Mech 3751

Chapter 3751 - Limitations of Mounted Wargear

"Biotechnology… has its strengths."

Although most humans considered biotechnology to be unnatural and a deviation from humanity's technological progression, Ves did not quibble too much about what was right or what was wrong.

Whether it was luminar crystal technology or spiritual engineering, Ves only judged their value by how much strength and benefits they brought to him. He treated biotechnology in the same manner.

The color of the cat didn't matter as long as it caught mice.

As for other concerns such as how they distorted human society or how much destruction they could bring, what did it matter to him? He was just a mech designer, not a galactic mech councilor who bore the weight of human civilization on his shoulders.

Though most ordinary humans possessed a bias against biotechnology due to how icky it appeared, Ves has spent enough time in the Life Research Association to be able to move past this instinctive response.

Although the Titan-3 Project did not exactly look bright and innocent, it was a powerful piece of equipment that could definitely elevate the Everchanger's combat capabilities to a new height!

"Leaving aside the meat suit's only 'ranged' attack method, it is a great war weapon, and one that can definitely play a useful role in the right circumstances."

Dr. Perris proudly smiled. "Thank you, sir. Our team and I have worked hard to make it worthy of the Everchanger. That said, we need to know whether you are willing to include this additional biological weapon system in the Titan-3 Project. The complexity and additional bioprogramming involved will set back the completion of the project by at least a couple of weeks."

This was a difficult question for Ves to answer. He wanted the Titan-3 Project to conclude as soon as possible so that his clan would be ready to tackle any unforeseen challenges.

However, he was also tempted by the choice to add an extra trump to the meat suit. The simulation battle left a profound impression on him. Even though the meat suit had to cannibalize its own biomass in order to generate all of those miniature flesh missiles, the amount of damage and disruption they could inflict was too great for him to ignore!

His eyes sharpened. "Are you sure this bioweapon system will not violate the MTA's sensibilities?"

The female biomech designer nodded. "This solution is not as terrible as you think. The autonomous flesh missiles cannot be formed out of nothing. While the meat suit comes with a reserve of excess biomass, it cannot afford to lose too much muscle mass, so it can only generate a limited amount of bioprojectiles before it has to stop. The only reason why we believe this weapon system is a good choice for the Titan-3 Project is because of the potential synergies it might form if Venerable Joshua resonates with the meat suit. The strength and potentially the growth potential of these bioprojectiles will likely receive a substantial boost if they are empowered by his strength."

This was an interesting possibility! Given how Venerable Joshua was able to resonate with the Titania's flesh, it was easy to infer that he might be able to give this unorthodox attack method a powerful boost that qualitatively boosted their effectiveness.

His body shook. Ves could hardly imagine how devastating Venerable Joshua might become if his life domain fully resonated with the meat suit with all of its biological capabilities!

He made a decision.

"You can add this additional weapon to the Titan-3 Project." He told her. "I can't say no to obtaining another trump card. We'll have to keep this weapon system under wraps until we truly need to make use of it, though. How long will it take to complete this project with this addition?"

"We can finish it and produce the meat suit in two months if we are not delayed. If there are any setbacks, it might take up to three months before the Everchanger can make use of this powerful wargear. We will need your assistance in order to impart your design philosophy to it and help us increase its integration with the Everchanger."

Ves nodded in understanding. "Our current design round will soon come to an end, so I have plenty of spare time to contribute to projects like these. Just take into account that I have more priorities on my plate than the Titan-3 Project. I also need to spend time on contributing to the artillery mounted wargear loadout. If the meat suit is our best close-ranged ship killer, then the artillery loadout that is also under development will be our long-ranged ship killer!"

Unlike the meat suit, the artillery loadout was based on conventional technology. It was much simpler in construction compared to the Titan-3 Project because it didn't need to perform so many different functions.

The artillery loadout, otherwise known as the Megagunner Project, was nothing more than a giant mounted module that was stuffed with heavy guns and enough armor to help the Everchanger withstand more incoming firepower.

Since it wasn't meant to fight in melee battles, its mobility characteristics were abysmal. This not only made it easier to maximize its firepower, but also saved Ves and the design teams working on it a lot of work.

The only challenging aspect was making it resonate with Venerable Joshua. No one in the Larkinson Clan could make that happen since none of them were able to design expert mechs independently.

Fortunately, Ves had already asked Professor Benedict to lend a hand to fulfill this requirement during his last visit to the Cyclical Engine.

Once the Larkinson Clan completed the Titan-3 Project and the Megagunner Project, Ves could easily foresee Venerable Joshua exerting almost as much power as Patriarch Reginald Cross on the battlefield!

The former might be weaker than the latter, but if Venerable Joshua obtained a lot more powerful gear, he could easily close the gap as long as the Cross Patriarch had yet to receive his Mars Project!

Of course, Ves didn't think a trick such as mounted wargear could compete against a ludicrously powerful quasi-first-class expert mech.

There were downsides to mounted wargear. Blindly making them as large as possible had detrimental effects on an expert pilot's ability to resonate with the enlarged mech frame.

Although few people ever thought about it, an expert pilot's willpower only extended past a certain distance.

They were still humans, after all. Their ability to extend their power into giant war machines had a limit. If this wasn't the case, who could stop them from resonating with 10 kilometer-long juggernauts? The idea was preposterous!

Expert pilots usually possessed optimal ranges where they could exert their strength to full effect. This made sense considering that certain people thought of them as proto-ace pilots. Their domain fields were still rudimentary and their ranges were much more limited.

It was no problem for them to extend their full power into the frame of a typical expert mech, but once their size surpassed that of a heavy mech, it became a lot harder for expert pilots to exert their strength at full efficiency!

All of this created a lot of implications, but the most important one to take note of was that the additional power bestowed by mounted wargear had to be offset by the drop in efficiency of true resonance.

The direct consequences of this was that the Everchanger gained substantial advantages when fighting against conventional opponents, but became a lot less efficient when fighting against expert mechs!

For this reason, it was not always the best choice to mount these heavy but unwieldy pieces of wargear onto the Everchanger.

Since loadouts such as the meat suit added a huge amount of bulk to the Everchanger, it effectively turned into a superheavy mech with all of the downsides that were associated with this weight class!

The meat suit might be powerful enough for Venerable Joshua to crush hordes of regular mechs, but against a competent expert mech such as the First Sword, it could easily be outmaneuvered!

Just like how a light mech could easily dismantle a heavy artillery mech up close, an expert melee mech could make mince meat out of the slow and sluggish meat suit!

The only way for the Everchanger to stand a fighting chance against a powerful melee mech was to purge the meat suit and answer the challenge in its base form.

Ves and Dr. Perris were well aware of the pros and cons of mounted wargear.

They understood that solutions such as the Titan-3 Project and the Megagunner Project were primarily targeted towards alien warships and massive concentrations of enemy mech forces.

The two mech designers proceeded to discuss the specifics of what they needed to do in the coming weeks in order to complete the meat suit design.

Once they were finished, Ves finally recalled the original reason why he had come to the Dragon's Den.

"I need your help on another project." He told her. "I am working on a small side project where I have encountered a wall. I can't make further progress if I rely on my existing solutions, but I believe that resorting to biotechnology will help me overcome this obstacle."

Dr. Perris grew curious what caused the patriarch to this point. "Please explain."

He briefly presented his living coin press project and explained the need to create a production process that could autonomously produce living coins according to his design.

What he learned about the Titan-3 Project gave him greater confidence that biotechnology could provide him with the solution that he was looking for. If the Titania's

biomatter reacted so well to Venerable Joshua, then it should react well to his design philosophy as well!

After all, Ves and Joshua's life domains were closely related to each other.

Dr. Perris paused for a minute as she took in the explanation. She silently skimmed through the documents that he had sent to her comm.

Since Ves needed her help, he freely passed on his research notes and documentation.

The woman eventually smiled. "You are not the first person who developed the desire to produce coins through growth. The biotech sector has already come up with an efficient solution that we can adapt to our specific needs. Let me show you an example."

She used her comm to project what appeared to be a fruit tree.

Different from a regular tree, the 'fruits' growing from its branches were translucent orbs that clearly showed the coins growing inside their center!

"This… is a money tree."

"...Are you serious?"

It looked like a gimmick rather than a serious production method to Ves!

"I am aware of what you are thinking." Dr. Perris said. "Biomechs are grown in a different way, but that is because they are too large and heavy to be grown from trees. Coins are considerably smaller, so we do not have to resort to a cumbersome means of production. Rather than relying on nutrient pools or production wombs, we can simply formulate a tree that can grow the coins like fruit seeds. Although the growth process is slower, the consistency in output and the ease in production is unparalleled. Once we have planted the money trees in a friendly environment, we only need to feed their roots with nutrients and raw materials in order to grow coins on a continuous basis."

Once Ves got over the joke-like nature of money trees, he realized that it was an effective solution!

The coins were grown by a genuine living organism. Even though growth them like fruits was not the same as giving 'birth' to them, Ves believed that the differences shouldn't matter too much.

Depending on the size of the trees, they could grow a large quantity of coins at a time, thereby fulfilling the criteria for mass production!

"How hard is it to grow multiple money trees?" Ves asked.

"It should not be an insurmountable challenge." Dr. Perris replied. "The main difficulty lies in designing the trees. Their bioprogramming along with their material composition needs to be exactly right. Once we have found the right configuration, we should easily be able to grow the trees, though that introduces its own problems."

"How so?" Ves curiously asked.

"Without additional protective measures, outsiders may be able to grow the trees as well, thereby risking our exclusivity. We will need to put in extra effort to ensure the money trees will only be able to grow our coins when it remains in our hands."

"I see."

Chapter 3752 - Golden Fruit Project

Money trees weren't all that complicated. Ever since humanity first expanded its biotech capabilities, there were people who wanted to realize their fantasies of growing money on trees.

There was no logical reason why coins should be produced in such a convoluted manner.

Modern coin minting machines were much more precise and consistent in their output!

Nonetheless, humans were creatures of emotions. There were enough wealthy individuals throughout history who were willing to splurge a substantial proportion of their net worth to obtain their own money trees!

It was through the efforts of all of these rich profligates that the science and bioengineering of money trees reached a high degree of development.

Even though they were only used as prestige objects that their owners could show off to their guests, the money trees had become remarkably more efficient after generations of development.

They had turned into one of the favored objects of the nouveau riche looking to flaunt their prosperity!

It did not matter that buying the trees and making them grow coins wasted far more energy and resources than what they could yield through production.

All that mattered was their symbolism and how much they enhanced the image of their owners.

As Ves and Dr. Perris sat down behind a large desk terminal, the latter accessed a public database where they could license a huge number of gene templates of money trees.

"We can tackle this project in two different ways." The biotech expert said. "The more convenient solution is to license an existing gene template and alter their bioprogram so that they can grow the coins you require. Since everything is already in place, it takes a minimal amount of time and effort to complete this job. I do not know how that ties in with your design philosophy, but even if you need to put more work in the project, we can probably grow a small tree in a matter of days."

"What is the second option, then?" Ves asked.

"If you want to make a more serious effort, then I suggest that we license a gene template and buy a few textbooks. As long as we study these materials, we can design our own money tree based on the existing template. Although it is not as good as designing a money tree from scratch, we can apply any changes we need to help it perform the functions that you require. The amount of changes you need to make will determine how much time it takes to design the money tree and grow it into a usable state. It will take at least a week by my reckoning."

"Hmmm." Ves rubbed his smooth-shaven chin. "That's not as fast as I hope, but it will be worth it if it actually works."

For the sake of creating a viable method of producing living totems without his active intervention, Ves was willing to bear the additional time and effort!

