

Mech 3841

Chapter 3841 Anchor Location

It took Ves quite a bit of time to pull himself away from his latest brainchild.

Unlike many of his radical new ideas, this one was actually viable enough for him to implement in at least one of his upcoming mech design projects!

He even had an urge to put down everything he planned to do in Purgatory so that he could direct his full attention on this new idea.

It took a lot of effort to control his impulses and suppress his desire to tinker with an innovative new design solution. He so badly wanted to return to his design lab at this time, but the promise of making much more lucrative gains deeper inside Purgatory straightened up his thoughts.

"I am getting too caught up on different tangents. I need to keep my enthusiasm under control."

This was not the time and place to research and develop his ideas in-depth. He could do that at any time.

In comparison, it was a lot harder for him to gather inspiration during ordinary times. The fleet had pretty much become home to him and it was difficult for him to get inspired by any novelties that emerged within his clan.

Only a completely different location provided enough of a difference to shock him out of his comfort zone. By immersing himself in a foreign environment, his curiosity became aroused and it became easier for him to develop wild and unconventional ideas.

He resumed his tour of Fort Fishblood in the hopes of gathering additional sources of inspiration.

One of the most notable features of this site was the gate that was originally responsible for exposing the Golden Skull Alliance to the fish-whale race and a brand-new pocket space.

He descended to the ground of the Gate Continent and noted its low gravity.

In truth, the gravity of the asteroid was heavier than expected. Either something funny was going on or a dense metal core was buried in the center of the landmass.

Ves approached the team of scientists studying the various elements of the large space gate.

"Welcome to Fort Fishblood, patriarch. Have you come to take a look at the gate?"

"Yes." Ves said as he stared at the large ring-like construction that was made out of a bone material. "How much progress have you made in deciphering this alien device?"

The figure wearing a hazard suit slumped a bit. "We have not been able to touch its essence, let alone derive any useful gains from our studies. We have spent much of the past few days on exchanging knowledge and bringing each other up to speed on our respective fields of expertise. Even so, our tools and our familiarity with phase whale technology are so inadequate that we do not anticipate making any substantial progress in our studies. The more we examine this alien construct, the more we recognize how out of depth we are. It is both awe-inspiring and discouraging to recognize that the phase whale race has reached this level of biotechnology while the ancestors of humanity were still flinging poo at each other."

That was a rather discouraging realization. When Ves glanced at the other scientists, he recognized that their moods were a little low. This was despite gaining the opportunity to study an amazing alien space gate!

"We will get better." Ves reassured the team leader. "Our clan has grown a lot in the past few years. If we keep up our growth trajectory, we will transition into first-raters eventually. Once we reach this point, we can master all kinds of profound sciences and gain access to much more amazing high technology. Cracking the secrets of this space gate shouldn't be impossible by that time."

The scientist slowly nodded. "I understand, sir. We will readjust ourselves as much as we can. We still want to come away from this with at least a basic understanding of how this space gate works, though."

Ves turned and studied the gate in greater detail. It was constantly active and the shimmering spatial portal still allowed mechs and vehicles to move to vastly different spaces in the blink of an eye.

"How is it powered?" FREEWEBNOVEL.COM

"We are unable to determine this, sir. We have yet to detect an internal power source. In fact, even if it comes with one, the chances are great that the passage of time has eroded its functioning. As far as we can guess, for this space gate to expend so much energy to keep the current spatial portal active all of the time, it has to receive power from an external source."

"You mean the blue supergiant star?"

"Right, sir. Logically speaking, the phase whale that has created this pocket space must have chosen to anchor it in the Garimel System for a reason. The phase whale's decision to anchor it so close to the massive star is probably due to several reasons."

"Oh? What have you guessed?"

"The most obvious reason to base the pocket space so closely to the star is to set it up to siphon the vast amount of radiation passing through its location. Not only that, the star also released remarkable materials including heavy metal exotics that are rare or unheard of elsewhere. One of the theories that we have developed is that the pocket space's primary purpose is to act as a 'net' that captures a portion of the rare exotics that the blue supergiant star ejects in the form of solar wind on a regular basis."

The team leader wasn't able to provide any hard proof to back up his assertions. Despite this flaw, Ves was quite taken by the logic of these arguments.

Plenty of people wondered why a phase whale or a cannibalistic version of one would bother to invest a huge amount of time and resources to form a pocket space in such a hot and difficult star system.

