

## Mech 3481

### *Chapter 3481: Quizlam Nemesis*

Before the Larkinson Battalion fought this match, the clan sought to find a solution for the infamous stealth tactics of the Quizlam Battalion.

"You all know what we are up against." Commander Casella told the Larkinsons in the meeting room. "The Quizlams excel at hiding their mechs. That not only prevents us from destroying them, but also allows them to approach us with near impunity. Yet their emphasis on electronic warfare also means that their mechs are not that good in frontal combat. As long as we can find them, we can confront them directly with our mechs. That will be the key to victory."

"How can we expose them, though? The Quizlam Battalion's stealth and ECM technologies are too good! None of the other two battalions managed to crack their advanced technologies. How can we do any better?"

"What about the Eye of Ylvaine? They should be good at detecting all kinds of sneaky bastards!"

Everyone directed their attention to the Ylvainan captain in the room.

"Ylvaine is not some sort of oracle you can dial on command." The mech officer grimaced. "The Great Prophet is still in recovery after the Ylvaine Protectorate has gone astray. He is all-knowing, but we must not burden him with too many demands."

"Surely Mr. Ylvaine can lend us a hand?"

"I'm sorry, but in non-critical situations like these, it is best to be frugal. The more we make demands of the Great Prophet, the less he can provide for us in the battles that truly matter."

The Sentinel Commander was one of the highest leaders of the Larkinson Clan. She was well aware of the dangers of the Red Ocean and could not afford to squander limited resources too soon.

From what Commander Casella understood of Ylvaine's situation, the so-called prophet was too short of worshippers to provide much support. What little he had left in the tank should be saved up for the kind of life-and-death battles that the Larkinsons would get embroiled in sooner or later.

As much as she wanted to borrow Ylvaine's full might to expose all of the hidden Quizlam stealth mechs, she could not justify the expenditure this time.

The stakes of the upcoming match were not as great as their previous battles. Sure, losing the match against the Quizlams might put the Larkinsons out of contention in the G-Aena League, but the loss was not that great.

Every mech pilot would still be alive. Many destroyed mechs could still be restored or recycled. The only really painful consequence of ending their tournament run was to forgo the chance to win a lot of combat carriers.

Commander Casella fell into thought for a time.

"We cannot rely too much on the powers of the Ylvainans." She eventually decided. "Our clan consists of far more than Transcendent Punishers. Our other mech legions must carry their weight as well."

"Still, the Avatars, Vandals and so on cannot properly deal with the Quizlam Battalion's mechs and battle strategies. If we throw them in with little support from the Eye of Ylvaine, they will all end up getting harassed to death by invisible and untouchable enemies like the Heartfallers."

The Larkinsons discussed a number of alternate solutions before someone came up with a bright idea.

"Wait! Why can't we triangulate the enemy positions?"

"Explain."

"The Transcendent Punishers work by nudging the aim of the mech pilot in a certain direction, right?"

"Correct."

"Then if at least two Transcendent Punishers are able to find the direction of a hidden mech, we can infer coordinates of the enemy mech through simple math!"

A few of the Larkinsons already became enlightened by what the analyst meant, but the others still needed a bit more clarity.

The man who proposed the idea formed his palms into knives and pressed them flat on the table.

"Pretend my palms are Transcendent Punishers. Let's say that there is an enemy stealth mech hiding somewhere in front of us. Right now, we don't know where it is located, but the great Ylvaine has a clue."

The two palms changed their orientation angles until they formed a vague pyramid.

"If Ylvaine does his usual stuff and clues in two Transcendent Punishers located in different locations, they only have to point the barrels of their cannons in the right directions. Once we register this direction, we can use the data we've collected to triangulate the position of the enemy mech!"

The analyst illustrated this example by pushing his two palms forward along their current orientations until they bumped into each other!

This time, everyone understood the method!

Although this tracking method required the cooperation of at least two Transcendent Punishers that were located away from each other, it was an incredibly simple and low tech solution to one of their biggest problems for the upcoming match!

"I see." Commander Casella's eyes lit up. "The Transcendent Punishers do not even need to fire their weapons. In fact, it might be best not to frighten the hidden Quizlam mechs in advance. As long as their coordinates are exposed, we can deal with them in many different ways!"

"We should give away as little clues as possible. If any of the Ylvainan mech pilots know the direction of a hidden enemy mech, then they shouldn't point all of their guns at it. That will just give away the fact that we know."

The Larkinsons began to discuss how to best leverage and optimize their ability to triangulate hidden opponents.

When the match against the Quizlam Battalion finally commenced, the Larkinson Battalion employed all of these newly-developed methods for the first time.

While it was true that the Larkinsons spread out their mech units because a single street wasn't big enough to accommodate them all, there was a second reason why they needed to distance themselves from each other.

The Transcendent Punishers that were located in the center of each Larkinson mech formation had to go their separate ways in order to make triangulation work as effectively as possible!

Right now, the Transcendent Punishers mostly pretended to be on standby, but in truth their mech pilots were shouldering the most important responsibility of the Larkinson Battalion at the moment.

They prayed to the Great Prophet and opened themselves up for divine guidance.

As Ylvaine responded to their pleas by nudging their aim through the Transcendent Punisher mechs, the mech pilots resisted the urge to change the orientation of the guns under their command.

Instead, they utilized the neural interface to digitize and transmit the vector data of the suspected enemy location to the rest of the Larkinson Battalion.

Every mech was capable of calculating the exact enemy coordinates after they collected the vector data from different Transcendent Punishers.

No matter whether it was a Bright Warrior, a Ferocious Piranha, a Valkyrie Redeemer or a Devious mech, each of them instantly knew where to unleash their aggression once they received the right data transmissions!

The enemy was taken off-guard. Even if the Larkinsons showed that they could overcome the effect of powerful interference and sensor-blocking particles, the Quizlams never expected that their much-vaunted stealth technology was rendered completely ineffective!

The combination of both stealth technology and other detection countermeasures should have made it impossible for the Larkinsons to sniff out the Quizlam stealth mechs!

What was especially insulting to them was that the Larkinsons assassinated the Quizlam machines with their own stealth mechs!

[What an unexpected surprise! The Quizlams thought they could play their usual game and rely on their advanced stealth and interference technology to conduct guerilla warfare, but the Larkinsons have become their second nemesis after the Ginetzys!]

[How can the Larkinson mechs possibly identify the positions of the enemy mechs?]

[I cannot say, but I suspect their odd and strange heavy artillery mechs may be responsible for this. According to public sources, certain religious-themed mechs designed by the patriarch of the Larkinson Clan possess strange detection powers. There is a lot of history behind these 'Ylvainan' mechs, but if they can truly detect the coordinates of every enemy no matter their means of hiding, then the Quizlams have definitely encountered an unbeatable opponent!]

The Quizlam Battalion originated from a virtual security company called Quizlam Systems. This company's main line of business centered around offering products and services related to electronic warfare, stealth warfare and information warfare.

One of the reasons why the Quizlams participated in the G-Aena League was to showcase the effectiveness of their products to a massive audience!

Though the Quizlams indeed attracted a lot of new customers after they dismantled the Heartfall Battalion, right now their impressive tech appeared to be completely useless against their current opponent!

After losing over 150 mechs in rapid succession, the Quizlams had desperately pulled back their remaining units, but that did little to solve their current problem.

The battlefield was still largely obscured in sensor-blocking smoke, so the Larkinson Battalion could not recklessly split up and hunt down all of the enemy units.

It was no problem for them to maintain their current formation and advance towards one group of Quizlam units.

Once it became clear that the Larkinsons could not only pin down the locations of their opponents at greater distances, but also showed enough patience by staying together, the surviving Quizlams had to do something to reverse the current trend!

"Evasion will only delay our defeat. We must go on the attack and assassinate those damned heavy artillery mechs! As long as these confounding machines are taken out, the chance is high that they won't be able to detect our mechs anymore. Get into position!"

Though the Quizlam mech pilots were incredibly distressed that their opponents negated their biggest advantage, they quickly rallied once they realized they still had hope.

It didn't matter if the enemy outnumbered them by two-to-one or even four-to-one. As long as the Quizlams were able to restore their original advantages, they could easily stem the losses and inflict disproportionate damage to the Larkinsons!

All they needed to do was to assassinate all of the Transcendent Punishers of the Larkinson Battalion.

The Larkinsons were quite aware of their great reliance on the Eye of Ylvaine, so all of their mech formations were geared towards protecting them. The Avatar knight mechs surrounding the heavy mechs practically made it impossible to snipe them from afar!

The only other choice the Quizlams had left was to commit all of their remaining melee mechs. Even if these mechs quickly got taken down, the sacrifices were worth it as long as the Transcendent Punishers went down!

Soon enough, all of the Ylvainan mech pilots began to receive a frantic amount of nudges from the Great Prophet.

"A large number of Quizlam mechs are storming our positions! They're going after our Transcendent Punishers!"

Before the Quizlam melee mechs swept down from the air, a large amount of kinetic rounds slammed into the mech formations.

The ranged attacks successfully diverted some of the attention of the Larkinson mech pilots, thereby giving the Quizlam light skirmishers and other melee mechs better chances to complete their missions!

"Shoot them down!"

The Larkinson ranged mechs all opened fire at the Quizlam light mechs that appeared from above and behind the cover of the tall structures.

Due to the dense urban environment, the enemy light mechs succeeded in getting fairly close without opening themselves up to enemy fire.

It was only at the end that they were forced to expose themselves!

"They're too fast!"

"Just hit them once! Their armor is as good as paper in front of our guns."

The Quizlams committed all of their melee mechs in order to take out the Transcendent Punishers! Even if the Larkinsons managed to shoot down dozens of them in quick succession, there were still enough enemies remaining that the Ylvainan mechs came under serious threat!

Soon enough, a lot of daggers plunged into the weak points of the Larkinson heavy artillery mechs!

Even though the nearby knight mechs moved to crush the Quizlam assassins into pieces, they were a bit too slow and clumsy at their jobs.

The ultra-mobile Quizlam light mechs rapidly circled around as they unleashed repeated attacks. Even if their dagger strikes were weak and unable to penetrate through armor, they still damaged plenty of vulnerable systems such as the weapon mounts and exposed sensor systems!

Sadly, the heavy artillery mechs were designed to take a lot of punishment. Many of their crucial parts and systems were buried deep within their frames and it was not possible to damage them with lots of weak and unfocused attacks!

The light mechs had no choice but to employ their other measures.

Mounted on each Quizlam light mech was a bandolier of potent grenades. Normally, they would throw or launch the grenades from a safer distance, but the chance of destroying the Transcendent Punishers was too low if they played it safe.

Instead, the Quizlams sought to press as close to the rear side of the Transcendent Punishers as possible before activating a command that not detonated all of the grenades, but also self-destructed their own machines!

Over a dozen explosions erupted throughout the Larkinson Battalion! The knight mechs that attempted to protect the stricken artillery mechs were forced to use their shields to withstand the violent forces!

#### *Chapter 3482: Clear Openings*

The Quizlam desperation attack most definitely spelled the end of all of their aerial light skirmishers, but the price was worth it as long as they could destroy all of the Transcendent Punishers!

The heavy artillery mechs had long turned into one of the most hated and detested machines in the eyes of the Quizlam mech pilots.

Against almost every opponent they fought against, they indulged in their ability to harass and torment their targets with little concern for retaliation.

While there were enemies that possessed sufficiently advanced and powerful detection measures, the Larkinsons clearly didn't employ any of that technology.

Even if they did, the Quizlam still had ways to reduce the effectiveness of many detection measures. This kind of fight was their home ground.

The Transcendent Punishers on the other hand detected the position of the Quizlam mechs through completely different principles!

There was no familiar tech for the Quizlams to fight against. All of their solutions were rendered ineffective against the mysterious method used to expose their hidden positions.

This was why the Quizlam Battalion went against its nature and launched a suicidal, all-out strike!

It was not common for the Quizlams to resort to such measures. They were accustomed to building up advantages on the battlefield before they slowly collected another win. In no way did they ever prefer to fight hard and tough battles like neanderthals.

To be driven up to this point showed how much the Larkinsons had driven the Quizlams up the wall!

As the smoke finally settled, the results of the suicidal assassination strikes finally became clear.

None of the Quizlam light skirmishers survived.

The Transcendent Punishers didn't look much better off either.

Many Larkinson mech pilots became dismayed as they saw that the violent explosions had ruined the Transcendent Punishers they had been tasked with protecting.

Many of the heavy frames of the artillery mechs collapsed onto the ground as their legs could no longer keep their torso aloft.

The detonations that tore through the relatively thinner rear armor of the Transcendent Punishers dealt the most effective damage. All of that heavy plating was unable to resist all of the powerful forces.

The Transcendent Punishers that got attacked by multiple Quizlam light skirmishers incurred the most damage. In some cases, large sections of their ruined frames were torn apart from the explosions!

"My mech is still operational!"