"I have a suggestion." Dr. Perris spoke on her own initiative. "It is a risky move that will introduce new complexities to this project, but I believe it will make the end product more likely to succeed where your previous coin presses have failed."

"Please explain."

"One of the reasons why we have decided to make the meat suit out of the Titania's dead flesh is because it responds well to your methods. Rather than designing the money tree around plant cells that have fixed cell walls like ordinary trees, we can shape a money tree around the same principal material used in the Titan-3 Project."

Ves furrowed his brows. "Are you saying… you want to make a flesh tree?"

He shuddered yet again. Even if he had seen a few flesh or two back in the Life Research Association, he still couldn't get used to their sight!

"Will that even work?"

Dr. Perris nodded. "The Titania's flesh consists of cells that are similar to that of other animal organisms, but they are much stronger and more rigid than usual. They can easily be shaped into trees as long as we add enough bones as supporting structures. The resulting money tree will actually have more in common with an exobeast than a woody tree from a physiological perspective, but its behavior pattern will conform much closer to plant life."

In other words, the 'money tree' would not be a tree at all. Instead, it became a tree-shaped designer beast!

The differences between this abomination and a regular exobeast was that the latter was immobile, did not ingest food like a normal animal and was not as cute as a cat.

The mere thought of planting a Titania money tree in a garden made him feel a bit squeamish. Would such a 'creature' truly remain harmless? What if it morphed into an actual monster?

Yet… the extraordinary qualities of its flesh could not be denied. Ves had observed mountains of it in frozen form earlier in the day and he had discovered that they were compatible with some of his unique methods.

He just realized that the Titania's biomass was one of the best raw materials for combining biotechnology with spiritual engineering!

Let alone the meat suit and the money tree, Ves could develop all kinds of fantastic applications from this material that possessed powerful properties!

He even developed a growing desire to design a complete biomech with this material. Only his lack of knowledge and foundation in biomech design hindered him from going any further with this idea.

He glanced at the young biomech designer that he had picked up from the LRA.

If Dr. Perris advanced to Journeyman, he would seriously entertain the idea of collaborating with her to design a revolutionary biomech.

She wasn't at that point yet, though. Ves did not think it was worthwhile to collaborate with Apprentice Mech Designer.

"Have you made a decision, sir?"

"Ah. Yes. Let's proceed with your latest suggestion. I think we stand the best chance of fulfilling our goal if we leverage the special properties of the Titania's biomatter to our advantage. Even if the resulting flesh tree looks weirder than normal, as long as it grows the right coins, there's no need to quibble over its appearance."

Once Ves made up his mind, he began to work together with Dr. Perris to complete the first steps of the Golden Fruit Project.

They licensed the gene template of a money tree that was made with similar hardy flesh tissue to use as an example.

Dr. Perris also bought a lot of reading material that could help her master the necessary skills and theories to develop a working flesh tree.

"I will need to study all of these books and articles before I can seriously tackle this project." She told him. "Given that I have other obligations, I will not be able to complete my studies in a short amount of time."

"I understand. I'll leave you to your work and studies. Once you are ready to work on the Titan-3 Project or the Golden Fruit Project, give me a call. If I am not engaged in pressing work, I will be able to collaborate with you remotely."

Ves committed to a lot of additional work, but he felt it was worth it. At worst, he would just delay the start of the next design round for a couple of weeks.

After discussing the details of their cooperation, Ves finally left the Scarlet Garden with a lot of optimism.

He slowly forgot about the potential of biotechnology before his meeting with Dr. Perris. The discussions he held with her reminded him of all of the products he could develop that weren't possible by relying on conventional means.

There was no way of replicating the Titania money tree by relying on alloys and AI programming!

Such artificial trees lacked the fundamental qualities that enabled them to produce coins by growing them in an organic manner.

If the Golden Fruit Project worked the way he envisioned, then that opened up a lot of new doors for Ves. No longer would have to produce his totems manually when he could work with Dr. Perris to design all kinds of fleshy trees that could grow many different products.

From statuettes to firearms, there were many different ways to take advantage of this new 'production method'!

Unfortunately, it was a bit too unrealistic to develop a massive flesh tree that was capable of growing mech parts.

Such a tree would not only demand a huge amount of energy and nutrients, but also wouldn't be able to grow components that were always within tolerance. The variable

nature of grown products made it virtually impossible for all of the parts produced in this manner to fit together like a seamless puzzle!

This was also why biomechs were grown as a whole rather than through assembling multiple smaller parts. Only by starting out in a relatively complete form would all of its parts and systems remain compatible while the biomech slowly grew into a mature form.

Ves put the matter aside. There were no active biomech units in the roster and there was no pressing need to add them to the current lineup.

"I should get back to my regular duties."

He just recalled that a bunch of his fellow Journeymen had recently a couple of ordinary mech design projects!

Not only that, but the other projects that were still in progress would soon reach completion in a week!

Given all of the new mech models that would soon become a part of the Larkinson Army's active lineup, he gave his fellow mech designers enough time to complete all of their outstanding work.

Once everyone was done with their remaining projects, Ves intended to hold a grand meeting so that they could survey all of the results and reflect on the completed design round.

"We're about to gain so many new mech designs that we don't even know what to do with them. There's not enough mech capacity in our fleet!"

Despite this condition, he was incredibly happy to obtain a lot of new mech models at once. The various mech legions could slowly replace their older and more redundant mechs with ones based on the newer models over time.

Once the Larkinson Clan was able to add a few more combat carriers to its fleet, enough room would open up to field the new models such as the deceptive Stingripper light harasser mech or the solid Rigid Wall defensive space knight.

"Ketis will also be ready to present her Monster Slayer model soon." Ves smiled.

The Monster Slayer was more special than the others because it was designed for the mech market from the beginning!

Although the Larkinson Clan earned a generous amount of money from selling the plunder taken from the previous battle, this was not a reliable way to pay the bills.

Publishing a new commercial mech design was the more sustainable way to earn money at this scale.

The Monster Slayer would become the first of many mech models that integrated the LMC into the Red Ocean's expansive mech market!

"I hope it will live up to the promises that Ketis has made."

The swordsman mech design was important for multiple reasons. As long as the Monster Slayer caught on in the mech market, the large and fairly powerful Wild Fighter Association would definitely seek further opportunities to cooperate with the Larkinson Clan!

"In fact, our successful business dealings with the Wild Fighter Association might inspire other powerful companies to cooperate with our Design Department!"

There were many powerful Seniors and Masters that could design more powerful mechs in the Red Ocean. The specifications of their mech designs were substantially higher, which made it difficult for Ves' work to compete against them on this basis.

However, he and Ketis possessed unique design philosophies and other advantages that allowed them to fulfill different needs.

If Ves wanted to make his mark in the Red Ocean's mech market, then he had to seek out these opportunities and spread his products further in this dwarf galaxy!

Chapter 3753 - Blue Supergiant

A week went by as the Golden Skull Alliance neared its destination.

Only a few days were left until they reached the Garimel Sytem where the Larkinson Clan intended to perform its mining mission.

Garimel was an odd star system in the Krakatoa Middle Zone. It centered around a blue supergiant star that was incredibly large and burned hotter than many other stars.

Just like how flames turned from orange to blue if they became hotter, stars behaved in a similar fashion. The light energy emitted from blue stars contained more energy and were therefore compressed in smaller waves.

White stars were even hotter than blue stars!

Ves did not dare to bring his fleet into a star system centered around a white dwarf star. Even the blue supergiant that sat in the center of the Garimel system posed a lot of danger due to how much heat and radiation it emitted.

Blue supergiants were usually seen as the more violent and self-destructing cousins in the star family.

They tended to burn bright but short and went out with a bang when they reached the end of their lifespans.

The big stars could potentially go supernova and flood any neighboring star systems with a destructive wave of energy and star matter!

After that, whatever was left in the middle would converge into an increasingly more dense point until all of the compressed matter created a new black hole!

Suffice to say, it was not enjoyable to live inside a blue supergiant star system. Fortunately, they were fairly rare because they only lived around a couple of dozen million years on average before they could no longer sustain their forms.

While there weren't many humans or aliens that liked to live so close to a blue supergiant, they had interesting properties that made them a lot more worthy of consideration!

Blue supergiants were known as the heavy metal factories of the cosmos. More heavy metals formed through the compression of matter than in many other stars!

Not only that, the extreme heat and other energies generated by these hot stars also affected the formation of these metals, giving birth to large quantities of exotics that possessed additional properties that weren't fully understood!

Although it was extremely unlikely that any of these heavy metals would become available before a blue supergiant went supernova, the more violent and unstables ones tended to 'fart' a few of the heavy metals out every once in a while.

The stellar winds produced by blue supergiants such as Garimel were one of the most popular sources of harvesting a semi-continuous stream of new exotics.

Right now, the MTA only had a vague idea on how much heavy metals Garimel ejected from its body in the form of stellar winds.

The MTA was also unclear about the exact metals and exotic variations the blue supergiant produced.

Long-ranged sensors that could infer the properties of star systems from many light-years away didn't work correctly for the Garimel System due to interfering factors. Not only was it located in a fairly dense nebula, it also released a lot of radiation that crowded out other signals.

The only way to understand what was going on in the star system was for a ship to visit it in person.

Although the MTA possessed a lot of survey ships that could learn everything it wanted to know about the Garimel System, the mechers didn't have the hulls to spare at the moment.

The vast majority of survey ships fielded by the Big Two were tasked with scouting territories claimed by intact alien star nations!

Discovering strategic enemy infrastructure and scouting the way ahead of a future offensive were much more crucial missions than surveying humanity's new backyard.

The Big Two simply didn't bother with surveying the massive amount of star systems inside the territories taken from their former alien owners.

It was better to leave this thankless job to pioneers who were often willing to do anything for MTA merits.

Now, Ves and his fleet had accepted a number missions that essentially amounted to surveying the star system and mining a lot of heavy metal exotics to figure out what was available in Garimel.

In fact, Ves didn't think it was strictly necessary to bother with all of that work because the Simile Halifax could do this job at least ten times better!

"Jovy shouldn't be petty enough to take away my merits." He hoped.

From what he had read in the mission briefing, the reason why the MTA wanted to send pioneers to the Garimel System was because its long-ranged sensors captured anomalous signals from this location.

The mechers weren't forthcoming about what they meant by 'anomalous signals', but they did not assign a high danger factor to the missions centered around the Garimel System, so it was probably fine.

Before the expeditionary fleet was ready to explore the novelties that this blue supergiant system had to offer, Ves and his fellow Journeymen were finally ready to embrace the fruits of their labor and evaluate the final batch of mechs designs of the current design project!

Ves eagerly stepped inside Gloriana's workshop where a row of brand-new mechs were standing in a column.

Each of the mechs were based on recently-completed designs!

From the much-awaited Monster Slayer to the more utilitarian Sliver Project, the new mechs were all characterized by their living qualities and their diverse roles.

The other mech designers had already arrived beforehand.

Gloriana talked with the rest of the old gang about the work that they had completed. Both Juliet and Ketis were inordinately proud for delivering a number of solo designs to the Larkinson Clan.

Sara and Dulo Voiken stood before a lancer mech designed by the latter. The machine in question was substantially different from anything else the male spearman mech specialized had designed in his life!

Janassa Pellier and Tifi Coslone were maintaining a lower profile as they stood in front of a new axeman mech.

Aurelia was present as well, of course. She sat next to her mother while playing with Lucky and Clixie.

"Hihihihi!"

"Meow!"

"Miaow~"

"Papa!"

Aurelia quickly detected her father's presence as he approached. Ves smiled and picked the baby up and kissed her cheek.

"I see you're having fun today. Are you interested in surveying our new mechs with us, Aurelia?"

"Mech…"

"Yes, mechs. These are all examples of the machines that will be used to defend our fleet and our lives one day."