Given how other observations revealed that the pocket space seemed to have generated a lot of phasewater and other valuable resources over the years might explain why it was located in the Garimel System.

Nothing came for free. Phasewater was an extremely precious resource and was virtually absent in the Milky Way.

If the phase whale race managed to create or capture a renewable source of phasewater, then feeding it with energy and materials was probably a crucial step to generating additional quantities of this valuable substance!

Ves slowly nodded. "Your theories make sense. They're likely true. I think there may be an additional reason why the alien creator chose this site to create a pocket space. The observations that we have made have shown that the pocket space is anchored in a close orbit to the powerful star. Despite this close proximity, the alien creator has applied a filter that blocks out the vast majority of heat, light and other energy rays from cooking the interior of the pocket space. Don't you think that this is contradictory? The phase whale had to invest a lot of time and resources to keep Purgatory cool enough to generate liquid phasewater and allow for life forms such as the fish-whales to survive without excessive adaptations."

The scientists employed by the Larkinson Clan weren't stupid by any means. The man in front of Ves only viewed Purgatory from a specific perspective.

Ves developed a different view of the phase whale enclave. His paranoia and his sense of caution had led him to develop another theory.

"Are you suggesting that the creator of this pocket space was trying to hide it, sir?"

"Yup. At this range from the star, the immense amount of energy radiating from the blue supergiant will practically blind any sensor or scanner pointed in this direction. It is actually a simple but incredibly effective way of hiding a pocket space. Only close examinations might reveal something unusual, but that requires an extreme amount of effort, persistence and technology. It's basically impossible for others to find the coordinates of the pocket space. Combined with the other benefits that you have mentioned, the creator succeeded in killing multiple birds with a single stone!"

This story didn't entirely add up, though. Ves did not mention the strange circumstance on one of the moons orbiting Garimel II.

Why go through such enormous lengths to hide Purgatory from intensive search efforts only to plant an easy backdoor in a more accessible location?

Ves found it difficult to figure out how this circumstance came about!

Had the creator of the pocket space gone crazy?

Had another phase whale come along and set up a prank?

Had a brilliant fish-whale succeeded in escaping from Purgatory by activating an unknown function of the space gate?

The strange circumstances surrounding the resonating exotics and the existence of the Royal Tomb signified that the Larkinsons still possessed an incomplete understanding of this situation.

Ves and the scientist talked a bit more about the space gate. One of the more interesting topics they discussed was the organic nature of the construct.

"We are unable to scan and examine the structure of the space gate as a whole, but what we did manage to study conforms to what humanity has learned about phase whale technology. The structural elements that we have taken a look at are made out of organic materials. More specifically, they are made out of a mixture of purpose-grown organic components combined with bones and other biomatter that are evidently harvested from naturally grown creatures."

The former sounded fairly normal but the latter was a little bit weird. Phase whales possessed such an extensive mastery of biotechnology that they could grow the biomaterials they required at high degrees of consistency.

Resorting to bone and flesh from other creatures was inherently flawed because they were so varied and inconsistent that they made for flawed construction material!

"Do you have an example of a naturally-grown component?" Ves asked.

The scientist gestured at the bony ring that gave the space gate its defining shape. "The most obvious example is the ring structure. After an extensive analysis, we have determined that the exterior and much of its interior consists of natural bones grown from an actual phase whale."

That caused Ves to perk up. "Really? I thought the builder of this device would have resorted to using another source. This is interesting. How solid is the gate? How much damage can it withstand?"

"The gate is nearly indestructible." The man answered. "At the very least, anything we throw at it is unlikely to work. Not only are the materials of this ring structure reinforced to a degree of hardness that is far in excess of their normal states, but if we push too hard, an energy field appears that adds an extra layer of protection."

"Is it the same sort of energy field that is protecting and preserving the giant phase whale skeleton in the Royal Tomb?"

"Correct."

That was an interesting fact. This commonality proved that there was a definite relationship between Purgatory and the Royal Tomb!

After a bit of discussion, Ves learned that it was hopeless to damage, dismantle or displace the gate. Whoever built it implemented so many safety features and precautions that pretty much every manner of tampering had been taken into account!

"At least we don't have to worry about the fish-whales destroying our only exit route that can lead us back to our main reality." Ves quipped.

