. Their personalities changed and grew much stronger over time. This applied especially to third order living mechs such as the Quint!

In order to figure out what was wrong with the Quint, Casella and Raella approached the assistant mech designers that were busy with servicing the masterwork mech.

Casella brought Catherine Evenson aside and filled the mech designer in on her problem.

"You must be quite familiar with Patriarch Ves' work." The legion commander said. "Do you know why the Quint has developed such a savage and bloodthirsty personality?"

The former noble of the Sentinel Kingdom frowned. This was a completely unexpected inquiry. "I may be a mech designer, but I don't specialize in living mechs. My specialty centers around artillery mechs, so if you asked me a question about the Transcendent Punisher model, I could have offered you a much more detailed answer. Still, as far as I'm aware, the growth of living mech is highly influenced by its exposure to external stimuli. The mech pilot has the greatest influence on the development of a living mech."

"That means that Venerable Joshua has shaped the Quint's 'childhood', if you can call it that." Raella said. "It doesn't make sense, though. I know what Venerable Joshua is like and he's quite a friendly expert pilot. I don't think he has a savage bone in his body."

Commander Casella began to connect the dots. "Anyone can become ferocious when they are pushed into a corner. Think about all of the battles we've been through. We fought numerous battles against tough opponents. The Quint has lived through them and has become defined by them. Before I took over the Quint, its previous mech pilots weren't officers at all. People such as Venerable Joshua did not have to take the overall strategic situation into consideration. Instead, they only concentrated on defeating the opponents in front of them at all costs. The Quint must have been shaped by these crucial moments."

That was as good of an explanation as any, but it didn't really help their situation all that much. What was done was done. The Quint grew up under challenging circumstances and developed a warped personality as a result.

The real question was what the Larkinsons should do after figuring out this sequence of events.

"Can't we just... reeducate the Quint?" Raella tentatively suggested. "I mean, you can always try to rehabilitate a delinquent. Since it works on humans, why shouldn't it work on mechs?"

The suggestion was sound, but neither Casella nor Catherine believed it was that simple.

"We can try, I suppose, but a masterwork mech such as the Quint has its own pride." Casella sighed. "I'm afraid I won't be able to correct its personality when I am the weaker partner in our relationship."

"Maybe we should call in the patriarch. He made the Quint. He ought to be able to fix it I think."

Catherine shook her head. "The patriarch is busy competing in a design tournament at the moment. We shouldn't distract him from doing his best to win more combat carriers for our clan. The Quint's personality might not be pleasant to you, but that doesn't mean it deserves punishment. It just means that you might not be the right pilot for this masterwork mech. Why did you get paired with it in the first place?"

"That's what I'm wondering about as well." Casella softly replied as she gazed at the dormant Quint. "My relationship with it is good, but I am fully aware that I can only pilot it at its sufferance. I can't go on like this. I don't even know why the Quint chose me as its current pilot when it doesn't fully respect my opinion."

"It sounds like you need to stand up against the Quint."

"That's easier said than done."

Chapter 3479: Command Contradiction

Though Commander Casella tried to work on her relationship with the Quint, she failed to make any significant headway.

The masterwork mech was content with letting Casella stay in charge most of the time.

However, as soon as a moment came up where she could fight a challenging battle against a powerful foe, the Quint compelled her to fight rather than opt for any of the safer alternatives!

It was fortunate that the Larkinson Battalion's second opponent was not as tricky as the Ginetzy Battalion.

Of the four battalions in Group A, the Heartfall Battalion was the most standard and normal of them all. The mechs employed by the Heartfall Security Enterprise were relatively basic and normal and only stood out for their higher-than-average mobility.

Mercenaries were accustomed to bullying weaker opponents and running away from stronger foes. Piloting mechs that could advance quickly and retreat and even faster was essential for mercenaries. It was a lot harder for them to stay alive and remain in business if they were unable to disengage at will!

Even so, an arena match did not allow for retreat. The Heartfall Battalion had little choice but to tough it out against the Larkinson Battalion in a relatively confined battlefield.

