

Mech 3731

Chapter 3731 - Commandeering Mechs

After half an hour of experimentation, Casella and the other Larkinsons figured out the basic rules of her Command Field effects when applied to the fullest.

Ves even had to come up with numerous new terms to describe this key effect.

"Commandeering describes the act of empowering a friendly mech. A Commandeered mech is a unit that Casella has already strengthened through this method."

The terms quickly spread among the Larkinsons. The Sentinel Commander did not object to them either.

The more they explored the power of Commandeering, the more everyone saw the potential in this ability!

However, while it was a powerful means of enhancing the battle strength of friendly mechs, the effects varied depending on many different variables.

Whether the mech was alive or not played a major role.

Whether the mech pilot had a lot in common with Commander Casella played another role.

A Commandeered mech did not receive an equal degree of strengthening in every aspect.

Attacks received the greatest degree of strengthening.

After performing many different tests, the Larkinson found out that both melee and ranged attacks received the same degree of empowerment.

In comparison, the defenses of a Commandeered mech did not receive a drastic boost.

Cautious tests showed that Commandeered mechs became a bit tougher, but only to the extent of resisting a couple more laser strikes.

From what Ves could observe, the glow surrounding a Commandeered mech should be the partial manifestation of a resonance shield.

If Casella had grown much stronger and if the Minerva was a much better expert mech, then this secondary resonance shield might become powerful enough to massively increase the damage resistance of Commandeered mechs.

For now, the defensive boost was a bit tasteless. Ves did not take it seriously for now as it was unlikely for Casella to make any drastic improvements in these aspects.

Finally, the mobility of a Commandeered mech gained the least degree of strengthening.

This was no surprise to anyone knowledgeable of expert mechs. Unless they were specifically designed with mobility in mind such as the Dark Zephyr, true resonance did not amplify their speed and acceleration that much.

Aside from boosting these basic attributes, Commandeering also improved many other properties.

The mech pilots gained a portion of Casella's tremendous skills.

They coordinated with each other as if they were under a perfectly unified command.

The mech pilots all gained greater awareness of themselves and the battlefield.

Casella was even able to communicate directly to their minds!

All in all, the Command Field cemented the Minerva's role as an expert command mech.

With the power of Talasmir, the Minerva did not even have to enter into combat in person. Commander Casella could delegate all of the extraordinary power produced by her and her expert mech to give other friendly mech units the strength to challenge powerful foes such as hostile expert mechs!

Although there were doubts about the point of doing so, Ves was happy to add another combat solution to the Larkinson Clan.

At this point, adding another expert rifleman mech or expert swordsman mech would not create a lot of ripples. Enemies could easily make plans to counter the existing expert mechs of the Larkinson Clan if they bothered to do their research.

Commander Casella's Command Field brought a different combat method to the table!

Expert command mechs were rare to begin with and Ves wasn't sure if other ones were able to function as well as the Minerva.

What valued the most in this signature ability was its sheer versatility.

After testing it out on numerous different mech units, Ves understood that Casella was able to team up with practically every mech legion!

Although her compatibility with some of them weren't great, Ves was certain that this could be remedied through repeated training sessions.

Once the self-assured Swordmaidens tasted the power of getting Commandeered, they would not be quick to reject Commander Casella in the future!

Casella could even apply her Command Field to mechs that belonged to other organizations such as the Cross Clan!

Of course, the difficulty of Commandeering them was much higher and the effectiveness was much lower, but there were ways to improve this so that it became a viable backup option.

To someone like General Verle, the greatest value in this ability lay in its versatility! Once Commander Casella and the mech legions gained a measure of proficiency in cooperating with each other, they could essentially choose to apply the Minerva's Command Field in different ways!

For example, during the Battle of Orange Tulip, it would have been extremely helpful for the Minerva to Commandeer the Transcendent Punishers.

Once the heavy artillery mechs gained a considerable offensive boost, each of their heavy positron cannons could tear through hull plating like nothing else!

In case the Larkinsons fought against a more conventional mech force, Casella could choose to Commandeer the Swordmaiden mechs and have them cut through the toughest enemy mech formations like a hot knife through butter!

Ves' eyes lit up as he imagined all of the possibilities of the Command Field. The versatility of this resonance ability was directly related to the variety of friendly mech models available.

"The more mechs we design, the more options we have!"

Naturally, the main emphasis of applying Commander Casella's abilities should still lie on increasing her cooperation with her own troops.

Her command over the Living Sentinels brought her closer to them than anyone else. The Commandeering resonance ability displayed its greatest degree of effectiveness when applied to Sentinel mechs!

Gloriana happened to make another observation. "The range of the Minerva's Command Field is too short." She said. "That doesn't matter much when it is used to Commandeer ranged mechs, but what if you want to apply it to melee mechs?"

"Ah. Yes. That is not an ideal scenario."

A range of a couple of kilometers was nothing in space!

If Commander Casella wanted to help out friendly melee mechs, then her Minerva either had to accompany them when they charged towards the enemy or have the mechs maintain a defensive posture at the rear!

The only way to resolve this shortcoming was to extend the radius of the Command Field, which wouldn't happen anytime soon.

"Commander Casella should probably stick to Commandeering ranged mechs if our future battles are similar to the last ones we fought." Ves concluded. "So long as we continue to fight in space, our ranged mechs are pivotal to defeating enemy warships and other large threats."

The Larkinsons could figure out the best tactics later once they registered all of the parameters of the Minerva's Command Field.

Ves suddenly paused. "Wait a second. Does Commandeering work on targets other than mechs and mech pilots?"

In order to test this out, Ves ordered a squad of infantry soldiers to board a shuttle and move to the testing site while other trials were taking place.

When the shuttle finally neared the Minerva, every mech halted while the armored combat soldiers boosted out into space.

The footsoldiers were all armed and armored with heavy gear, but they were still too small and weak to pose a threat to mechs!

The point of this test was not to pit them against mechs. Ves just wanted to test a new hypothesis and see whether the Minerva's Command Field could take effect on other combat assets!

"Begin."

Ves carefully studied the visual feed. He could faintly see a golden corona around the individual soldiers.

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In order to gather more data, each of the soldiers were equipped with different loadouts. Some of them wore plain vacsuits while others wore heavy combat armor.

However, regardless of the soldier, Casella failed to Commandeer them like she had done with mechs. Although it looked as if it was about to succeed a few times, she eventually ceased her attempts.

"I am unable to do it." She reported. "I can feel their minds, but trying to latch on to them is like trying to use the wrong key to open a door. There's something about them that makes me feel that we aren't compatible."

Ves looked disappointed. "Oh. It's okay. You'll probably reserve this ability for mechs anyway, but it is still useful to know your limits. We can explore the reasons behind this distinction later."

His fantasy of empowering warship cannons were shot. Oh well. It wasn't as if he would get his hands on a battleship or something and be compelled to use her most powerful weapons against a monstrous enemy or anything.

Once they finished testing the Commandeering ability on mechs at rest, Ves wanted to see how they fared in a more realistic battle scenario.

"Commander Casella, Commander Melkor, order your men to get ready for a live sparring session. Make sure to show enough restraint, but try and show as much superiority as possible."

This was one of the highlights of this testing session. Two-hundred mechs from each side squared off against each other.

During previous sparring sessions, the Avatars always gained the upper hand from beginning to end. The skill and confidence between the two mech legions were too far apart!

However, Ves and many other people had a feeling that this time would be different.

"Start!"

The mechs from both sides sprung into battle!

To their credit, the Avatar mechs did not show any timidity! Even as their machines charged forward, every Avatar mech pilot immediately invoked the Golden Cat!

This caused them to gain a portion of the skills of the best Larkinson mech pilots! After many months of practice, this little trick had become second nature.

This had always been their capital to defeat other mech units! Given the same level of mechs, an increase in combat skill could give the Avatars a decisive edge in many confrontations!

However, compared to the failed attempt to replicate a battle formation, the Command Field generated by the Minerva was much more impressive!

Instead of relying on the relatively weak minds of average mech pilots, the Commandeering ability shoved all of the burden on Commander Casella, who was much stronger than all of the Sentinel pilots put together!

This produced a strengthening effect that went far beyond boosting the skills and coordination of the Sentinel mechs!

Although their defenses and mobility hadn't increased that much, each of their attacks landed with additional power.

Even if the Sentinel mechs held back, both their ranged and melee weapons gained an extra bite that induced a lot more pressure on the Avatar mechs.

If an attack boost was the only effect of the Minerva's Command Field, then the Avatars might still find a way to blunt the offensive.

The problem was that Commander Casella provided a lot more benefits than that through her resonance ability!

Not only did the Sentinel mech pilots display more skill, they also exhibited much closer cooperation with each other.

Though the Minerva had yet to make a move during this sparring session, Casella had become more active than ever. She tracked and issued regular orders to the mech units under her command, causing the Sentinels to employ various different tactics to dismantle their current adversaries.

The difference in coordination alone was massive!

Whereas Commander Melkor had to track what was going on through interpreting the data from his mech before issuing orders through several different layers, Commander Casella was able to command her subordinates directly!

She did not even need to rely on the mech officers to execute her intentions. Although the strain was not light, she was able to display an impressive degree of multitasking by keeping track and commanding every individual mech in the field!

In the short time Casella was able to keep it up, the Living Sentinels completely shed their image as the weakest mech legion of the Larkinson Clan and crushed the best the Avatars could offer!

Even if the Avatars possessed an advantage in skill, the Sentinels benefited even more by enjoying an increase in their attack power as well as exhibiting exquisite coordination!

Each Sentinel mech had willingly become an extension of Casella's will!

"Too strong!"

"This... this is the ultimate command mech!"

Chapter 3732 - Single Empowerment

"This is too absurd! How can a single expert mech empower so many mechs at once?!"

"This is our legion commander's unique strength! No, this has become the strength of all of our Living Sentinels from now on. Alone, we are weak. Together, we are strong!"

"The Minerva is a masterwork expert mech, remember? It's not comparable to the more normal mechs like the Dark Zephyr. Even the Bolvos Rage piloted by that arrogant Cross Patriarch doesn't have as much potential."

Everyone in the expeditionary fleet was utterly impressed by the strength and capabilities shown by the Minerva.

All of the prior expert mechs were impressive in their own right, but few of them showcased their full capabilities in battle so far, so it was difficult to comprehend their charm.

The Minerva was different. Its signature ability was not only wide-reaching, but also immediately clear to see. Everyone could understand the weight of the expert mech's combat effectiveness after seeing hundreds of Sentinel mechs beat the crap out of their Avatar counterparts!

Fortunately, the Avatars didn't suffer from this ordeal for long. Commander Casella Ingvar had already expended a lot of her willpower today and still needed to save her strength for the last sequence of tests.

The Minerva quietly retracted its Command Field without any warning, thereby depriving the Sentinel mechs of Casella's guidance and strength!

Most of the Sentinel pilots were caught off-guard. The deprivation was so abrupt that they could not adjust in time before the steady Avatar mechs quickly took advantage of the disruption in rhythm to regain their dominance!

Ves twitched as he saw the results of this abrupt move. The Sentinel mech pilots clearly needed to train this scenario more often in order to avoid getting stunned during an actual battle.

"Alright, that's enough. End the sparring session. We're not here to see ordinary mechs fight."

Most of the Avatar and Sentinel mechs retreated. Since both sides controlled their attacking power well, they did not incur any significant damage.

At most, the Sentinel mechs occasionally created accidents due to failing to adjust for their sudden boost in power.

Given her previous exertions, Ves gave Commander Casella a few minutes to catch her breath while he discussed the current results with his fellow colleagues.

"What do you think?"

"Strong." Gloriana answered. "I already expected our latest masterwork mech to be powerful, but what Commander Casella can do is a real game changer. What is even more promising is that this is only the beginning. Once Commander Casella grows into her power and once we perform a few upgrades on the Minerva, she can truly dominate the battlefield!"