Before he left the ancient space gate, he tried to examine it with his spiritual senses. This was actually one of the other main reasons why he wanted to enter Purgatory.

With his life domain and his affinity towards organic products, he hoped that he could sense the touch of its creator or stumble upon a spiritual remnant of the source of the bone material.

"Damn."

Unfortunately, Ves did not detect any significant traces of life in the space gate. Whether it was because it was made in a different way or because it had remained dormant for too many years, the powerful and highly-advanced biotechnological construct came across as a dried and empty fossil to his senses!

"Oh well."

Chapter 3842 Taking Advantage of AlienTechnology

The ancient space gate was a marvel of phase whale technology. Even though Ves and the other researchers failed to learn anything solid by examining the construct, it was already beneficial for them to open their eyes to the wonders of the cosmos.

"Humans rarely come in touch with alien technology nowadays." A Lifer biotech expert said as he glanced admiringly at the impressive gate. "I think that is a shame, because we have much to learn from races that have developed their tech in radically different directions than our own. Many aliens don't think like us. I won't say anything about how much of a danger they pose to humanity, but if we can sit down in the same room and conduct a technological exchange with each other, I bet that we can push our mastery of biotechnology to the same heights as conventional technology!"

That was a controversial argument to make. Plenty of people looked askance at the bioresearcher.

"The aliens are our enemies, you know. I doubt that other humans will approve of trading our technology for theirs."

"I am not suggesting anything like that. We can just conquer their star systems and claim their tech for ourselves." The bioresearcher quickly said. "I think that invading the Red Ocean has been one of the best decisions that humanity has made. Just look at what other races have accomplished in this dwarf galaxy. We have become exposed to so many new possibilities that I intend to start a brand-new research project once I get back to the Dragon's Den!"

The thoughtful expressions on the faces of the other members of the research teams showed that he was hardly the only one to think this way.

Although the organic space gate stubbornly protected its secrets, just getting in touch with it stimulated a lot of people's imagination!

Just seeing what other races had accomplished on the technological front was an eye-opening experience!

"Back in the Life Research Association, much of the progress that we have made in advancing the state of biotechnology has stalled. Even though we were constantly able to come out with better inventions and applications, much of that progress was achieved by relying on better materials that have come out in recent years. The fundamental tech we have relied upon to develop our bioproducts hasn't evolved that much throughout different generations. I think the reason why we haven't made that much progress is because we were insulating ourselves too much."

This exploration run had provided them all with more gains and more eye-opening insights in a couple of days than they had obtained in decades!

Ves was no exception either. Though he had gained even less from studying the space gate than others because of lacking the right expertise, his imagination still grew wild as he continually entertained new thoughts.

However, he knew that he shouldn't get too obsessed about alien ingenuity. He was strongly aware of how the Big Two regarded those who got too obsessed with pursuing alien technology over human technology.

"I agree with you." Ves stated. "Getting in touch with advanced alien technology developed according to different paradigms and understanding of reality can inspire us to develop entirely new applications. We can also quickly upgrade our capabilities by adapting alien tech outright. That said, our civilization rose up because we were smart enough to internalize the lessons we have learned from other races. Only the technology that we understand and master ourselves is truly worth relying upon. We should all be careful and avoid fetishizing alien inventions too much."

Of course, no one told him that the Larkinsons should stop making so much use of luminar crystal technology.

The power of this tech when adapted to second-class combat was too good!

While there were other forms of human tech that could deliver even greater combat power in the second-class arena, the problem was that they were often exclusive and not easily accessible in the public domain.

The Larkinson Clan was hardly the only organization that conducted private research and developed specialty products. Each power player eventually built up an accumulation of specialties that they relied upon to do business or secure alliances with other strong players.

If possible, Ves wanted to understand or master the ancient space gate, but it seemed that this was not in the cards. Even his personal intervention didn't make a difference in the face of an organic device that was far too ancient and far too advanced for him to grasp.

"A pity."

Ves no longer wasted any time on the gate and spent the rest of the day exploring other sights.

He not only surveyed the terrain around Fort Fishblood, but also took a close look at the remains of various fish-whale subspecies.

He did not really gain any inspiration or other harvests from studying the corpses. The grunt fishes and sergeant fishes were too different and not that special to the Larkinson Biotech Institute.