Perhaps the Ginetzys were able to negate and invalidate many of the advantages of the Larkinson Clan, but the Heartfallers were so painfully ordinary that they easily served as a foil to the various detachments of the Larkinson mech legions participating in the G-Aena League!

The Avatars of Myth assaulted the main lines of the Heartfall Battalion upfront!

Once the Avatar mech pilots invoked the Golden Cat, they temporarily inherited the superior piloting skills of the best mech pilots of the clan. This subtly increased their battle effectiveness and caused the opposing mechs to fall back again and again!

The Penitent Sisters and the Flagrant Vandals harassed the flanking elements of the Heartfallers. The Valkyrie Redeemer and Ferocious Piranha mechs took great advantage of their glows to disturb the enemy mech pilots and take advantage of the openings they created.

The Eye of Ylvaine not only provided artillery support, but also specifically suppressed the mechs piloted by the mech officers of the Heartfall Battalion.

By taking out or distracting all of these leaders, the coordination between the Heartfall mechs became more flawed as the match went on. Without sufficient guidance, the mercenary mech pilots began to make decisions on their own, which was a considerable taboo on the battlefield!

If they were professional soldiers, then they would have been able to organize themselves to some degree. Unfortunately, mercenaries weren't known for their discipline and even an elite outfit like the Heartfall Security Enterprise wasn't able to impose too much discipline on their troops!

The Larkinsons identified this flaw pretty early based on the Heartfall Battalion's previous match against the Quizlam Battalion.

Once the cohesion of the Heartfall Battalion dropped below a certain point, the Larkinson Battalion finally unleashed their coup de grace.

The Swordmaiden mechs advanced towards the flanks of the Heartfall Battalion while encountering virtually no opposition!

The slaughter that ensued cemented the Larkinson Battalion's victory! The Swordmaiden mechs cut through both sides of the enemy and broke the back of the Heartfall Battalion!

The relatively simple and neat victory was a great morale booster to the Larkinson mech pilots. Their reluctant win against the Ginetzy Battalion had made them question their battle effectiveness, but their second match in the tournament showed they still had the capital to reach the finals.

The only issue was the Quint practically forced Commander Casella in the thick of the action.

Though her mech did not toss aside its luminar crystal rifle in favor of a sword this time, the masterwork mech had exposed itself to considerable danger as it strafed and danced against the elites of the Heartfall Battalion!

Though Casella tried to negotiate with her mech numerous times, the Quint had its own ideas on what it should do in battle.

A LARKINSON MUST BE BOLD AND COURAGEOUS.

"I get that, but that doesn't mean that a commanding officer must go forward all the time!"

YOU ARE AN EXPERT CANDIDATE. A CHAMPION. FIGHTING IS IN YOUR NATURE.

"My way of contributing to the battle is different from other mech pilots! My command responsibilities are much more important than my individual skill! In larger battles such as these, our clan can reduce a lot more losses if we command our forces more effectively!"

THE LARKINSON CLAN HAS MANY OFFICERS, BUT FEW CHAMPIONS. YOU CANNOT DENY YOUR OWN NATURE AS A MECH PILOT.

"I understand you're trying to help me reach apotheosis, but I don't want to break through as a battle maniac like our other expert pilots! My ambition is to become the best battlefield commander of the Larkinson Clan!"

Though Casella always sought to attain this goal, this was the first time she voiced it directly to someone else. Even if the Quint wasn't a human, she still felt a bit ashamed at voicing out her personal desire.

Though the Quint didn't argue with her any further, it did not change its priorities either. Battle was all the living mech thought about. Like a drug addict, it disregarded logical arguments and mostly gave in to its baser desires.

"It seems that living mechs can reflect both the best and worst of humanity."

There was a huge diversity among humans. Why should living mechs be any different?

Commander Casella realized that proper upbringing was crucial to both forms of life. The way they were raised heavily determined their character when they reached maturity. The Larkinsons just paid too little attention to this aspect and just allowed mechs such as the Quint to grow without any specific guidance.

Perhaps the aggressive personality of the Quint might work out for a simple mech pilot such as Venerable Joshua, but this was not quite working out for Casella at the moment.

She even thought about transferring to another mech and allow another Larkinson expert candidate to pilot this great machine, but she reconsidered.