Yet much to the relief of the Larkinsons, not every Quizlam mech fulfilled its mission!

The Ylvainan artillery mechs were partially designed to engage in artillery duels against their enemy counterparts. This meant that their frontal armor was much thicker and more able to resist the sort of heavy impacts that enemy artillery mechs unleashed.

"How many Transcendent Punishers are still operational?"

"Four... maybe five! Two of them are rendered immobile while all of them have suffered varying degrees of armor breaches. They're vulnerable to follow-up attacks, commander."

"Then do your best to guard them and prevent the remaining Quizlams from aggravating their injuries."

Additional Larkinson mechs converged on the surviving Transcendent Punishers. Even though this was an excessive measure, the sheer amount of physical obstacles surrounding the precious machines successfully prevented the remaining Quizlam ranged mechs from finishing the job!

Now that the Quizlam Battalion had sacrificed so many mechs, the Larkinsons were no longer under as much pressure as before.

Commander Casella felt a little pained after seeing how many Transcendent Punishers meet their end, but she comforted herself with the fact that none of them were blown to pieces.

"The downed machines can still be restored."

It would take a lot of work as the mechs needed to be disassembled almost entirely in order to replace every damaged component, but one day the Transcendent Punishers would rise again!

The rest of the battle unfolded with little suspense. The Quizlam had less than 200 mechs left while the Larkinsons still retained most of their battle strength!

Sure, they were down a lot of Transcendent Punishers, but they still had enough left to perform triangulation on all of the enemy positions!

The mechs of the Swordmaidens and the Avatars of Myth completely surrounded the surviving heavy artillery mechs. Their protective formations were so dense and exaggerated that not a single hidden mech could squeeze through!

All of this protection left the Flagrant Vandals and the Penitent Sisters free to pursue their prey. Their Valkyrie Redeemer and Ferocious Piranha mechs only needed to wait until they received the right data in order for them to hunt down the fragile Quizlam mechs!

Seeing that their remaining ranged mechs were being picked apart one by one, the Quizlam's desperately gathered them together in order to repel the Vandals and Sisters with massed firepower, but that just made it easier for the Larkinsons to mop them all up at once!

"Hahaha! Who do you think you are?! You're nowhere close to the Ginetzys when it comes to intercepting our mechs!"

The final stand of the Quizlam Battalion ended in disgrace for the masters of electronic warfare. Even if they brought twice as much ranged mechs, the charging Larkinson mechs would have still been able to crush them! They just had to spend a little more time and lose a bit more mechs in that case.

Fortunately for the Larkinsons, the Quizlam Battalion was a spent force at this stage. Their ranged mechs were all sitting ducks against direct assaults and they could no longer call upon any melee mechs to fend off all of the Valkyrie Redeemers and Ferocious Piranhas.

The audience had become completely convinced of the Larkinson Battalion's victory. Though the Quizlam had managed to land at least a single punch against their opponents, the match had utterly showcased how dramatically they collapsed when their advantages no longer existed.

The Larkinsons were quite happy in the end. Not only did their battalion become the undisputed winner of Group A, they also preserved most of their mechs in the final match of the round.

Furthermore, they developed a new and easy method to counter other enemies like the Quizlam Battalion!

All of the arena battles fought by the Larkinsons taught the clan how to deal against a myriad of opponents that they might face in the future. It was better to be confronted with the unusual tech and strategies that human forces employed in a safe and controlled environment than be confronted by them in the wild!

"It's over, now." Commander Casella smiled as she observed her men celebrating their guaranteed advance into the second round!

The G-Aena League soon confirmed the results. Since the Larkinson Battalion was the only one in Group A to win all of its matches, there was no reason to stop them from entering the second round.

Only a tiny incident occurred when the Quizlam Battalion disputed this verdict and brought forward allegations of cheating. The Quizlams claimed that the Larkinsons broke the rules by utilizing mechs that contained additional detection systems.

Inspectors briefly arrived and inspected the wrecked and damaged Transcendent Punishers but didn't find any extra components that weren't supposed to be present.

In fact, the tournament organizers had fully kept track of every single mech inside the premises of the Fortas Major Arena. Nothing could be hidden from their absurdly effective monitoring system. How could they not know that the Transcendent Punishers were exactly the same as when they were initially checked and given seals of approval?

While it was undeniable that the Larkinson heavy artillery mechs possessed extra capabilities that were disproportionately effective, it did not break the rules.

Perhaps future tournaments might look into adjusting them, but for now the Larkinsons were fielding mechs that were roughly as strong and valuable as those deployed by the other battalions.

That meant there were no grounds to the complaint!

"The decision stands. The Larkinson Battalion shall advance to the second round."

Although this dispute didn't go public, there were plenty of knowledgeable mech insiders who realized that the Larkinson mechs were more effective than normal. Their technical performance was relatively plain given their construction, but their 'glows' and other capabilities made a lot of observers think.

The Larkinson Battalion had to wait a couple of days for Group B, C and D to present their own winners. Once the first round concluded, the semifinals would begin soon enough.

In the meantime, the Larkinsons took advantage of the spare time available to analyze their possible opponents and refine their battle methods based off the lessons they learned in the previous matches.

"The likely winners of the other groups such as the Zpoeze Battalion aren't as easy to exploit as the Quizlam Battalion." Director Raella told Commander Casella during one of their free days. "In fact, the first round is meant to filter out these mech forces that have clear weaknesses that are not that difficult to exploit. Whoever emerges from the other three groups are not only strong, but adaptable."

"We shall just have to defeat them up front, then."

"Indeed. That will be costly, though. The good news is that we only have to fight two more matches. If we can win our next round, then we'll have at least 20 combat carriers in the bag no matter whether we win or lose the finals."

Casella frowned at the trueblood Larkinson's words. "You're talking as if we don't have much of a chance to win the finals, Raella."

"Hey, I don't want to set your expectations too high. The Zpoeze Battalion are the well-deserved favorites to win the tournament. I've taken a look at their match history and I can't imagine the pussies will falter against their last opponent. You better pray to Ylvaine that we don't fight them in the second round."

The Sentinel Commander had to admit that the Zpoeze Battalion indeed deserved to be feared. Their mechs might not be extravagant for this tournament, but they were powerful and difficult to deal with in their own way.

What really caused the Zpoezers to stand out was their mech pilots!

Even though they were restricted to fielding mostly regular mech pilots, each of them were highly augmented and extremely skilled. Their training was on another level and that showed in both their superior coordination and their stronger individual battle prowess.

"Let's wait until we know who we need to beat in order to advance to the third and final round."

When the winner of Group D was finally settled, the tournament finally entered a more exciting phase!

[What an exciting day! After several days of thrilling battles and moments of excitement, we have finally determined the matchups for the second round!]

Before the announcer unveiled the schedule for the next two days, he first reiterated the four battalions that had managed to rise above their former competitors.

[Rising up from Group A is the fresh and thundering Larkinson Battalion! Having risen from the edge of the old galaxy, this upstart has already shown they have the capital to compete in the Red Ocean. Their living mechs with their unusual glows are nothing that we have ever seen before. The G-Aena League is grateful for the variety they bring to our competition. You never know what to expect from their unfathomable mechs!]

The Larkinsons might not have made the strongest impression, but their mechs had already attracted a lot of fans.

[The Aventine Herman Battalion has managed to fight its way through Group B. Although the Aventiners only have 2 wins under their name, they have dealt with strong opposition in every match. With their military background, they are certainly the toughest opponents to fight against in a frontal battle.]

The Aventiners were not as exciting as the Larkinsons, but their mechs and mech pilots were extremely solid.

[I don't think I need to say anything further about the Zpoeze Battalion. The rest of Group C served as window dressing for the only centrist battalion. Let us hope that their subsequent opponent will put more resistance against the Zpoezers.]

The Zpoeze Battalion did not actually attract that many cheers. They were faintly painted as the villains in the narrative of the G-Aena League. It didn't help that their mech pilots were stoic, quiet and utterly unsociable. Sometimes, people had the illusion that the Zpoezers had more in common with aliens rather than humans!

[Finally, we have the outspoken Glory of Urthina Battalion. Although they have also suffered a loss, their two victories were so dominant that the tie-breaker rules clearly put the Urthinans ahead of the other battalions in Group D. As the elites fighting on behalf of the Church of Urthina, these faith warriors have shown more courage and fervor in battle than any other mech pilot!]

The Glory of Urthina Battalion was made out of religious nuts. The fanatic mech pilots not only dressed and acted strangely, they also expressed intense devotion towards their goddess.

[Without any further ado, here are the matchups for the semifinals!]

[LARKINSON BATTALION VS GLORY OF URTHINA BATTALION]

## [AVENTINE HERMAN BATTALION VS ZPOEZE BATTALION]

Cheers immediately erupted among the Larkinsons!

"Yes!"

"Thank Ylvaine!"

"It's been a while since we've beaten up some cultists."

"We won't face the pussies until we reach the finals!"

Of the three possible opponents for the second round, the Glory of Urthina Battalion was one of the more manageable opponents!

While the Urthinans weren't weak, at least they had shown that they could still be defeated!

### *Chapter 3483: How To Resist A Charge*

For once, the Larkinson Clan had a stroke of luck.

The random draw that determined their next opponent placed the dreaded Zpoeze Battalion as the final boss of the G-Aena League.

Practically no one thought the Zpoeze Battalion would falter in the semifinals and be forced to fight for third place.

Even if the Larkinsons managed to reach the finals only to get stomped by the pussies, it still would have been worth it! Losing against the Zpoeze Battalions would put them in second place, which was still worth 20 combat carriers!

Therefore, the Larkinsons absolutely had to win their next match. None of the clansmen involved in the tournament relaxed any longer. It was all hands on deck as they prepared to analyze their next opponent and make specific preparations to win the upcoming match.

During the following meeting, Director Raella put forth a suggestion.

"We have always been aiming to win either first or second place in this tournament. Although we only need to defeat one more battalion to reach the finals, it would be an enormous shame to stumble at this point. The prizes for third and fourth place are much smaller. After all we have done, I don't think that anyone here wants to return to our clan with just 10 or 5 combat carriers in our possession."

All of the Larkinsons in the meeting room nodded. They were all fighting to become the champion of this massive and prestigious event, but getting second place didn't sound so bad either.

"If that's the case, make sure to go all-out this time." Raella continued. "Whatever we have left, just use it if the moment is right. Don't think of hiding our strength for later."

"Is the Glory of Urthina Battalion that strong?"

Raella crossed her arms. "Yes. If you haven't watched the previous matches yet, you'll find that the only reason why they fumbled a match was because they fought against a highly mobile mech battalion that was able to evade their most powerful attacks. Most of our mechs can't do that, so we won't be able to fight the Urthinans at an advantage."

"What is their strategy, exactly? I've seen them fight, but all I see is their mechs launching an all-out assault."

"That's pretty much what they are all about." Raella responded. "The Glory of Urthina Battalion's mech roster is disproportionately slanted towards assault-oriented mechs. Their aerial wave consists of hundreds of lancer mechs, offensive knight mechs as well as light skirmishers that specialize in intercepting other light mechs. Aside from that, they also field a substantial landbound contingent of medium cannoner mechs escorted by defensive knight mechs."

The aerial wave was the main attacking force that could already sweep some of the weaker battalions in the G-Aena League with just a single charge. The fairly mobile landbound ranged contingent that followed from behind provided firepower support just in case they bumped into tougher opponents.

"From what the Urthinans have shown up until now, their mech doctrine and mech roster is completely geared towards assault. They do not have the patience or desire to remain on the defensive, and they do not bother to set up the battlefield in their favor either. They're just obsessed with vanquishing the unbelievers."

"Sounds familiar." A Larkinson officer scoffed.

"We've fought our fair share of cultists and fanatics, so expect to fight against highly motivated mech pilots who will never break or show hesitation in battle. Don't think that they have more guts than skill. Since the Church of Urthina is powerful enough to enter the Red Ocean, its mech forces are definitely capable."

The Larkinsons in the meeting room studied the snippets of footage that Raella had prepared for them. They showcased the indomitable melee mechs flying forward and charging straight towards the first enemies in their sight.

It didn't matter if the opposition had prepared defenses. The Urthinan lancer mechs simply charged through any solid obstacle while the following mechs took advantage of the openings.

If there were any ranged mechs that were somehow out of reach to the Urthinan melee mechs, then the cannoner mechs that always tried their best to keep up with the forward elements did their jobs and fired solid gauss rounds against tougher targets or expanding shrapnel rounds that could easily grind down elusive light mechs no matter how amazingly they danced in the air.

Commander Casella shared her own insight of their next adversaries. "One of the key reasons why the Glory of Urthina Battalion managed to defeat two of their opponents so easily is because its quick and overwhelming assault leaves little room for the enemy to think and form a response. By the time the overwhelmed defenders change their tactics, the Urthinan mechs have already broken into their core."