The only fish that possessed greater research value was the so-called assassin fish. These red fish-whales were not only larger and stronger than the other fish-whales, but were also capable of performing instant short-range teleportation!

Naturally, Ves wanted to get to the bottom of this phenomenon. The body and mass of an assassin fish was roughly equivalent to that of a medium mech. If he and his research team could figure out the science behind this wonderful teleportation ability, he could make good use of all of the phasewater that his clan had already harvested and what it stood to gain from raiding the Lake Continent!

Every assassin fish corpse was an incredibly valuable treasure to the Larkinson Biotech Institute. Though the expeditionary forces had already transferred a lot of red fish-whale bodies to the Dragon's Den, a few of them remained on this side of the portal in order to study whether the environment affected them differently.

When he entered one of the hastily-erected biolabs, his attention immediately drew towards the giant red bodies that were put into special chambers.

The state of the two bodies were quite poor. Both of them had clearly received the tender mercies of the Second Sword mechs of the Swordmaidens. Large cuts and gashes marked their bodies and caused them to look as if they had a bad encounter with a serial killer!

Still, despite the damaged state of their bodies, they weren't mangled and brutalized beyond recognition. There was enough intact biomatter left for the biotech researchers to learn plenty of details on how their bodies worked.

Ves approached the nearest supervisor and quizzed her about what they had learned.

The female biotech expert looked enthused. "The specimens are fascinating examples of targeted breeding and evolution. We do not exactly know to what extent their genes have been tinkered with, but they did not develop their short-range teleportation ability through natural selection. However, the earliest iterations of the assassin fish were probably weaker and cruder than the ones you see in front of you. It is only through the passage of time that stronger and more fitter red fish-whales emerged. Through constant and targeted pressure, they have grown to a state where their efficiency, power and growth rate has approached the optimal level for your biological parameters!"

In other words, the creator of this subspecies started off a long time ago with developing assassin fish version 1.0 before calling it day.

Then something happened that left Purgatory unattended. This presumably allowed the Swarm Kingdom to rise and to implement several measures that caused the red fish-whales to experience a lot of challenges.

The weakest among them died but the stronger and more adaptable ones survived.

While it was hard to guarantee that the next generation of assassin fish became stronger, through repeated cycles an upward trend slowly came about. After millions of years, the red fish-whales were incomparably more effective in battle than before!

This was both good and bad news to Ves and his men. UPDATE FROM
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The upside was that a more efficient and optimized assassin fish physiology meant that the creature functioned like a well-designed mech. The biological systems responsible for accomplishing teleportation must have undergone a lot of improvement!

The downside was that stronger assassin fishes also posed a greater threat against the expeditionary forces.

Their ability to appear in the midst of vulnerable mech formations and deal instant damage was too hard to guard against!

The only way to stop them from smashing vulnerable mechs was to take them out from a distance, which wasn't always easy when there were lots of grunt fishes in the way!

As Ves continued to quiz the supervisor on what the scientists figured out about the assassin fish, he soon made an important request.

"You told me that the red fish-whales activate their short-ranged teleportation ability by stimulating a special organ, is that right? Can you take me to one and show me it in person?"

"I can do that. We have already harvested one and placed it in another lab. Follow me, please."

They moved over to a separate biolab that was considerably more well-equipped than before. It was clear that the rest of the red fish-whale body didn't merit as much attention as this specialized teleportation organ!

At first glance, the red sack of meat did not look all that special. Ves wouldn't be able to distinguish it from the many other organs buried within the bodies of the fish-whales.

However, the scanners detected clear concentrations of phasewater inside this crucial biomass! This was undeniable proof that it was related to the signature ability of the assassin fish subspecies!

"Have you learned how it works?"

"No, sir. Our progress in understanding its principles has been slow." The supervisor shook her head. "This is a fascinating product of biotechnology and contains many elegant and profound implementations that are equivalent to applications of high

technology. In order to understand and replicate this 'blinking organ', we must slowly study and experiment on numerous samples in order to learn its many secrets on a sequential basis. It will take decades for this research project to bear fruit based on our current capabilities."

This was better than Ves expected. Unlike the ancient space gate, the blinking organ was a more accessible form of biotechnology!

"I will approve of this research project." He quickly said. "No matter how long it takes, we must master this application of phasewater so that we can gain additional advantage on the battlefield. This is a perfect tool for both assault-oriented and assassin-oriented mechs!"