"The Quint might be unruly, but it is still our most powerful standard mech. If we want to defeat the tougher opponents in the G-Aena League, I will surely need to borrow its power. It's a fantasy for me to win the subsequent battles by remaining in the back."

Casella experienced the classic contradiction between a mech champion and a mech commander. It was too difficult for most people in her position to adequately fulfill both roles at the same time.

Those who had the potential to become an expert pilot usually abandoned their commanding duties so that they could fully invest into becoming a better individual combatant. After all, stepping onto the path to godhood was much more attractive than simply attaining a higher military rank!

There were still people who managed to thread the needle, though. To the Larkinsons, their greatest example was Venerable Ark Larkinson, who currently acted as the patriarch of the Larkinson Family.

Casella Ingvar studied the powerful Larkinson expert pilot's record and even interviewed old veterans on how this famed leader conducted himself on and off the battlefield.

Though she hadn't fully figured out how Ark was able to reconcile all of his responsibilities, she was already content with knowing that it was possible.

"I need to find my own way. I shouldn't follow Venerable Ark's trajectory too closely. "

Just like any other aspiring expert pilot, she needed to find her own path towards godhood. This was why she opposed her mech's more brutal urges. Even if she forced herself to embrace the Quint's tendencies, she didn't think she would be able to break through.

She didn't have time to solve her disagreements with the Quint. She needed to prepare for the next and last match of the first round of the G-Aena League.

When she along with a number of other Larkinson leaders gathered in a meeting room, she clearly outlined the stakes of the next engagement.

"Currently, our battalion is in the top of the standings of Group A. We have two wins under our belt while the Quizlams and the Ginetzys have only managed to achieve a single victory each. Raella, please explain the potential scenario that we might face if we can't win our next match."

Director Raella projected a simple table which showed the standings of the four battalions. "Currently, the Quizlams and the Ginetzys both have the potential to collect another win. The Heartfall Battalion is clearly not up to par against the rest and I anticipate that the Ginetzy Battalion will be able to defeat the mercenaries with ease. If our battalion loses against the Quizlams, then we'll end up in a situation where three battalions in Group A are all tied with each other."

The numbers in the table changed until the Larkinson Battalion, the Quizlam Battalion and the Ginetzy Battalion all had 2 wins and 1 loss!

"Uhm, what will happen if there's a three-way tie?"

"We won't fight any additional matches. The busy schedule of the G-Aena League cannot accommodate any further arena battles. The tournament organizers will instead resort to a complicated set of tie-breaker rules to determine which one of us is most deserving to advance to the second round. The rules take into account who has managed to overcome the other, how many mechs we've lost and how much time it took for us to secure our wins."

"Do we have a good chance of ranking ahead of the other two battalions?"

"I don't know." Raella admitted. "Our performance against the Ginetzys wasn't all that great from a scoring perspective. There is a significant chance that a hard-fought victory tomorrow will all come down to nothing. The only way we can guarantee advancement to the semifinals is to defeat the Quizlam Battalion. When we are the only ones that have accrued 3 victories in the round-robin phase, we will become the undisputed winners of Group A."

Her message was simple. If they won the next match, they could immediately move forward. If they lost, they still had a chance of making it through, but the decision was out of their hands!

"If that's all it takes, then why are we making such a big fuss about it? Let's just beat the Quizlams and be done with this round!"

Although this was an obvious conclusion, Casella found it important for everyone to know how crucial it was for them to do their best. Once everyone comprehended the stakes, they began to strategize in earnest.

"The Quizlams never fight a straight battle." Commander Casella stated. "Their previous two matches have shown that they have a penchant for relying on obscuring the battlefield, dividing our forces, cutting off our communications and defeating us in isolation."

"The Ginetzys have managed to beat them, though."

"That's because the Ginetzy Battalion's famed defenses has essentially allowed it to outlast the Quizlam Battalion. Remember that the Ginetzys do not have to move or split their forces at all in order to fight at their best. Their battle approach directly counters most of the methods employed by the Quizlams."