That was a scary scenario, but not an insurmountable one. The Larkinsons already knew what to expect, so it was impossible for them to be caught off-guard like this. That didn't mean they could allow the enemy to break through their lines.

Once the Urthinan mechs broke through the Larkinson Battalion's lines, it became a lot harder to get rid of the intruders! The Larkinson mechs would become less organized and make it easier for the Urthinans to cause further disruption.

"What I'm more worried about is that the Urthinans haven't shown their full capabilities." Raella said with obvious concern. "These Urthinans are fanatics, but that doesn't mean they're stupid. They might even be putting up an act to lull us in a false sense of security."

"What makes you say that, director?"

"Just look at the footage of their only defeat in the first round. They matched against a battalion that deploys mechs that are too fast for most of the Urthinan mechs to catch up. The complicated canyon battlefield also helped them out by limiting the movements of the lancer mechs and blocking much of the line of sight of the cannoner mechs."

The Glory of Urthina performed rather brilliantly against two of its opponents, but lost so badly against another battalion that it was hard to respect the Urthinans.

Yet Raella presented the Larkinsons with an alarming theory.

"What if the Urthinans deliberately held back when they fought against this mobile battalion? What if they had looked forward and determined that they could afford to lose a single match? As long as no one else has managed to win 3 times, all of the battalions in the group will have to be ranked according to the tie-breaker rules. With

their two overwhelming victories, it is already 90 percent certain that the Glory of Urthina will advance!"

This was a rather outlandish theory, but one that revealed an uncommonly high degree of cunning and forethought!

Commander Casella frowned. "If... if the Glory of Urthina Battalion truly calculated this result, then it should definitely be hiding its trump cards against stronger opponents. While it may be possible for the Urthinans to look down on us and set their sights on the Zpoezers, the chance is great that they will surprise us with powerful new surprises that they haven't shown in the first round."

"Do you understand why I'm telling you to go all out this time, commander? The Urthinans may sound like stereotypical religious fanatics on the surface, but their tournament strategy is highly rational. It's exactly what I would do if I was in their place. You guys may not realize it, but there is more to winning a tournament than smashing the enemy's mechs."

Once Raella convinced them not to take the Urthinans lightly, the Larkinsons properly respected their opponents this time.

Any battalion that could make it into the top 4 should not be weak, but even if the Glory of Urthina Battalion could not compare against the Zpoeze Battalion, the gap between the two was probably a lot smaller than most people thought!

"So how can we actually beat these opponents?"

That was an important question. The known battle strategy of the Glory of Urthina Battalion was relatively simple but already difficult to resist. No other battalion in the G-Aena League relied so heavily on lancer mechs as these crazies!

"Can our knight mechs withstand the charges of their lancer mechs?" A mech officer asked.

"No." A mech designer replied. "According to our calculations, the enemy lancer mechs can easily build up enough momentum to breach through the shields and armor of our Bright Warriors in knight mech configuration. Even if we make use of a tougher and more specialized knight mech model, the results are unlikely to be any different."

Everyone already suspected that this was probably the case, but it had to be said.

"What if we fight on more confined battlefields?"

"The lancer mechs can still penetrate through our defensive mechs. To be honest, the performance of our Bright Warriors in their more defensive loadouts are below standard in the Red Ocean. There are substantially tougher mech models in the market. Sure,

they're not alive and they don't have any glows, but lancer mechs don't let any of that stop them from driving their weapons through our mechs."

This was bad news, though not new for some of the gathered Larkinsons. It still disappointed them that they could not rely on their defensive mechs as before. Many of their old workhorse mech models needed updates in order to bring them back up to standard.

Commander Casella voiced her greatest concern. "No matter what trump cards the Glory of Urthina Battalion has in store, it's useless to think about them when we cannot overcome the first hurdle. We need to ready an effective response against the charges of all of their lancer mechs."

"Ideally, we should make it so that they never succeed in impacting our mechs. We can do that by shooting them down before they get close or keep running so that their lances never hit their targets."

"We can't do the latter unless we field 500 Ferocious Piranhas, which we don't have." A mech officer stated. "Besides, committing to a full force of light mechs will waste a lot of our allowance tonnage. I don't think a full force of light mechs can defeat this assault-oriented battalion."

"What if we throw in a couple of hundred Penitent Sisters?" A captain from the same mech legion proposed. "We are quite interested in fighting against these Urthinans. They claim that Urthina is the greatest female goddess and that is an affront to the Superior Mother's majesty!"

A few Larkinsons groaned. They did not look forward to getting caught up in a religious dispute of all things.

Commander Casella cleared her throat. "I believe the Valkyrie Redeemers can be of great use in raiding the ranged contingent of the Glory of Urthina Battalion. The Hex Army often employs the Valkyrie models against these kinds of targets in the Komodo War. It is what they are made for and what they are good at. I think we should employ better solutions against their assault units, though."

The Valkyrie Redeemers excelled at flanking and raiding but fared less well in frontal combat against heavier units.

"If we can't rely on our Bright Warriors, Valkyrie Redeemers or Ferocious Piranhas to counter the Urthinan lancer mechs, then what do we have left?"

An awkward silence followed.

This problem was only able to occur because the Larkinson Clan's mech roster was too small and had too many holes. The need to expand the amount of mech models the Larkinsons could rely upon became especially acute at this time!

The Larkinsons shared several suggestions and explored different ideas, but none of the proposals sounded good.

Commander Casella was only able to choose between a number of imperfect solutions that all came with flaws of their own. It was just too difficult to present a better plan when the Larkinson Clan didn't possess the required mech elements!

Perhaps the Larkinson Army could respond more effectively to this kind of threat, but the Larkinson Battalion had to abide by the rules of the tournament. This condition restricted the Larkinsons a lot more than the other competitors!

#### *Chapter 3484: Repeated Failures*

The big day had come.

The Larkinsons spent a lot of time strategizing and preparing for their upcoming bout against the Glory of Urthina Battalion.

No one knew what the religious group might unveil during the semifinals. The Urthinans had already shown a considerable amount of strength, but the possibility that they were still hiding secrets was great!

The Larkinson Battalion had to win the next match at all costs. If they lost this time, they only had a chance of obtaining third place.

While winning 10 combat carriers sounded like a rich reward, it did not sound as great once everyone recalled how many mechs and mech pilots it took to grasp those warships.

If the hundreds of mechs and mech pilots all participated in smaller tournaments, then there was a possibility that the Larkinson Clan could have won more than a dozen combat carriers throughout the two week duration of the G-Aena League!

Not only that, the Larkinsons had already written off hundreds of mechs and would permanently lose at least hundreds more after fighting two more difficult battles!

It was not unacceptable for the Larkinson Clan to use up its main combat assets. Producing mechs was its bread and butter. The benefit of owning a factory ship like the Spirit of Bentheim was that the clan could easily churn out replacements as long as it had access to enough raw materials.

In contrast, it was a lot harder to build lots of good combat carriers with a respectable capacity of 60 mechs.

Although the clan already put the Diligent Ovenbird to work, it would still take at least a month or two to build a cheap, flimsy light carrier that could only carry 20 mechs at most!

None of the Larkinsons liked this plan. Relying on an armada of flimsy light carriers to roam the dangerous new frontier was madness, especially when everyone fully understood the strength of the other human forces in the Red Ocean!

The existence of powerful or tricky organizations such as Quizlam Systems, the Ginetzy Family, the Heartfall Security Enterprise, the Church of Urthina and the Zpoeze Group all presented serious threats to the Larkinson Clan!

Although everyone was interacting peacefully with each other at the moment, that was because they were all residing in the Vulit Central Star Node.

Few Larkinsons forgot about the fact that the central star nodes were the exception rather than the rule. The Big Two guaranteed absolutely safety to everyone residing in their direct territory, but that applied to just a small amount of star systems.

Most star systems in the Red Ocean were still wild, dangerous and devoid of order!

If the Golden Skull Alliance bumped into the main fleet of the Heartfall Security Enterprise, then it was questionable whether the latter would refrain from taking action.

While the Heartfallers performed relatively poorly in the arena, in reality the mercenary organization was much larger and stronger than the Larkinson Clan!

Just the Heartfall Security Enterprise's quantity of mechs alone could flood a lot of smaller pioneering organizations!

In an actual fight against these forces, the Larkinson Clan's dinky little light carriers probably wouldn't survive unless they could shelter behind larger ships. That was fine, but it also turned them into burdens.

In the long run, it was better to get rid of these burdens and settle for proper combat carriers that were designed and built to endure the rigors of war.

It was just that there was no good channel for the Larkinson Clan to obtain additional carriers for the moment. Even participating in the tournaments in Chance Bay was only a temporary channel.

The expeditionary fleet had to leave within the month, thereby cutting the Larkinsons off from this convenient method of earning new starships.

Therefore, the light carriers that everyone looked down upon still had a place in the Larkinson Clan. No matter how crappy they performed, it was better than nothing!

"We've got to win this next match." Imon Ingvar said as he and Vincent Ricklin of all people had paid a visit to the Larkinson Battalion. "The others aren't winning that much. Aside from exceptions such as Commander Sendra and her team of elite Swordmaidens and our best Penitent Sisters, the rest of our Larkinsons simply aren't tournament worthy."

Commander Casella Ingvar had spent all of her time on the Larkinson Clan's participation in the G-Aena League up until now. She hadn't paid any attention to how the other clansmen were doing. Hearing that not a lot of Larkinsons were doing well did not sound good.

"How did the two of you fare?" She asked in a suspicious tone.

Neither Imon nor Vincent looked proud. They both lowered their heads like defeated dogs.

"We got smashed." Imon admitted. "Not once, not twice, but thrice. If we fought in a regular tournament, we would have been able to beat the opposition. The rules prevent us from bullying the weak. We can only take part in a smaller number of competitions where expert candidates like us have to fight on equal ground."

Casella already knew this, but she didn't think the Larkinson Clan's own expert candidates would fare so badly.

"You're a skilled mech pilot, Imon. I can understand why someone as your friend over here gets taken out in the first round, but I expected better from you. I've already fought against a number of expert candidates in the G-Aena League and they aren't particularly special from what I've seen so far. What is the reason why you aren't faring so well in these contests?"

Her brother sighed. "Your situation is a lot better than ours. Not only can you call upon the support of other friendly mechs, you also have the Quint. Every other expert candidate in our clan has to make do with modified Bright Warriors. Those mechs are decent, but not that special compared to other Red Ocean mechs. It also doesn't help that they don't excel at anything. They're geared towards accommodating less skilled and experienced mech pilots. What we truly need is a high-end mech like the prime mechs that our clan used to field. Without the right hardware, it's hard for us to beat the competition."

"You're... you're putting all of the blame on your mechs."

"You know I'm right, Casella. We've all used the Bright Warriors for over a year now. We know what they are like by now. The Bright Warriors were designed for a different clan at a different time."

Casella looked upset. "I'm not saying you're wrong, Imon, but it's too easy for you to push all of the blame on your mechs. We can only make do with the machines we have at the moment, so rather than do something that won't change anything such as complaining about them, why don't you try and improve your skills so you can overcome this handicap?"

"That's the thing, commander. We've tried to push ourselves harder after every defeat we've suffered, but..." Vincent didn't finish the sentence.

"Are they truly that good?"

"They are, sister." Imon Ingvar said. "You can't imagine how many battle maniacs and desperados are taking part in these expert candidate tournaments. They're all hungry and mad for advancement. They fight as if their entire lives are on the line and destroy anyone they think is too weak to give them the stimulation they need to break through."

Expert candidates were all on a time limit as far as they were concerned. While they knew that they had the potential to become an expert pilot, that knowledge would not do them any good if they failed to take the most important step!

If they plodded along for too long and only managed to advance when they were at the end of their piloting careers, then what good would it do for them to undergo apotheosis?

Demigods aged as well!

Since it was a lot harder for mech pilots to undergo life-prolonging treatment, hardly anyone was willing to spend extravagantly just to prolong the life of an expert pilot who already had one foot on his deathbed!

Given these circumstances, practically every expert candidate was desperate to break through. Being able to fight repeatedly against other strong expert candidates in a safe environment was practically paradise to them, especially to the older generation.

Younger expert candidates like Imon and Vincent could only get abused in these kinds of events!

Their skills were too rough and rudimentary compared to those who underwent much better systematic training.

Their experience was lacking. Though both of them had fought in numerous hard battles, there were expert candidates in Vulit that had fought in entire wars!

Their augmentations were also far behind. Many expert candidates who originated from the galactic heartland and especially the galactic center enjoyed implants and genetic treatments that were at least a thousand times more expensive!

The only strong point of the Larkinson Clan was its mechs, but much of its design resources went into developing the expert mechs in the past year.

Although the effort was undoubtedly worth it, the problem right now was that no one organized any tournaments for expert pilots in the Vulit Central Star Node!