He was sure that the Big Two and a few other powerful players had managed to figure out how to perform instant teleportation by leveraging phasewater. However, it was unlikely that they were willing to share this trump card to others!

The time it took to yield results was a bit long, though. Even though he believed that the Larkinson Biotech Institute would constantly improve its manpower and research capabilities as the clan continued to grow, that still meant that it would take a decade or so for Ves to design his first blinking mech!

Ves directed a speculative look at the harvested organ.

What if... he didn't have to wait so long to impart a short-ranged teleportation ability in his mechs.

What if... he was able to transplant these whole and presumably functional organs in a mech of his own design?

His eyes lit up! This was a viable idea! It was just like reusing the parts of one mech to enhance another mech!

Although the idea of empowering his mechs by stuffing them with the fleshy remains of dead fish-whales sounded gross, who cared as long as it worked?!

"Can this organ work even if it is separated from an assassin fish body?" Ves excitedly asked. "Are we able to leverage its ability if we find a way to transplant it in a mech or another vehicle?"

"We... do not know enough about its mechanisms to give you a positive answer." The supervisor cautiously replied. "The blinking organ is calibrated to teleport fish-whales. If I have to make a judgment, it is theoretically possible to make it work in either a biomech or a cyborg mech as long as we can decipher and alter its bioprogramming. It won't even take that long since we have plenty of samples to study and experiment upon."

It was possible!

Chapter 3843 Blinking Organ

Ves talked extensively to the research supervisor about the potential of implanting the red fish-whale's important blinking organs in his mechs.

It was not far from easy to accomplish this feat. Ves and his staff had to solve at least two different problems.

First, the blinking organs were designed and attuned to the bodies of red fish-whales. Randomly transplanting them in other machines would go as poorly as putting the Shield of Samar's shield generator inside the frame of a Rigid Wall mech!

In order to make them work with entirely different shells, the Larkinson biotech experts needed to apply many different processes onto the organs. It took a lot of research and effort to figure out the right way to transform the alien organs into a more usable form!

Only this way would they become compatible with human mechs!

The second challenge was to design a mech around these organs. Converting them into usable organic modules was not enough. The mech had to implement special accommodations in order to integrate this weird and demanding organ!

Ves thought about what it would take to design a suitable mech.

He first took a look at the size of the blinking organ. As a key element of the assassin fish subspecies, the organ was not small. It was a lot larger and heavier than a human body!

However, the body of a red fish-whale was no bigger than a mech. Most of its organs were no larger than the parts of a mech.

The blinking organ was roughly the size of a typical mech-grade shield generator.

This meant that it would take a lot of effort and compromises to integrate it on the frame of a light mech. Given how much light mechs need to make the most out of their limited capacities, Ves didn't think it was worthwhile to allocate a precious strategic resource to machines with limited combat power.

Medium mechs were much more suitable. They were inherently more powerful. A medium melee mech such as the new Second Sword model could become twice or thrice as deadly in battle if they gained the ability to blink behind the defensive lines of enemy mechs and wreak havoc on the enemy's rear!

As for heavy mechs... one one hand, they had plenty of internal capacity to accommodate a blinking organ. Assuming the organ was powerful enough to teleport a machine of this size and mass, such a powerhouse could deal a lot of damage if it was able to overcome its mobility disadvantage and show up in an extremely favorable position!

On the other hand, heavy mechs possessed far too many limitations when employed in an offensive capacity. Just the amount of time it took for them to even get close enough to an enemy position to perform an effective blinking maneuver was too long!

There were good reasons why most heavy mechs tended to be artillery mechs and knight mechs. These were mech types that didn't necessarily have to move a lot in order to play a useful role on the battlefield.

Ves turned his thoughts back to medium mechs. When he tried to imagine what kind of mech could make the best use of this blinking capability, he couldn't help but consider the Swordmaidens.

Out of all of the mech legions in the Larkinson Clan, the Swordmaidens were the most oriented to melee offensive combat.

Their training, culture and mech doctrines all emphasized attack and nothing else. While this left obvious shortcomings in their ability to respond to different situations, they were absolutely lethal when they fought under favorable circumstances!

However, Ves knew quite well that the moments where the Swordmaidens could attack unscrupulously without worrying about getting attacked in return were quite minor.