"Can't we do the same? I mean, we should just deploy a lot of Transcendent Punishers and pair them up with a sufficient amount of knight mechs to keep them safe. With the Eye of Ylvaine's special powers, our artillery mechs can practically nail any stealth mech no matter how difficult it is to detect their whereabouts!"

"That's not a viable strategy to us." Director Raella shook her head. "The tournament rules limit the tonnage and firepower we can bring at any time. The more Transcendent

Punishers we bring, the more we have to give up on something else. Our artillery mechs can easily be defeated if we don't have a sufficient force of other mechs that can directly block the sneaky Quizlam mechs."

Commander Casella also realized this truth. "I agree with the director. Defense is not our strong suit and we don't have the right mechs for it. We're an attacking force and we should stick to what we do best if we want to make it to the finals."

"Forgive me for saying this, ma'am, but if we just focus on attacking the Quizlam Battalion, won't we suffer the same fate as the Heartfall Battalion?"

Raella smirked. "Not quite. I've asked the mech designers of the Design Department for assistance, and they've obliged. We have a couple of solutions that no one else has... We will surely be able to turn the tables against the Quizlam Battalion as long as we make good use of our advantages."

Chapter 3480: Quizlam Battalion

The fated day had come. The final matches of the first round for Group A had commenced.

First up, the Ginetzy Battalion fought against the Heartfall Battalion.

Each of them had learned from their previous battles against the other battalions. They were both aware that they had exposed much of their strength and strategies in the previous matches, so they adapted their mech rosters and battle approaches for their final bout in this round.

The Heartfall Security Enterprise already regretted the decision to take part in this enormous event. Its battalion was pretty much guaranteed to end their tournament participation today. Still, it would be far too shameful for the Heartfallers to bow out of this grand event with not a single win to their name!

To that end, the Heartfall Battalion deployed an unusual mix of mechs consisting of a large amount of offensive knight mechs!

The mercenary organization wasn't short of mechs, so it could easily swap out their previous machines for hundreds of offensive knight mechs.

Everyone in the audience was completely surprised by the abrupt change in strategy. Although the Heartfallers looked as if they had gone mad, there was a certain brilliance to their extreme decision.

"These knight mechs are not only tough, but also moderately fast! Many of them will be able to survive bombardment long enough to reach the fortified position of the Ginetzy

Battalion. As long as they can breach the shield and get inside, they can likely withstand several suicide explosions before they are finally taken out of the fight!"

The Heartfallers abandoned all nuance and committed to the most stupid, foolproof battle strategy to squeeze out a win!

If they succeeded, they would have been able to redeem themselves.

If they lost, then the Heartfall Security Enterprise would probably find it much more difficult to conduct business in the Red Ocean!

It was a pity that this gamble failed. The Ginetzy Battalion did not change much, but deployed additional knight mechs that successfully stalled the advance of a lot of Heartfall mechs!

This enabled the Ginetzy ranged mechs to fire their weapons with impunity for a significantly longer time. Though the Ginetzys lost a lot of mechs at the end, they still managed to bury all of the Heartfall mechs!

The Larkinsons weren't happy with this result. With 2 wins, the Ginetzys had a good chance coming out on top when the tie-breaker rules went into effect.

"You've seen what happened in the arena." Commander Casella addressed her fellow Larkinson mech pilots. "The Ginetzy Battalion has 2 wins now. If we don't beat the Quizlams, we'll end up with the same amount. It will be up to the referees to decide which battalion in Group A gets to advance to the next round. Will you allow these referees to decide our fate or will you take matters into our own hands?"

"We'll beat the Quizlams!"

"We're not going to let any of these clowns get their way!"

"Then stick to the plan and follow your instructions! The Quizlams may have been able to abuse the Heartfallers, but we are ready for their tricks!"

Once both the Larkinson Battalion and the Quizlam Battalion entered the arena, the dynamic battlefield changed into an odd environment.

Entire city structures had risen up from the floor as the entire environment began to resemble a dense urban metropolis!

"Damnit! Why a city of all possibilities?!"

"This is a paradise for the Quizlams!"

"Shut up and focus on your own duties! We've already accounted for this scenario. The Quizlams may favor urban battlefields, but the cramped terrain makes it easier for us to get close to them as well."