This was an understandable yet incredibly frustrating rule to the Larkinsons. Despite the relatively recent breakthroughs of all of the clan's expert pilots, as long as the masterwork expert mechs such as the Amaranto, the Shield of Samar and most promisingly the Everchanger entered the arena, there was little doubt the Larkinsons could compete against most rivals!

"Don't worry." Casella said as she reached out and placed her hands on both of their shoulders. "The Larkinson Battalion will succeed and bring home all of the combat carriers that you have missed out on. We're all Larkinsons. We stick up for each other."

Imon and Vincent smiled and felt more at ease. Though they still felt bad about their lack of success, they didn't shoulder all of the responsibility of winning combat carriers for the clan.

There were many other Larkinsons who were trying to fulfill the same goal. As long as only a fraction of them succeeded, the Larkinson fleet would already be able to welcome dozens of crucial combat carriers!

"Commander! It's almost time! Please get ready to bring out the Quint."

"Understood!" Casella responded to the mech designer that had been servicing her masterwork mech before turning back to her brother. "I need to go now. The arena awaits."

"Good luck, sister."

"I hope you'll beat them, commander."

The main gate that led into the large arena field slid open. A flood of cheers, music and noise assaulted everyone's ears.

The hype and attention surrounding the G-Aena League had practically quadrupled now that the competition had entered the semifinals!

Of the sixteen battalions that initially took part, only four of them were left. Each one was undoubtedly the strongest of their respective groups.

With all of the flawed and mediocre competitors out of the way, the remaining matches of the G-Aena League would definitely give the spectators the high-intensity battles they craved!

As the announcers built up entire narratives surrounding the two battalions who were about to clash against each other, Commander Casella ignored all of the noise and only focused on her opponents and the Larkinson Battalion's upcoming plan.

Ten kilometers away, the Glory of Urthina Battalion entered the main arena with confidence. Their gleaming rows of green-and-yellow mechs were embellished by ornaments themed around the goddess Urthina.

"The grace of Urthina shines upon all of you!" The commander of the battalion broadcasted to the audience and remote spectators. "Today, our goddess-blessed mechs shall smite the latest group of unbelievers who dare to hinder our holy mission. Like the battalions we have defeated before, the Larkinsons shall be the latest ones to taste Urthina's punishment!"

Not a lot of people in the audience were sympathetic towards the arrogant Urthinans. Their religion was unknown to most people and no one had much interest in converting to their beliefs.

Compared to these snooty fanatics, the crowd was much more eager to support the Larkinson Battalion!

"Smash the Urthinans!"

"Larkinsons forever!"

#### *Chapter 3485: Strategic Shift*

Although the support of the audience did not directly affect the battle strength of the combatants in any way, it still had a substantial influence on morale.

The Larkinson mech pilots became a lot more buoyed when they saw how extensively the fans and viewers around them rooted for their victory.

Even if many of the Larkinson mech pilots didn't fight for glory, right now they couldn't help but become caught up in the competitive fever!

As long as they won the next match, they would become famed and celebrated warriors in the Red Ocean! If nothing else, they could brag about reaching the finals of a big and important tournament whenever they entered a bar!

Of course, they still needed to win. All of their dreams and hopes would become dashed if they weren't able to beat the Urthinans.

As the countdown started, the mech pilots of both sides tuned out the massive live audience and only focused on what was important.

The arena battlefield turned into a highly unusual environment this time. The surface of the arena turned into a flat, arid terrain that offered no cover or obstacles of any kind.

A battlefield like this would have been completely boring if not for one complication.

A light sandstorm swept throughout the entire battlefield.

The sand particles that were largely blowing in a uniform direction were mixed with a light proportion of metal and exotic materials. This caused the sandstorm to generate a moderate amount of interference.

Although the sensor and communication systems of most mechs still remained effective in a range of a couple of kilometers around them, it was quite troublesome to reach any further without the use of mechs acting as relays.

Still, this was not that big of a deal. Neither the Larkinsons nor the Urthinans enjoyed a significant advantage this time. At most, they needed to roam around a bit more in order to locate each other's mechs.

What did bother them was the fact that the sand could sneak into all kinds of holes and crevices. While the blowing sand wasn't powerful enough to grind down solid mechs in a short amount of time, they could easily aggravate the injuries of any mechs!

As long as a mech suffered an armor breach and exposed its internals to the environment, all of that sand blowing into the interior compartments could easily interfere or wreak havoc on the functioning of the mechs!

The implications were clear to the Larkinsons.

"Avoid getting hit." Commander Casella instructed her men. "If you get struck by a lance, it likely won't matter as much, but if the enemy ranged mechs manage to breach your armor, try to orient your mechs so that the hole doesn't face the wind."

This would only slow down the deterioration process. The measures the mechs had to take to stall their end also impose considerable limits on their subsequent actions.

However, Commander Casella could work with this. In her judgement, the current battle environment provided a slight advantage to the Larkinson Battalion.

Whereas the Urthinan lancer mechs needed to pull off a successful charge in order to breach the armor of their targets, most of the Larkinson mechs didn't have to go through so much trouble!

Casella took one more look at her entire battalion. The mech roster for this battle was a significant departure from what the Larkinson Battalion had fielded before.

This time, the Larkinsons did not bring any Transcendent Punishers.

The Eye of Ylvaine wasn't happy with this strategic decision, but the Larkinson Battalion simply couldn't afford to bring so many burdens to the battlefield this time.

The Transcendent Punishers worked best against opponents that were slow and could not overwhelm the Larkinson lines. The aggressive, charge-oriented mech doctrine of the Glory of Urthina Battalion happened to be one of their worst nightmares!

No matter whether the Larkinsons brought 20, 50 or even 100 Transcendent Punishers, each of them would get demolished in the first five minutes when a torrent of lancer mechs swept across their positions!

Lancer mechs just loved to skewer their lances through big, fat immobile targets like heavy artillery mechs!

It was largely self-defeating to bring a large amount of knight mechs to protect the heavy artillery mechs.

The enemy lancer mechs would just wipe out the knight mechs first before moving on to demolish the heavy artillery mechs shortly afterwards!

This was also the reason why the Larkinsons did not bring any Eternal Redemptions this time. While Penitent Sister cannoner mechs were more maneuverable than the Transcendent Punishers, they were still sitting ducks against their current opponents!

The Larkinsons made a bold but risky change in strategy for this match. Instead of fielding a rounded and balanced assault force, the Larkinson Battalion instead switched out all of their melee mechs and slower mechs!

The Bright Warriors in knight mech configuration and swordsman mech configuration were entirely absent this time. The Valkyrie Redeemers were still allowed to remain, but their numbers had been reduced from 120 mechs to 80 mechs.

The remaining 420 mechs of the Larkinson Battalion consisted entirely of Bright Warriors in rifleman mech configuration!

Many of the mech pilots who fought in the previous matches had been replaced by other mech pilots who specialized in ranged combat. The clan still had plenty of mech pilots that were readily available to participate in this competition.

The extreme shift in force composition meant that the Larkinson Battalion could no longer use the same fighting formulas as before. The Larkinsons needed to employ a radically different approach in order to win with so many mobile ranged mechs!

While the Valkyrie Redeemers could fight both at range and up close, they clearly weren't equipped to collide directly against the assault forces of the Glory of Urthina Battalion.

For now, their melee capabilities weren't important. Commander Casella had strictly instructed the Penitent Sisters to maintain their distance for the time being.

"Before we can go on attack, we need to blunt the enemy's assault." She reminded everybody. "Stick to the plan and force the Urthinan lancer mechs to waste their time chasing after our mechs."

As the Larkinson mechs all soared into the air and built up speed, the first Urthinan offensive mechs had already begun to appear from the sandstorm.

These mechs quickly relayed the news to the other Urthinan mechs. More and more powerful enemy lancer mechs, offensive knight mechs and light skirmishers emerged from the raging sands.

"Slay the infidels!"

"Run them down!"

"Glory to Urthina!"

Just like they did in the previous matches, the Urthinan assault force did not bother to deliberate its choices. They immediately committed to a full attack, trusting that their strength was more than enough to sweep their opposition!

Their religious fervor and devotion to the goddess Urthina caused all of their mech pilots to become extremely focused on reaching their opponents before crushing them with pure momentum!

Yet as the Urthinan melee mechs surged forward, their mech pilots found to their dismay that the unbelievers didn't group up in a single, large formation.

Instead, the Larking ranged mechs all split up into different mech companies that all flew in directions!

The grand charge of the Urthinans soon yielded no result. No Larkinson mech was stupid enough to stay in the path of the advancing lancer mechs.

While the previous lineup of the Larkinson Battalion wouldn't have been able to move aside so easily, the current makeup was different!

With no slowpokes to slow the Larkinsons down, the Bright Warriors piloted by the Avatars and the Valkyrie Redeemers piloted by the Penitent Sisters easily managed to dance around the main enemy formations before firing their potent luminar crystal rifles at the exposed enemy machines.

Hundreds of energy beams concentrated on a dozen targets. The warnet automatically coordinated the actions of the different Larkinson mechs so that groups of them always concentrated their firepower on specific targets.

The Urthinan lancer mechs possessed quite a lot of armor. They not only relied upon it for protection, but also needed the mass to better build up their momentum.

Now, all of that armor was quickly being dismantled after the unlucky targets got hit by forty different energy beams at once!

"Ahhh!"

"My mech is going down!"

"I have shamed Urthina!"

Most of the energy beams accurately hit their target. Much of it had to do with the relative inflexibility of the enemy lancer mechs, but the Avatar mech pilots had all invoked the Golden Cat at this time.

By borrowing the superior marksmanship skills of superior mech pilots such as Commander Casella Ingvar, every mech pilot controlling a Bright Warrior in rifleman mech configuration had begun to echo her level of skill!

In addition, a strange connection formed between Casella and the Avatars while the latter borrowed from her skill. She felt a little bit more connected to her current subordinates. Although this did not lead to anything drastic, she faintly felt that her battle awareness had extended even further.

Her eyes narrowed at the distant lancer mechs. "You might fight in the name of the goddess Urthina, but we have the Golden Cat on our side!"

The luminar crystal rifle was one of the strong points of the Larkinson Clan. This exclusive tech granted the average Bright Warrior mech model a considerably more powerful offensive punch!

Although one of these rifles already posed a threat against the enemy Urthinan mechs, a mech company's worth of them could easily tear apart any mech even if half of the energy beams missed!

One of the more interesting tactical decisions the Larkinson had made was to employ multiple luminar crystal attack phases at the same time.

The slicer beams fired by some of the Bright Warrior mechs possessed high penetration power and easily drilled tiny openings through the frontal armor of lancer mechs.

The kinetic beams fired by a number of other mechs forcefully expanded these cracks and made the weak points larger.

The barrage of positron beams that were fired at the same time could not only soften up the armor even further, but could easily burn through the openings and inflict a huge amount of damage to the internals.

When these different energy beams were employed in isolation, then their effect wouldn't be as good.

However, the Larkinsons had learned long ago that using multiple types of energy beams at once produced a wonderful synergy effect that allowed them to breach through enemy armor considerably faster than usual!

While it was difficult to realize this advantage on a smaller scale, the current battle was just big enough for the hundreds of Larkinson ranged mechs to take advantage of this potent synergy effect!

The Glory of Urthina Battalion weren't happy with seeing their prided lancer mechs getting downed one by one, though.

Their commanding officer soon formed the correct response.

"Split up and chase after the enemy mech companies! They can't evade all of our charges as long as we pincer their formations!"

The Urthinan melee mechs split up into companies as well, but they did not chase after all of the Larkinson mech companies.

Instead, 2 Urthinan mech companies both split up and chose to approach a single Larkinson mech company from two different directions.

While this left a large amount of Larkinson mechs unattended, it was fine as long as their targets were taken out quickly. All that mattered was that the Urthinans had to reduce the number of opponents quickly in order to reduce all of the attacks whittling down their melee mechs.

Yet even as the Urthinans executed their pincer strategy, the Larkinsons quickly enacted their own response to this change.

"Split up into fireteams spread out!"

The targeted Larkinson mech company did not dare to confront the two charging Urthinan mech companies head-on. Instead, it dispersed into smaller groups of 5 mechs that each moved away from each other at a rapid pace!

The Urthinan pincer attack was rendered ineffective now that their original target had faded away like a dispersing bee swarm.

Meanwhile, those split-up Larkinson elements continued to fire their luminar crystal rifles at the stymied Urthinan mechs!

It was as if the Larkinsons were taunting at the inability of the Urthinan lancer mechs to skewer an opposing mech!

Yet even as the Larkinson mechs continued to dance around the Urthinan melee mechs, a flood of shrapnel overwhelmed a couple of Larkinson fireteams!

The Urthan ranged support had finally taken their place at the center of the battlefield and begun to support their beleaguered comrades!

#### *Chapter 3486: Urthinan Surprise*

The Larkinsons knew in advance that the Urthinans not only deployed a lot of melee mechs, but also a considerable amount of cannoner mechs.