Juliet Stameross had another opinion.

"The Minerva shouldn't be used to amplify the Sentinels. It is a force multiplier that can strengthen the combat effectiveness of any mech unit after sufficient practice and acclimatization. However, why should we use the Commandeering ability to boost our weaker mech units when we have much stronger ones at our disposal? Think of what the Minerva can do when it fights alongside the Penitent Sisters. When all of their Valkyrie Redeemers charge alongside the Minerva, they can tear apart any enemy mech formation!" Panda

Novel That was an interesting thought and one that Ves took seriously.

If Commander Casella could strengthen an ant and an elephant by the same proportion, then only a fool would apply to the ant!

However, Ves did not think the difference between the Sentinels and the other mech legions was this wide. The previous mock battle showed that the Sentinel mechs could still burst out with battle power beyond the level of an elite mech unit!

Sure, the Avatar mechs could exert even greater strength after being Commandeered, but their alignment with Commander Casella was not that high.

Ultimately, Casella and the Living Sentinels belonged to the same camp! Their relationships and affection ran deep due to Casella's successful attempt to revive the mech legion after a crushing defeat in the past.

Hardly anyone in the Larkinson Army remembered the first-generation Sentinel Commander. Compared to the accomplishments of Magdalena Larkinson, the latest rising star of the Larkinson Clan contributed a lot more to the Larkinson Clan!

Now that she had finally gained an expert mech that could properly amplify her strength in battle, Commander Casella was about to take off even more!

Ves frowned in thought.

"Does Commander Casella have a boyfriend?"

Gloriana immediately pinned her husband with a suspicious stare.

"Why do you ask?"

"I just thought it would be nice if she was like Venerable Joshua or Venerable Tusa. If she has married someone and started a family, she can potentially raise children who can follow in her footsteps if they develop genetic aptitude. With her personal tutelage and guidance, it is not impossible for her to raise a successor that can inherit her talent for Commandeering mechs."

His wife rolled her eyes. "I've studied and talked to her extensively. Commander Casella is a dedicated woman who takes her responsibilities seriously. She spends much of her time leading the Living Sentinels. She was even willing to sacrifice her practice time in order to make sure her mech legion is well-run. Starting a relationship is much further down her list of priorities. Even if she is interested in finding a partner, there are not many people in our clan who can handle an expert pilot and a legion commander."

She was right. Although Casella could always hook up with an average guy, Ves doubted that such a relationship could stand the test of time.

"Well, this isn't really relevant to the current field test, so let's set it aside. Before we begin with testing the Minerva's second resonance ability, do you have any further comments?"

When Ves saw that no one had any desire to say anything that couldn't wait, he turned around and issued a few instructions.

"Good job so far, commander. For the final series of tests, we want to explore your application of the resonance ability associated with Pecker Carbon. This resonating material behaves opposite to Talasmir, and that is interesting to us. If our guess is right, resonating with Pecker Carbon will allow you to infuse a lot of concentrated strength on

an individual mech and mech pilot. Since you are concentrating so much power in a single mech, this can potentially be highly dangerous."

"What do you have in mind, patriarch?" The tired Sentinel Commander asked.

"Well, it already helps that you are nearing the end of your limits. We have two choices here.

We can try to start with testing your Single Empowerment resonating ability by starting off with strong mechs and hope that they are sturdy enough to withstand any accident.

We can also begin by testing your second resonating ability on a weaker mech, perhaps one that is piloted by a volunteer or by no one at all. Since we already confirmed that your influence works on living mechs, maybe we can be extra safe by letting you resonate with an AI-driven mech."

Commander Casella frowned. "You are in charge of this field test. I will defer to your arrangements."

"Alright, then let's start with an expert mech." Ves decided. "I am incredibly curious whether your Command Field can positively affect another expert pilot and expert mech. I have several different theories but they conflict with each other."

The potential of letting the Minerva empower an expert mech was not light!

What if the expert command mech was able to lend its strength to the Amaranto?

The high-powered shots fired by the latter could smash through any enemy expert mech!

What if the Minerva and the Shield of Samar banded together?

Venerable Jannzi's resonance barrier could block even more powerful warship volleys!

What if... Commander Casella and Patriarch Reginald Cross teamed up? Whether the latter is piloting the Bolvos Rage or the Mars Project once it was finished, the top-level combat asset of the expeditionary fleet would be able to demonstrate strength that surpassed the level of a high-tier expert mech!

Ves even came up with an interesting thought.

The resonance strength of an expert pilot measured between 1 to 67 laveres.

If an expert pilot happened to grow his strength up to 66 laveres. If Commander Casella empowered him to the extent of boosting his resonance strength by 20 laveres, what would happen?

Even though the lavere scale was not linear as far as he knew, it should definitely be possible to push the expert pilot's effective resonance strength beyond 67!

The problem was that a resonance strength that was higher than that was always considered to be the territory of an ace pilot!

Would the empowered expert pilot be able to display the power of a genuine ace pilot or would he get stuck half-way? What if something unintended happened that could cause the hapless high-tier expert pilot to suffer an accident and fall into a coma?

There were way too many questions and far too few answers. This was why it was so important for him to conduct all of these tests and collect a huge amount of data.

They soon proceeded with the test by putting the Everchanger back in front of the Minerva.

Though Venerable Joshua complained about being used as a test dummy yet again, Ves had good reasons to make use of him. He not only got along with everyone, but was an inherently adaptable expert pilot. The same applied to his expert mech.

Therefore, if the Minerva was able to empower any expert mech, then the Everchanger was the most likely candidate!

"I am about to start. Get ready." Commander Casella warned everyone.

She concentrated her mind and will and tried to resonate with the Pecker Carbon that was integrated into her expert mech.

The sensations were quite different from resonating with Talasmir!

Whereas Talasmir made her feel as if she was inflating her mind to ridiculous proportions, Pecker Carbon made her think as if her mind was being crushed by another person's hands!

Though Casella was eventually able to get accustomed to the strain, it was still difficult for her to compress her Command Field in a single point without practice.

"Ah!"

She soon discovered another problem.

"I can't do this, sir. I can feel that Joshua is welcoming me, but I am unable to push further. The two of us are like water and oil. We can't mix together."

"Oh?" Ves slightly frowned. He was afraid of this. "Keep trying for a minute, but don't try too hard. If you haven't obtained any results, then let us try our luck with the other expert mechs."

They had no luck on the latter. No matter whether it was the Dark Zephyr or the Shield of Samar, the other mechs actively repulsed any foreign intrusion no matter whether it was benign or malignant.

From the vague and imperfect descriptions given by the expert pilots, Ves managed to confirm one of his hypotheses.

"Expert pilots possess incomparably strong willpower. This can produce a strong and highly individual field around themselves that form the precursor of their domain fields. Among equals, they will not allow anyone to encroach on their territory. Therefore, no matter how much Commander Casella tries to infuse them with her strength, the other expert pilots cannot tolerate such an invasive intrusion."

From what Ves understood about the nature and role of extraordinary willpower, he believed this was the most likely explanation.

The point was that Casella had no chance of empowering any expert mechs.

Though this was disappointing news, Ves did not linger on it for too long.

"If expert pilots don't work, what about expert candidates? Someone call the B-Man forward. Vincent Ricklin is an excellent test subject for our next attempt!"

When the Minerva applied its Single Empowerment ability on Vincent and his new custom hybrid mech, the results were finally different!

After only a moderate amount of effort, Commander Casella was able to latch on to the expert candidate, thereby enabling her to channel a larger proportion of her effective strength to the B-Man!

"Whoa!" Vincent gasped as he could feel a much stronger lady pumping his head full with power! "This is better than a one night stand!"

The B-Man's codpiece was heating up from the vastly elevated energies channeling through its thick and sturdy frame!

Chapter 3733 - Tasteless Ability

Just like any other recently completed mech, the B-Man had yet to show off its strong side.

While the confrontations against the Titania and the pakklaton refugee fleet were both intensive battles, they did not progress in a way that allowed the newer mechs to showcase their full capabilities.

However, the B-Man took part in enough virtual and live practice sessions for everyone to gain a decent idea of its battle prowess.

The custom mech was a fairly powerful hybrid mech that could pump out a lot of firepower while resisting a decent amount of incoming damage in return. Its major shortcomings was its lack of flexibility and its less-than-stellar mobility.

The B-Man actually occupied an awkward position in the Larkinson Army.

It was weaker than an expert mech and could not pose a threat against such a powerful machine.

It was also strong and special enough that it couldn't blend in with the regular mech units. The lack of coordination along with the ostentatious appearance of the B-Man would only lead to problems!

This was why any mech piloted by an expert candidate fell out of place in the expeditionary fleet.

Yet this was different. Now that Commander Casella was trying out the resonance ability she had recently comprehended, the B-Man began to develop a brighter dark yellow glow with each passing second!

"It's done. I can go no further. Please tell Vincent to show what he can do in his current state."

It took a bit of time to snap Vincent out of his fascination. Once he regained control of the B-Man, he tested out its capabilities.

Compared to the mechs that were Commandeered before, the Single Empowerment ability significantly enhanced all of the B-Man's attributes!

Whether it was defense or mobility, the B-Man was no longer weak in either of these areas.

However, what truly stood out for the custom mech was its abundance of integrated weapon systems. The B-Man's firepower became a lot more threatening when all of its energy attacks became empowered by a substantial amount of resonance!

"Amazing!" Ves enthusiastically studied the elevated sensor readings. "The B-Man is still too far away from challenging an expert mech by itself, but the individual enhancement is so potent that it can definitely beat any other normal mech!"

The B-Man effectively became several times stronger under the influence of the Minerva!

The strength enhancement was much more comprehensive as well as all of its parameters increased, though the increase in attack power was still the greatest.

What was more important was that Vincent also received the direct guidance of Commander Casella. The B-Man fought a lot more effectively under their combined control!

"Our compatibility is not the best." Commander Casella reported to the mech designers. "Vincent and I don't get along even though he's a friend of my brother. I do not think I am doing the Single Empowerment ability justice with the B-Man."

Ves could vaguely see what she meant. The Single Empowerment ability exhibited much poorer efficiency than the Commandeering ability.

After all, the Minerva was able to multiply the combat strength of the B-Man by 300 to 500 percent.

In contrast, its use of a Command Field could only amplify the strength of an ordinary mech by a more modest margin before reaching a limit.

The difference was that the Commandeering ability worked across hundreds of friendly mechs!

Ves would rather choose to strengthen a hundred mechs by 50 percent than boost an individual machine by an even greater margin!

However, there were still situations where Single Empowerment could play a useful role. Duels, challenge rooms and so on were instances where boosting a single mech could lead to a lot of benefits.

He still preferred the Command Field in large battles. The difference it could make was vastly greater as the sheer quantities involved could trample any opponent!

After they collected enough data about empowering the B-Man, they moved on to applying the same effect on other mechs.

This time, they paraded a number of other mechs such as the Bright Warrior and the Ferocious Piranha.

The mech designers soon figured out a few rules.

While it was possible to empower a regular mech to the point where it could easily defeat elite mechs, the strengthening effect was not as good this time.

Part of it was because the mechs simply couldn't carry as much power. Strengthening them further might cause them to burst out greater force, but the relatively weak mechs risked falling apart right afterwards!

This made the ability tasteless in the eyes of others.

Rather than supercharging a single mech by three times, it was much easier to deploy five mechs in order to accomplish a task!

During the trials, they also learned that compatibility was a much more important issue.

There was no problem at all with Casella's relationship with her subordinates. It went without saying that the Sentinel mech pilots received her strength with the least amount of friction.

It became a lot more difficult if she tried to get in sync with the pilots of other mech legions.

"Single Empowerment is not designed to be applied to a random stranger mech." Gloriana said. "It should be treated as a means to lend a considerable amount of strength to hand-picked expert candidates. The stronger the mechs, the easier it is to carry the weight of Commander Casella's power."