The urban battlefield for this match had several important consequences.

First, long-ranged detection was considerably less effective because all of the reinforcements were packed with dense materials and electronic systems.

Second, aerial mechs had to watch their movements carefully and could not fly as freely as before. The only way for them to move without hindrance was to fly above all of the structures, but they couldn't do much in that situation.

Third, ranged mechs were severely constrained due to all of the obstacles in their way. The artillery mechs had it worse as they needed to knock down a lot of structures before they could land their attacks on distant targets.

Although the Quizlam Battalion probably felt at home in a highly urbanized battlefield, the Larkinson Battalion wasn't all that bothered by it. Commander Casella quickly issued a series of instructions as she thought about how her men could defeat the Quizlams.

"We're not good at entrenching ourselves, but we can't split up and chase after every shadow either. We need to keep moving around. We also have to stay close enough to each other to prevent our mechs from getting defeated in detail."

The Larkinson Battalion did just that. Different mech companies began to spread around to an extent so that they were able to occupy multiple adjacent streets at the same time.

While Casella preferred to concentrate all of her troops on the same avenues, the city didn't offer enough space to do so. Forcibly cramming 500 mechs in a single street would only make them all vulnerable to wide-area attacks!

Most of the mechs stayed on the ground though the Valkyrie Redeemers and the Ferocious Piranhas had taken flight. They needed to remain mobile in order to remain effective and would only become more constrained if they had to rely on their legs to move around.

"The smoke is coming!"

The Quizlam Battalion had already acted as quickly as possible. Their mechs erected strong interference fields and launched a large amount of canisters that released signal-blocking particles in the air. Every conventional sensor system could no longer return anything solid beyond a hundred meters while communication signals didn't fare much better!

Under these conditions, the outlying Larkinson mech units became more vulnerable to concentrated attacks.

"We're under attack!"

A barrage of physical projectiles emerged from the mist and struck the mechs of this isolated formation!

"Hunker down!"

Fortunately, all of the outer mech units of the Larkinson Battalion possessed plenty of defensive mechs. The Bright Warriors in knight mech configuration all planted their tower shields on the street and withstood the withering fire while providing cover to other friendly mechs.

The other Larkinson mechs didn't try to charge in the direction of the enemy attack. They had learned from the Heartfallers that they would just stumble into an ambush prepared by the Quizlam Battalion.

The problem was that hunkering down was not a permanent solution. Sure, the knight mechs were able to block the attacks for now, but their shields and armor would get chewed through eventually.

Though the rifleman mechs in the same unit tried to fire back with their luminar crystal rifles, all of that firepower wouldn't make a difference if they didn't know where to aim!

This was where the two Transcendent Punishers came in. The Ylvainan mechs soon fired out guiding positron beams and gauss rounds at certain directions.

Just an instant later, the Avatar ranged mechs followed suit!

Now that they had practiced this combination play, the cooperation between the Avatars of Myth and the Eye of Ylvaine was much better than before.

Yet beyond the sight of their sensors, their attacks mostly hit nothing but useless structures!

It turned out that the Quizlam ranged mechs had always made sure to hide as much of their frames behind the corners of different street structures as possible.

Since the arena simulated a prosperous second-class city, the massive buildings were tough enough to withstand a lot of collateral damage. Due to their sheer size and mass, the structures were not that much weaker than mech armor!

"Our return fire is not hitting enough Quizlam mechs!" An Ylvainan mech lieutenant said.

How he knew that without being able to observe their distant attackers through the mist was a mystery, but none of the Larkinsons tangled over this little detail.

The right response to this was to beat a slow and steady retreat towards the main elements of the Larkinson Battalion.

However, that would be a mistake! The Larkinson mech units would just contract further and surrender all of their initiative to their opponents.

Although the mech pilots all knew what they had to do, it was quite difficult for them to maintain their cool while they let the annoying Quizlam ranged mechs fire at them with impunity. It was not in the nature of the Larkinsons to let their opponents have their way!

Boom!

Boom!

Boom!

Fortunately, the organized response of the Larkinson Battalion had finally come!