Unlike the Avatars of Myth, the Swordmaidens weren't suitable in meeting toughness with toughness. The former had no qualms about attacking defensive mech formations up front. The latter vastly preferred to assail enemy formation from the flanks.

Depending on the battlefield, it was quite tricky for Swordmaiden mech units to outmaneuver their enemy counterparts and hit them from the sides or rear.

If the opponent possessed enough numbers, it could simply dispatch mechs to block and stall the Swordmaiden mechs.

In this situation, the Swordmaiden units faced a difficult dilemma. They could either risk incurring lots of losses by attacking enemy mechs upfront or continue to procrastinate and maintain their distance.

All of that could be changed if the Swordmaiden mechs possessed a third option!

Ves envisioned an elite group of Swordmaiden mechs. These powerful crack troops were larger, more powerful and more expensive swordsman mechs than the recent Second Sword mechs. FREEWEBNOVEL.COM

When the elite Swordmaiden mechs approached a hardy mech formation and stopped a short distance away, they only paused long enough for their blinking organs to charge its ability and calculate their displacement.

Once their blinking organs completed their preparations, the swordsman mechs all disappeared from sight, only to appear right behind the enemy mech formation, where they subsequently chopped dozens of mechs apart in quick succession!

When the enemy machines finally reacted by turning around, the elite Swordmaiden mechs blinked a second time and returned to their original positions.

At that time, the teleported mechs could opt to attack the disarrayed enemy unit once again or retreat in order to wait for a better opportunity.

This was one of the most promising uses of the newly-discovered blinking organ.

"What about integrating them in expert mechs?"

The ability to teleport could be a game changer in high-end mech combat!

In duels between expert mechs, the ability to appear at a different spot and attack an enemy expert mech at a vulnerable angle with minimal delay could instantly spell the defeat of powerful enemies!

The blinking organ could also serve as a life saver. Key expert mechs like the Minerva would always be a priority target to intelligent opponents.

If an enemy expert mech expended a lot of effort into getting close, the ability to blink away before a fatal attack was able to take effect could save Commander Casella's life one day!

While Ves believed that every expert mech in the Larkinson Army's lineup could benefit from incorporating usable blinking organs, the problem was that none of them were designed with this feature in mind.

Their internal architectures were stuffed with other high-end components. Each of them were so intricately designed that moving them aside and pulling out a few unneeded parts would drastically decrease the combat effectiveness of the powerful machines!

Was it worth it to lower the effective performance of his expert mechs by as much as 30 percent just so that they could gain a short-range teleportation ability?

No!

The basic performance parameters of his expert mechs was the basis of their power. If they lost too much combat strength, then they wouldn't be able to obtain victory against tough opponents even if they gained a teleportation gimmick.

"However... who says that the blinking organs need to be integrated inside a mech?"

The alternative to integrating them deep inside the protective frame of a mech was to mount them onto the exterior.

Backpack modules were made for this! While the ones designed for spaceborn mechs were smaller and more limited due to the presence of flight systems, the blinking organs were still manageable enough to be mounted on the rear!

The Larkinsons just needed to research and develop a way to convert a blinking organ into a functional backpack module.

"The blinking organ will be more vulnerable as a consequence, but the benefits are worth the tradeoffs."

As long as Ves and the Larkinson researchers were able to develop this new organic or cybernetic module, it would be a lot easier to mount them on the backs of specific mechs.

The Larkinsons could keep them in storage when it wasn't necessary to make use of them and only bring the backpack modules out when they were about to fight a crucial battle!

While all of this sounded nice, Ves also acknowledged that this plan possessed several flaws.

The element of surprise played a huge role in the effectiveness of the blink-capable mechs.

Just like how the expeditionary forces had adjusted its combat approach after learning about the capabilities of the red fish-whales, other opponents could make their own adjustments to minimize their vulnerability against teleportation strikes!

Ves also worried about the cost of activating a blinking organ.

"How many times can an assassin fish utilize its blinking organ in battle?" He asked.

"An ordinary red fish-whale can only blink twice per engagement, sir." The supervisor answered. "Activating it once will cause it to endure a great amount of stress. Activating it twice will wear it out to the point that it requires at least an entire day of rest as well as

plentiful nutrition before it can be utilized again. Each activation will consume a large amount of energy. The only upside is that the process is relatively efficient. The organ will not generate too much while it is performing its main function. The burden of using it is one of the reasons why the body of an assassin fish is relatively large and robust."