Ves ultimately wasn't satisfied with this series of tests. The resonance ability had a lot of potential, but it cost Commander Casella quite a lot of effort to power up just a single mech.

If it could be applied to an expert mech, then that was still okay.

If the best it could do was to strengthen a single mech piloted by an expert candidate, then that was too pathetic!

Gloriana turned to Ves. "We should end the field test. Commander Casella's life signs show that she is close to reaching her limit. We aren't gathering any new data from the current tests either, so there is less of a reason to continue on like this. Let us go back and digest all of the data before planning out the subsequent tests."

"Hmmm... that is a good suggestion."

Once Ves transmitted the orders to cease the tests and bring every mech home, he reflected on what he had witnessed from the Minerva.

The expert command mech performed above his expectations. Though it showed plenty of shortcomings and limitations, the powers it was able to display when Casella was piloting it for the first time were already impressive!

He could already foresee that the Minerva would center completely around its fantastic Command Field and its useful Commandeering resonance ability.

Just having this capability in any of the Larkinson Clan's previous battles would have led to more decisive victories!

"What does the MTA think of the Minerva?" Ves wondered.

This was a good question. As far as he was aware, expert command mechs were rare and those that could directly empower so many mechs were even rarer!

Master Huron's clumsy attempts to make the Charlemagne work proved how difficult it was to create the ultimate group enhancement mech.

Even though the Minerva benefited from much more expensive resources, it still managed to outperform the Charlemagne in every area that mattered!

"I can see the Minerva doing especially well when propping up a defensive line." Sara Voiken expressed her own thoughts. "Once the Living Sentinels are able to replace their older mechs with our new Rigid Spines and Rigid Wall models, we can form a solid battle line that can intercept much more powerful enemy mech units. Both mech models excel at defense, but their ability to damage their opponents is not that great. If Commander Casella Commandeers them with her expert mech, then the mechs in question will become a lot more lethal and solve one of the shortcomings of their formation."

"That is one promising application of Minerva's Command Field." Ves acknowledged. "The Sentinels haven't played a major role in battle for a while now. They should be much more useful in landbound battles where terrain plays a limiting role, but I don't know when we will ever deploy mechs in a planetary environment. For now, we should focus on increasing the Minerva's synergy with ranged mech units."

Ves wished he already had a hundred Fearless Project mechs at his disposal. The stalled design project promised to deliver a ranged mech that wielded heavy luminar crystal rifles.

These weapons were meant to be so potent that they could pose a legitimate threat to expert mechs!

Still, no matter how much the Fearless Project mechs tried to bridge the gap between themselves and enemy expert mechs, the former still suffered from a lot of handicaps.

Fighting against an expert mech had always been an uphill battle!

If it was so easy to overpower expert mechs through mundane solutions, then the Hexadric Hegemony shouldn't be losing the Komodo War so badly!

The Minerva gave the Battle Criers and other Larkinson mechs hope of legitimately challenging opposing expert mechs.

Sure, the Command Field was only able to impart a shadow of Commander Casella's force of will to other mechs, but when it was applied to several hundred mechs, not even the Bolvos Rage should be able to weather the storm intact!

Ves grew more optimistic about the future of his clan. A single effective solution against powerful threats was not enough to make him feel secure. Creating another one that overlapped with the earlier solution was a lot better!

As he and his fellow Journeymen were about to wrap up this testing session, Ves received a sudden call.

"Patriarch Ves! I was trying to reach out to you for a while now. I had to go all the way up to General Verle to convince him to reroute my call to you" Imon Ingvar said in a hurried tone.

Ves grew confused. "Why are you contacting me? The field test that we have just concluded centers around your sister and her new expert mech. You are not involved."

"That's what I wanted to talk with you about. I think you are wrong. You have tested one of the Minerva's abilities on Vincent, but why have you skipped me out? I am Casella's brother! We grew up with each other and attended many of the same classes during our youth. I have to experience this ability myself!"

"Why are you so impatient? We can wait until next time. Commander Casella has already tired herself out and needs a good rest."

"I don't want to wait, sir! I know my sister. She can still push herself a little further. Just give me half a minute to experience her power. We know each other so well that I think we can cooperate much more effectively."

This was a logical-sounding argument. Ves did not expect Imon Ingvar to be so clever. The expert candidate was too eager at the moment and did not want to turn away from this opportunity.

"Fine. You and your Blade Chaser can stick around a little longer. I will talk to Commander Casella and find out how she wishes to proceed."

He conferred with Commander Casella. Though she was too tired to care about her bonds, she was willing to indulge in her brother."

"It's best to get this over with. My brother won't be able to snap from his obsession if it remains unfulfilled."

This was only a minor annoyance on Commander Casella's part. She was also curious how it would be like for her to support Imon more directly in battle.

If she could give Imon stronger support by loaning him a part of her willpower and her skills, then his chances of surviving a battle would definitely be raised.

Of course, the Minerva could also use its Irvan rifle to shoot down any threats directed towards the Blade Chaser in advance.

The problem was that Casella would be doing her brother a disservice if she went overboard. Imon needed to depend on himself to find his breakthrough opportunity.

He was not having much success with this approach.

Chapter 3734 - The Legacy of House Ingvar

The Minerva amply proved its worthiness in the expert mech lineup of the Larkinson Clan!

After performing many exhaustive tests, the Larkinsons gained a good idea on what it was capable of. Though its individual battle prowess was relatively average, its ability to channel and amplify Commander Casella's natural talent after her breakthrough was stellar!

This was the ultimate dream of every mech designer. Those who chose this vocation usually did so because they wanted to serve mech pilots to the best of their abilities.

One of the greatest ideals in mech design was to design a machine that could draw out all of the untapped potential of a mech pilot.

The Minerva was far from the strongest expert mech that could be designed and built. There were stories about first-class monstrosities within the MTA that could easily tear apart the Shield of Samar as if it was made out of a leaf!

However, that was no reason to disparage the Minerva. It was an excellent machine for a beginner expert pilot and it was powerful enough to give Commander Casella Ingvar the capital to survive most battles against equal opponents.

The Larkinson Clan finally obtained a powerful machine that provided a monstrous degree of utility. The Command Field was more than a simple offensive boost. It was a way for a powerful command-oriented expert pilot to take control of hundreds of mechs and turn them into Casella's personal instruments!

The Larkinson Clan's strength had risen by a huge margin because of the birth of the Minerva. Masterwork expert mechs were always powerful beyond doubt but much of its

strength was derived from its design. Even if it wasn't a masterwork, it still would have been able to Commandeer friendly mechs, just not to such a drastic extent.

Imon Ingvar was happy for his sister. He knew her the best. From growing up in House Ingvar to attending the same mech academies, he became intimately familiar with her ambitions. Becoming a mech commander was her dream and now she had fulfilled it in a way that she could never imagine!

Not only had she become the leader of an entire mech legion before she had reached her forties, she also managed to do so while shedding a portion of her mortality!

It was already difficult for a mech pilot to achieve success in any of these two pursuits. Though many people thought that leading mech pilots into battle was only a matter of learning, it had been difficult for Casella Ingvar to keep up with her leadership studies on top of polishing her piloting skills.

Even after they graduated into full mech pilots, Casella learned the hard way that leading a mech unit required more than book learning and school-level exercises.

"You must be happy to have come so far after suffering so much failure when our house was falling apart."

The topic of House Ingvar still produced mixed feelings within him. He used to pledge his loyalty to it before he forcibly had to shift his allegiance in order to join the Larkinson Clan.

For a long time, he harbored a lot of thoughts about reviving House Ingvar, either by returning to the treacherous Kingdom of the Three Flowers in person or transferring funds to the distant cousins that survived the purge.

Over time, the need to take revenge for the conspiracy that killed so many of his relatives had faded. The Larkinson Clan had become his new home and it was so much better than anything he experienced before.

Power and wealth continued to flow into the clan. As prominent mech pilots and leaders, the Ingvar siblings earned a generous salary.

Both of them had transferred the hex credits they earned into a bank account they set up to fund the expenditures of the remnants of House Ingvar. All of the distant blood relatives that had remained behind in the Komodo Star Sector had managed to escape the reach of the Kingdom of the Three Flowers and build up an increasingly prosperous business empire.

To the Larkinson Clan, a third-class corporation was a weak and forgettable existence. To the Ingvars who had to flee while leaving behind much of the riches of House Ingvar, it was a new foundation!

With the money that Imon and Casella had funneled to the remnants, they could have moved to a second-class state, but they wisely chose to settle down in the Sentinel Kingdom.

Second-class states were much more treacherous than the Kingdom of the Three Flowers. It was incredibly ill-advised for third-raters to drop into a second-class state and expect that every person and organization would let the hillbillies take advantage of their institutions.

Without a foundation of strength and local support, it was impossible for the Ingvars to do well!

After several years of transferring millions of hex credits to the coffers of the Ingvar remnants, the survivors eventually decided to integrate into the power structure of the Sentinel Kingdom.

By offering plenty of tribute and taking advantage of their tentative connection to the Larkinson Clan, the Ingvars successfully persuaded the Sentinel King to become his vassal.

The House of Ingvar had risen again!

With the ample funds they possessed, the members of the reconstituted house bought the rights to own and manage a rural star system.

At a certain point in time, Casella came up to him and persuaded him that the time had come to end their support.

"Why?" He asked.

"House Ingvar needs to stand on its own. We have already repaid the grace of raising us and educating us. As much as the blood of the Ingvars still flows through our veins, we are Larkinsons now. We cannot serve two masters. While I have tolerated the act of supporting our old House with money, we cannot allow these ties to weigh us down."

"They're our relatives!" Imon retorted. "I can accept that we are Larkinsons now, but much of our blood family died back then. Don't you want the conspirators to pay?!"

Casella sighed and placed her hand on his shoulder. "Let it go, Imon. What happened to our House was a tragedy, and many of our fellow Ingvars didn't deserve to get killed. However, now that we have reached this height, we can see more now. House Ingvar did not fall without a reason and what has happened is a consequence of participating in games of power. Taking revenge... is pointless. It won't bring back the dead and it will only serve to vent the unhealthy emotions of survivors. Does this sound like a worthy cause?"

Her brother only grew more conflicted. Though his affection for House Ingvar faded with each passing day, his honor demanded that he should not leave it in the dirt.

"We can still do more, Casella. House Ingvar are still newcomers to the Sentinel Kingdom and the Komodo Star Sector is anything but calm at the moment."

Casella casually waved her hand. "House Ingvar isn't the most powerful in the neighborhood, but it has already grown strong enough to protect its own interests. As long as our surviving relatives don't bite off more they can chew, it can survive the test of time. Continuing to support will not do our House any good. While we are lucky that the elders are far-sighted enough to create new revenue sources, throwing more money at them will just make them dependent on us. They need to stand on their own, Imon."

Though she managed to persuade him to cut off the remittances, he still felt uncomfortable with the move. It was as if he was leaving a job unfinished. This notion weighed down on him so much that he never felt comfortable with his identity as a former noble who took refuge in the Larkinson Clan.

He didn't know why, but Imon Ingvar no longer felt that sense of failure anymore. Only pride and happiness filled his being.

Seeing his sister rise from the ashes of their original house and gain power with the help of the Minerva completely caused his residual bonds of belonging to snap.

He recalled everything his sister had said at the time.

"There is no point in taking revenge on the Royal House of Black Poppy."

"We were only ordinary members who weren't shouldered with any great responsibilities at the time."

"The surviving Ingvars have already chosen to leave the past behind and rebuild their lives in peace."

"House Ingvar of today owns enough territory and industry to stand on its own."

"The Larkinson Clan is our only home."

For a long time, Imon could never bring himself to embrace the last statement.