Ves interacted with his daughter for a minute before he set her down again. As much as he would like to teach his little girl more about the wonders of mechs, she was too young to understand most of what he said.

It was also rude to ignore his peers. The other Journeymen of the Design Department had all ceased their prior talks in order to converge in a group.

"Alright, ladies and gentlemen, it's time to start. First, let me say that I am both proud and happy to see that you have all succeeded in the projects that you have led. Whether you worked on them by yourself or with the contribution of others, I can tell at first glance that each of your works will find a place in the Larkinson Clan."

He directed his words towards the four Journeymen that had only joined the Larkinson Clan a few months ago. They not only integrated well in the Larkinson Clan, but also showed enough competence and initiative to complete their respective design projects without any disruption or complications.

Ves turned directly to the four newcomers.

"Before we started on this project, I told you that our clan is still reserving our judgment on your place in the Design Department. That is no longer the case. We have all tracked your progress and paid attention to both your conduct and your results. We have found nothing that suggests that you have been slacking off or engaged in any improper actions. There is no reason for me to leave you hanging, so I am ready to give my stamp of approval to your entry into our ranks. From now on, you are all officially our lead designers!"

The foursome all reacted positively to this news! Naturally, they did not have a lot of concerns about their job security. Even Dulo Voiken, the most lackluster Journeyman among them, had performed more than adequately during his time in the Design Department.

"This is no reason to take it easy, though." Ves warned them all. "Lead designers occupy a high position in our clan because every member is dependent on what we do. You passed our tests because you are more skilled, talented, knowledgeable and capable than many other Journeymen in your generation. If you slide back in the coming months and years, then I might remove you from your position. I expect each of you to progress your design philosophies so that you can keep up with the growth of the rest of us. We may be Journeymen for now, but in a century I hope that each of us are Masters or at least close to realizing our respective design philosophies. Do you understand?"

"Yes, sir!"

This was a bold aspiration! There was hardly anyone among the eight Journeymen who believed that half of them could advance to Master Mech Designer within a century. The difficulty was simply too great for everyone to succeed despite the talents that they had shown at this point!

After he confirmed the newcomers were here to stay, he moved on to the main reason why he gathered everyone in this workshop.

"Our Design Department has completed numerous different mech design projects after our Minerva has debuted. Today, I want their respective designers to introduce the final versions of each of them so that we all know what we have gained. Juliet, let's start with you. There are two mostly solo projects under your name. Which one do you want to introduce first?"

Juliet Stameros did not look fazed when Ves gave her the honor of introducing her recent mech designs first.

She turned around and led the group over the closest mech of her design.

"Let us start with the Sliver Project designed by myself with help from the patriarch. As you can see, it is a reconnaissance-oriented light mech that I have designed for the Flagrant Vandals. Since the mech legion can already count on the Ferocious Piranha and the new Stingripper models to defeat their foes, I focused on designing a scout mech that offers superior sensor and scanning capabilities. It is not explicitly designed as a combat mech and only possesses weak self-defense measures."

Its ability to fight back against a serious combat mech was pathetic. By default, it was equipped with a lightweight combination of knife and pistol.

The virtues of this loadout was that it was light and compact!

While these weapons were enough for the Sliver Project to eliminate shuttles and lightly-fortified infantry positions, there was no way for it exert pressure onto enemy mechs!

Everyone in the workshop was able to recognize this weakness, but none of them said anything about it. The Sliver Project was essentially an auxiliary mech model that existed due to its utility.

As long as it was able to perform its intended role well, who cared about its combat parameters?

"I don't believe I need to elaborate on its low attack and defense properties." Juliet stated. "What is truly interesting about the Sliver Project is its vastly superior straight-line acceleration capabilities and its expansive sensor suite. The former allows the scout mech to get in position quickly and escape enemy pursuit when detected. The latter is essential to feeding us the data that we must know to understand what is up ahead."

Ves smiled. "This mech is completed just in time given the missions that we are about to perform."

Juliet smiled back. "I believe the Sliver Project will play a highly useful role in our upcoming destination. The Garimel System is awash with radiation and interference, so many our sensors will not be able to gather precise data at further distances. Having a

dedicated scout mech such as the Sliver Project at hand will allow us to explore the Garimel System Properly."

A good scout mech was always essential to exploring new locations!

Chapter 3754 - Samasel Orb

The Larkinson Clan had managed to accumulate a decent collection of exclusive mech designs.

Each of them were powerful and conveyed distinct advantages on the battlefield.

The Bright Warrior was a versatile modular mech platform that could be adapted to a variety of roles.

The Ferocious Piranha could exert pressure on enemy mech pilots and paralyze weaker alien minds.

The Transcendent Punisher was able to bombard enemy weak points with uncanny accuracy.

The Valkyrie Redeemer was backed by the most powerful design spirit.

These four mech models formed the core of the Larkinson Army's mech roster for several years.

Despite their age and despite conforming the standards of the galactic rim, they acquitted themselves well so far. Although there were pioneering organizations that fielded mechs with superior performance characteristics, the Larkinson Clan could still rely on its various trump cards to close the gap.

However, this was not a sustainable method to achieve continuous victories. The foundation of a mech force was the strength and performance of its mechs.

The older Larkinson mech models had already fallen behind as soon as the expeditionary entered the Red Ocean, and this disparity would only grow worse over time.

The only way to keep up with the times was to design newer and better mechs. The mechs standing in the middle of Gloriana's workshop all represented the future of the Larkinson Clan!

Each of the new mechs bestowed new capabilities to their users. Aside from the expected combat-oriented mech models, the new lineup also contained a few auxiliary mech models.

The latter products were crucially important despite their low combat power.

The Larkinsons already possessed a lot of combat mech models and would gain a few more after this day. The issue was that many of the additions such as the new lancer mech and the new axeman mech were lacking in a single major area.

The combat mechs were all lacking in utility.

Although utility alone could never help a mech force win a battle by itself, they could substantially improve the performance of a mech force by providing additional conveniences.

Ves hadn't encountered a lot of opponents that made prominent use of auxiliary mechs, but they were particularly prominent in military organizations that possessed the necessary scale and organization to make good use of them. Auxiliary mechs were also more relevant in larger campaigns and battlefields where factors outside of direct combat power played a greater role.

Given that the Larkinsons were about to enter a complicated star system dominated by a blue supergiant star, the ordinary sensors equipped by their combat mechs no longer cut it! Their sensor suites were not designed to cope in the extremely radiation-rich space of the Garimel System.

This was why Ves was keen to add the completed Sliver Project to the Larkinson Army's mech roster. By forgoing offensive and defensive capabilities, the mech was able to carry a large amount of sensor systems that were each attuned to detect different signals and phenomena.

A scout mech like this was useful in many complex environments, not just the Garimel System!

"The Flagrant Vandals will be even happier than before." Ves smiled as he anticipated the reaction of Legion Commander Abis Firelight and his rambunctious band of former Brighter servicemen. "Our light mech-oriented mech legion will finally be able to complete its trifecta of core mech models now. With the addition of a scout mech, the Vandals will finally be able to perform its scouting functions properly."

Technically speaking, any light mech model could be used for scouting purposes. Their high mobility and low mass made them suitable for exploring new terrain and keeping an eye on enemy positions.

The Larkinsons heavily relied on the Ferocious Piranha to perform essential scouting missions for the clan.

However, the Ferocious Piranha was not optimized for scouting at all. Its explicit focus on mech combat left little room for sensor systems, which meant that they could only function as half-hearted scout mechs at best.

The emergence of the Sliver Project neatly resolved this suboptimal situation and provided the Larkinsons with true scouting capabilities.

Juliet briefly summarized the advantages of her work.

"The Sliver Project is not agile as the Ferocious Piranha, but it doesn't have to be. As long as my scout mech isn't caught in a dogfight, it does not matter how poorly it is able to outmaneuver enemy mechs. By relying on its special flight system, it can rely on its formidable straight-line acceleration power to outrun any pursuers."

Of course, the Sliver Project's lack of agility was only relative to other light mechs. It was still considerably more maneuverable than most melee mechs. This allowed the scout mech to evade long-ranged attacks with greater efficiency.

"How good are its detection capabilities?" Janassa Pellier asked.

As a mech designer who specialized in enhancing the physical power of lighter combat mechs, she was quite intrigued by the Sliver Project. Even though its current configuration left no room for combat enhancements, that might change in the future.

With the help of her specialty, she could easily apply a few solutions that could substantially improve the melee combat power of this harmless-looking mech!

Juliet activated her comm and projected a diagram showing the many sensor modules integrated into the Sliver Project's mech frame.

"As you should already know, ordinary mechs only carry composite sensor suites. Mechs such as the Bright Warrior and the Valkyrie Redeemer only rely on one or two primary sensor modules to observe the battlefield and track different units. The benefit of using them is that they can capture many different sensor readings while taking up less capacity than usual. The downside of relying on them is that they cannot do any single job well. The Sliver Project is different from our other mech models. It is the only one in our lineup that carries enhanced and standalone versions of numerous different sensor systems."

The diagram that depicted Sliver Project's design lit up at many different points. Each of them represented different specialized sensor components.

One was dedicated to observing visible light. Another specialized in detecting heat. A third one was highly attuned to gravitic fluctuations. A fourth one solely paid attention to dimensional fluctuations.

The latter one was particularly important to the Larkinson Clan!

Juliet pointed towards the module in question. "This has become an essential sensor system in the Red Ocean. In the old galaxy, warp drives are still nonexistent, so many mech forces do not have to be concerned about getting ambushed by mechs or warships sneaking up on them in warp. Our situation is different. Red Ocean is rife with alien warships that are all equipped with native warp drives. We may have been lucky when we fought against the pakklaton refugee fleet, but we cannot count on this to happen again. If we are confronted by fully-functional alien warships, then the chances are great that our adversaries will use their warp drives to attack us while we are unprepared. The Sliver Project can help keep us safe by providing us with greater advance warning than before."

With a specialized sensor suite that was more precisely tuned against the characteristic spatial ripples that ships in warp travel produced, the Sliver Project could potentially detect incoming enemies a few minutes in advance!

This was a powerful advance that was enough to speed up the Golden Skull Alliance's attempt to deploy as many mechs into space as possible!

The eyes of Ves and the other Journeymen grew brighter. While it was true that numerous different starships were equipped with dimensional sensors that were much more powerful, the problem was that it was a lot less safe to disperse all of these vessels away from each other!

For safety's sake, it was best to keep all of the ships together.

This was where the Sliver Project could fulfill this essential need. These mechs were so fast that they could easily distance themselves from the main fleet. This would allow them to extend their eyes and ears further away, thereby making it easier to detect distant threats in advance!

Although the scout mechs incurred a lot of risks by exposing themselves to threats in isolation, the benefits outweighed the risks.

The Larkinsons would feel incredibly distressed if they lost even a single combat carrier!

The loss of a single mech and a light one at that was a trivial price in comparison.

Mechs were more despicable than starships, so neither Ves nor anyone else felt any qualms about compelling these light mechs to perform risky scouting missions.

"We should look towards upgrading this sensor system in future. Its effective range is still a bit lackluster." Ves remarked.

After explaining the many benefits of the Sliver Project's dimensional sensors, Juliet finally moved on to the most exciting part about the new scout mech.

"Most of these sensor modules work by gathering and interpreting passive signals." She explained. "This facilitates their ability to remain hidden because they do not easily expose their presence as long as they are only focused on receiving signals. The Samasel Orb Directional Scanner Module is different. It is an active system that works by transmitting powerful signals in specific directions. If there are any objects in the way, these signals will bounce back, allowing them to be captured by the Sliver Project. This active scanning method can provide us with a rich amount of data!"