A moderate distance away, a group of Valkyie Redeemers and Ferocious Piranhas swooped down from above and overtook the Quizlam mechs that had been firing their kinetic weapons at the distant Larkinson mech unit!

The ranged mechs did not expect the Larkinsons to be able to figure out their locations so soon, let alone communicate their findings to different mech units.

In order to make sure that the Larkinson Battalion didn't rely on wired communications or other ECM-resistant communication methods, the Quizlam Battalion had secretly snuck in a lot of stealth mechs throughout the Larkinson mech elements!

"How is this possible?!"

"Warn the others!"

"It's too late! Our other sniping units are also under attack!"

Almost a hundred Quizlam ranged mechs were being assaulted by a similar number of Larkinson aerial mechs.

In each and every case, the Larkinson mechs responded quickly and managed to find the actual positions of the Quizlam mechs despite the latter relocating after every few shots!

Though the Quizlam ranged mechs along with their melee escorts fought back as best as possible, the Flagrant Vandals and Penitent Sisters combined both their glows and managed to torture and terrify the minds of the Quizlam mech pilots to such an extent that they had lost a lot of focus!

"Hahaha, these Quizlam mechs aren't so scary now that we're able to pinpoint their coordinates!" A Vandal mech pilot laughed.

The Quizlam mechs excelled in situations where they had the upper hand. Yet now that they had lost control, their weakness in direct combat immediately became apparent. The Larkinson mechs were simply better now that they had successfully closed in on their opponents!

"Thanks for leading us to the right location, Sisters."

"It is of no issue."

The Penitent Sisters hadn't just deployed their Valkyrie Redeemers this time. While the women were very fond of this mech model, they also brought in an additional mech model this time!

Originally designed for the Hex Army, the sole Cherub mech in their midst was a highly conspicuous newcomer in the Larkinson mech lineup.

The Larkinson Clan never saw the need to employ this mech model until now. The auxiliary mech was small, cheap, fragile and practically defenseless against enemy mechs.

Yet it possessed one powerful capability that was extremely useful for this match.

Every Cherub mech was able to maintain contact with other Cherub mechs as long as they were in the same star system!

In a battlefield like this, it was no problem for the dozens of Cherub mechs that were spread throughout the different Larkinson mech elements to stay in contact with each other. By relying on the spiritual communication network maintained by the Superior Mother, these auxiliary mechs completely negated every attempt of the Quizlams to cut off the Larkinson Battalion's communications!

This effectively meant that despite all of the effort the Quizlams had put into blinding and isolating the individual Larkinson elements, Commander Casella and every other clansmen remained in full contact with each other!

Honestly speaking, the Larkinson Clan could have relied on other methods to achieve the same effect if it really wanted to. The problem was that it was much harder to

explain why the Larkinsons were able to maintain contact with each other through all of the interference.

The Cherub mech model was already a familiar product to the Mech Trade Association. Hundreds of thousands of them were being employed each day across the frontlines of the Komodo War. The Hexers maintained a distinct coordination advantage in large and complex battlefields with the help of this old male-oriented auxiliary mech model.

This wasn't the only surprise the Larkinson Battalion had in store against their current opponent. Now that the Quizlams were caught off-balance, Commander Casella quickly issued her next command.

"Swat the flies!"

Shortly afterwards, more than a dozen hidden Quizlam mechs situated close to the Larkinson mechs became exposed as their stealth systems malfunctioned.

Even though the Quizlam stealth mechs had been clever by staying out of the direct line of sight of any Transcendent Punishers, the Larkinsons still managed to attack them without giving them a chance to retreat.

The Devious mechs briefly became exposed as well once they slipped their daggers through the backs of their oblivious Quizlam counterparts.

The Devious was another exclusive Hexer mech design that the Hexadric Hegemony used to good effect! Although their stealth systems weren't top-of-the-line, the Quizlam stealth mechs didn't specialize in detection.

Yet even if that was the case, how could the Larkinsons detect all of their hidden elements? Was the Larkinson Battalion's sensor technology much more advanced than the Quizlams had realized?

It was too bad that the Larkinsons weren't in the mood to answer their questions... Scores of sneaky Quizlam mechs quietly met their end as they were abruptly rooted out without warning.