His sister was not as entangled. She had always been the smarter of the two and seeing her bloom so much in the Larkinson Clan had loosened the final shackles that bound him to the cause of his former house.

Patriarch Ves and his clan had given them so much more than it owed to the Invars. Imon and Casella not only received an opportunity to serve as mech pilots, they also received powerful new mechs that were designed with great love and care!

How could Imon still cling to ties to a house that had not only grown more distant to him, but also didn't need him anymore?

"It turns out that everyone has moved on except for me." He said in a depreciating tone.

He felt like a clown for making this belated realization so late. What happened in the past should already be behind him. Even if he wanted to meddle with the affairs that brought down his former house, he was hundreds of thousands of light-years away from the Komodo Star Sector!

Rather than clinging on to useless and redundant notions of taking revenge and restoring the honor of the Ingvars, it might be better to let it all go and accept the current circumstances.

A sense of liberation overflowed his mind and body as he felt more at peace with himself. As he used his Blade Chaser's sensors to watch his sister's impressive performance, he began to develop another purpose in his life.

"I'll accompany you and fight by your side, sister."

She was his only blood relative left as far as he was concerned. Although the Larkinson Clan was his new family in a sense, his sister had been his pillar of support.

Now, a sense of hunger rose up in him. As the Minerva began to test its ability to empower single mechs, Imon felt jealous at his friend Vincent.

"Why should he be the one to receive her power? It should be me that fights on her behalf!"

Of course, he wasn't stupid. He understood the logic of empowering the B-Man. The mech was equipped with lots of powerful ranged weapons and they could become even more damaging if they received a huge boost in power.

Out of all of the mechs piloted by expert candidates, only two of them stood out as suitable targets if Casella ever wanted to employ this resonance ability.

Both the Quint and the B-Man were powerful mechs that could output a lot of damage at range. If Casella grew stronger and became more proficient in using this resonance ability, then the empowered mechs might be able to output enough damage to threaten expert mechs by themselves!

Together with the Minerva's ranged capabilities, this was in effect a way to output the damage of two expert mechs instead of one!

Such a force would definitely have a massive influence on many battlefields, especially long-ranged firefights which seemed to be more common as of late!

As for Imon, his Blade Chaser was just a custom swordsman mech. He might be able to gain the power to protect the Minerva if his sister channeled her strength in his direction, but there was no point in doing so unless a powerful enemy came close!

Imon's expression grew grave.

"With a high-profile expert command mech like the Minerva, this will happen sooner or later. I need to get enough practice with this ability in order to defeat the mechs that are attempting to assassinate my sister!"

Chapter 3735 - Overprotective Brother

The request issued by Imon was unusual to say the least. Nonetheless, Ves was in a good mood so he acquiesced to this personal demand.

He was curious at what would happen. The previous tests with the Single Empowerment resonance ability showed that compatibility was crucial.

In fact, the requirements were much more complicated than that. Compatibility was merely a convenient catch-all term that could quickly describe how well Casella was able to channel her extraordinary power through another mech.

Testing out this ability on dozens of different targets had given Ves a good understanding of the variables that determined compatibility.

Logically speaking, Imon Ingvar should possess the highest degree of compatibility with Commander Casella Ingvar. Their bond with each other was so much stronger that no other Larkinson could compare!

Not even her subordinates serving in the Living Sentinels could compare to their sibling bond.

However, Ves did not fall into the trap of obsessing over compatibility above all else.

The point of adding a resonance ability derived from Pecker Carbon to the Minerva was to increase the combat strength of the Larkinson Clan.

Ranged mechs were much more important to the battles of today and it was logical to find a way to make them stronger.

Of all of the tests conducted so far, Commander Casella produced the most powerful result by infusing her power in the Quint!

The Quint was the best carrier to Casella's power due to many reasons.

First, the legendary mech was Casella's old ride. Both of them knew each other well and Casella owed her breakthrough to the powerful mech.

Second, the Quint was not only a masterwork mech, but also a third-order living mech! These traits made it a lot easier for Casella to latch on and channel her power through its frame.

Third, even without the aforementioned advantages, the Quint had been upgraded numerous times and possessed considerably more combat power than an average Bright Warrior.

Amplifying its strength by 5 times or so would produce a much greater boost in combat power than doing the same to a weaker mech like an ordinary Ferocious Piranha!

Fourth, the Quint was currently assigned to Isobel Larkinson, an expert candidate and a serving member of the Living Sentinels! She should have an excellent relationship with Commander Casella, thereby making it much easier for her to accept the power given to her by her commanding officer.

All of the other mechs were inadequate in comparison. The machines and their pilots simply did not possess a sufficient degree of compatibility with Commander Casella to make the attempt worthwhile.

As the Blade Chaser approached the Minerva, the two mechs made for a powerful contrast.

Both of them were living mechs that were exclusively designed for their current pilots. That said, their combat prowess and strengths were like night and day.

The Blade Chaser was just a custom mech that Gloriana had designed for Imon Ingvar because she wanted to exercise her specialty. It was powerful compared to the regular mechs of the Larkinson Clan but it was not a machine that could single handedly change the course of a battle by itself.

Its blue coating with gold accents made the custom swordsman mech look dignified and different from the standard mechs hailing from the mech legion.

However, its appearance also caused the mech to stick out like a sore thumb. It was clear that it could not fight alongside the Avatars or the Swordmaidens without disrupting their coordination

The Minerva was different. As an expert mech, the aforementioned problems did not apply at all. As an expert command mech, it was more suited to integrate with large mech units than other expert mechs!

In honor of the Living Sentinels, Ves had given it a coating of silver and green that reflected its prominent identity within the mech legion. Though he added a few fancy golden accents and symbols, they only served to complement the inherent majesty of a noble mech.

Seeing the Blade Chaser hovering in the vicinity of the Minerva was like comparing a soldier to a king. They were incomparable in status and strength. It was hard to believe they were piloted by brother and sister.

As the Blade Chaser waited for the test to commence, Imon opened a private channel to the Minerva.

"What is it, pilot?"

"Put as much of your power in me as you can." Imon requested. "I don't know how much you have left, but please let me experience you at your best. I want my Blade Chaser and I to show everyone that we can be stronger than any other combination."

"...Very well. I will try. With the willpower I have left, I cannot sustain my effort for long. You should make the most out of it, brother."

After a minute of delay, Casella finally received permission to employ her Single Empowerment ability again.

The Minerva glowed in a dark gold before much of it began to flow towards the Blade Chaser.

The custom mech began to take in the force of will of another expert pilot!

Ordinarily, this shouldn't even be possible. Most expert pilots such as Joshua and so on could not extend their influence beyond themselves and their mechs.

Casella was different. Her pursuit of power did not emphasize martial strength but instead focused on leading troops in battle!

In essence, the Irvan rifle equipped by the Minerva was not her primary weapon. It was merely a tool for self-defense.

The evolution of her strength and the design of her expert mech already pointed out Casella's future progression.

Even if she was a highly skilled rifleman mech pilot that only got better once she surpassed her human limits, she could never be as good as Venerable Stark or Venerable Brutus in this aspect.

The differences might not be obvious at this stage, but every expert pilot knew that growing stronger required one to continue to deepen their proficiency in their chosen pursuit.

While there were expert pilots that could handle multiple weapons such as Venerable Joshua, even he had to pay a price for splitting his specializations.

Those that piloted the expert versions of first-class multipurpose mechs had to master a lot more modes of combat! Their highly sophisticated cranial implants and genetic modification treatments might help with shouldering a lot of the burden, but those who only chose to specialize in a single weapon system would always be able to surpass them in terms of absolute power!

This was why Imon felt a bit more ambivalent about Casella's successful ascension as a command-oriented expert pilot.

Once she reached the level of Patriarch Reginald Cross, she would no doubt struggle to fend off an aggressive high-tier expert mech.

Her marksmanship would not be able to keep up and her other combat skills would become too mediocre.

She would become a sitting duck against any powerful challenger that sought to decapitate one of the prominent leaders of the armed forces of the Larkinson Clan!

"This is why I need to be at her side."

The other expert mechs could easily protect the Minerva, but they all possessed their own roles.

In case a powerful enemy ever got close, Imon wanted his Blade Chaser to be there to serve as her agent in fighting against a closing threat.

To him, it did not matter if he and his mech were not strong enough for this role. He would make sure to train as hard as possible in order to satisfy Casella's needs, if not today then surely tomorrow!

As time went by, the power that Casella infused in both himself and the Blade Chaser became more obvious.

He could feel her presence and felt an instant sense of familiarity and intimacy with it. Though other recipients had described various problems related with trying to work with so much power, Imon only experienced a minor degree of strain.

"That's it, sister! Give me more!"

Casella's willpower continued to pour inside the Blade Chaser. The mech had already begun to glow brightly, but continued to gain more power until it clearly exceeded that of the Quint!

It was only at the later stages that it became more difficult for the siblings. Commander Casella eventually hit a wall and could not infuse her brother and the Blade Chaser with any of her willpower.

The pair were not able to bear any greater strain! When the Blade Chaser made a single swing of the arm, the latent power behind it was strong enough to strain its structure!

As for Imon, his sister occupied such a large part of his mind that he felt as if his brain was getting close to bursting!

Despite the heavy strain on his mind, Imon did not say a word of complaint. He needed to tough it out if he wanted to exercise the maximum possible borrowed strength from her sister!

After a short amount of time, Ves spoke to Imon through the command channel.

"Impressive work so far, Imon! According to our readings, this is not an easy state for you to maintain. Do not hesitate to say whether the pressure becomes unbearable. Now, we don't have much time so I want you to demonstrate your current level of strength by pitting you against the Everchanger. Spar against Venerable Joshua and do the best you can. We need to measure your current strengthening degree."

The Everchanger had already moved before the brightly glowing Blade Chaser at this time!

"Go at me with all of the strength you've got." Venerable Joshua transmitted. "You don't need to hold back. Even with this little trick, you can't hurt my expert mech."

Imon's eyes flared!

"Says who!?"

The expert candidate did not think any further. He let his fury and Casella's willpower guide him in going forward to clash blades with the Everchanger!

For a moment, a quick and powerful exchange of blows took place.

The Everchanger had holstered its luminar crystal rifle behind its back and wielded just a single sword at this time. The sword and the arm that held it continually swung around as it blocked and deflected the Blade Chaser's sword attacks with relative ease.

Imon did not give up, though! He was already aware of the disparity between an expert candidate and an expert pilot and the strength of the Everchanger only widened the disparity.

Nonetheless, even if he was unable to defeat a genuine expert mech with the direct support of his sister, he at least wanted to score a few blows on the surface of the Everchanger and prove his strength!

"Attack me!" Imon demanded. "You're getting off too easy by sticking to defending!"

The expert hero mech easily fended off the Blade Chaser's furious assaults. Joshua was content with playing a passive role for this session, but if Imon wanted a greater challenge, then that was okay as well.

"Be careful, Imon!"

The Everchanger began to make offensive moves, but only cautiously.

Imon still experienced a lot more pressure than before! Each attack launched by an expert mech should not be underestimated. Combined with Joshua's superior sword fighting skills, the Everchanger was already pushing back the Blade Chaser despite not putting in a full effort.

As an expert candidate, Imon could clearly judge that despite the massive boost of strength he and his custom mech obtained from his sister, it was far from enough to put a dent in the Everchanger's armor.

"No! This is not the extent of what I can do. I can do better!"

No matter how much Imon tried to outfight his opponent, the Everchanger easily resolved every attack.

Yet the more he failed, the more he thought about how his sister might have to rely on him to defend her against an opponent of similar power.

How could he accept failure and allow his adversary to pass his mech?

"I need power! I will not fail my sister!"

How could he gain the strength to defeat a mech as powerful as the Everchanger? He was only so strong and his mech base attributes were fixed.

Then, a new idea popped in his mind.

"My sister!"