During the time the Urthinan lancer mechs and so on ineffectively tried to run down the Larkinson Battalion, the slower-moving ground contingent had steadily advanced towards the center of the arena battlefield.

They advanced a lot easier due to the flat and solid terrain. Once they reached the center, the cannoner mechs along with their accompanying escort of knight mechs settled into position.

At this location, the powerful ranged mechs armed with large-caliber single cannons largely became unbothered by the sand storm.

After all, the dimensions of the enormous arena was 10 kilometers by 10 kilometers by 1 kilometer.

There was no place in the arena that was out of range to the Urthinan cannoner mechs!

While the raging sandstorm diminished the effectiveness of their sensors and targeting systems, other friendly mechs that were in the vicinity of the distant enemies transmitted accurate data back to their ranged contingent.

With every other Urthinan element supporting their activities, the Urthinan cannoner mechs practically had free reign at the moment!

The result of all of this was that a considerable amount of cannons went to work. They flooded the elusive Larkinson ranged mechs with special rounds that were designed to fracture and spread out into small but deadly shards.

Once these shards reached a group of Bright Warriors, they scarred and raked across the surfaces, leaving behind a lot of shallow grooves.

It took multiple volleys of shrapnel fire to tear through the armor plating of the Larkinson rifleman mechs.

"This isn't working. These rifleman mechs are tougher than usual."

The Bright Warrior was a balanced modular mech platform. In order to fulfill several different roles, its base specs were relatively middling in every category.

The rifleman mech configuration of this model did not add a lot of mass to the mech in order to preserve as much mobility as possible. However, just the base armor of Bright Warrior was already thicker and more capable of resisting damage than that of many other rifleman mechs!

This meant that the Bright Warriors actually fared quite well against shrapnel fire.

While it was practically impossible to evade the incoming attacks, the Bright Warriors merely did their best to resist the damage as much as possible.

Knowing that they would go down eventually, the rifleman mechs under fire overloaded their luminar crystal rifles and fired extra powerful energy beams at their current targets!

Seeing that relying on shrapnel fire was inefficient, the cannoner mechs simultaneously switched magazines and began to fire solid gauss rounds.

Although a lot of projectiles missed the Larkinsons rifleman mechs, enough of them managed to strike true with every volley!

"Ah, damnit, my armor is fractured!"

"Don't let them hit you from behind! Our rear armor is too vulnerable against these solid rounds!"

The cannons weren't particularly accurate under the current circumstances, but there were no doubts about their power.

Each heavy caliber round that struck a Bright Warrior either fractured a lot of armor plating or drilled a hole through the weaker sections straight away!

Once the Bright Warriors suffered major breaches in their armor coverage, the blowing sand soon began to wreak havoc on their internals!

The mechs overheated faster. Several mechanical parts began to get blocked or jammed. Delicate components fell offline after they were sanded down. All of these effects and more quickly began to deteriorate the damage mechs over the span of several minutes!

The Urthinans had brought just enough cannons to put serious pressure on the dispersed Larkinson mechs.

Commander Casella held her breath as she accurately fired a shot against a distant lancer mech that was chasing another Larkinson mech. The beam hit a portion of the powerful flight system that extended from the Urthinan mech's back.

Though this didn't cause the lancer mech to lose a lot of thrust power, her attack slowed it down just enough to make it easier for other Larkinson mechs to finish off the target.

Instead of joining the Larkinson mechs that were in the process of finishing off the lancer mech entirely, Casella switched her aim to other lancer mechs and focused specifically on weakening their flight systems.

Slowing them down was of utmost importance!

"If you can't catch up to us, you can't kill our mechs!"

As an expert candidate, it was easy enough for her to land her hits consistently. The lancer mechs may be fast at moving forward, but their agility was terrible. The only challenge was to attack the lancer mechs at the right angle, which in most cases was any direction except straight ahead.

If the Larkinson mechs remained in one single group, then that was difficult to accomplish.

However, now that the Larkinson mechs had dispersed in every direction, the Urthinan mechs had split up as well, causing many of them to expose their sides and rears to Casella's sights!

Though Casella was having a great time as a mech pilot, she grew increasingly concerned as a commander.

The Larkinson Battalion slowly surrendered the initiative to the Glory of Urthina Battalion.

The cannoner mechs were making steady progress in downing the Larkinson mechs.

The Avatar Bright Warriors did not fare too well once they were being bombarded by heavy caliber gauss rounds.

Their performance specs just happened to work against them this time. The Bright Warrior mechs did not possess enough armor to effectively resist the cannon fire.

However, as medium mechs, their evasion ability did not come close to that of the Ferocious Piranhas. They tried their best but could not prevent themselves from getting hit once they became the target of ten cannoner mechs or more!

The battle devolved into an attrition game. The Larkinsons were doing their best to whittle down the enemy lancer mechs while the Urthinans were trying hard to eliminate the Bright Warriors.

While the cannoner mechs also directed their firepower against the Valkyrie Redeemers, the marauder mechs fared a little better.

They were lighter and a bit more agile in the air. They also carried round shields that provided enough defense to withstand an extra hit or two. The efficiency in killing them was lower so the Urthinans would rather bully the weaker and more vulnerable Larkinson mechs!

That was a serious mistake.

A Penitent Sister mech captain issued the command that many of her fellow sisters had been waiting for all this time.

"Gather up! We're going to do something about those ground troops!"

The Larkinsons went into this battle with the determination that they should no longer hold back. The Penitent Sisters had long held themselves back until they finally became jubilant as they gathered up and prayed to the Superior Mother.

"Show these ignorant people that Urthina is no match to the Superior Mother!"

The convergence of the Valkyrie Redeemers did not escape anyone's notice.

The Urthinans, the live audience and the billions of spectators spread across two different galaxies all saw how the marauder mechs holstered their light rifles and whipped out their spears.

[I believe we finally have the honor of witnessing one of the Larkinson Clan's greatest battle solutions. It is one that is highly controversial and often speculated about in certain circles on the galactic net. Several different enemies of the Larkinson Clan have borne the brunt of its unfathomable attack, and now we shall surely witness their might in person and in front of the best recording equipment in Chance Bay!]

[Surely the Urthinans must be aware of what the Larkinson Battalion is attempting to do. The Valkyrie Redeemer mechs couldn't be any more obvious of what they are attempting to do. Why aren't the Urthinan mechs swarming or bombarding these marauder mechs?]

That was a good question. Even the Larkinson mech pilots in the field began to grow uncomfortable at the lack of response.

The Larkinson Clan's battle formations were not really a secret anymore. Anyone doing research on the Larkinsons would have been able to stumble upon them sooner or later.

What the Urthinans might not know was that the movements of the Penitent Sisters was partially a bluff. Commander Casella was ready to whip out a response should the Urthinans focus their might on the Valkyrie Redeemers.

Instead, the Penitent Sisters were left to converge and enter into a specific formation without any disturbance.

"They can't be that stupid."

"The Urthinans are unnerving me. Are they hiding something?"

"What if they're hiding a surprise of their own?"

The mech battalions that had made it to the semifinals of the G-Aena League should never be so complacent!

Though Commander Casella smelled a trap, there was not enough grounds to pull back the Penitent Sisters.

The current trend was not advantageous enough for the Larkinsons. While the Bright Warriors were doing good work, the Urthinan cannoner mechs were doing even better despite their smaller numbers!

The main reason for that was because the cannoner mechs were landbound mechs. Unlike flight-capable mechs like the Bright Warriors, the Urthinan cannoner mechs did not have to sacrifice performance in order to accommodate a hefty and demanding flight system in their designs.

This not only allowed them to carry more powerful cannons, but also allowed them to carry thicker armor. Since they didn't have to be light enough to enable them to fly at standard gravities, they could easily pile up at least 50 percent more armor without slowing down their ground traversal speeds too much!

The Penitent Sisters had already engaged their battle network at this time. The silhouette of the Superior Mother already came into being, though in a less grandiose size than before due to the smaller number of mech pilots involved.

Special projections built into the frames of the Valkyrie Redeemer automatically filled in this dark silhouette so that the visage of the Superior Mother became a lot more lifelike!

Even so, almost two mech companies worth of Penitent Sisters was just enough to launch a considerable attack!

At this time, the cannoner mechs had ceased their fire so that they could press against and huddle behind the defensive knight mechs of the Glory of Urthina Battalion.

Unlike the aerial offensive knight mechs that accompanied the lancer mechs in the air, the Urthinan defensive knight mechs were fully landbound and therefore a lot thicker and more resistant to damage than usual.

Each of them tilted their shields upwards in anticipation of meeting the combination attack of the Penitent Sisters.

Although the Larkinson Battalion expected the Urthinans to make these moves, Casella still couldn't get rid of her unease.

"It's too simple."

Passive defense rarely worked well against the Superior Mother's might. Even if the Penitent Sisters weren't allowed to utilize their infamously lethal death formation attack, their other formation attacks were still formidable in their own way!

Against tough, stationary targets like the Urthinan ground contingent, the Penitent Sisters opted to go for the woman formation attack!

"The superiority of our Supreme shall be made manifest!"

The Superior Mother's energy projection extended her giant finger and stabbed forth towards the Urthinan landbound contingent!

A sharp spike of overpowering energy rapidly surged forward and almost instantly pierced through the center of the enemy formation!

Yet just before this powerful energy spike could slam through the middle of the enemy ranks, the Urthinan landbound knight mechs erupted into fire as green flames burst out from their frames!

"What are they doing?!"

The strange energies they released rapidly formed an energy dome around the Urthinan landbound contingent just moments before the Penitent Sisters' battle formation attack had arrived.

BOOM!

Two different energies collided against each other! A lot of powerful energies dispersed in every direction, causing everyone to temporarily lose sight of what was taking place.

Once the spreading energies had run their course, all the Larkinsons became dismayed when they saw that the Valkyrie Redeemer battle formation had failed to destroy a single enemy mech!

Though the enemy landbound knight mechs weren't in good shape right now, the cannoner mechs were still intact!

Yet what drew the attention of most people wasn't the mechs.

It was the green energy dome that was still erect somehow!

Even though it had lost a lot of power in order to resist the Superior Mother's attack, it still looked as if it was capable of blocking other attacks!

"What kind of tech is able to generate such a strong shield?!"

"Is this even an energy shield?"

"How could the Superior Mother fail?"

The Urthinans had finally unveiled one of their own trump cards! The Larkinsons were under a lot more pressure now that the enemy had managed to foil the Penitent Sisters!

*Chapter 3487: Stealing Wheels*

The Glory of Urthina Battalion finally displayed a trick that they hadn't shown in the previous matches!

The strange green energy shield that the Urthinan knight mechs managed to erect by unleashing strange green flames completely shocked the crowd!

"That's no average energy shield! It's too strong!"

"Where did these guys get this tech?"

"Where can I buy this system?"

The audience had forgotten almost entirely about the earlier manifestation of the Superior Mother. The Penitent Sister battle formation attack launched with great fanfare, only to be used as a foil for one of the Glory Urthina Battalion's own trump cards!

[What is your technical analysis, sir?]

[The shielding tech utilized is clearly not conventional. The energy readings as well as the visual appearance of the green energy barrier are too far removed from the energy shields that we are all accustomed to. Ah, if you peer closer into the Urthinan landbound defensive knight mech designs, you will see that there are several unidentified components in their frames. They take up a significant amount of volume but aren't connected to the other systems of the mech in a usual fashion. They are... isolated and self-contained. If I'm not mistaken... we're looking at salvaged alien tech.]

A lot of spectators gasped in surprise.

"Alien tech? How exciting!"

"What are you talking about? Human tech is superior!"

The overwhelming majority of humans in the Milky Way lived in states that were far removed from any alien civilizations. The odds that any of them would be able to bump into raw alien technology outside museums was practically zero.

While there were still plenty of advanced alien races in the Milky Way Galaxy, they had largely kept their distance from the powerful humans. The Big Two strictly guarded against these serious threats and did not allow any private individuals to interact or exchange with the menacing aliens.

The mistakes of the past should never be repeated!

It wasn't until the Red Ocean opened up to the public that humans got in touch with sentient aliens from a fresh perspective.

Strangely enough, most people didn't harbor that much hatred, fear and disgusts towards the native alien races just as the nunsers or the puelmers. They were more novelties than anything else because they were exotic and because they were too weak to pose a threat against human civilization.

With the Red Ocean exposing so many people to the wonders of alien civilizations, humanity slowly began to shift its mentality.

After decades of turning their backs on anything related to aliens, now they have begun to grow curious about them again.

[Is the alien shielding tech familiar to any of you? Could the Church of Urthina have managed to stumble upon a wrecked puelmer starship?]

[The energy shields utilized by the cybernetic puelmer race is more familiar to us than this unknown shielding technology. The alien components used by the Urthinans do not ring a bell to me. It is highly likely that these alien components originated from a relatively minor alien civilization in the Red Ocean.]