"I see."

These were severe constraints that essentially ended his dreams of designing a specialized melee mech that could blink around a dozen times on the battlefield.

The Larkinson mechs that carried this module could only utilize their blinking ability during critical times. Being able to teleport just twice was too much of a constraint!

The only way to break these limitations was to crack the principles behind the blinking organ and develop a better teleportation module.

Suffice to say, this could not be done in an instant.

"How durable are these organs?" Ves asked.

"They are tougher than they look, patriarch. Don't let their appearance fool you. As the key organs of the red fish-whales, they were designed to withstand the rigors of battle. Millions of years of targeted evolution has caused them to become tougher and even more robust."

"That is good news. If they ever become damaged or broken, can they be repaired so that we can utilize them once again?"

The supervisor didn't know the answer to that. She needed to consult her fellow scientists before she could give an answer.

"We have not researched this topic in-depth, but based on our preliminary findings, the blinking organs possess inherent self-repair capabilities. They can heal from battle damage by themselves as long as they are supplied with sufficient quantities of energy, nutrients and possibly phasewater. However, we do not have much confidence in reviving them if they are destroyed. At that point, it is doubtful whether we can salvage what is left and grow a new blinking organ. Until we are able to reverse-engineer this organic tech, we have no choice but to source them from living assassin fish."

This was a major limitation! The inability for the Larkinson Clan to produce these crucial blinking organs by itself meant that there was only a finite amount of them available.

Once they were being put to use, the quantity of blinking organs would slowly drop as one battle after another wrecked a few of them at a time.

The only way to prevent this was to figure out a way to obtain a continuous supply of fresh blinking organs!

"Is there truly no way of artificially producing the blinking organs on the Dragon's Den?"

"No. As I have already mentioned, we do not have that capability. We can only take them from the assassin fish, and they are only available in this pocket space. Before you ask, we have already considered the possibility of capturing live specimens in the hopes that we can breed them aboard the Dragon's Den, but this is a hopeless endeavor."

"Why so?"

"The red fish-whales do not reproduce in a conventional manner. They emerge after a white fish-whale has ingested enough nutrients and grown to the point where they can metamorphose into a new red fish-whale. Even then, the chance that a grunt fish can successfully complete this evolution is low."

Ves grimaced. "In other words... we need to sustain a huge population of white fish-whales in order to birth a continuous supply of red fish-whales."

There wasn't enough space in the Larkinson fleet to accommodate so many violent and hostile life forms!

The only viable way to secure a constant and renewable supply of blinking organs was to capture or gain control over the entrance of Purgatory!

This way, the Larkinsons could treat Purgatory as a giant farm for rare and valuable fish-whales. They would come in every time they needed to harvest another batch of phasewater, blinking organs and other rare or unique resources!

Chapter 3844 Revisiting the Everchanger

Ves was disappointed that he could not make widespread use of blinking organs.

Unless he dispatched his troops to slaughter the nearby Swarmer hordes en masse, it was hard to gather more than a couple of dozen blinking organs that the expeditionary forces had already gathered up until this point.

Although Ves was tempted to order his troops to launch an all-out hunt on the assassin fish, the chances were too great that slaughtering hundreds of thousands of Swarmer fish-whales might alarm the guiding intelligence of the Swarm Kingdom!

After the exobiologists had studied the fish-whales in many different ways, they developed numerous theories and insights regarding the most formidable and most numerous threat in Purgatory.

Since there were millions of Swarmers, the loss of thousands or tens of thousands of fish-whales didn't change the overall situation. There was no reason to pay attention to the deaths or disappearance of a few hordes.

A lot of fish-whales already died each day due to cannibalization. The possible queen of the Swarm Kingdom also sent several hordes towards the other fish-whale kingdoms on a regular basis in order to consume their strength.

The point was that losses at this level were trivial to the Swarm Kingdom, but that would no longer be the case if they became ten times as much!

If the total presence of fish-whales on the Gate Continent dropped by 10 percent or more, then that would definitely affect the overall situation of the landmass!

There was no way the Swarmers would remain ignorant at that point! Otherwise, it would have been easy for the other three kingdoms to exploit this shortcoming and weaken the Swarm Kingdom over time.