He had already embraced the source of his empowered strength, but he was no longer content with the extent of his strengthening. Being able to wield five or six times as much power as before was not enough!

If he wanted to gain the strength to not only beat the Everchanger but also more powerful opponents such as the Bolvos Rage, then he needed to break his limitations and change so that he was able to channel his sister's willpower to an even greater degree!

He did not know why he came up with such an absurd thought, but as soon as he channeled all of his need and desire into this aspiration, a barrier shattered inside his mind.

When the Blade Chaser launched its next attack, its powerful sword slash battered the Everchanger's sword with so much force that the latter almost flung aside!

"What?!"

Before Venerable Joshua could question where the outburst of strength had come from, the brightly glowing custom mech before him exploded in far more light and power than any empowered mech seen before!

Chapter 3736 - No Exclusion

Within one of the observation rooms of the Spirit of Bentheim, the mech designers and staffers monitoring the last test became shocked at what was taking place!

The Minerva had already produced a lot of astonishing feats during its debut deployment. Everyone thought that would be the extent of all of the excitement.

The expert command mech had already displayed its main capabilities which were much different and more sensational than anyone expected out of the latest Larkinson expert mech.

It would be downright absurd for anything else to happen on this day. The Larkinsons and its allies had already witnessed enough remarkable feats to talk about for weeks.

Who could have imagined that letting Commander Casella Ingvar perform her Single Empowerment resonance ability on her brother Imon Ingvar would produce such an exaggerated reaction?

"This is impossible!"

"My sensors are going crazy! The processors are producing errors. They can't make heads or tails of what is taking place!"

"The resonance meters are going wild! The Blade Chaser is emitting confusing signals and our software cannot interpret the results!"

Gloriana quickly flicked her projected interface until they displayed the sensor logs of the resonance meters.

"The errors are a result of trying to measure the resonance strength of a mech that is not only being empowered by an expert command mech, but is also breaking through at the same time. If you want to make sense of what is happening, then split up these readings into two. You will find that one of them corresponds of Commander Casella's true resonance while the other is generated by Imon Ingvar's breakthrough!"

When Gloriana personally tweaked the settings so that the different signals weren't jumbled together anymore, the data finally reflected the actual situation.

The readings were unambiguously clear. The Blade Chaser gained another infusion of power, and this time it was much more powerful and violent than that of the Minerva's Single Empowerment ability!

"Imon Ingvar is undergoing apotheosis!"

A lot of mech pilots who figured out what was taking place grew incredibly envious at the lucky bastards. Many of them had no realistic hope of breaking through in their lives. Others might have the potential to become a demigod but needed to push themselves through constant battles in order to prove themselves worthy!

In contrast, Imon's sudden chance was an extremely lucky occurrence!

Not only did he manage to find a chance during a last-minute test of all situations, but also did not have to worry about getting strangled by an enemy force in order to prevent him from becoming another asset of the Larkinson Clan.

Only Venerable Jannzi Larkinson and Commander Casella Ingvar had the fortune of breaking through under safe circumstances, and now another clansman was about to join this envious club!

Imon did not realize what was happening to him. He was so consumed by his overwhelming desire to protect his sister from future foes that he immediately embraced the rush of power pouring out of his being.

All he had in mind was to prove his worth, embrace his new strength and attain more power in order to protect his sister!

"I will not let you down, Casella!"

"I have tried so hard to find my own goal, only to realize that my strength has always been derived from you. It was foolish for me to try and become more independent from you. I will stay by your side so that we can grow strong together!"

"Since you cannot defend yourself against every enemy, let me stand in front of your foes!"

"If my power or yours is not enough to defeat a threat, then let us both combine our strengths!"

"Your power is mine, and my power is yours!"

No one had witnessed a breakthrough quite like this, but the phenomenon taking place was undeniable!

Not only was Imon Ingvar undergoing the changes that were traditionally associated with apotheosis, the Blade Chaser also gained a massive boost of strength that temporarily put it at the same level as an expert mech.

No! There was more than that! Commander Casella's willpower that had been running through the frame of the custom swordsman mech had doubled and tripled in magnitude!

Casella herself reacted with both shock and happiness as she witnessed what her brother was going through.

She was happy that Imon had finally succeeded in catching up to the same level as her. She had always noticed the frustration and envy from her brother. If this unequal state continued, she could not guarantee whether their relationship would remain as close and harmonious as before.

Now that Imon had finally become a demigod, those concerns had gone away! As a proper expert pilot, her brother finally had the capital to remain confident in her presence.

The reason why she was shocked was not because her brother broke through while she was empowering him with one of the Minerva's abilities.

She was taken off-guard by how her active bond with her brother was affecting them both!

The first effect was that Commander Casella suddenly experienced a rush of strength that undoubtedly came from her brother!

A part of the energies unleashed by Venerable Imon's breakthrough had flooded in her direction!

For some reason, Casella was easily able to absorb her brother's energy despite the different properties.

This was the odd part about this. She did not sense any form of rejection. In fact, Imon's violent and powerful energies turned tame when they reached her mind. They smoothly integrated with her own willpower, which not only wiped away her exhaustion, but also caused her to become more aligned with her brother!

"What is happening?"

Casella couldn't explain it, but she intuitively sensed that this was a positive turn of events!

This was why she did not retract her resonating ability. Whatever reactions that Imon's advancement had evoked at the moment were creating an even deeper bond with her and her brother!

Their absolute trust, affection and willingness to protect each other became empowered by Imon's overwhelming desire to serve as Casella's champion.

The temporary bond created by the Minerva's Single Resonance ability became the unwitting vessel of this transformation!

All kinds of miraculous and wondrous changes occurred, one of which was the formation of a permanent spiritual bond between the two expert pilots!

The effects of this bond and more were in stark display at the moment as the brightly glowing Blade Chaser exuded vastly more power, and not just because of the forced resonance that was coursing through its frame.

The Minerva visibly weakened in power. Its dark gold corona grew dimmer and dimmer until it looked like a sickly expert mech that had fallen on hard times.

In contrast, the custom swordsman mech that was hacking at the Everchanger even now became increasingly more splendid and radiant after obtaining a much greater proportion of Casella's reinvigorated willpower!

Any signs of incompatibility that existed before were wiped away as Imon's apotheosis had forcibly caused the two Ingvar siblings to become almost perfectly aligned!

At this moment, Casella willingly answered the call of her brother and passed on her extraordinary power to him without reserve.

The results were becoming increasingly more clear. The Blade Chaser no longer exhibited the strength of a mech that was affected by forced resonance.

With two different powerful sources of resonance affecting the same mech, the swordsman mech that had only recently fallen into the hands of Imon Ingvar turned into a monster that was actually giving the Everchanger a run for its money!

"What is this?! Even I wasn't this strong when I broke through!" Venerable Joshua exclaimed as he had to fend off the repeated strikes from his 'sparring partner'.

Their skills were still too far apart from each other. Venerable Joshua had already become an expert pilot for a couple of years and also spent enough time to thoroughly familiarize the Everchanger's nuances.

Though he was not a full-time swordsman mech pilot, his wife constantly exhorted him to practice his swordsmanship and thoroughly master all of the basic drills.

All of this helped with turning him into the second-most powerful swordsman among the expert pilots of the Larkinson Clan.

Although Venerable Dise could easily abuse him in a swordfight, no other expert pilot should come close to challenging him in a contest of blades.

Yet that was exactly what Imon was doing!

As the forced resonance from Imon's breakthrough and the escalating power donated by Commander Casella blended together, the Blade Chaser turned into a vessel that effectively channeled the power of two expert pilots at once!

This was a miraculous result considering that willpower was highly exclusive and usually rejected other influences.

Only an insanely high degree of compatibility could make two expert pilots get along with each other to such an amazing extent!

A phenomenon like this would have never occurred if Imon did not desire with all his heart to offer himself up to her sister and serve as her eternal guard, protector and champion!

As the expert pilot as well as the expert mech became irrevocably changed, the Blade Dancer pressed the Everchanger with greater force, speed and ferocity until it overpowered the expert hero mech!

No matter what kind of technique Joshua employed, the Blade Chaser was considerably faster and more powerful at the moment!

Relying on these temporary advantages, Imon Ingvar roared as the sword of his custom mech finally evaded the guard of the Everchanger before slicing its surface with a radiantly glowing blade!

"The Everchanger got hit on its arm!"

The powerful blow was not enough to cut through the Everchanger's arm structure, but it had left a deep cut behind that showed that the attack had firmly penetrated through a solid layer of Unending alloy.

This was an exceptional material with the defensive properties that usually corresponded with first-class materials!

For a second-class mech to be able to inflict this much damage was impressive, even if the dual forms of resonance were responsible for making it happen.

"Hahaha! I did it! I've become strong enough! Did you see my performance, sister?!"

As soon as Imon succeeded in this attack, much of the power that had elevated him and his custom mech quickly resided as if it had completed its mission.

The forced resonance that had pushed the Blade Dancer far beyond its limits had disappeared, drastically causing it to deflate in power.

Commander Casella also took the initiative to stop her Single Empowerment ability.

"Ack!"

Imon did not react well to the sudden changes. The truth was that he had been overdrafting his strength by a lot in order to pass his own test.

He quickly fell unconscious as his recently-evolved willpower was in an exhausted state!

His custom mech did not look much better either. The mech had performed amazingly fast and powerful moves but all of those high-intensity movements took a toll on the physical structure.

Many fractures and overloaded components marred its frame, causing it to look as if it had fled a warzone.

The Larkinsons did not think that there was anything wrong with this. No matter what, once Venerable Imon Ingvar recovered from his ordeal, their clan would finally have another expert pilot at its disposal.

The entire clan celebrated this unexpected event without any reserve!

"Hail Venerable Imon Ingvar!"

"Our clan is blessed with expert pilots!"

As everyone cheered for the appearance of another powerful hero in the Larkinson Clan, Ves was not as jubilant.

His mood sank when he realized he needed to invest his time into designing yet another expensive and cumbersome expert mech.

The logistics surrounding the development of such a high-end machine always troubled Ves. What was worse was that the expeditionary fleet was heading away from Davute, so it was unlikely that they could find compatible resonating materials.

Resonating materials were the foundation of a unique and individualized expert mech. Without knowing what Imon Ingvar was good at and what resonating materials could amplify his natural talents, there was no proper way to get started with designing a new expert mech!

Ves frowned. "The only solution is to wait until we have returned to a major trading system. Only a large settlement where lots of trade is taking place will have the warehouses and marketplaces that can expose Imon to a lot of different resonating materials."

Chapter 3737 - Cubed Root Relationship

Suffice to say, the Golden Skull Alliance and more specifically the Larkinson Clan experienced a long and exciting day.

No one expected that after the Minerva demonstrated its prowess, the brother to its pilot would break through under circumstances that had never taken place before.

An incredible amount of coincidences had to take place at once to make such an improbable event happen.

If Casella and Imon worked for any other organization, it would have been impossible for the Sentinel Commander to connect to her brother with an empowering bond at the time of his breakthrough.

It was clear to numerous people who possessed an understanding of expert pilots that a unique and possibly legendary breakthrough had occurred.

There was no way that Commander Casella remained unchanged after getting involved in her brother's transformation.

It was also unlikely that Venerable Imon Ingvar had broken through to become a normal expert pilot.

Right now, the Larkinson Clan's highest priority was checking up on the health of the two power siblings.

Both brother and sister had been carted off to the Dragon's Den where the most knowledgeable and experienced Lifer medical specialists examined their new patients.

Commander Casella Ingvar's condition was relatively mild. She had exhausted her willpower during the field test. Though she received an infusion of energy from her brother's breakthrough, she had exerted herself far too much during the last test.

"How is she, doc?" Ves asked as Lucky clung to his shoulder.

"Casella is doing okay." Director Ranya told her as they stood behind a transparent screen. "Aside from her mental exhaustion and signs of stress, there should be nothing wrong with her. She will require several days of rest in order to return to her peak."