This was an extremely simplified explanation on how the Samasel Orb worked. In truth, it contained so many sophisticated scanning mechanisms that Juliet would have to stay all day in order to explain everything!

"The Samasel Orb is the centerpiece of the Sliver Project. It is the equivalent of my scout mech's main weapon. Compared to the passive sensor modules, the Samasel Orb is able to break through interference and look past meters of solid alloy. It is not perfect, though. It is only effective at medium range and shorter and it consumes a large amount of energy when activated at full power."

All of this was worth it. In confusing situations where every other mech was only able to observe their surroundings at short range, the Sliver Project could potentially dispel the fog around the mech unit by relying on its brute force observation capabilities!

Gloriana saw another powerful way to take advantage of this active system. "This Samasel Orb is great for finding weaknesses in enemy mech models. Think of how quickly our mech forces can dismantle opposing machines when we know exactly how they are constructed."

"That's not all." Ves spoke up. "What is even more important to us is that the Sliver Project possesses the capabilities of scanning the interior of alien warships. We cannot assume that the MTA database contains a blueprint of every native vessel. In those cases, we need to rely on ourselves to analyze the strengths and weaknesses of alien warships. With the Samasel Orb, we can quickly understand the structures of these vessels and tailor our response to them based on what we learn from the scanning data."

Ketis was a bit more skeptical. "The premise to doing so is to bring the Sliver Project mechs close enough that their scanners become effective. I can't imagine that would be easy against an alien warfleet."

Ves dropped his smile. His former student was right. Juliet chose the Samasel Orb over other scanning systems because it was able to collect a rich amount of data. However, it traded range for resolving power, so its utility wouldn't be as great as long as enemy forces maintained their distance!

He shrugged. "We have little choice but to accept this shortcoming. We could have opted to integrate the Sliver Project with a different scanning system, but the alternatives would certainly be less effective in analyzing the strengths and weaknesses of different assets. I don't find this tradeoff worthwhile because a scout mech's ability to provide relevant combat data is just as important as detecting threats from a distance."

Information was power, and the Sliver Project was dedicated to supplying as much relevant data to the Larkinsons as possible!

Chapter 3755 - Battlefield Auxiliary Mech

The Sliver Project possessed negligible combat power, but its immense utility addressed a lot of shortcomings of the Larkinson Clan.

The combination of its specialized sensor modules along with its powerful Samasel Orb Directional Scanning Module made it a lot harder for adversaries to withhold crucial information.

From detecting approaching enemies at range to exposing their structural strengths and weaknesses, the Sliver Project was a nightmare to opponents that relied on information symmetry to gain advantages in battle!

The expeditionary fleet became a lot harder to fool once the Flagrant Vandals were able to field their new scout mech model in greater numbers.

What made Ves especially happy was that the Sliver Project also excelled at detecting hidden enemies.

The scout mech's passive sensor systems were slightly better at capturing the faint fluctuations generated by stealth vessels. Mechs and shuttles sneaking up while under active stealth needed to behave a lot more carefully in order to avoid exposing their presence in advance.

Perhaps the presence of the Sliver Project mechs might be enough to deter saboteurs from launching covert operations on the expeditionary fleet!

The threat of the Sliver Project was especially great if the Vandal mech pilots suspected that there were sneaky bastards in the vicinity.

Although it was costly to run the Samasal Orb at full power, its directional scanning capabilities were so strong that it could easily overwhelm the equilibrium of active stealth systems!

As Juliet finished explaining all of the main functions of the completed Sliver Project, there was one more feature that she had yet to address.

"As you have noticed, I did not completely design this mech by myself. In order to make this mech alive and fit the requirements of the Larkinson Clan, our patriarch has contributed to it in several ways. His most notable addition is the glow."

"I was wondering about that." Janassa Pellier said. "I think I have experienced echoes of this glow when I studied the Amaranto one day. The glow of this impressive masterwork mech makes me feel as if I'm being mesmerized by light. How can this glow be relevant in a substantially different mech type? A scout mech performs a completely different role than a rifleman mech!"

Everyone turned to Ves. Not even Juliet fully comprehended this choice.

To be honest, Ves only resorted to the Illustrious One because there weren't any better options available.

He thought about creating a new design spirit that excelled in detection, but he didn't have any suitable spiritual ingredients in his possession.

As his collection of design spirits expanded, he became more and more discerning about their quality and advantages. A more generic design spirit hardly conveyed any benefits and their growth potential was also a lot lower.

He would rather wait a few years and see whether the Larkinson Biotech Institute was able to acquire or breed a suitable mutated beast. Once a mutated beast with a useful power emerged in the Dragon's Den, he had multiple ways to turn this asset into an excellent design spirit!

Although the Larkinson Biotech Institute managed to acquire dozens of mutated beasts, none of them possessed any notable scouting abilities.

Fortunately, Ves discovered that the Illustrious One was a fine substitute for a more dedicated detection-oriented design spirit.

Although the Illustrious One's exact abilities had always been vague, his history and inheritances granted him with a fantastic affinity for electromagnetic radiation. He felt at home when flooded with light and other energy rays and his understanding of them was derived from the masters of light, the luminar race!

Optical sensors and other EM-oriented systems constituted the most important detection tools of the Sliver Project. If the Illustrious One was able to help the mech capture and interpret these signals through different means, then the scout mech model possessed an additional advantage compared to others of its kind!

Ves wasn't entirely confident about this solution, though. This was the first time he tied the Illustrious One to a scout mech model, so he was not able to foresee how much of a difference it made.

He would just have to keep a closer eye on the Sliver Project mechs once they were put into use. Their ability to leverage their glows to their advantage would determine whether he would keep the Illustrious One in place or design an updated version with a different design spirit in the future.

Once everyone understood what the new scout mech model was capable of, Ves asked one final question.

"Juliet."

"Yes, sir?"

"You have led this design project from beginning to end. Although I may have contributed to it a little bit, you have made virtually all of the most important design choices. The Sliver Project is a product of your vision, so it is only right for you to name it. You already have a proper one in mind, right?"

The Penitent Sister mech designer nodded. "Yes. I have thought about it for many weeks. My work is related to both the Flagrant Vandals and the Illustrious One, so I came up with a name that reflects both of these relationships. My choice would be to call it the Light Hunter."

Light Hunter. It evoked the image of a mech roaming in darkness in search of any points of light. Ves liked the name because of that. Although the word 'hunter' might not be the most appropriate considering that the scout mech did not possess any meaningful offensive capabilities, it could still work in this combination.

Once Ves officially registered the name of the completed Sliver Project, the crowd of Journeymen finally moved on to studying Juliet's second completed project.

"As you can see, the Nanny Project is another auxiliary mech." She explained as she stood in front of the copy she made. "Since it shares numerous similarities with the Light Hunter, you will find that I have applied the same solutions. Its offensive and defensive parameters are almost identical. In terms of mobility, the Nanny Project is a little more agile, making it easier to evade attacks. There are other differences, but that is mainly because the Nanny Project possesses more feminine contours."

The Light Hunter was designed for the Flagrant Vandals, so it possessed a normal masculine appearance.

The Nanny Project was designed for the Penitent Sisters, so Juliet went back to her Hexer roots and made it female.

"Aside from making it female, what makes the Nanny Project different from your Light Hunter?" Tifi Coslone wondered.

"I was getting to that, Tifi." Juliet smiled. "The Light Hunter is a scout mech that is designed to perform reconnaissance-oriented tasks. Its configuration makes it suitable to deploy away from our main forces. Its low energy signature and abundance of passive sensor systems allows it to remain somewhat hidden while it is able to observe enemy positions from afar. While its Samasel Orb allows it to play a more active role in serious battles, the real use of this active scanner is to expose stealthed opponents and perform deep scans outside of direct combat situations."

In other words, the Light Hunter was more at home when it stayed away from active battlefields.

"So the Nanny Project is an auxiliary mech that performs much better when deployed on the front lines?" Tifi guessed.

"Correct. The Nanny Project is primarily designed to accompany different mech units as they spread across a battlefield or a theater. This is why the word 'nanny' is part of its codename. It takes care of the mech unit it is attached to by performing two essential roles."

Juliet summoned a projection that displayed the Nanny Project's design. She inputted a command that lit up the mech's sensor modules.

"If you look closely and compare it to the diagram that I showed before, you will see that the Nanny Project is equipped with a different suite of sensor modules. Many of them possess both passive and active modes. The latter is particularly useful as it allows the Nanny System to provide rich sensor data under heavy jamming and interference."

A few mech designers looked confused when they heard about the active sensors.

Dulo Voiken raised his hand like a schoolboy.

"What exactly makes the Nanny Project's sensors different from that of the Light Hunter?"

"The Light Hunter's Samasel Orb is a powerful but energy-hungry directional scanning system." Juliet answered. "The mech cannot keep it active at full power for long. Not only will the scanning module overheat quickly, but it will also drain its energy reserves in a matter of minutes. Aside from that, it is also directional, which means it can miss important details if it is pointed in the wrong direction. Think of it as a spotlight."

The female mech designer pointed towards the various sensor modules highlighted in the diagram. "The Nanny Project does not possess a directional scanning system. Instead, it carries a whole host of specialized sensor systems that can go active whenever needed. Different from the Samasal Orb, these active sensor systems are more omnidirectional, so the Nanny Project has no blind spots. They also work at a lower intensity, which means they put considerably less strain on the mech. The mech

can keep all of its sensors active for half an hour under ideal circumstances. The pilot can choose to activate only a portion of the sensor systems if there is no need for more. This can extend the deployment time of the Nanny Project even further. It functions as a torchlight in that sense."

All this talk about different lights caused Ves to remember the time he served in the Mech Corps.

It had been so long ago when he was just a random mech designer who got in touch with Flashlight.

Meanwhile, Juliet continued to explain the nuances of the Nanny Project's sensor suite. The Penitent Sister auxiliary mech was much more efficient at short-ranged, omni-directional detection and tracking.

"The Nanny Project can break through many forms of interference and electronic countermeasures at relatively shorter ranges." She said. "This allows it to feed much more precise targeting data to friendly mechs whether they are next to it or situated further in the rear. It is one of the best mechs to tell our ranged mechs where they should fire their guns."

"Shouldn't other mechs be able to do this as well?"

"They can, but the Nanny Project is a considerably more effective spotter than any other mech in our lineup including the Light Hunter. Just because they both carry powerful sensor suites does not mean they excel in the same areas."

"The Nanny Project possesses another feature that makes it well-suited to feed targeting data to other mechs." Ves added. "Its glow is identical to that of one of my past works, the Cherub model that is currently being used by the Hex Army."

It took a moment for some of the mech designers to recall this mech model. While they never participated in its design, they still read up on all of the patriarch's known mech designs.

"You mean the communication mech?"

Ves nodded. "Yes. I would argue that communication is the Nanny Project's primary responsibility. It not only carries a powerful communication system that excels at breaking through jamming, it also incorporates a more esoteric communication method that cannot be blocked through regular means."

The mech designers here understood the value of the Nanny Project. It was a mech that could keep in touch with each other even when they were in the middle of an active battlefield!

The quality of communication and data transfers always degraded under those conditions. Being able to ensure reliable communications while at the same time providing detailed sensor data meant that the Nanny Project was able to cut through the fog of war and provide unprecedented clarity!

Even though the Larkinson Clan didn't really need the Nanny Project in most of its past battles, who knew whether that might change in the future. Alien forces possessed all kinds of weird technologies while the human forces in the Red Ocean were vastly stronger and more capable than the ones in the galactic rim.

It was better to have an auxiliary mech such as the Nanny Project early rather than late!

Chapter 3756 - Certain Lance Project

Both the Light Hunter and the Nanny Project provided the Larkinson Clan with two useful auxiliary mechs.