[This is a good example of the ingenuity of alien science. Since our race's entry into this dwarf galaxy, we have already identified over 10,000 alien races. Even if many of them are relatively small with empires spanning over just a dozen star systems or maybe just their home planet, they have spent eons refining their applications of all of the resources in their reach. They might not have access to as many different types of exotics as humanity, but by pouring much of their research on a handful of powerful materials, they can accomplish feats that even our most brilliant scientists have never thought about in their advanced labs.]

A female commentator chuckled. [And all of these alien fruits are ripe for the plucking.]

A round of laughter erupted from the commentator room.

[Correct. In the Age of Conquest, humanity managed to grow explosively in strength after our scientists have obtained samples and data on a vast amount of alien tech. By studying and reverse-engineering the technological culminations of other alien civilizations, we turn their best accomplishments into our own gains! I have little doubt that if the unidentified alien shielding tech employed by the Urthinans has any advantages over conventional technology, we will soon see the benefits in the next generation of technological advancements.]

This was how humanity always worked. It stole the best works of alien civilizations and turned it into its own accumulation after a few years or decades.

There was no shame or guilt in doing so. Though many humans preferred to rely on their own ingenuity to invent better technology, it was much more convenient to just steal someone else's wheel rather than invent it yourself!

The commentators ignited this desire with their excited discussion, the Larkinsons on the other hand were appalled!

Sure, the Larkinson Battalion anticipated that the Urthinans might unveil a special capability, but they never imagined that they would whip out alien technology themselves!

The shock and surprise of seeing the best effort of the Penitent Sisters being negated like that interrupted the momentum of the Larkinson Battalion.

Commander Casella realized the danger and barked out her words!

"Penitent Sisters, pull back and regroup! We'll think about eliminating the enemy ground contingent later!"

The Valkyrie Redeemers had stalled a bit after seeing the Superior Mother fail in breaking through the enemy defensive measures.

Even though a battle formation consisting of just two mech companies wasn't able to unleash the strongest energy attack, the Penitent Sisters had still been sure that they would have demolished the Urthinan mechs on the ground.

If the enemy consisted of an ace mech, then the Penitent Sisters wouldn't have been surprised that their attempt had failed. Yet their current foes were just a bunch of normal mechs. How could they have resisted the Superior Mother's might?

It took a while for them to wake up and readjust their mentalities. This was a shortcoming and revealed that they were still not up to par with true professional soldiers, but that was a discussion for later.

Right now, the Larkinson Battalion needed to recover from this setback and find another path towards victory.

Although the energy dome slowly began to lose strength, it looked as if it was still staying up for at least another minute.

The knight mechs that had originally erected this powerful shield were largely spent at this time. The strange flames that had run through their frames had heavily damaged their armor and systems. Though they still remained operational somehow, it probably wouldn't take too much to take them out of action.

Unfortunately for the Larkinsons, the Penitent Sisters were no longer in their prime!

Every activation of a battle formation imposed a mental burden on the mech pilots involved. Though the Penitent Sister mech pilots had performed this special move several times before, they hardly got better in their ability to stave off the strain and exhaustion that had settled into their minds.

"Stay strong, Sisters! We must fight! Don't stop until your mech can't fight any further!"

The Penitent Sisters were all gritting their teeth and forcing themselves to stay sharp.

However, this was easier said than done when all of them felt that they had been awake for at least 2 days straight!

The only way they could retain a portion of their battle effectiveness was to rely on their willpower, their motivation, their sense of duty and above all else their fear of disappointing the Superior Mother!

Every Penitent Sister had briefly come in touch with their Supreme during the time they engaged their battle network. That gave them a more personal connection to the great woman.

This connection played a pivotal role in helping the Penitent Sister mech pilots recover. Though they weren't doing anything aside from dodging enemy lancer mechs and evading enemy cannon fire, it was sufficient for the moment.

The outlook of the Larkinson Battalion still hadn't improved, though. The Avatars of Myth piloting the Bright Warriors in rifleman mech configuration came under greater and greater pressure.

Despite their best efforts, a half-squad of Bright Warriors failed to evade the Urthinan lancer mechs.

The enemy mech pilots had long grown frustrated about the difficulty in getting close to their targets.

Now that they successfully leveraged their teamwork to corner a bunch of Larkinson mechs, the Urthinan lancer mech pilots gleefully planted their long and sharp lances through the frames of the enemy rifleman mechs!

Incidents like these happened on a frequent basis across the arena battlefield. Just because the Larkinson Bright Warriors were good at evading the enemy didn't mean that the Urthinans were chasing after them blindly.

By working together and boxing in the free-flying Larkinson mechs, the Urthinan melee mechs methodically defeated them in batches!

Of course, the Larkinson mechs armed with luminar crystal rifles hit back as hard as possible. They became more efficient about it as they focused on drilling holes in the armor coverage of their opposition.

As long as any mech gained a large enough hole, the powerful sandstorm would do the rest of the work!

If the Urthinans only deployed melee mechs, then this tactic would have been enough to give the Larkinson Battalion the upper hand.

Unfortunately, the Urthinan ground contingent existed as well, and after fending off the battle formation attack, it retaliated against the Larkinsons mechs with a vengeance!

For now, the Urthinan cannoner mechs couldn't resist the easy targets. The Penitent Sister mech pilots were no longer in their prime, and it showed. The way they defended and reacted against the incoming fire was much less sharp than unusual. This meant that they soon started to drop like flies!

"We can't go on like this!" An exhausted Penitent Sister captain said. "We need to charge at the cannoner mechs before all of our mechs drop dead!"

The Penitent Sisters waited for the strange alien green energy shield finally faded away.

No matter what tricks the Urthinans had come up with, they still had to abide by the limits set by the tournament. The tech they were allowed to bring to the arena should never be too overwhelming.

This gave the Penitent Sisters a chance to redeem themselves. They steered their Valkyrie Redeemers back on a diving approach and made no secret about their current motive!

"Hold fast, Sisters! Let these Urthinans attack us as much as they want!"

The Urthinan cannoner mechs had never let up on their attacks against the Valkyrie Redeemers.

What was different was that the Valkyrie mechs no longer tried to dodge the incoming fire. They instead dove almost straight towards their location. Even their attempts to juke around a bit failed to spare them much because they were only really heading in one direction, which was straight towards the Urthinan ground contingent!

Dozens more mechs sustained serious damage and some of them even fell out of formation!

Lancer mechs swept across the diving marauder mechs and selectively impaled them from the side with lances.

Only half of the Valkyrie Redeemers managed to survive the constant attacks, but that was just enough as far as the Penitent Sisters were concerned!

"DEATH!"

At the final moment, the Valkyrie Redeemers finally activated their death-oriented glows.

Though the Urthinan mech pilots had done their research and mentally prepared themselves to face this famed mental attack, these worshippers had never experienced Superior Mother's ability to induce dread!

Perhaps the Fridaymen mech pilots were already accustomed to this effect, but the Urthinans were completely fresh!

With the Valkyrie Redeemers all blasting this glow in a cone in front of them, practically the entire Urthinan ground contingent had frozen at the moment!

On top of that, the Valkyrie mechs also launched all of their Starburst grenades all at once!

The huge amount of physical and mental disruption completely scrambled the Urthinan landbound mechs.

The knight mechs had it especially bad because their frames were already in poor shape. Some of their damaged sensors completely malfunctioned when the Starburst grenades overloaded their systems!

At this time, the Valkyrie Redeemers crashed onto the Urthinan landbound mechs without any attempt to preserve themselves!

#### *Chapter 3488: Hero's Role*

Suicide attacks were apparently the new trend in the mech tournaments held in central star nodes like Vulit.

Achieving victory mattered more than preserving the mechs in most cases. As long as there were enough friendly mechs left on the battlefield, then it was more than acceptable to sacrifice a bunch of machines to accomplish a result!

As long as the enemy suffered more losses, it was always worth it to go all out and use the mechs to their best effect!

This was why the Penitent Sisters chose to deviate from their training.

Ordinarily, the diving charge attacks of the Valkyrie Redeemers were a lot more restrained. The mechs needed to build up enough momentum to drive their spears through the enemy mechs, but they had to be careful not to go overboard and crash onto the ground!

This was a delicate balancing act that made performing dive attacks in planetary conditions a lot more fraught than charging enemies in space.

At least there was lots of empty room in space for the Valkyrie Redeemers to fling towards with their remaining momentum after pulling off their charges.

This time, the Penitent Sisters were fighting an aerial and landbound battle for the first time in years, but none of them showed hesitation in driving their mechs to suicide.

The arena's safety systems rescued their bodies and pulled them away even as their machines drove their spears through a mech before subsequently slamming those same machines with their own frames!

The damage inflicted by the Valkyrie Redeemers subsequently overwhelmed the Urthinan ground contingent.

Although the spent and damaged Urthinan landbound knight mechs tried to get in the way of as many charging mechs as possible, they couldn't withstand the sheer amount of force generated by tons worth of mechs falling from above!

Throughout the powerful collisions, many of the knight mechs got crushed or bounced away.

Some of them even crashed into the cannoner mechs they were trying to protect, causing these crucial ranged mechs to suffer serious damage as well!

As the entire position of the Urthinan landbound contingent looked as if it had suffered a calamity, both sides began to study the results of this devastatingly effective charge attack.

The goal of the charge attack was to eliminate all of the landbound ranged mechs. In that, the Penitent Sisters had partially succeeded.

Though the enemy defensive knight mechs managed to block and absorb much of the incoming damage, the death glow along with the Starburst grenades interrupted their actions, causing at least half of them to fail to complete their objectives.

In addition, even if the knight mechs still got in the way, the collisions were so strong that many cannoner mechs got toppled and crushed!

The only problem was that too few Valkyrie Redeemers managed to survive long enough to pull off their charges. Though the ones that made it to the ground intact had all inflicted a lot of damage, there were still at least twenty or so cannoner mechs that were either untouched or only suffered moderate scrapes from the dive attack.

Soon enough, they went back to business firing their potent cannons at the Bright Warriors that still put up a fight in the air!

[What a shame! The Larkinson Battalion has made a risky choice by limiting its melee mechs to 80 of these Valkyrie Redeemers. Now that they are all spent, the Larkinsons must either divert more firepower towards attacking the Urthinan ground forces or withstand the continuous ground-to-air attacks as they eliminate other targets.]

[They cannot afford to let the surviving cannoner mechs fire at their rifleman mechs with impunity. The Larkinsons must respond!]

The Bright Warriors first tried to divert their firepower from the surviving enemy lancer mechs to the Urthinan ground contingent. With most of the landbound defensive knight mechs crushed and out of the fight, the surviving cannoner mechs became relatively vulnerable targets!

However, unlike the Bright Warriors, the enemy cannoner mechs were substantially bigger and tougher. They were better able to resist the energy beams raining down on them from above.

What was even worse for the Larkinsons was that the Glory of Urthina Battalion quickly adjusted to the altered situation.

Dozens of mechs flew down from every direction and protectively held their shields close to the cannoner mechs.

"The Urthinans have diverted their aerial offensive knight mechs to guard their heavy guns!"

The Urthinans deployed two models of knight mechs. The landbound ones were much tougher and more capable of defending against attacks from a distance, so they were assigned as the original guards of the cannoner mechs.

Now that these big and massive machines had done their jobs, their lighter, flight-capable cousins took over their responsibility!

[What an excellent response!] A strategic commentator praised. [The Glory of Urthina Battalion finally recognize that their offensive knight mechs are too slow and cumbersome to catch up to the agile Larkinson rifleman mechs. It is much more suitable for them to return to their original purpose and guard their more important mechs. If the Urthinans wish to eliminate the Larkinson Battalion, they must rely on their cannoner mechs to do most of the work of killing the opposition.]

The offensive knight mechs were less capable of resisting enemy fire than the original guards of the cannoner mechs, but the Urthinans had a good way to extend their durability in the face of so many attacks from the air.

The mechs simply threw aside their shields when their defensive equipment started to crumble and picked up the heavier tower shields that their heavier cousins had dropped onto the ground.

Even though the offensive knight mechs didn't possess the right strength to hold and carry these heavy tower shields effectively, it was no problem for them to hold them with two limbs or brace them against the surrounding wrecks for support.

With the help of these additional tower shields, the Urthinan offensive knight mechs successfully prevented the Larkinson Bright Warriors from downing even a single surviving cannoner mech!

Even if a couple of stray shots managed to land from a tricky angle, the sturdy ranged mechs still possessed plenty of armor to take the hits and keep going!

"This isn't working!" A Larkinson mech officer said. "We need to close in on the enemy ground force and eliminate those cannoner mechs immediately."

"We can't! Those knight mechs will stop us all and these lancer mechs that are chasing after us aren't for show either. Besides, our mechs are no good in close quarters combat in our current configuration."

"We still have our backup knives!"

As the Larkinsons tried to figure out a response to the latest development, Commander Casella grew increasingly more troubled.

The pressure continued to mount on her shoulders. Though she tried to keep everything under control, the Urthinans were slowly unraveling the Larkinson Battalion.