Ves looked relieved. "That is great to hear. Have you also detected any foreign presences, significant changes in her brain structure, elevated energy signals or other anomalies?"

Ranya narrowed her eyes. "Are you suspecting that Casella has experienced greater changes?"

It was hard for Ves to miss the spiritual bond that had recently formed between brother and sister. The connection emerging from Casella's head went right through the bulkhead and off into the direction where Imon was currently being treated!

"I suggest you keep the Sentinel Commander under observation for a few more days." He mildly said. "I think it would be good for them both if you can put the Ingvars together. This breakthrough event has produced changes that we have never seen before and cannot fully understand."

Ranya looked thoughtful and nodded. "Hm, you are correct in that, though I believe that Casella will not experience any detrimental side effects from the incident. Her brother on the other hand is in a much more serious condition."

The two moved over to observing the treatment room where Imon's unconscious body was being subjected to a lot of intensive scanning.

"He looks in bad shape alright." Ves commented. "His breakthrough event was quite a doozy."

"It shouldn't be more violent than a typical breakthrough in battle, but..." Ranya hesitated. "The current scans show that his brain signals are more disordered than usual. What that exactly means, we do not know. Usually, expert pilots gain more physical resilience due to their changes that always helps with recovering from a stressful transformation. The concern we have right now is whether this normal healing process is enough for a newly-advanced expert pilot who has channeled substantially more power than usual."

Everything had a price. Commander Casella's act of empowering her brother during his breakthrough created both positive and negative repercussions.

Ves predicted that the former outweighed the latter, but that did not mean he should disregard the cost.

He briefly extended his spiritual senses to the unconscious expert pilot.

Imon's force of will was more frazzled and messy than normal. Though expert pilots ought to be strong enough to remedy this damage, it might take weeks or even months before Imon consolidated his new state!

"I think... we should pay more attention to healing and rehabilitating Venerable Imon." He told Dr. Ranya. "Take it slow with regards to his recovery. There is no hurry. It will take many months before we can develop an expert mech for him so he does not need to push himself to pilot mechs anytime soon."

"Very well. I will take that into consideration."

Ves waited for a time in order to see whether Imon was able to wake up soon. When Ranya indicated that he would remain out cold for at least several days, he gave up and headed back to the room where Casella was recovering.

"Meow." [*Updated from . c o m*]

Lucky flew to the tired-looking Sentinel Commander and tried to cheer her up by acting cute.

Casella slowly reached out and petted Lucky, but it was clear her heart was not in it. Her mind was a jumble as she thought about the implications of her brother's successful apotheosis.

"Well. We had a big day today." Ves spoke in a light tone. "Let's start with your expert mech. Now that you have finished a session with it and have time to reflect on your experiences, what do you think about your Minerva?"

"I do not have much to say beyond the feedback that I have already given before and during the field test. The Minerva is both powerful and fully capable of amplifying my strengths. I cannot wish for anything better, truly." She answered.

"How well do you think you can improve your Command Field going forward?"

"Hmm. I already have a sense that I can increase the range of my Command Field by growing my resonance strength. When I stretched it all the way out to 8 kilometers from my Minerva, I already felt that I was being limited by my lack of growth. I cannot tell you how much more powerful I have to become to extend that field to 16 kilometers, but it will not happen soon."

Ves nodded. "I wonder whether your growth in resonance strength will expand the range of your Command Field at a linear rate or progress in a cubed root relationship."

Casella frowned as she failed to understand this point. "What do you mean by that?"

"There are two possible models for range extension that I can think of. If the range of your Command Field only looks at distance from your expert mech, then growing twice as strong as an expert pilot will also multiply the radius by two. If you grow four times as powerful as now, the maximum range will be four times as much as now. Understood?"

"That is simple enough to understand. Does this mean that my Command Field can cover entire battlefields in space if I grow strong enough? If I can encompass enemy mechs in my range, maybe I can affect them in a detrimental way."

Casella already started to think about what she could do to debilitate any hostile mech that fell into her spider web!

"Let's not get too excited, commander. Your Command Field was fairly strong back then because all of those mech pilots voluntarily embraced your intervention. If they considered you their enemy, then you wouldn't be able to affect them that much with the dispersal of your strength over such a massive area."

"I see. Well, I will see for myself once we fight our next battle. What about that square root relationship you mentioned?"

"Ah, that's another possible model that describes the growth of your Command Field. If it is not based on range but rather on the volume of space that you can influence with your expert mech, then the increase in radius will not be as exaggerated. You can think of it this way."

Ves activated his comm and used it to draw a simple projected circle in the air. "Imagine this is a standard 25 cm diameter pizza."

He drew a larger circle around the first one.

"Imagine this is a 35 cm diameter pizza. Now, you don't need to be a mathematician to figure out that the bigger pizza exceeds the smaller one by 5 cm on both halves. A 10 cm difference in diameter does not sound like a massive difference, but the bigger pizza is actually twice as big as the smaller pizza!"

Casella became more attentive as she studied the two circles.

"In other words, the 35 cm pizza offers as much food as two 25 cm pizzas?"

Ves smiled. "Correct. Next time, don't get fooled by the sizes of the pizzas that you order in the future. Even a 5 cm difference in diameter can dump a lot more joules of energy in your stomach. Now, I didn't present you this story to teach you about pizzas. What I really wanted to do was to put you in the right perspective."

"What does this have to do with the range of my Command Field, then?"

"Your Command Field is a big pizza." Ves simply stated. "No, it's more than that. It's a big ball-shaped loaf of bread. Since we are working in three dimensions rather than two, you need to describe the expansion in volume in a cubed relationship."

Casella frowned and rubbed the side of her head with a pained expression.

"Meow?" Lucky looked concerned.

"I had a long day today. I am not like this normally, but can you please give me the short version of your explanation?"

Ves let out an exasperated breath. "Okay, imagine a balloon that is 5 cm across. If you want to increase its radius by 1 cm, you only need to pump in a small breath of air. Now consider a balloon that is 5 meters across. If you want to increase this big boy's radius by 1 cm, how much air do you think you need to blow inside?"

"...I am guessing a lot more air than with the smaller balloon."

"Correct. It is so much more that at some point the cost becomes too exorbitant. I am afraid that this will be the case with your Command Field as well. Instead of air, the substance that 'inflates' your field is the true resonance that you are able to generate with your expert mech. There is only a finite amount of energy that you can generate, and the larger your Command Field, the more difficult it becomes to expand its radius by just 1 meter. This is because you need to blow a huge amount of 'air' just to fill up all of the extra volume!"

Although the analogies made her feel woozy, Casella roughly understood the gist of his message. She would have been able to figure this out easily enough on her own if she was in her prime, but she should have been asleep a while ago considering how much she had exerted herself today!

"Let's talk about another aspect of your Command Field." Ves moved on. "Have you figured out how you can affect more mechs with your Commandeering ability? During the testing session, we noticed that you struggled to Commandeer more than a couple of hundred mechs. It would be nice if you can raise this number over time, but we aren't sure what is needed for that to happen."

Casella smiled. "That is easier. While I think I can do better when my resonance strength has grown, I already had a thought back then that it is a matter of exercise and proficiency. The more I become familiar with this operation and the more I exercise my mind and willpower with the Commandeering ability, I can probably affect more mechs over time, especially if I push my numbers limit on a regular basis. I would have to practice alongside many friendly mechs in reality for that to happen."

"Ah, that sounds good. I suspect that we can also improve this aspect of your ability by augmenting your multitasking capabilities. This is a risky operation, though. A botched implantation procedure can ruin your genetic aptitude or your qualifications as an expert pilot. The risks are far too great."

The sentinel Commander already understood this truth. "I will exercise the quantity limit of my Command Field the old fashioned way if that is the case. This should be the most natural and healthy way for me to strengthen my Command Field."

"I hope it will grow to encompass the entire Larkinson Army in the future."

Chapter 3738 - Responsible Sister

Ves and Casella kept talking about the properties and growth methods of her unique abilities, most notably her Command Field and Commandeering ability.

The power to uplift hundreds of friendly mechs and mech pilots without making any complicated and cumbersome preparations beforehand was incredibly powerful!

Master Huron would probably salivate if he learned what the Larkinsons had been able to accomplish with Commander Casella Ingvar and her new Minerva!

In fact, the Fridayman Master couldn't be blamed for botching up the Charlemagne. He had been unable to acquire approval to test this radical new concept on one of the mainstay expert pilots of the Friday Coalition.

The only test subject that his superiors and supervisors deemed acceptable was a defector from a third-rate state.

The Fridaymen wouldn't shed any tears if such a test subject suffered an accident during a risky experiment!

Although Ves had been a lot more reckless by subjecting Casella and many other Larkinsons to the effects of the Minerva straight away, he was always confident when it came to his mechs.

The expert mech's performance ultimately exceeded his expectations and that made him reconsider the value of the Sentinel Commander in his mind.

He looked speculatively at the tired but still powerful expert pilot. Maybe he should slowly bring her into his inner circle and fill her in on some of the secrets he carried around.

"How is your relationship with the Minerva? I can imagine it is good, but it is a masterwork expert mech that I hope will be paired up with you for a long time. If there are any concerns, it is best to handle them now when it is still early."

Casella thought for a moment while she hugged and petted Lucky.

"I don't think I need to mention any issues. My relationship with the Minerva is excellent. The expert mech is truly devoted to me in a way that I never experienced from the Quint. The only shortcoming is that the Minerva's personality is still a bit too young and inexperienced. Sometimes, it makes me feel as if I am raising a child."

That did not sound strange to Ves. "That is natural. While every living mech starts with a certain foundation of personality and attitude, they are always designed to evolve according to the qualities of their pilots. Therefore, the Minerva's relatively bland personality should not be seen as a disadvantage, but must be seen as an opportunity for you to shape your expert mech and train its personality in a way that best compliments your piloting style in the future. You won't have situations like the Quint where you frequently have to fight against its crotchety personality."

"I kind of miss it, to be honest." Casella smirked. "The Quint was an annoying and stressful mech to pilot, but now that I look back on it, all of that antagonization has unintentionally done me a lot of good. I still needed to be straightened out and partnering up with a snarky mech that did not take my position of legion commander into consideration was a good way to sort out the obstacles that prevented me from breaking through."

"Are you thinking about cultivating a more active personality in your Minerva?"

"Hmm, not necessarily, sir. I think it is best not to make any deliberate choices. I will see where the Minerva will take me by piloting it normally."

"That is indeed the safest and most stable choice. If you do not choose to actively guide your living mech's personality, then it will definitely develop the most complimentary traits to you. The only issue is that this is slower than if you make use of deliberate guidance."

Casella had already made up her mind. She shook her head. "As you have said, the Minerva will be my designated mech for the long term. I do not think this process should be hastened and the Minerva already possesses a decent personality."

They moved on to talking about other topics. Ves inquired about Casella's perspective on certain aspects of the Minerva.

"If you can Commandeer or empower non-mechs in the future, then your utility will definitely elevate your role in our clan to the top!"

have already tried and failed, sir." Casella firmly shook her head. "I believe my Command Field is only able to latch on to certain people. Those infantry soldiers you brought forward were all difficult to grasp. If I have to describe it, it was as if we didn't have any common ground."

"Well, it makes sense that your Command Field possesses limitations. Your subjects must all be tied to mechs in some way. Your expert mech was also designed with the express purpose of empowering mechs and mech pilots, and combined with your own development as an expert pilot, it is logical that you can't augment other subjects."

This was an annoying limitation and one that severely limited Casella's usefulness in the future.

Ves could think of plenty of situations where her talents could be employed to good effect if she was able to apply them to starships!

However, he had been dreaming too much. There was no way that Casella's Command Field could be exploited to such a ridiculous extent.

Perhaps the story might be different once she broke through to ace pilot, but that was way too far away.