Although their functions overlapped to an extent, it was better to have both of them rather than just a single one. The Larkinsons had all the detection mechs it needed for the time being!

"We can't keep calling this mech the Nanny Project. Do you have a better name, Juliet?" Ves asked the Penitent Sister mech designer.

"Signal Bearer."

"That will do, I guess."

The names that Juliet came up with didn't sound particularly creative, but they were both appropriate to their respective models.

Once Ves originally updated the database so that the Nanny Project became known as the Signal Bearer, Juliet finally stepped back to allow a different mech designer to take the word.

"Okay, now that we have the new auxiliary mech models out of the way, let's proceed with reviewing the more exciting combat mechs. Dulo, let's start with yours. I enjoyed collaborating on our new lancer mech design."

The group moved until they stood in front of the large and imposing white lancer mech. Compared to the other mechs, it carried a lot more mass, causing it to look bulky and imposing.

Although it was not unusual to see lancer mechs on the mech market, the reason why half of the Larkinson Journeymen knew that it was unusual was because of its glow.

The lancer mech exuded the same vibe that was characteristic to the Transcendent Punisher model!

"The Certain Lance Project is an adaptation of one of the competition mechs I've designed in the past." Ves stated. "It's essentially the more complete and fleshed out version of the Pontifical Lance that I have once developed during the High Tide Tournament back in Chance Bay."

Combining a lancer mech with Ylvaine was an unusual combination, but it worked! The Pontifical Lance's performance during the aforementioned tournament gave Ves enough confidence in its mech concept that he supported the development of the Certain Lance Project!

Even though Ves didn't have enough time to lead the project, he trusted Dulo Voiken to take up this responsibility.

Considering how good the finished version of the Certain Lance Project looked, Ves did not choose wrong!

After Ves introduced the lancer mechs to the ones who hadn't been involved in the project, Dulo took over the presentation.

"Our clan already has access to a lancer mech in the form of the Bright Warrior in the right configuration, it is not a particularly good one to be honest. The surveys we've conducted among our mech pilots has revealed that even if they are proficient in piloting lancer mechs, they have serious concerns about the durability and survivability of a lancer mech that isn't fully designed to perform this way." Dulo explained.

Ves and Gloriana both frowned a bit after they heard this. They had put serious effort into designing the four configurations of the Bright Warrior. They did not think their work was all that bad when used as a lancer mech, but it was hard to counter this negative impression.

The Bright Warrior in its lancer mech configuration indeed performed less optimally than dedicated lancer mech models.

"The Certain Lance Project is meant to provide our clan with a reliable solution." Dulo continued. "While I have never worked on a lancer mech design project that is able to receive 'guidance' from a higher authority, I did my best to do its mech concept justice. Compared to the Pontifical Lance, the Certain Lance Project is much more mature and capable of performing deadly charges."

Just like Juliet, Dulo Voiken summoned a projection that displayed the design of the Certain Lance Project.

"Let's start with offense. The mech's main weapon is its heavy lance. It can carry three of them in total, which is important because each of the lances are designed to break when they are subjected to an excessive amount of force."

Ketis asked a question. "How much force is too much force?"

"The threshold is determined by how much force the Certain Lance Project can withstand before incurring serious damage." Dulo smoothly answered her question. "I am sure that all of you know that lancer mechs have to withstand the same amount of force it directs towards its target with every successful charging run. Lancer mechs usually enjoy an advantage in this aspect because much of the force they endure is dispersed across a reinforced arm and body structure. Their frames are also expressly designed to absorb and negate as much of the force as possible. Making the lance break at a certain threshold will limit the amount of damage the target will incur, but it will also save the lancer mech from getting disabled."

The Certain Lance Project was therefore able to charge at high speeds without worrying too much about crippling or destroying itself.

"There is still the danger of colliding against an enemy." Ketis remarked.

Dulo nodded in acknowledgement. "That is a risk that every lancer mech pilot has to bear. This is also why the Certain Lance Project possesses substantial defenses. I have solicited my sister's help in designing its special armor system. I think it is best for her to explain the details of how this mech is more survivable than many other lancer mechs."

Sara Voiken smiled. "My design philosophy is highly compatible with lancer mechs. The lancer mech's armor system is expressly designed to negate, absorb and redirect as much physical force as possible. This not only applies to enemy attacks, but also to collisions. The shape of the mech is one of its best tools to survive collisions. Different from all of the other mechs in our clan, the front side of the Certain Lance Project is shaped as a wedge."

The Certain Lance Project looked like someone merged the bow of a ship to the front torso of a mech!

The mech looked a lot sillier due to this drastic addition. Not only did it add more bulk to the mech design, it also got in the way if the lancer mech ever tried to wield a weapon in a dogfight!

"The wedge hinders a lot of actions that the Certain Lance Project can undertake, but it is a crucial tool that can help it survive 80 percent more collisions than normal." Sara proudly claimed. "As long as the lancer mech isn't locked into battle against enemy melee mechs, this wedge gives its mech pilot greater confidence in surviving a powerful charging run."

Ves didn't think the mech pilots assigned to the new mech model when it became available needed any of the encouragement.

Just its connection with the Great Prophet was enough to make the Eye of Ylvaine pilots confident! Their morale was always high whenever Ylvaine was involved!

Still, it was nice not to worry about losing half a lancer mech unit after performing a single charge. The Larkinson Clan couldn't afford to suffer heavy losses with every charging run!

Sara Voiken dug up the footage of a simulated test where the Certain Lance Project built up a lot of speed and charged against an enemy heavy space knight.

The latter was substantially heavier than the Certain Lance Project and was protected by multiple layers of thick armor. The defensive mech was able to withstand a huge amount of punishment due to its bulk!

"With the defenses of this heavy space knight, ranged mechs will not be able to inflict internal damage before they can whittle down the defenses of this defensive machine. A lancer mech such as the Certain Lance Project offers hope of eliminating or crippling it in a single blow. However, the lancer mech must first build up enough momentum before it gains enough lethal power."

The projected simulation footage showed an example of how it could be wrong.

In the simulated test run, the Certain Lance Project circled around and steadily built up its speed.

When the lancer mech initiated a charging run against an opponent, it did not build up enough momentum.

The result of this was that the lance got stuck halfway through the frontal armor of the defensive mech!

"As you can see, momentum is king for lancer mechs." Sara stated. "The only way for the Certain Lance Project to pose a threat against such a powerful mech is to continue accelerating forward. This is rather dangerous as many mech pilots cannot fully understand how much momentum they need to build up to destroy their targets. Making the lance breakable is one solution. Forming the front side of the model into a wedge is another solution. Combined with my ability to negate or lessen the physical forces acting on the lancer mech, all of these advantages combine into a result that can boost its safety limit."

Sara showed a similar clip but this time the Certain Lance Project built up a lot more momentum!

Once it initiated its charge, the enemy mech never left its sights. Once the two mechs made contact with each other, the lance successfully penetrated deep into the heavy space knight's chassis!

"What an impressive result." Janassa Pellier said.

Dulo felt flattered. "What we have shown you is only a fraction of what the Certain Lance Project can do. There are other charging scenarios that can showcase its different functions."

There was one simulated footage where the Certain Lance Project did not bother to use a lance at all. It invested completely into its wedge-shaped torso, allowing its shape to inflict a lot of collision damage without incurring the same penalty!

Another clip showed what happened when the Certain Lance Project was caught in a melee battle.

Due to the Certain Lance Project's sluggish movements and hindrances from its ostentatious-looking wedge, the mech did not perform nearly as well as a swordsman mech.

It was only able to thrust its spare spear forward. If it attempted to perform a horizontal sweep or any other move with high demands, the Certain Lance Project was unable to execute them due to the giant wedge in the way!

"As you can see, the Certain Lance Project is an all-in attack machine that cannot afford to get entangled in the middle of an enemy formation." Sara resumed. "This is a mech that only has to do one job well, which is to perform a charge against a concentrated group of enemy machines."

Under more favorable conditions, the Certain Lance Project blew the Bright Warrior in its lancer mech configuration out of the water!

Sara Voiken enhanced its defenses and massively improved its shock absorbing systems.

Juliet also pitched in and added in a flight system that was able to generate more thrust power than average. This was key to building up momentum quickly!

With both of their contributions, Dulo was able to integrate them into a lancer mech that could charge with blazing speeds and could even turn collisions into its weapons!

As long as the Certain Lance Project did not collide against an enemy mech head-on, much of the destructive forces would be deflected away due to its wedged-shaped torso!

"It can only perform three successful charge attacks before it runs out of lances, but that should be enough." Ketis' eyes twinkled. "With the power and momentum this lancer mech can display, it can punch through the thickest enemy mechs!"

Dulo Voiken chuckled. "Let's not get carried away, please. There are still first-class mechs and alien warships to consider. Both of them can easily resist a charge. What I can say is that it is difficult to design a lancer mech that can unleash even stronger charges. Outside of the Amaranto's full-powered attacks, the Certain Lance Project is able to deal the most powerful individual blows!"

This was what mattered the most. Lancer mechs existed for this reason. Although it was a lot more difficult to make use of them against a typical alien fleet, they still enjoyed a lot of advantages against an unprepared human force!

"Power by itself means nothing if it is not properly directed." Ves said. "This is where its glow comes in. If the Ylvainan mech pilots are able to obtain the Great Prophet's assistance, they should always be able to target the right weak points with their lances!"

This was the true charm of the lancer mech project! The Certain Lance Project wouldn't be nearly as effective without this additional function!

Chapter 3757 - Mech Diversification

The Certain Lance Project was a highly specialized mech model that was solely designed to excel in a single purpose.

All of its design characteristics were aimed at delivering the most powerful and destructive charge attacks possible.

Its heavy mass, its strong impact resistance, its heavy lances and its ability to beseech Ylvaine to guide its mech pilot were all aimed at breaching the toughest defensive lines with a single attack run!

"Given the extremes of this design, the Certain Lance Project should never get entangled in a melee battle." Dulo Voiken said. "Its rigidity and defensive power rivals that of a space knight. In a number of areas, it even exceeds the parameters of a defensive mech. My sister and I have only managed to raise the toughness of our lancer mech design to such a height by sacrificing options that can improve its performance in close-ranged combat. Ideally, the Certain Lance Project should never come to a halt. It must always ensure that it is able to soar away after completing its attack run."

This was why the Certain Lance Project was designed in this fashion. It was heavier than most mechs which made it harder for enemies to bleed its momentum. Its front side was shaped like a wedge which allowed it to shove through any obstacles. Its lance broke after being subjected to too much force so that the lancer mech did not get stuck.

"It's impossible for lancer mechs to avoid entanglement." Ketis spoke. "If the Certain Lance Project ever gets caught by a swordsman mech, how can it defend itself? Those heavy lances are too large and unwieldy."

Dulo Voiken did not look fazed. "I thought about that. It just so happens that I specialize in designing spearman mechs that excel at performing stabbing motions. Even though the Certain Lance Project is dedicated to performing charge attacks, it only needs to hold its weapon with a single arm. I am sure you have already noticed that its arms are asymmetrical. The left arm is thicker, more solid and more capable of withstanding powerful shocks. The right arm is faster, slimmer and more nimble! This is an arm that is suitable for wielding spears! As long as the Certain Lance Project carries a spear in its loadout, it can keep melee mechs at bay, especially when they are grouped into a spear wall."

It was a fairly clever solution that allowed the mech to fight in different ways. While there was no way that a mech as bulky and sluggy as the Certain Lance Project could outfight a dedicated melee mech such as the Rigid Spine model, it at least prevented the lancer mechs from getting slaughtered without any means to deter its attackers!

After Dulo and the other participating mech designers answered questions about the Certain Lance Project, Janassa Pellier brought up an important question.