"Maybe we should have brought in a company of Swordmaiden mechs."

She did not regret the decision to come into the battle with their current lineup. Although it didn't sound like much at first, Casella knew that they wouldn't have been able to resist against the Urthinan aerial mechs with too few ranged mechs. The Larkinsons needed the numbers in order to pressure and whittle down the enemy lancer mechs fast enough.

Nonetheless, she still needed to do something in order to reverse the Larkinson Battalion's losing trend.

It was at this time that her living mech issued its own opinion.

**WE MUST TAKE ACTION OURSELVES. ONLY HEROES CAN SALVAGE A VICTORY FROM THIS BATTLE.**

"What?!"

Casella grew appalled even as the Quint grew more eager to enter the fray.

Even though the mech was designed to fight enemies at range proficiently, it enjoyed defeating enemy mechs up close even more.

Although Casella wanted to refuse the Quint's overly aggressive suggestion, she found that she couldn't form the right words to do so. The Larkinsons were obviously losing this battle if this went on, so why not take this gamble?

One of her greatest worries about losing was whether the Quint would get killed as well. She had no idea how much the Urthinans would damage the precious masterwork mech. If the enemy piled too many attacks on her current mech, could it still be brought back to life?

Casella didn't know the answer, and neither did the Quint.

This made both of them more desperate. The Quint did not fear an unworthy death, but it would be damned before it allowed these strange Urthinans who relied on a single trick to gain the upper hand in this match.

At this time, Commander Casella fully let herself go. She quickly passed over the responsibility of commanding the Larkinson Battalion to another mech officer before she instructed the Quint to dive towards the enemy ground force in the center of the battlefield!

The Quint's abrupt change in course did not escape the notice of the Urthinans. Soon enough, their cannoner mechs as well as a number of lancer mechs went on the attack!

While Casella was able to evade or resist most of the incoming fire, the lancer mechs posed a much greater threat.

Even if the Quint had been upgraded with better armor systems and other defensive measures, it would still not meet a good end when a solid mech and its lance slammed onto its side!

"Cover Commander Casella's approach!"

The other Avatar Bright Warriors did their best to cover for the Quint. They concentrated their fire at the incoming lancer mechs to take them out or slow their advance. They also threw their own bodies in the way of the enemy fire coming from below. Even if their mech frames weren't solid enough to block so many direct attacks, they still served as adequate shields for the short time needed for the Quint to reach its destination!

When the masterwork mech finally reached the ground forces, it had holstered its overstrained luminar crystal rifle and pulled out its sword.

After the first time the Quint became embroiled in a melee clash, Commander Casella had made sure to brush her skills up a bit in case she ended up in a similar position.

She was quite grateful for refreshing her swordsmanship in her recent practice sessions. Together with the Quint's active guidance and participation, she and her mech tore through the Urthinan mechs in their way!

The Quint in its current configuration may be lacking in strength and toughness, but it was light, agile and fast.

Even if it was alone in the center of the enemy ground formation, there was practically nothing the Urthinan ground mechs could do to stop the Quint from rampaging through their ranks!

The Quint looked as if it was dancing from one clumsy Urthinan mech after another.

The enemy cannoner mech might be well-protected, but they were slow and unable to turn fast enough to prevent a sword from sticking through the weak point in their rear armor!

As for the knight mechs, the Quint outright evaded them. Whether they held tower shields or not, the offensive knight mechs were just not equipped to blocked a powerful masterwork mech piloted by an expert candidate!

"We can't fire at this masterwork mech! There are too many friendly mechs in the way!"

"Urthina save us! We need support from above!"

"Our light skirmishers are coming!"

The Quint had already massacred half of the remaining cannoner mechs when the Urthinan light skirmishers finally arrived from above!

Even though many of them had been shot or downed after the Avatar Bright Warriors concentrated their fire on them, more than a dozen still managed to make it through!

The light skirmishers were considerably faster and more agile than the Quint. There was no way for the Larkinson masterwork mech to escape their attacks!

That didn't mean the Quint was helpless, though.

"Get out of our way!"

The Quint chose to rely on brute force and charged in a specific direction while blocking as many incoming knife attacks as possible. The Quint was able to summon up just enough force to push and smash aside the light skirmishers that directly blocked its path!

"We shall not be stopped!" Casella declared as the heat of the battle began to rush in her head.

Her connection with the Quint deepened as she pushed her piloting skills to the limit in order to survive in this difficult situation.

More and more Urthinan cannoner mechs fell against the Quint's sword.

However, just before the Quint could finish off the remaining ones, a lance speared through the air and almost managed to impale the masterwork mech if not for Casella sensing an incoming threat from above.

A more powerful and decorated Urthinan lancer mech had finally made its appearance.

Casella and her living mech grew more serious as they regarded this new threat.

The enemy expert candidate finally initiated its challenge.

#### *Chapter 3489: Belittled By Mech*

The Urthinan expert candidate had always been fighting in this battle. His lancer mech had already skewered a lot of Bright Warriors during this match.

However, now that the Larkinson expert candidate decided to wipe out the precious Urthinan cannoner mechs, he could no longer stand aside.

Although it was a shame that the mech's thrown lance had failed to impale the enemy mech, the champion mech grabbed hold of another lance just before it reached the Quint!

Commander Casella didn't foolishly stay in place. She moved the Quint behind a pile of wrecked mechs and commanded the mech to jump aside as soon as the powerful Urthinan lancer mech expended most of its destructive power against the derelict mechs!

Even though the enemy expert candidate failed to nail the Quint, he expected it wouldn't be so easy to take out such a valuable masterwork mech.

"Urthina, witness me as I slay this great enemy!"

The champion mech came with more weapons than the usual lancer mech. It not only had access to two powerful lances, but also carried a collapsible spear that it had quickly drawn from its back.

Although the spear was partially hollow and didn't possess an exaggerated reach, it was made out of plenty of high-quality materials.

Instead of blasting away in order to circle around for another charge, the enemy champion mech sought to eliminate the Quint more directly!

"This lancer mech is just as agile as a spearman mech!"

Unlike other lancer mechs, the machine piloted by the expert candidate was specially prepared. A dedicated spearman mech might be more capable of dueling enemy machines, but the champion mech was good enough for an expert candidate to leverage its agility to great effect!

The Quint was not a slow mech either, so Commander Casella was still able to use it to dodge and block the incoming spear thrusts.

However, the Quint was still in its rifleman mech configuration so Casella was at a definite disadvantage!

The difference wasn't that important if she fought against regular mech pilots, but the Urthinan expert candidate was good!

The enemy expert candidate did not take any unnecessary risks. Despite his great desire to slay the larkinson expert candidate and prove himself worthy to his goddess, he was too experienced to let his excitement override his common sense.

The Quint and its mech pilot clearly didn't excel in melee combat, but they could still reverse the situation by launching a desperation attack.

In order to prevent these last-ditch attacks from happening, the Urthinan expert candidate mainly stuck to launching repeated stabs with the spear of his mech.

Even if the attacks were monotonous, they were difficult to block and divert and therefore posed a considerable threat against the Quint!

The Quint kept moving backwards while the Urthinan champion mech kept up without letting the gap between them grow too big!

Due to the latter's insistence on sticking to the former, Commander Casella found no opportunity to disengage from her current opponent!

As long as she could put enough distance between their two mechs, the Quint could switch back to its rifle and begin to cripple the Urthinan champion mech from afar!

"I won't let you get away!"

The Quint already suffered a few stabs as Casella failed to respond well enough to block or deflect the incoming attacks.

When the Quint attempted to take flight, the enemy champion mech flew up in order to block its ascent.

The Larkinson masterwork mech was considerably faster and more agile in the air, so the Urthinans could not allow it to take flight again!

"Damnit!"

Commander Casella grew increasingly more concerned about the progression of the match.

So far, both sides had already lost hundreds of mechs. Many Urthinan lancer mechs bore scars from the energy beams they withstood. The Avatar Bright Warriors weren't in good shape either. All of their actions expended a lot of energy and generated an even greater amount of heat.

All the while, the sandstorm kept sweeping across the frames every mech in the arena. A lot of surfaces featured scratched coating and sanded metal as the dangerous particles continued to wear down the mechs.

Some mechs even suffered problems in the air because the sandstorm also damaged the weaker parts of their flight systems.

The more their backs faced the direction of the sandstorm, the faster their flight systems malfunctioned!

This caused the battle to become a little more constrained as both sides sought to preserve their mechs as much as possible.

Nonetheless, the Larkinsons gained a slight advantage as their ability to strike at any target in front of them made it much easier for them to deal damage while trying to keep their mechs at a safe orientation.

The poor Urthinan lancer mechs had to make harder choices in order for them to fulfill their purpose!

If not for the fact that Commander Casella had been unable to eliminate the last few cannoneer mechs, the Avatars of Myth remaining in the air would have been able to mop their remaining enemies!

Yet those few intact cannoneer mechs were still downing a mech every once in a while. Each time, they directed all of their guns towards the same Bright Warrior mech. This not only caused the latter to be boxed in, but the increased attacks also put a lot more pressure onto the unlucky Larkinson mech pilots!

The remaining Urthinan mechs made sure to never let the Bright Warriors come close to their remaining cannoneer mechs.

While there were a lot less of these powerful mechs in working condition than before, the amount of Larkinson mechs that still remained active had shrunk as well!

This meant that every mech the Larkinson Battalion could still employ in this match was of crucial importance. Seeing them removed from the board after they got hit by a couple of heavy gauss rounds increasingly tilted the balance of the battle in the favor of the Glory of Urthina Battalion!

[Oh dear. It appears the Larkinson Battalion is closing in on defeat. Does it have any chance of reversing this outcome?]

[That is hard to say. There is always a possibility, but if the Urthinans do not make any mistakes, they will likely be able to win this battle of attrition.]

[The only way for the Larkinsons to change the outcome is to flip the board. They must pull off a brilliant maneuver, unveil a brilliant maneuver or display greater skill than they have ever before in order to defeat the remaining Urthinan mechs.]

That sounded nice and all, but the Larkinson Battalion didn't have further depth left to uncover!

The Penitent Sisters were taken off the board and the other Larkinson mech legions didn't even take part in the battle in the first place.

There were no Transcendent Punishers to call upon. There were no Eternal Redemptions that could threaten the Urthinan champion mech. There weren't even Swordmaidens who could easily demolish the enemy expert candidate by relying on numbers and teamwork to take down a superior foe!

The lack of strategic depth in the Larkinson Battalion's lineup left it without any solutions that could extricate it from its slide towards defeat!

"We can't let this go on! Help the commander! We need her to break the balance!"

Recognizing that Commander Casella and the Quint were the only variables left for the Larkinsons to change the outcome, numerous Larkinson mechs descended from the air.

They faced withering fire from the surviving cannoneer mechs and also had to dodge charges from hostile lancer mechs. The pressure made it difficult for any of them to make it to the ground.

Commander Casella was not unaware of what her fellow comrades were doing. Seeing them falter or get destroyed in an attempt to reach her position made her feel increasingly more distressed.

She knew quite well that none of the Larkinson mech pilots actually died when their mechs fell apart. Still, she had witnessed so many tragedies and losses in the previous battles of the Larkinson Clan that she couldn't help but recall those painful moments.

In some instances, her mind went back to the Battle of Reckoning and the Battle of Fordilla Zentra.

The Urthinan champion mech turned into a Fridayman expert mech in one moment and a dwarven expert mech in the next moment!

Though Casella was aware that she was letting the pressure get the better of her, she simply couldn't catch her breath so that she could clear her mind at this time. The enemy expert candidate was so skilled that just a single moment of inattention from her was enough to spell the Quint's end!

While the Quint became more alive and active as the one-sided duel continued, the living mech was not quite content with the way it was proceeding.

The enemy champion mech constantly maintained the upper hand. With its repeated spear attacks, it was always on the cusp of winning the bout.

The Larkinson masterwork mech on the other hand could do nothing but keep stepping back while using its movements and its sword to stave off a crippling blow.

In the hands of a better mech pilot who was more skilled in melee combat, the Quint would have never ended up in this position!

YOU ARE TOO FAR REMOVED FROM JOSHUA, CASELLA. YOU LACK PRACTICE AND YOU ARE UNWORTHY TO WIELD THIS SWORD.

"I'm a ranged mech specialist!" Casella complained to her mech! "My talents lay elsewhere. I cannot commit all of my time on mastering my swordsmanship when it isn't necessary!"

YOU ARE BENEATH JOSHUA. YOU HAVE TOO MANY SHORTCOMINGS AS A MECH PILOT. THE TIME YOU WASTE ON OTHER ACTIVITIES SUCH AS COMMANDING YOUR TROOPS HAS MADE YOU REGRESS AS A WARRIOR.

"THERE ARE MORE WAYS TO CONTRIBUTE TO A BATTLE, YOU PIG-HEADED MECH!" Casella finally exploded!