"Do you have any words on the Single Empowerment Resonance Ability?" Ves asked. "It was originally integrated in your mech to create an additional 'expert mech' for free, though I did not expect that the compatibility requirements would be so harsh. If there is a way to improve this, then as long as you grow a lot stronger, you can apply this special ability to empower the expert mechs we most need or do not possess ourselves. For example, we don't have an expert striker mech in our arsenal, but we can take a regular version of this archetype and amplify its strength."

"I can do that, but I do not think it is necessary, sir. So far, I think the best choices for me to apply this ability is the Quint and... my brother's mech."

They were nearing the critical topics of this discussion. What happened at the end was still unclear in many parts. The best way to clear up the uncertainty was to approach Commander Casella and get a first-hand account on what happened from her perspective.

When Ves prodded the Sentinel Commander to describe what had happened with her own words, he leaned back and mulled over the words.

Everything she said was true, of course. She was an expert pilot and would not lie over trivial matters.

"You gained a good picture of what went on in Imon's mind, right? What did you sense?"

"He... found his way forward by dedicating himself to me." She reluctantly replied. "He has given up his hope to advance into an independent powerhouse that many mech pilots have yearned to become. Instead, he has pinned all of his hopes onto myself. I am incredibly touched by his decision, but... I am wondering whether his obsession is too extreme."

"Every expert pilot has a few screws loose in his or her head." Ves stated with certainty. "It comes with the job. If his conviction is to protect you and fight on your behalf, then he cannot be dissuaded so easily."

Commander Casella grew worried as she heard that. As much as she loved and adored her brother, she did not want his chosen role to turn him into a slave who could not function independently without help.

"Well, if the changes are for the worse, then you have my permission to sort him out, whether through retraining or other means."

Casella grinned a bit. "Thank you. I do not want to get followed around by a stalker all the time. Though I welcome his assistance, I still want him to live his own life."

"How do you think you will be able to cooperate with him in battle?"

"We already know each other's habits and tactics to a good extent. We grew up together and took the same lessons in the mech academy. I already know most of his moves except for the unorthodox ones. It was only later on that we diverged and pursued our own specialties."

"Does empowering your brother and his mech take a lot of effort?" Ves asked.

"Not at all." Casella answered. "My brother and his Blade Chaser have all become highly compatible with my power. Even now, I can vaguely feel him despite not piloting the Minerva at the moment."

"That is a normal consequence of what you have been through. The bond that you have formed with him should be benign and useful going forward. At the very least, you will always know where he is located and vice versa."

Ves continued to ask questions and gained a better understanding of what Commander Casella was capable of. He also clarified a few theories that could be helpful in designing future expert mechs.

He stood up. "You've answered enough questions now. I think it is best for you to sleep and recover your mental condition during sleep. Don't worry about anything else and relax."

"I know. I have already staved off my fatigue too much."

When Ves and Lucky left her recovery room, she had already fallen into slumber.

Ves briefly examined her force of will. Even if her mental energies were depleted, he was still able to sense the attributes of her spirituality.

"Hmmm..."

He wandered over to the treatment room where the doctors had completed what they could do in the realm of the physical.

It was too bad that the Larkinsons did not have much of a clue to repair mental trauma. Only time and positivity could hasten the restoration process.

Imon was not a regular victim, though.

Ves wanted to confirm one of his interesting little theories and that meant determining the Imon's spiritual attributes.

"I thought so. There's a part of his original attributes but there are also newer ones that reminds me of Venerable Jannzi. The result of these changes is that Imon not only possesses strong individual combat power, but can also channel a huge amount of energy with assistance from his sister."

One of the reasons why they were so compatible with each other was that they started off with spiritualities that were a lot better than anything he had seen before.

He still remembered the time where they looked lost and clearly needed help to get away from the Kinner Tribe.

The reason why he went out and recruited them back when he was just a third-rater was because he was attracted by their distinct spiritual potential!

Although the Ingvars developed in ways that Ves did not foresee, their original attributes were still present and in company!

They were made to work together and the latest testing session reinforced this impression further.

Ves would have to make sure that General Verle knew the importance of putting them together. It would be a waste to treat Venerable Imon like an average expert pilot!

He was not certain about how strong Venerable Imon and his Blade Chaser could become after getting augmented by Commander Casella.

Right now, Ves only had a lot of question marks, but did not dare to insult the expert pilots with his precocious personality.

He couldn't wait to conduct his next test but knew that he couldn't rush the injured expert pilots.

Ves had a strong hunch that the two could combine their forces and generate much more power than if they were separate expert pilots!

At that time, the Ingvar siblings would have probably become high-tier expert pilots. Would they be able to stack enough their respective power together that they could harness the power of an ace mech, if only through a loophole?

The notion sounded incredibly unrealistic, but as long as there was a faint chance of truth, Ves' curiosity could not be sated!

Chapter 3739 - Luxury Babies

Too much excitement took place in the Larkinson Clan in a short time.

Even as many Larkinsons celebrated the completion of both the Minerva and the successful breakthrough of Venerable Imon Ingvar, the mech designers responsible for making all of this happen had become bone-tired.

Although their physical exhaustion was easy to solve with enough sleep, their mental exhaustion was not so easily solved.

Ves gave himself and the other Journeymen involved in the Minerva Project a well-deserved vacation.

Each of them needed the break in order to reset their mental states and process the humongous gains they had made during the extremely successful fabrication run and the astonishing field test of the Minerva.

Both Ves and Gloriana shoved aside their work and responsibilities and enjoyed a quiet afternoon in their grand stateroom.

"Mama!"

"Aurelia!"

A boisterous baby girl almost stood up and walked with the help of her mother, but didn't seem to have the strength to support her weight.

"Miaow~"

Clixie lied down at the side and watched Aurelia attempt to walk. She looked forward to seeing the little girl succeed.

Once Aurelia learned how to walk properly and grew a few years older, they could move on to much more exciting places!

Ves approached the girls and sat down next to them. Aurelia quickly noticed her father and eagerly stretched out her arms in an attempt to invite a hug.

"Papa.. hug!"

"Sure thing, cutie!"

He firmly grabbed Aurelia away from her mother and began to hug and kiss his daughter before studying her current state.

She had grown a little bigger and cleverer compared to before. Ever since she learned how to speak her first word, she expanded her vocabulary at a steady rate.

Of course, she was far too young to understand more complicated concepts, but Ves and Gloriana already discovered that their child was a little sharper for her age!

The greater advantages of designer babies finally came into play. Ves did not agree to pay 4000 MTA credits to Witshaw & Yeneca for nothing!

Ves even learned that Venerable Joshua and Ketis were so impressed by Aurelia that they sought to purchase a designer baby of the same tier!

He knew this because Ketis had recently approached him for an advance.

Although Ves hated the thought of giving away so much money at once, the recent monetary gains from selling all of the unwanted salvage derived from the pakklaton refugee fleet were quite substantial!

It was not a big problem to divert a portion of the proceeds to fulfill the prominent couple's wish.

He eventually agreed to Ketis' heartfelt request because of several reasons.

First, he wanted to maintain good relations with two of the key figures of the Larkinson Clan. Even though they already owed him a lot of gratitude, they might not be so fond of him anymore if he acted stingy in a matter that was incredibly important to their hearts.

Children were the foundation of their love! As a father himself who adored Aurelia enough to conduct an unprecedentedly risky and extravagant experiment on her to grant her a powerful companion spirit seed, he knew exactly how parents could become irrational if their children became involved!

Second, the money wasn't a gift but rather a loan. Once Ketis finished the Monster Slayer Project and commercialized her work with the help of the Wild Fighter Association in accordance with their contract, the money would flow in soon enough.

Ketis had already promised to relinquish her share of the proceeds until she had fully repaid her debt.

Therefore, Ves and his clan weren't suffering a meaningful loss at all. From what he knew about the Monster Slayer Project, the commercial swordsman mech model possessed several unique selling points!

There was no way that no one would lack interest in a mech designed by the only dual Journeyman and swordmaster in existence!

All of these reasons and more convinced Ves to give the lucky couple the money they need to become another client of Withshaw & Yeneca.

"Mech!" Aurelia said as she crawled over her plushy mech and presented it to her parents.

"Yes, that's a mech." Ves smiled. "Are you interested in them, sweetie?"

"Papa! Mech!" Aurelia yelled before she began to chew the arm of the plushy mech.

Gloriana frowned a bit and pulled the plushy mech from the baby's grasp. "Mechs are not for eating, dear. You shouldn't gnaw on anything that you can grab."

"Mech!"

Aurelia instantly began to tear up and cry!

"Don't cry, please! Gloriana, give her back her toy!"

"You can't indulge her like this, Ves! She needs to learn how to behave. Now let's focus on soothing her first."

Despite the various bumps, the couple enjoyed spending time with their daughter. It was a lot more relaxing to keep Aurelia company when they weren't distracted by their work.

As Aurelia expended much of her energy and began to take a nap by cuddling with Clixie, her parents began to talk about more serious subjects.

"Once we complete the current design round, I want to commission another designer baby." She told Ves.

He winced. "Are you sure you want to go at it again so soon?"

"Yes. I already told you that I have been preparing for my second pregnancy. I visited the Dragon's Den numerous times to hasten my recovery and make sure I can safely bear a child again. I don't want to delay this matter too long."

He knew that he could not stop Gloriana once she set her mind on this decision. He just lamented that he would probably have to spend another large sum of money in order to fund the development of a customized designer baby.

"Do you have a formula in mind?" [*Updated from . c o m*]

Gloriana grinned. She had already done her research. Since she was an existing customer of Witshaw & Yeneca, it was easy enough for her to contact the renowned genetics company's representatives and receive help with finding the right designer baby package.

She reached out and placed her hand on his leg. "You don't need to worry too much about the cost. I am okay with spending as much money as we did to obtain Aurelia. I am incredibly happy with our firstborn daughter and our secondborn child should be just as good as long as she receives the same treatment!"

Even Gloriana couldn't ignore the laws of diminishing returns when it came to designer babies. The next substantial tier that was objectively better than a 4000 MTA credit designer baby was probably at least ten times more expensive.

Ves could buy an excellent brand-new superfab with that kind of money!

Although raising an excellent child could definitely pay off in many different ways, Ves could not afford to hollow out the foundation of his clan and his personal ambitions just to raise another money pit.

This was only their child! Gloriana intended to raise at least four more children before she was willing to stop, and it was conceivable that those future brats would all demand a lot of money to support their upbringing.

Kids were expensive!

Still, they were worth every credit in the end!

Ves gazed lovingly at their sleeping baby. She looked especially cute when she was cuddled up in Clixie's soft fur.

"You know that Aurelia is a lot better than designer babies of the same tier because of my spiritual augmentations, right?"

"You're wrong." Gloriana shook her head. "It's not just you who is responsible. Have you forgotten about the blessing the Superior Mother bestowed to her granddaughter?"

"Ah. Yes. That happened as well."

His wife smirked. "This is also why I am okay with settling for a designer baby that is worth around 4000 MTA credits. So what if our child is cheaper than those birthed in prosperous first-class households? The Terrans and Rubarthans will never be able to have children like ours! When Aurelia and our other five children grow up one day, they will become the envy of all parents."

Though Gloriana was a bit too confident for her own good, Ves happened to agree with her this time. Both of them had already experienced the amazing benefits that companion spirits could provide.

It was a lot harder and more cumbersome to implant them in children before they were born, but this was only a trifling price compared to the potential benefits. Seeing how much more remarkable Aurelia had already become at this age, Ves was certain that he could use this as the foundation of his family's rise!

Gloriana activated her comm and projected a document that outlined one of the many formulas developed by Witshaw & Yeneca.

As a long-standing biotech company that had bred an uncountable amount of children to clients throughout human space, Ves couldn't even count how many formulas W & Y had developed over the centuries.