"I am impressed by this lancer mech. It will surely become the premier lancer mech model in the Larkinson Clan. The Bright Warrior's lancer mech configuration looks like a training mech in comparison." She began. "However, why dedicate this mech to the Eye of Ylvaine? With their special advantages, I think it is better to turn the Ylvainans into ranged mech specialists. Why should we split their focus by adding a lancer mech model in their roster? There is no obvious synergy between the Transcendent Punisher model and this new model. Why not design a more universal lancer mech and make it available to multiple mech legions? I think the Avatars of Myth would love to get its hands on a real assault-oriented mech!"

These were all good questions. Even Dulo Voiken himself held doubts at certain times. While it was true that he was the project leader, the initial concept and ideas came from Ves. Without him, this mech design wouldn't even exist!

Ves looked up at the finished lancer mech and took in its pure and holy glow. The mech's glow was identical to that of the Transcendent Punisher. This was just the way the Ylvainan believers in the Larkinson Army liked it. Their faith in the Great Prophet drove them forward and inspired them to fight with complete certainty that their sacrifices were worth it in the end!

A part of him felt guilty for manipulating and exploiting these gullible believers into fighting on his behalf.

Another part of him liked the idea of having loyal and reliable troopers under his command.

He turned and faced his fellow Journeymen. "The Eye of Ylvaine may excel at ranged combat, but that is not what they are all about. The Ylvainans, similar to the Penitent Sisters, are motivated by their faith, and that makes them suitable to perform the most difficult and risky missions imaginable. The power of their Great Prophet can also be applied in more ways than guiding their aim. From predicting enemy movements to figuring out the best timing and angle to launch an attack run, the Eye of Ylvaine is the mech legion that is centered around taking maximum advantage of its information superiority."

This was a difficult matter for him to convey to his fellow Larkinsons. None of them understood the Ylvainans better than himself. The time he spent in the Ylvaine Protectorate had given him a deep and profound understanding of the Ylvainan people. Their devotion to Ves and the Great Prophet rivaled that of the Penitent Sisters and their obedience came close to that of the Battle Criers.

It would be a waste of their strengths and potential to confine them to the rear. In his long-term plans for the Larkinson Army, Ves wanted every mech legion to become a self-sufficient military organization.

While they still needed to retain their traditional strengths, Ves wanted them to perform other roles if necessary.

The Avatars of Myth shouldn't have to wait for the Flagrant Vandals to perform scouting missions.

The Living Sentinels didn't need to wait for the Swordmaidens to go on the attack.

The Eye of Ylvaine shouldn't have to call for help from the Battle Criers in order to defeat enemy expert mechs.

The main distinction of the Larkinson Clan was that it was founded and led by a mech designer. The Design Department of the Living Mech Corporation was highly productive and would only produce more mech designs over time.

As the Larkinson Clan continued to grow over time, the size of the mech legions would certainly grow in turn. This meant that they would steadily have more room for additional mech models.

Of course, it would take decades before any of the mech legions reached this point. The Larkinson Clan's lack of carrier vessels severely constrained the growth of its mech legions.

Before the Larkinsons solved this problem, it was best not to overwhelm the mech legions with too many responsibilities.

"I think it is a good idea that the Ylvainans get to have a completely different mech." Gloriana spoke up while she watched over her daughter. "Right now, the Eye of Ylvaine is more constrained than any other mech legion because its mechs and mech pilots are dispersed on different ships. They control our sole artillery mechs and that has slanted them too much towards ranged combat. Do you know how many Ylvainan mech pilots we have who feel much more at home inside the cockpit of a melee mech? They have been forced to stay in the reserves or join one of the other mech legions in order to perform their jobs."

This was a good observation. As a mech designer who was obsessed with fitting mech pilots to their perfect vessels, Gloriana could be quite observant when needed.

Ves took the lead again. "The Certain Lance Project will not be the last lancer mech model in our lineup. I think you will better be able to appreciate this Ylvainan mech once we have developed a different lancer mech in the future."

The Avatars of Myth needed a lancer mech model as well. An assault legion wouldn't be deserving of its name if it did not possess a solution that could smash through enemy lines!

It could wait, though. Lancer mechs weren't that useful against alien warships.

The Larkinson Army also didn't need to field too many lancer mechs either. Deploying a few hundred machines in the field was enough to shake up a battle, especially when their mech type excelled at achieving immediate results!

"Alright. Let's move on to the next completed mech." Ves announced.

"Wait! I still need to bestow a name to the lancer mech model!" Dulo called.

"Oh yeah. I almost forgot about that. Since you insist on it, you must have a suggestion in mind. What should the Certain Lance Project be called now that it is finished?"

"The lancer mech we've designed shares numerous similarities to the Transcendent Punisher. They are both guided by the 'prophet' and they are both designed for religious soldiers." Dulo Voiken explained. "Given these relations, I think it would be good if our lancer mech model will be known as the Transcendent Charger. While their mech types are different, they are still related to each other. Calling our new work this way will reinforce its identity as an Ylvainan mech."

"Hmmm…"

The name sounded fine on its own, but Ves feared that the similarities in the names might cause people to confuse between the two Ylvainan mech models.

"Transcendent Charger sounds awfully similar to Transcendent Punisher. Still, your reasoning is decent and the name itself inspires confidence. I approve."

"Thank you, sir!"

Ves didn't expect the Eye of Ylvaine to field a lot of Transcendent Chargers in the short term. There was no space and it took a lot of time and effort to train or retrain a large body of lancer mech pilots.

Even if a hundred Transcendent Chargers fell onto his lap, accommodating them and integrating them into the Larkinson Army took a huge amount of effort!

Hopefully, he and his clan would be able to find better ways to obtain additional combat carriers. Ves was getting sick and tired of the extremely slow expansion of the Larkinson fleet.

Aside from the cheap and fragile light carriers emerging from the Diligent Ovenbird every now and then, the Larkinson Army hardly had any room to grow!

They moved in front of a different offensive melee mech.

Unlike the newly-named Transcendent Charger, the Splitter Project aimed to breach enemy formations through a more gradual and sustainable approach.

The Splitter Project was the only mech model dedicated to the Avatars of Myth for this design round. The project centered around an axeman mech that didn't possess as much finesse as swordsman mech but made up for it with greater power.

"What a powerful mech." Juliet commented. "Imagine how much physical force this frame can exert. Its arms and torso are completely configured to deliver continuous heavy blows."

"The code name of this mech design is not symbolic. The Splitter Project should truly be capable of splitting enemy shields and other barriers." Tifi Coslone stated. "With this axeman mech, the Avatars of Myth will gain a powerful offensive addition that can definitely enhance their breakthrough power. No enemy mech line will remain unscatched if they are assaulted by enough units!"

Ves recalled the past yet again. During the Battle of Fordilla Zentra, the dwarven extremists that sought to attack the expeditionary fleet fielded a dwarven axeman mech model.

None of the dwarven products were weak, and he became quite impressed with the Shieldbreaker mechs that hailed from the Avido Berserkers.

Just like the Shieldbreaker model, the Splitter Project was meant to fight in the front and confront heavy-armored units with the intent of chopping through armor!

While swordsman mechs could perform the same role, they just weren't as good at it due to the inherent characteristic of their weapons.

Against solid shields and stationary mechs, axes were much more efficient at tearing through these obstacles! Even if axemen mechs weren't able to attack the enemy from a flanking angle, it didn't matter because an enemy line would not be able to remain unscathed for long!

Chapter 3758 - Splitter Project

Of the 'second batch' of Journeymen to enter the Design Department, the Voiken siblings attracted the most attention.

Hailing from a family of mech designers, Sara and Dulo Voiken grew up preparing for their eventual careers in the mech industry since they first learned to read.

Sara was definitely the most valuable among them due to her defensive specialty. There was hardly any mech that could forgo the advantages that she could bring. Ves actually found it regrettable that there was only one of her at the Larkinson Clan's disposal. There were many mech models that lacked the defensive strengths that she was able to add to a mech design.

Her brother's design philosophy was not as widely applicable as hers, but his work on the Rigid Spine and the Transcendent Charger showed that he was able to add powerful new melee mech models to the lineup.

Compared to the Voiken siblings, the pair of Journeymen from the Ochre Mirim Star Sector did not stand out in this design round. This was odd considering that both Janassa Pellier and Tifi Coslone possessed strong foundations due to being taught by a genuine Master Mech Designer.

It was not their fault. Janassa Pellier may not have led any design projects on her own this time, but she had lent her aid on a bunch of melee mech designs, the most prominent of which was one of Ketis' pet projects.

Tifi Coslone only led a single mech design project herself, and she tried to make the most of this opportunity to impress her colleagues of her strengths.

She stepped forward and presented her work.

"The Splitter Project is called this way because of its incomparably powerful physical strength. I have applied my specialty to the fullest when designing its arms and internal architecture. While my solutions have caused my axeman mech model to become bulkier and less mobile than ideal, it should not even have to rely on outmaneuvering its opponents. I have always found that as long as my work possesses enough overwhelming strength, it can break through almost any enemy arrangements."

With a specialty like hers, axeman mechs were one of the best mech types for her to demonstrate her capabilities. They benefited more from possessing greater strength than other mech types such as slender swordsman mechs or light skirmishers.

The latter two did not purely have to rely on brute force to defeat a tough opponent. They usually preferred to dance around their opponents and strike their sharp weapons at an enemy machine's weak points.

The Splitter Project obviously gave up on this possibility so that it could maximize its frontal combat capabilities. Its main use was to throw itself onto a relatively static enemy line and hack away with their two-handed axes and their powerful mechanical strength!

"The characteristics of the Splitter Project's offensive capabilities make it relatively simple to pilot." Tifi continued. "Its agility and range of motion are not the best, but its reaction and attack speeds are relatively decent. A good mech pilot will be able to use this axeman mech to duel a swordsman mech in terms of skill. However, the point of the Splitter Project is not to outfight an enemy, but to overwhelm the opposition and make all of their measures invalid!"

She pointed towards the rear of the mech that she had fabricated. "To that end, I made sure the Splitter Project possesses enough mobility to keep up and pursue retreating enemy units. My work might not be fast, but it is still mobile enough to keep up with enemy units. Its decent acceleration properties also allows it to reposition itself fairly easily on the battlefield."

"What about its defenses?" Gloriana quizzed. "All I have seen is how well your Splitter Project performs when it is on the offensive. However, its armor does not look formidable enough to withstand the same amount of damage it is inflicting."

Tifi nodded seriously. "I made sure not to hollow out the defenses of the Splitter Project. I invited Sara Voiken to help me address this shortcoming. She hasn't been able to help me as much as she would have liked due to her busy time schedule, but her limited contribution has strengthened my axeman mech's defenses to a more adequate level. I wouldn't say it is good, but it is tougher than it looks."

"What is particularly important to the Splitter Project is that I have applied an armor system that is particularly good at resisting physical attacks." Sara Voiken commented. "This will give our new axeman mech a small advantage in melee combat, primarily when attacked from the front. The pilot should take care not to get attacked from the

sides or rear. I did not have much room to work with, so the defenses outside of the front are not that good."

Sara could have done a better job if had more room to work with and if she was able to spend more time on the project. However, Tifi wanted the Splitter Project to possess incomparably powerful direct offensive capabilities. Piling it up with armor and other defensive systems not only ate up a lot of capacity, but also weakened its offensive parameters in other ways.

Giving another mech designer a lot of leeway in a project was not always a good idea. Depending on their design philosophies and their specializations, their solutions could actually conflict with each other.

Tifi and Sara's respective specialties didn't overlap that much, but there were definitely a lot of areas where one could directly weaken the other's efforts.