She couldn't take the backtalk of her own mech any longer! Even if the Quint was a revered relic of the Larkinson Clan, that didn't mean she liked being told what to do by it. She was a Larkinson! She was an Ingvar! She was the legion commander of the Living Sentinels!

A flash of inspiration dawned upon her mind. Even as she continued to repel her opponent's attacks, she latched on to a radical idea.

She might not have her Living Sentinels at her disposal this time, but she was still surrounded by plenty of Larkinson mechs!

"AVATARS! RALLY TO MY COMMAND!"

Casella's mind surged as she reached out into the existence known as the Larkinson Network.

Every member of the clan was connected to it. More precisely, they were bonded to the Golden Cat.

After feeling what Casella Ingvar attempted to do, the Golden Cat gave her blessing to the expert candidate and facilitated her actions as best as possible!

The Quint began to take on an unexplainable golden glow as Casella's presence grew greater!

Not only did she try to exert as much of herself as possible, she also tried to reach out to the other Larkinson mech pilots that were still taking part in the fight!

"ALONE, WE ARE WEAK!"

The Avatar mech pilots that had been invoking the Golden Cat and thereby making active use of their connections to the Larkinson Network began to feel a stronger influence pressing on their own minds.

"TOGETHER, WE ARE STRONG!"

Although the Avatar mech pilots instinctively resisted this intrusion at first, the powerful words of Commander Casella caused them to embrace this oddly invasive influence.

"WE ARE ONE FAMILY!"

Though the Quint did not fight more effectively against the Urthinan expert candidate despite the odd golden corona around it, the same could not be said for the other Larkinson mechs.

As time went on, the Larkinson mechs began to unleash a soft golden glow as well! The brighter this glow, the more their marksmanship improved!

"OUR TEAMWORK IS OUR GREATEST ADVANTAGE!"

What was even more remarkable was that the Avatar mechs displayed increasingly greater coordination! They covered for each other more effectively and moved to assist their comrades at just the right times.

The improvement was gradual but noticeable. Less Bright Warriors fell from the air and more Urthinan mechs collapsed instead.

"OUR FAMILY IS OUR ROOT!"

A strong sense of kinship and shared identity welled up from the mech pilots who listened to Casella's uplifting roars! Every Larkinson mech pilot in the arena felt as if they were digging up their latent power and willingly offered it up to the Sentinel Commander!

"OUR MECHS ARE OUR PARTNERS!"

Not just the Larkinson mech pilots, but also their mechs sought to provide their strength to Commander Casella!

There were only Bright Warriors active in the field on the Larkinson Clan's side. Each of these mechs were brothers and sisters of each other, with the Quint as the unquestionably greatest sibling among them at the moment!

Now, these ordinary Bright Warriors were answering the call of Commander Casella. Even the Quint became swayed by the rallying cry of its current mech pilot!

"TOGETHER, WE SHALL VANQUISH ANY FOE OF THE LARKINSON CLAN! THIS I SWEAR!"

As those words echoed in the ears of every Larkinson, an oddly calm moment ensued.

Even the audience had fallen silent. The arena had access to all of the communication feeds and did not hesitate to broadcast Casella's heartfelt words to an audience of many billions of spectators.

Only the sounds of the whipping sandstorm continued to fill the venue.

Then, the Quint exploded with power!

The Urthinan champion mech couldn't even finish off its next attack as a wave of power flung the high-quality lancer mech away from the masterwork mech!

"FOR THE CLAN!"

*Chapter 3490: Stay True To Self*

The viewers tuning in to the semifinals of the G-Aena League became witnesses to a rare and much-celebrated spectacle!

When these spectators quickly spread the words to their friends and acquaintances, the viewership of the current match quickly jumped!

The tournament organizers were extremely happy to see this bump in viewership! Even if it was just a short-lived phenomenon, all of those customers buying tickets in order to access the remote broadcast poured more than enough money to afford an extra fleet carrier!

It took only a short moment for the number of viewers to double! Already the interest in this particular match exceeded the predicted numbers of the finals. All of the sponsors of the G-Aena League were bursting with happiness as the brand names projected on the sides of the arena entered the eyes of over a trillion viewers!

Many of the people tuning in were mech pilots. They held a special interest in witnessing this match in real-time.

To be honest, few of them were interested in the mech battalions. They had no stake in either the Larkinson Battalion or the Glory of Urthina Battalion. Neither names sounded familiar to the public as they never bothered to watch the preceding matches in the tournament.

The only reason why they tuned in was to watch one particular mech, or more precisely the mech pilot sitting within its cockpit.

Few people had heard of the Quint. Those who possessed the right technical acumen became pleasantly surprised by the existence of this masterwork mech.

"The mech design it is based upon is a bit clunky and rudimentary in a few areas, but this rendition is rather impressive in a rustic manner."

"A masterwork mech shouldn't have much of an effect at this level, though."

"They do help, if only marginally. I don't think what is happening in the arena is a coincidence."

The Glory of Urthina Battalion was quite aggrieved at the moment. The faithful mech pilots possessed great confidence in this fight. Not only did they whittle down their opponents faster, they successfully negated the Larkinson Battalion's big move with the help of a hidden alien device!

The only other variable that could have prevented the Urthinans from dedicating their victory to their goddess was the intervention of the Larkinson expert candidate.

Though Commander Casella had taken the Urthinans by surprise by forgoing the rifle and diving in to kill the precious Urthinan cannoner mechs with a sword, her rampage didn't last long.

Their own champion mech completely managed to stop the Quint. Even if the Larkinson masterwork mech did not suffer a quick defeat, it was more than sufficient to pressure it to the point where it couldn't intervene in the battle any further!

The plan hatched by the Urthinans was sound, but they never accounted for a particular low-probability event.

Although similar occurrences took place in human space every day, it was still too rare to see it happening in any single battle.

It was even less probable for it to occur in an arena battle where the stakes were relatively low. In a safe and ultra-modern venue like the Fortas Major Arena, mech pilots simply weren't subjected to the kind of soul-stirring stimulation that actual battles produced.

Yet several different influences prompted Commander Casella Ingvar-Larkinson to boil over at this time.

First, she had already built up a decent accumulation as an expert candidate. She was one of the many mech pilots who broke through during the Battle against the Abyss. She not only trained considerably since then, but also fought in several major actions since that time.

Second, she underwent a mental evolution. The difference between the current Casella and the Casella that was still a member of House Ingvar was enormous.

She matured in every way. She became calmer, more thoughtful, more decisive and more competent.

She also completely developed her leadership ability. Her time as the leader of the Living Sentinels helped her shape her ability to command her troops in battle and

organize her administration. She learned how to formulate long-term plans and solve problems concerning morale and logistics.

All of this enabled her to develop a better overview of the bigger picture. Her perspective was no longer as narrow as before, and she became fully qualified to take part in discussions that determined the future course of the entire Larkinson Clan!

None of this directly related to her personal ability to pilot a mech, though.

The Quint made that very clear. Joshua had left a strong impression on the masterwork Bright Warrior. The partnership between the two exerted a powerful influence on how the machine judged other mech pilots.

Commander Casella was a disappointment to the Quint. Venerable Joshua might not be as complicated, but his dedication to the piloting profession was sincere and he held an immense respect towards any living mech.

The living mech did not fully understand the importance of leadership. Joshua barely knew anything about it and never really considered it a priority. The Quint had inherited this perspective and kept focusing on personal piloting ability.

In the beginning of their partnership, the Quint saw promise in Casella. Just like Imon, the woman possessed a particular quality that could turn her into a remarkable warrior if molded correctly.

It was too bad that the Sentinel Commander sought to develop herself in a different direction.

The Quint couldn't understand the woman's stubborn decision. Couldn't she tell that she possessed a lot of potential as a champion like her brother?

The mech tried to act in the best interest of the Larkinsons and encourage Casella to put more focus on her personal fighting ability. Yet the more the Quint insisted she should change, the more she dug into her heels!

The mech might be alive, but it still had a long way to go before it comprehended human nature. Their ability to interface with humans didn't necessarily mean they were just as complex!

Whether Commander Casella would have been able to make her efforts bear fruit while piloting another mech was still a question, but the Quint had inadvertently helped her with its adversarial approach.

By challenging and exerting pressure under Casella, the expert candidate did not bend or break. She stuck to her chosen course and did not develop her latent talent further as the Quint had expected.

Instead, she listened to heart and pursued her original goals and ambitions.

Her persistence and her dogged pursuit to develop her own way towards greatness finally culminated in this special moment!

The sandstorm raging through the arena field became less of a hindrance now that a large number of mechs began to release a golden glow!

The Larkinson mech pilots that were still taking part in this battle began to feel as if their minds and will sublimated to a higher level.

Although it was largely an illusion, they truly felt as if everything on the battlefield was in their grasp and that they were all part of a single cohesive fighting collective!

"Together, we are strong!" The Larkinsons spontaneously repeated!

They put these words to practice as their Bright Warriors immediately fired at the surrounding Urthinan lancer mechs.

Different from before, their energy beams achieved much greater effect than before.

Their coordination had reached another level. No matter whether they were kilometers away from each other, the Avatar mech pilots that had fallen under the sway of their mech commander fought as if they were all beside each other!

Energy beams struck from different distances and directions. Each of them boxed in and dismantled the targeted Urthinan mechs with much greater speed and effectiveness than before!

No matter what evasive or defensive measures the Urthinan offensive mechs took, they were simply helpless to withstand the withering fire that even came beyond the detection range of the sandstorm!

To the Larkinson mech pilots, all of the interference and lag practically didn't exist to them anymore! Without relying on the sensor data transmitted by other mechs, they all seemed to gain an overview of what was taking place across the entire battlefield.

This granted the Avatar ranged specialists an unprecedented degree of clarity! They knew exactly what to do to achieve the greatest advantage for their side!

Not only that, but their accuracy and precision rose further. Each of them were already proficient in piloting ranged mechs, and invoking the Golden Cat with their half-baked imitation of a battle network improved their skills further.

Yet now, the source of that assistance had grown stronger, so much so that she was able to provide vastly greater support than before!

At this time, the effective combat performance of all of the Avatar mech pilots came close to Commander Casella's level as an expert candidate!

Even if the number of Bright Warriors armed with luminar crystals had diminished to less than 80 mechs, what was the concept of facing 80 expert candidates in battle?

The luminar crystal rifles wielded by the Bright Warriors became a lot more deadly than before!

The powerful positron beams, slicer beams, kinetic beams and so on hardly went wide anymore. In addition, the beams that managed to strike a mech tended to land more reliably on weak points and critical parts.

Lancer mechs kept raining down from the air as they were helpless to resist the absurdly precise and coordinated attacks.

Even the ground forces bore the brunt of the vastly increased effectiveness of the surviving Bright Warrior mechs!

The five remaining cannoner mechs that had been so effective at shooting down the Bright Warriors from the air now became peppered by debilitating energy beams!

The efforts of the Urthinan offensive knight mechs that remained operational throughout all of these events mostly went in vain.

Soon enough, the enemy ground contingent existed no more!

Throughout all of this, the Quint continued to glow brighter as Commander Casella underwent a sublimation process that continued to transform her mind, her will and her very life essence!

Everything she experienced up until now had shaped her evolution!

By the end of her apotheosis, the excess willpower exploding from her very being was already beginning to taper.

It would be a long time before she was able to wield so much raw power.

Yet this was still enough time for her to take action herself.

The Bright Warriors left one opponent alive.

"Thank you." Casella broadcasted that enemy expert candidate. "You gave me the opportunity I needed to embrace who I truly am. To that, you have my gratitude."

That didn't mean she was willing to give the Urthinans a favor, though. She still remembered her duty! In her opinion, her breakthrough wasn't nearly as important as reaching the finals of the G-Aena League!

With just a few resonance-empowered shots, the Quint straightforwardly demolished the enemy champion mech.

While the powerful Urthinan mech possessed enough armor to resist a lot of firepower from the front, the temporarily-empowered Larkinson mech wielded power in far greater excess than normal!

The forced resonance generated by Casella allowed the Quint to channel the strength of an expert mech once again, and such an existence was practically unbeatable in this controlled arena setting!

Once the last Urthinan mech fell, the sandstorm raging through the arena had finally subsided.

The dust began to fall and the Larkinson mechs slowly stopped releasing a golden glow.

Everything fell to calm as both the mech pilots and the massive audience processed what had happened.

[The Larkinson Battalion... has won. The Glory of Urthina Battalion is no longer effective in battle, and is judged to have lost this match. All of our referees are in unanimous agreement with this judgment. The Larkinson Battalion will officially advance into the finals of the G-Aena League where it will have to face off against the winner of tomorrow's match.]

The Larkinsons sighed in relief.

Commander Casella continued to fall into her own thoughts as her surging willpower finally settled down. Exhaustion finally began to settle in on her as her explosive breakthrough almost emptied out her entire reserves!

Just a second later, the live spectators began to erupt in cheers!