Most of the formulas they developed were probably flawed, cost-inefficient or uncontrollable, but as long as even 1 in a million formulas succeeded, then that could easily recoup all of the extravagant research spending!

The formula that Gloriana had picked out was one of many random attempts that W & Y initially did not place much hope in. The company merely came up with a base formula but tweaked its parameters in thousands of different ways.

For example, one variation substituted one key ingredient for another. A different variation changed the proportion of valuable ingredients. Another variation altered the genetic programming of the designer baby to increase the metabolism of the child.

The formula that Ves was studying was vastly different from the one used to make Aurelia.

According to the short description, Formula K-356666-EKT was primarily geared towards raising elite mech pilots and military officers.

It was the kind of product that propelled many mech pilots in first-rate states to prominence!

Although it was not necessary for children to become excellent first-class mech pilots by relying on advantages bought before their birth, it made their journey a lot easier!

Although Ves was attracted by the many advantages promised by Formula K-356666-EKT, he was not blinded by all of the positives of this designer baby package.

There were downsides to every formula, and this one possessed a greater issue than the one they utilized before!

"All of these advantages sound nice to someone who aspires to become a mech pilot." Ves waved at the list of benefits. "Increased physical strength, more resilient nerves, enhanced protection of the brain and central nervous system, much denser bones, better endurance, more efficient organs, an adrenaline stimulation system, high metabolism, accelerated cellular regeneration, strengthened immune system, enhanced combat-oriented cognitive functions, minor social and of course a better appearance. All of this is great if our second child not only possesses the right genetic aptitude, but also chooses to become a mech pilot. However... what if these conditions aren't favorable?"

His wife kept smiling. "That is regrettable, but that doesn't mean Formula K-356666-EKT is wasted on our second daughter. She can still rely on most of her enhancements to excel as a military officer with the help of her modest cognitive improvements such as better memory and better combat deduction capabilities. Besides, you haven't read the most prominent advantage of this formula."

She scrolled down the document and pointed her finger at an impressive claim!

"This... this formula can improve the emergence of the right genetic aptitude for mech piloting by 10%!"

Ves was shocked! He had heard whispers of solutions like this, but he did not expect that it would be available at this price tier!

Even though the military-oriented designer baby package only promised a modest increase in probability, this was already a price worth paying!

Whether his second daughter could become a mech pilot or not, it did not hurt to give it a try.

"So? Do you think this is an acceptable formula?" Gloriana grinned.

He did not immediately say yes.

"It is a little light on the cognitive enhancements, so if our child doesn't have the right genetic aptitude, then much of these physical enhancements are wasted. Can you give me a look at similar formulas to this one? I need to understand the differences and see whether you have truly made the most appropriate choice."

Chapter 3740 - Genetic Aptitude Lottery

Although Ves felt a bit uncomfortable with setting up their second daughter to become an excellent mech pilot, he did not object to it that much.

First, he wanted to raise at least one powerful mech pilot in his lineage. With the impending establishment of the T Institute, Ves possessed a huge amount of confidence that he could turn any son or daughter of his into an expert pilot as long as they possessed the qualifications to get started in this privileged profession.

While Ves wasn't sure whether mech pilots would continue to remain important as warships were hoping to make a return in human space, he still felt it was worthwhile to raise a mech pilot in his family.

He actually possessed little doubt that his upcoming daughter would choose to become a mech pilot once they confirmed that she possessed the right genetic aptitude.

No child could resist the romance of piloting mechs and becoming a powerful god pilot that could dominate human space by themselves!

Unless the course of human history changed drastically in the coming decades, becoming a mech pilot would still remain the favored vocation of any child with the ability to interface with mechs!

However, the road to becoming a qualified mech pilot was not easy. Simply possessing a compatible genetic aptitude was only the first hurdle. Aptitudes also differed by grades.

"This is a pretty uncertain bet that we are taking." Ves told his wife. "In order for our designer baby to take full advantage of her genetic endowments, she not only has to pass the minimum threshold, but also gain enough talent to make it worthwhile for her to pilot mechs. Her grade needs to be a minimum of D but preferably at least C to give her a bright enough future in mech piloting. Any lower than that and the costs far outweigh the benefits."

Gloriana's smile faltered. She understood that there was always a probability that her second daughter could end up in this awkward zone between possessing decent talent and no talent for mech piloting at all. These were probably the most saddest people in human space.

Ves remembered a long time ago that he witnessed an arena match of a prominent mech athlete that went by the name of Leviticus.

Despite developing a low-grade genetic aptitude, the fellow persevered and worked ten times harder than his peers, but could only barely pilot a normal mech to a satisfactory level!

This was an impressive accomplishment for someone with his condition, but most people whose genetic aptitudes were too low simply didn't bother.

The cost was too great and most mech academies didn't even want to bother with investing scarce resources into their training!

"It will be okay." Gloriana quickly recovered. "No son or daughter of ours will be average. Your Larkinson bloodline should prove immensely useful here. If there is one good trait about your family's genetics, it's that your lineage has numerous dominant genes and gene combinations that increase the probability of producing offspring with compatible genetic aptitudes."

Ves crossed his arms. "That may be true, but as far as I know it doesn't improve the probability of obtaining higher grades of genetic aptitudes. If our daughter is born with an E-grade genetic aptitude, then that is practically no different from being born with no good genetic aptitude."

In fact, in various scientific documents, a norm who lacked the right genetic aptitude received an F-grade.

"Don't mention that, Ves! It's bad luck. Our second baby will grow up to become a talented mech pilot! I will pray to your mother and hope she can shower our next

daughter with a blessing that will guarantee that she has all of the requirements needed to become a talented mech pilot!"

Ves rolled his eyes. He was pretty sure that not even the best research teams of the MTA managed to develop a solution that could improve any potentate's genetic aptitude.

If this was already the case, then word of it would have leaked long ago and the MTA would be stuffed with an endless amount of A-grade mech pilots!

Of course, there was also the possibility that the MTA had indeed developed a working solution, but was so expensive and impractical that only a select group of elites could take advantage of it. Such an extravagant benefit was far beyond the reach of the Larkinson Clan.

Ves shrugged. "We can't do much to influence the genetic aptitude of our upcoming daughter, so let's put that matter aside. We just have to hope for the best and prepare for the worst. This is also the main problem I have with the formula that you have chosen. Compared to the ones that I have studied earlier, the one you have set your sights upon provides the best possible boosts to mech pilots, but comes at the cost of forgoing non-mech pilot related enhancements."

The alternate formulas were a bit more universal in purpose. They might not create designer babies that were so abundantly strong if they grew into mech pilots one day, but the increase in intellect and learning ability meant that a child without the right genetic aptitude could easily excel in any other career.

"We don't need to consider those options. Those are merely compromises that attempt to hedge for failure." Gloriana said in a disapproving tone. "We don't need any safety nets for our next child. I already told you that our second daughter is guaranteed to become a talented mech pilot with the help of your mother's blessing. She will want her granddaughter to become a powerful pilot the most!"

Ves wanted to vomit after he heard that. He distinctly remembered his mother telling him that she secretly messed up his genetic aptitude when he was in her belly so that he would not risk his life in battle.

Now that he had grown older and become a parent himself, he actually understood why Cynthia Larkinson pursued such a drastic procedure.

She was in a dying state and did not have long to live at the time. There was no time for her to raise multiple children. If Ves was to be her only flesh-and-blood offspring, then a concerned mother would be a bit hesitant about seeing her son participate in one of the bloodbaths of the Bright-Vesia Wars!

The Larkinsons always took pride in serving in the Bright Corps and fighting on the frontlines in the many conflicts against the Vesia Kingdom. Yet what did this have to do with a foreigner who looked down on banal territorial rivalries?

Cynthia would definitely find it unbearable to see her only son die on behalf of a worthless cause!

She would rather make sure that her son would never have the chance to pilot mechs in his life so that he could safely stay in the rear and have a much higher chance of staying alive in the event of war!

Whether her loving gesture was misguided or not, Ves did not have to make the same choice.

He and his wife already agreed to have six kids so it was not as devastating if one of them died. They would still have 83.3 percent of their offspring left!

Therefore, Ves would not prevent his second daughter from entering the battlefield if she became a mech pilot.

Compared to other warriors, he would make sure that his girl would receive the best possible advantages!

He and his wife could design a custom training mech that performed a lot better than the Chiron.

He and his wife could also design dedicated custom mechs that integrated the highest possible pilot defenses that they could obtain.

He could group her up with the best mech cadets so that she could groom them into becoming her dedicated bodyguard units.

He could ensure she received plenty of tutoring from every useful expert pilot in the clan.

He could make use of any successful research applications from the T Institute to guarantee her advancement to expert pilot.

A father would do anything to help her daughter survive!

As Ves studied the details of Formula K-356666-EKT once again, he figured that it was indeed a bargain at its current price level.

The premise was that his second daughter developed the right genetic aptitude. If not, then this formula was not nearly as cost-effective as most of her combat enhancements would be wasted!

He did not feel comfortable with making such a high-stakes gamble for his child, but Gloriana was right. The other formulas were too half-hearted. If their next baby entered the battlefield as a mech pilot one day, then those weaker combat enhancements might fail her one day!

As Ves tried to make up his mind, he suddenly lit up. There was another splendid future that her daughter could pursue if she was unwilling or unable to become a mech pilot!

"Let's say our daughter isn't lucky enough to develop the right genetic aptitude."

"That will never happen!"

"This is just a hypothetical scenario!" Ves exasperatingly argued. "Just imagine a future where our daughter simply doesn't have the right talent. While she can choose to become a mech designer or any other profession, that would ultimately waste much of her combat enhancements. Since this is the case, why not hand her over to Ketis so that she can personally raise our little tigress into a swordswoman?"

For a moment, Gloriana looked disgusted. "The Swordmaidens are too uncouth! I will not allow any of my daughters to embrace their crude and savage culture!"

"I am not suggesting that we throw our daughter to the Swordmaidens. Just Ketis is enough to provide all of the personal instruction needed to raise a qualified swordswoman. If that is not enough, then there's thousands of Heavensworders who are much more refined than the Swordmaidens. Once our daughter inherits their swordsmanship tradition, maybe our family will be lucky enough to welcome a swordmaster of our own one day!"

His wife calmed down a bit as she considered this possibility. "Swordmasters are obscure for a reason, Ves. They are an anachronism in human history. Maybe they were useful in the past, but nowadays an ordinary mech possesses enough firepower to tear a swordmaster apart."

"Then we just have to make sure our daughter isn't stupid enough to put herself in front of a hostile mech." Ves retorted. "Besides, with stronger combat training, our child will have a much higher chance of keeping herself alive during a crisis than if she chose a different pursuit."

"You have a point, Ves..."

Both of them agreed that they would give their daughter the option to become a swordmaster if she wasn't able to become a mech pilot.

Naturally, Ves insisted that their child should always have the final say in matters. No matter what she chose, Ves was determined to support her all the way.

Becoming a swordmaster did not sound bad to him. Sure, they were weak and unable to take part in massive space battles between mechs and warships, but they could still play a role in smaller engagements.

If his daughter truly wanted to become just as strong as Ketis, then Ves would do his best to gather the best materials and develop the strongest pieces of equipment.

He was even willing to remodel his Unending Regalia so that his daughter could inherit it and benefit from all of its potent properties!

Once Ves and Gloriana made their choice, they started to make the first arrangements. They scheduled a consultation meeting with Witshaw & Yeneca and notified Director Ranya that she should get ready to cultivate another designer baby fetus in the near future.

Gloriana smiled. "The timing is good. Venerable Joshua and Ketis are also about to grow their designer baby in the near future. Once they both show that they have the talent to become mech pilots, they can train together and back each other up on the battlefield! It will be perfect!"

From the eager glint in her eyes, Ves guessed that she had a lot more in mind than providing their daughter with a strong battlefield companion...