Since defense came second to offense to the Splitter Project, Sara was only able to apply her work to the outer portions of the mech. She was unable to add much of her internal defensive solutions to the mech because that would displace the special design elements that Tifi used to amplify the physical might of the axeman mech.

Fortunately, both women had come to an accord on this division. Their relationship would have become a lot uglier if they vehemently argued that their solutions should take priority!

Tifi continued to present the characteristics of her work. The mobility of the mech was a little above average, which befitted an offensive melee mech well.

"The Splitter Project performs at its best when it is fighting against stationary enemy mech formations, but if we ever face a more elusive enemy force, it should be able to catch up to most medium mechs. I can't say how well it will perform against alien assets considering that they come in so many different varieties, but I would argue that our new axeman mechs will fare better against them. Their powerful axes can hack into thick hull plating with greater ease than swords."

"What is the endurance of your design?" Dulo Voiken asked. "It looks like swinging that two-handed axe all the time will quickly drain its energy reserves."

"The staying power of my work is relatively decent. It is not fantastic and it indeed goes down faster if it is performing intensive actions, but it is worth it as hardly any defensive line can withstand that much strength." Tifi answered.

Energy was a resource. It represented potential that could be used to obtain different advantages.

There was no point for mechs to conserve all of their energy in battle. The more they were able to expend their energy cells in a short amount of time, the greater the combat power they could exert!

To someone who specialized in designing offensive mechs like Tifi Coslone, it made a lot of sense to design energy hungry mechs that could quickly transform stored energy into powerful results!

The more drastic the transformation, the greater the impact of the mech!

Of course, not everyone agreed with this approach. A more efficiency-oriented mech designer such as Gloriana and Professor Benedict Cortez would have found it abhorrent to implement such solutions.

This was because the more energy they used up at a time, the more waste heat they produced!

Mechs that didn't possess energy-hungry systems were much more efficient and could keep going for longer periods of time. In larger and more expansive battles, the uptime of a mech was just as important as its maximum combat power.

From what it looked like, the Splitter Project definitely wasn't a frugal mech. As soon as it got going, its powerful components would definitely demand a lot of energy in order to power the mech's attacks!

Once the mech designers understood these characteristics, Tifi briefly brought up the final important trait of the Splitter Project.

"As you can no doubt feel, the glow of the Splitter Project is more aggressive than our other mechs. I am told that our patriarch has tied its design to Zeigra, which is derived from some sort of giant cat that he has hunted in the past."

Ves hadn't utilized Zeigra in a standalone design for a long time. While the former Crown Cat had always played an integral role in mechs such as the Doom Guard and the Ferocious Piranha, those were instances where the feline design spirit had to share the same spaces.

This was the first time in years that Zeigra was able to express his ferocity and aggression in a mech design of his own. The mech's glow truly reflected his savage majesty in a way that Ves had not experienced since the completion of the Prideful Soldier variant!

Ves crossed his arms as he inspected Zeigra's glow. Over the years, the big cat had changed remarkably.

At the beginning, the feral design spirit expressed pure rage and anger due to its death at the hands of humans.

Zeigra's attitude towards Ves was especially poor considering that he played a key role in his demise!

Yet… that hunt on Felixia I was ancient history as far as he was concerned. Perhaps Zeigra's trauma of its violent death had faded as well, because Ves no longer perceived any heightened sense of animosity towards himself.

In fact, he even had the illusion that Zeigra's attitude towards him had grown friendlier!

"Is it the spiritual feedback that he has been getting all of these years?" Ves wondered.

Zeigra was actually one of the 'wealthier' design spirits in his connection. The Prideful Soldier may be an outdated third class variant design, but it was still a fairly popular alternative to the more boring Desolate Soldier.

What was even better was that Zeigra also received a portion of the spiritual feedback of the two bestsellers of the LMC, the Doom Guard and the Ferocious Piranha!

Perhaps the spiritual feedback from tens of millions of mech pilots had finally overwhelmed Zeigra's grudge against humanity and convinced him that his current life wasn't all that bad!

"No one is incorruptible. As long as anyone receives enough bribes, they can betray any principle!"

In any case, Zeigra's attitude may have grown more temperate, but the alpha predator still retained his aggressive and savage attitude.

This made it an excellent fit with the Splitter Project. Even if Zeigra did not bestow any special abilities to the axeman mech model, his aggressive influence easily put the mech pilot in a more optimal mindset.

For an axeman mech like this, ferocity and aggression were much better than calculation and caution.

The Splitter Project needed to be on the offensive in order to perform well. As soon as an axeman mech was forced on the defensive, it would not be able to make as much use of its advantages!

"The Avatars of Myth will need to adjust to the aggressive character of the Splitter Project." Ves mentioned to everyone. "Its glow will encourage its mech pilots to go out of control. That is not ideal. The Avatars will need to find a way to take advantage of its

glow without getting consumed by it. Seeing how well they have been getting along with various design spirits, I am sure they will find a way to work together with Zeigra."

The Avatars had shown a lot of creativity when they developed new ways to leverage the properties of the Bright Warrior and the Golden Cat. Maybe they could do the same with the Splitter Project and its bigger feline design spirit!

Chapter 3759 - Closing Threat

When Ves asked Tifi Coslone to bestow an official name to her Splitter Project, she paused for a few seconds.

"To be honest, I haven't actually come up with a good name for my work."

That sounded interesting. A mech designer and particularly a Journeyman was never indecisive when it came to their work. Tifi poured several months worth of effort into the Splitter Project. How could she still be stuck at this juncture?

"What's the problem?"

"All of the ones that I came up with contains words that are overused. Think of Berserker, Viking, Shieldbreaker and so on. While they can fit any axeman mech, I don't think they can do justice to the Splitter Project. It deserves to carry a more unique name due to its power and its glow."

Ves looked thoughtful as he considered various possible names.

Tifi's good bosom friend spoke up at this time.

"If I may make a suggestion, how about calling it the Redaxe?" Janassa suggested.

Everyone looked up at the dormant axeman mech. As a mech destined to become one of the mainstays of the Avatars of Myth, it came in the Larkinson Clan's iconic gold coating.

However, Tifi chose to make the mech's appearance stand out by coating the blade of its large axe in a bright red shade. This caused the total package to offer a contrast that gave the mech a more threatening vibe, especially when it was deployed alongside the more gentle-looking Bright Warrior!

"Redaxe… sounds acceptable. If Commander Melkor is okay with it, then I let it be known by this name." Tifi eventually said.

"Great!" Ves grinned. "The Redaxe will be sure to become a prominent presence in our armed forces once the Avatars are able to field it in greater numbers. For now, you need to be patient as we still don't have room for all of our new mech models."

After wrapping up all of the necessary administrative steps for the new Redaxe model, Ves moved on to the final two mechs in the workshop.

He had saved the best for last.

Although models such as the Light Hunter and the Transcendent Charger all had their good points, they were within the range of what he expected.

In each of the projects they surveyed today, Ves had become involved just so that he could make them alive. This added extra value to the mech designs, but they weren't necessarily better than what he could have designed by himself.

Sure, his design philosophy made it difficult to match the defenses designed by Sara or the advantages of other mech designers, but his work possessed its own charm, as evidenced by his Stingripper light harasser mech model!

The only products that he was not certain about matching were the ones designed by his former student Ketis.

Compared to ordinary Journeymen, the Swordmaiden mech designer was able to leverage her swordmaster capabilities to her advantage during the design process!

This was a massive advantage as it was almost equivalent to two different mech designers working on the same mech design project!

"No. This description isn't accurate enough." Ves shook his head.

The two mech designers actually possessed different but related specialties! They just happened to synergize so well with each other that the mech design would definitely possess strength beyond what even a talented Journeyman like Jovy Armalon could accomplish!

The only way that Ves could compete against such an absurdly powerful approach was to tie design spirits in his products. Without borrowing help from external parties, Ves wasn't sure whether his base design solutions were enough to achieve parity with Ketis' revolutionary new techniques!

While Ves tried to guess whether he was still the best mech designer in the Larkinson Clan, the woman he was thinking about proudly stepped forward.

Though Ketis wore a typical lab coat that mech designers usually wore while they designed their mechs, she was anything but a typical intellectual like the rest of them. The large and menacing-looking greatsword that obediently followed her from behind showed that she wasn't hesitant about eliminating her problems in a more direct fashion!

A part of him felt incredibly proud. Though he wasn't her first mentor, he was still her teacher in a sense. He also gave her the advantages that she needed to bloom into one of the most remarkable mech designers to have emerged in recent times.

Just the fact that she was able to pursue two extraordinary professions at once meant that she had great potential!

However, the more he recognized her formidable design prowess, the more he felt threatened by her rise.

Even though she had yet to introduce her first two proper solo mech designs, Ves could already tell that both of them were exceptional in their own ways.

Ketis was still lacking in experience! She had only advanced to Journeyman relatively recently. Although she had participated in the design of numerous Larkinson expert mechs, she hadn't been able to flex her full design capabilities due to the need to collaborate with many other colleagues.

This wasn't the case anymore. Both the Monster Slayer Project and the First Sword Project were completely under control.

Ves wasn't involved in them because Ketis was able to make her mech designs alive in her own unique way!

Though Ves was impressed by Ketis' ability to adapt and assimilate her gains, that only turned her into a more formidable rival.

Was it detrimental to him and his clan if Ketis surpassed every Larkinson mech designer?

No. The clan would gain a powerful new pillar that could help the Larkinsons make more progress in their ambitions!

This was the rational answer, and one that Ves should embrace.

Emotionally, he felt different about it. He wanted Ketis to make progress, but not to the point of leaving him in the dust!

How could he possibly maintain his pride if Ketis surpassed his strength? He wouldn't be able to call himself a man anymore!

Not only that, but his legitimacy as the clan patriarch would diminish as well. Everyone in the clan knew that one of the reasons why Ves remained in charge was because he was its most powerful mech designer.

If Ketis advanced to Senior before himself, how could this argument still hold true? She had the potential to wrest power and authority from his hands!

His blood pumped faster as he felt challenged.

"Not even my wife can make me feel so pressured." He frowned.

Maybe he should step up his efforts and try to create more radical innovations in the next design round. He had grown too comfortable with his existing set of tools. Perhaps it was time to expand his toolbox once more.

Ketis had stepped in front of her completed commercial mech by now. The Monster Slayer possessed a different vibe than many of the other mechs in the workshop.

This was because it was not a living mech in the traditional sense. In fact, Ketis' design approach did not emphasize life as much as Ves, so this was not a prominent quality in her work.

What the Monster Slayer did possess was a fainter but sharper impression. The greatsword-wielding mech was like a mirror of Ketis when she was in her fighting mood!

"I am sure you have already noticed that my solo mech designs don't possess any glows." She began. "That is not a shortcoming in my eyes. I am confident that my mechs will definitely appeal to both our fellow Larkinsons and people outside of our clan."

Ketis reached out to her Bloodsinger and pulled out her personal weapon from its scabbard.

With the evolved Sharpie occupying the weapon, the Bloodsinger possessed a strong presence that was not weaker to that of a masterwork expert mech!

As everyone stood by and watched, Ketis resonated with her weapon, causing it to glow and accumulate power.

What was shocking was that the swords secured to the backs of both the Monster Slayer and the Second Sword began to glow and echo with power!

Even though the effect was not that strong, the stunt still showed that Ketis had managed to impart at least one special quality to her designs!

Ketis grinned. "The first thing you should know about my Monster Slayer is that it is an attempt to pass on a part of my swordsmanship to others. While it is a swordsman mech that can perform adequately in battles on land, I did not design it with the harsh conditions of hostile planets in mind. I primarily designed it to function as an arena

mech, which is exactly what the Wild Fighter Association has asked for. What I did with the Monster Slayer was add more features to it that will help it stand out in the market."

She began to introduce the most important elements one at a time.

"First, let's start with its offensive capabilities. As you can see, the Monster Slayer is a swordsman mech that does not rely on any other weapons to win its battles. It is solely optimized to wield a greatsword and will not be able to make the most out of other weapons such as daggers and lighter swords."

She pointed specifically at the arms of the mech.

"I did not invite Janassa or Tifi to help me increase the mechanical strength of my Monster Slayer because I want to keep the design to myself. I designed its arms and internal architecture with more moderate strength levels in mind. The truth is that my swordsman mech doesn't need exaggerated physical strength."

She emphasized her point by suddenly performing a few sword routines with her Blood Singer!

"Look at how I fight. I am not applying an excessive amount of force in my movements. Instead, I rely on my momentum and the weight of my weapon to help me swing my blade. This is the foundational greatsword style and it is sufficient to most wielders of this sword type. Every Swordmaiden has learned how to fight in this manner. As women, they are not necessarily the strongest individuals, but they can overcome their weaknesses through learning specific techniques."

She stopped swinging her blade, much to everyone's relief. No one felt comfortable about standing so close to a lethal weapon!

"My Monster Slayer's physical strength isn't as formidable as that of the new Redaxe, but that allows my work to fight in a more balanced manner. The agility, reaction speed, range of motion and other properties are all good. As long as the mech pilot is good enough, he or she can use my Monster Slayer to defeat superior opponents. It is agile enough to circle around opponents and it can also jump and dash short distances if needed!"

She had devoted quite a lot of attention to the legs during the design process. The Monster Slayer was not meant to clash against enemies upfront like the Redaxe. Instead, it was the consummate duelist mech and possessed a much higher skill ceiling than many of the other mechs in the workshop!

In other words, a good mech pilot was able to perform miracles while a more mediocre mech pilot might easily stumble with the Monster Slayer.

"Offense and mobility are the two most important strengths of my Monster Slayer design." Ketis stated. "Its defensive properties are not great to be honest. While it looks like a medium mech, my arena mech will fare better if it is piloted like a light mech. The mech isn't weighed down by excess armor, so it should be able to outpace and outmaneuver many other melee mech models."

This inevitably made the mech weak against ranged mechs, but no one bothered to mention that. The Monster Slayer might be able to defeat ranged mechs in a fair arena battle, but it would be a different story if it stepped onto the battlefield.

Its slightly thin defenses along with its lack of ranged solutions meant that the Monster Slayer was only good for one role, and that was dancing opponents until they were eliminated!

Chapter 3760 - Imprinted Skills

The Monster Slayer did not stand out in terms of performance.

Its specifications were rather mediocre when compared to the prevailing competition in the Red Ocean's mech market.

It was not the strongest, fastest, toughest, most agile or even the most cost-efficient landbound swordsman mech model available.

However, the Monster Slayer nonetheless possessed advantages that could not easily be replicated by the competition.

"If I have to summarize the configuration of my Monster Slayer, then I would say that it is a balanced swordsman mech with an emphasis on mobility." She told everyone. "I designed it so that it is more forgiving to control. By lowering the skill floor, it is easier for beginner mech pilots to pilot my work effectively. Its relatively fast reaction speed and good agility allows it to jump away and move aside with greater efficiency, thereby offering my mech a safety net when locked into melee combat."

This was a configuration that was suited for limited circumstances. Considering that Ketis primarily dedicated it to arena combat, there was no problem with specializing it to this extent.

Everyone could see that the Monster Slayer would have a harder time fighting against ranged mechs and aerial mechs, but the mech wasn't really designed for these scenarios in the first place.

For this design, Ketis solely focused on maximizing its chances when fighting against other melee mechs!

Whether it entered into a duel or a group match, the Monster Slayer could fight against a variety of melee mechs and vanquish all of them as long as the mech pilot utilized its capabilities properly!

Ketis smirked as she stood in front of her first completed passion project. "Don't let the low skill floor mislead you into thinking that my Monster Slayer is only appropriate for newbies. While it is true that my mech is partially designed to help lesser-skilled mech pilots become more proficient in wielding greatswords, its reliance on controlled movements can bring it much further. Top swordsman mech pilots such as Venerable Dise and Venerable Imon Ingvar can utilize its understated capabilities to defeat melee mechs that are five times or even ten times as expensive without exceeding the Monster Slayer's limits!"

She purposely designed it this way to pay tribute to her unforgettable 'duel' against the monstrosity a cultist from the Hallowed Abyss Temple had turned himself into. She had dreamed about realizing a swordsman mech that could win leapfrog battles for years, and now she had finally turned it into a reality!

It did not matter that she failed to turn the first Monster Slayer she built into a masterwork mech. Only an obsessive mech designer such as Ves and Gloriana fixated on that. Ketis cared much more about expanding her own body of work.

Compared to Ves who had led dozens of mech design projects and earned the most of credit for most of them, Ketis embarrassingly came up short in this aspect!

She was an anomalous Journeyman who advanced way before she went serious with publishing her own work. Even the First Sword which she earned the most credit for was not entirely her work.

The completion and the impending release of the Monster Slayer relieved the pressure that was pressing on her shoulders for a long time. She finally took a solid step forward in her career as a mech designer now that she was ready to publish her first true commercial mech design!

"How much does it cost to produce a Monster Slayer?" Ves asked.

"That depends." Ketis replied. "The price of raw materials is inconsistent. My Monster Slayer is designed to be a more affordable mech. I refrained from including any bells and whistles in my design and I did my best to incorporate less flashy and more economical parts in my design. My target is to limit the production cost to 1.4 MTA credits, but it is not entirely possible to produce the mech that cheaply in every zone. The good news is that we don't have to worry about this problem. It's the job of the Wild Fighter Association to arrange the logistics and produce the mechs themselves."

That was part of the deal that Ketis and the Larkinson Clan originally struck with the Wild Fighter Association. The Monster Slayer design was essentially a commission.

Once the final results fell into the fighting club's hands, it was up to their people to derive as much profit as possible.

The Larkinsons didn't have to do anything. They could just sit back and relax and wait for the Wild Fighter Association to pay royalties to the tune of several million hex credits per sale.

Although the share of profits was rather low, the Wild Fighter Association agreed to do all of the heavy lifting. It was only right that they harvested the bulk of the earnings.

What Ves truly cared about was not the modest profits that the Larkinson Clan could earn from this business deal.

The true value of this business deal was to form a closer relationship with the Wild Fighter Association.

As long as their initial cooperation succeeded, the Larkinson Clan could propose follow-up deals that had the potential to earn ten times as much earnings!

Furthermore, the Larkinson Clan would also gain more access to the Wild Fighter Association's rich network of business partners and strategic partners!

Of course, the Larkinsons had to be careful when navigating this relationship. The Wild Fighters had their own share of enemies and Ves did not want to get entangled by their problems.

As Ketis continued to explain the virtues of her Monster Slayer, she finally addressed the most special points of her work.

"First, as you are probably aware, my fundamental design philosophy focuses on sharpness. While the Monster Slayer's default armament is not particularly strong or powerful, it is a relatively affordable weapon that is nonetheless sharper than normal. It is able to cut through tougher and more expensive materials without costing a fortune to repair or replace. This advantage gives my Monster Slayer the capital to defeat superior mechs, especially those that rely on superior defenses to stay in the fight."

This was also a way to make up for the shortcoming of insufficient physical might. The Monster Slayer did not have to apply as much force in order to penetrate through armor.

Of course, an enemy mech wouldn't allow itself to get cut so easily. The Monster Slayer's mech pilot still needed to rely on clever positioning and maneuvering to gain the upper hand in a duel. ?ll ? ???? Fu??.c?m

"Aside from the excellent cutting power of its greatsword, my Monster Slayer also stands out due to another advantage. I have successfully found a way to turn it into a training mech similar to our Chiron model that has guided many of our mech cadets.

The exact mechanics are too complicated for me to explain, but just know that each of Monster Slayer mechs are able to help mech pilots become skilled in utilizing the foundational greatsword style that I have compiled for this design."

While Ketis briefly elaborated what she meant by that, Ves carefully studied the finished Monster Slayer for clues on how she managed to turn it into a training mech.

In the case of the highly-successful Chiron training mech, Ves had shaped its spiritual programming to develop a personality that actively taught its users on how to master the various skills related to mech piloting.

While it was easy enough for Ves to program such a feature, the key to making this work was to provide his Chiron mechs with access to teaching materials.

Ves managed to pull this off by using the Larkinson Network as a database of skills and experiences!

There were so many skilled and veteran mech pilots connected to the Golden Cat that she could effectively function as a repository for all of the best skills in the clan!

Sharing them directly to mech pilots was extremely difficult, though. The existence of the Chiron served as a channel that could regulate and control the flow of information so that the pilots always received the right lessons at their stage of development.

As Ves scoured the Monster Slayer mech with his spiritual senses, he soon figured out how Ketis managed to achieve a similar result.

She found her own way to imprint her will and swordsmanship in her mech design. The spiritual foundation of the Monster Slayer possessed a solid core that carried an echo of Sharpie's qualities!

It was not the same as connecting the Monster Slayer design to a design spirit, but Ves was able to tell that Ketis had clearly taken inspiration from his approach.

She was able to derive her own methods from his work and came up with a way to 'program' a swordsmanship style to her own mech design!

This was quite impressive! Even though it seemed that the Monster Slayer's capacity was too small to store a lot of swordsmanship comprehension, just the basics were more than enough to point beginner mech pilots in the right direction!

The Monster Slayer was not a proper living mech, though. Compared to his own work, Ketis fell far behind in terms of making her mechs alive.

In fact, just like Gloriana, she wasn't really able to make her mechs alive in the truest sense of the word.

However, that wasn't strictly necessary as long as Ketis was able to make up for it in other ways. Her ability to imbue her mech designs with her own swordsmanship definitely qualified!

"According to my own classification, a normal Monster Slayer mech is equivalent to a first-order living mech." Ves concluded.

This was already a better result than what the overwhelming majority of mech designers could accomplish in their lives!

Everyone else was completely ignorant about the potential for their mechs to become alive. Once they figured out that it was possible and learned his basic method, it should not be difficult to bestow a hint of life in their own work.

Ketis was much better off in this regard. Not only did she receive numerous lessons from him over the years, she also gained a more profound understanding of his unique perspective whenever they collaborated with each other or connected their minds to each other with the help of a design network.

Blinky and Alexandria's design networks were particularly effective at helping Ketis get started! She knew what she needed to pay attention to and gained a more direct impression on how Ves made his mechs alive.

As a result, Ketis was able to impart her Monster Slayer design with a hint of X-Factor.

Ves was reminded of his work back when he was just an Apprentice. Back then, he did not have the support of his design seed that gave birth to his life domain. He had to rely on his own efforts to make his mechs alive.

"This is probably the limit of what Ketis can do." Ves quietly guessed. "Life is just a side branch to her. If she doesn't deviate from her trajectory, then it is difficult for her to accomplish anything better."

Although he thought highly of her design abilities, he did not think that Ketis could surpass him when it came to designing living mechs! He was the undisputed master and pioneer of this field, and he knew exactly what prevented Ketis from making any further progress!

Even if she became a Master one day, Ves did not believe she could do any better than imparting her mechs and mech designs with a modest degree of X-Factor.

Ves did not have to put any effort into making a second-order living mech, but the only way for Ketis to achieve the same result was to fabricate a masterwork mech!

The process of making a mech on the higher rungs of the craftsmanship ladder was incredibly mysterious to Ves. When a mech turned into a masterwork, all of its properties gained a boost, including its intangible ones!

"Her work still needs to rely on their mech pilots to truly become alive!"