In short, there was a limit to how many blinking organs the expeditionary forces could obtain by harvesting them from assassin fish bodies.

The best way to 'produce' blinking organs aside from reserve engineering them was to set up a sustainable farm.

Unfortunately, this plan was completely impractical due to the special way they emerged.

The weak and most common white fish-whales served as the embryonic base of every elite fish-whale. The chances that any of them might be able to break through their base forms and reach an entirely new height was low. Not even eating a lot of fish-whale flesh and participating in a lot of fights could guarantee their advancement.

Yet once they succeeded, they became a completely different fish-whale!

"The grunt fish should have been called the pawn fish instead. As long as they are able to reach the other side of the chessboard, they can advance into any other chess piece!"

There was no practical way to domesticate a lot of white fish-whales and hope that a few of them might evolve into red fish-whales one day.

The Dragon's Den simply couldn't hold that many fish-whales!

Even if she could, the fish-whales were violent, unruly and difficult to suppress!

There were many other barriers to breeding the Swarmer fish-whales outside of Purgatory. One of the key elements that was missing was the method to breed the white fish-whales!

No one figured out how they were born in large numbers. The exobiologists speculated that the Swarm Kingdom set up spawning pools where juveniles quickly emerged and grew en masse.

If these special pools existed, then they must certainly be key protection targets!

The moment a mech force attempted to fight its way to a spawning pool, the Swarm Kingdom would definitely take notice of the human intruders!

In the end, the only way to continuously breed assassin fishes and harvest their blinking organs on a sustainable basis was to gain control over Purgatory.

It would be great if he could conquer or at least gain permanent access to this wondrous pocket space. This way, his mechs could continuously enter and harvest all of the resources generated from within.

His eyes almost grew red as he thought of all of the gains he could make if he turned Purgatory into his private farm. From phasewater to obtaining all kinds of strong and wondrous organisms, this phase whale enclave was a true paradise!

He sighed. "It's too bad I won't be able to keep it. There's no way I can claim this pocket space."

The Mech Trade Association was still looming over his shoulder. The mechers had already shown how much they valued the giant phase whale skeleton.

When faced with a larger pocket space that contained lots of phasewater and other ancient phase whale arrangements, the greedy mechers would definitely lay claim to his discovery!

Ves would only be able to obtain a few crumbs that he could gather through his own efforts. No matter how many blinking organs or phasewater he obtained, harvesting them once was incomparable to harvesting them year and year!

The MTA was the ultimate winner of this excursion no matter what he did. A ship was already on the way in order to assume ownership of the recent discoveries.

Once the vessel arrived, Ves could already predict that there was no opportunity for the Golden Skull Alliance to make any further gains in the Garimel System.

This meant that the expeditionary forces were on a time limit!

They needed to fulfill their goals as much as possible in the following week!

Once Ves recalled the time pressure that he was facing, he no longer spent as much time on studying the various dead fish-whale corpses and headed over to one of the workshops in Fort Fishblood.

As he entered the space, he could already spot the Everchanger resting quietly in the middle.

The expert mech was waiting to be modified.

Venerable Joshua was resting not too far away from the dormant expert mech. The talented expert pilot immediately perked up once Ves and his bodyguards came over.

"Sir! You are finally here. I have been waiting for your arrival."

"Joshua." Ves waved at the familiar expert pilot. "Are you concerned about the changes that I am planning to make to your battle partner?"

"No. Well, I'm not worried about what you will do to the Everchanger. You designed it in the first place, and you also turned it into a masterwork. I... am just concerned about piloting my mech with you inside my cockpit. No offense, sir, but is it truly a good idea to allow a mech designer like yourself to ride alongside me while I pilot my mech?"

Ves smiled. "It's not unheard of for mech designers to do so, although it is an extremely rare occurrence for expert mechs. The cockpit of the Everchanger is a bit roomy for a single person, so it isn't difficult to modify its interior so that the both of us can sit in the same space. You will just have to get used to less room."

"I do not care about the lack of room. I can handle this hardship. What I am truly wondering about is whether I will be able to resonate with the Everchanger as effectively as always. Having you around might not do me any favors. It will be harder for me to focus on the battle and defeat the enemies in the way if I constantly have to worry about your safety."

Ves dismissively waved his armored hand. "Don't restrain your piloting due to my presence in the cockpit. As you can see from combat armor, I am not as fragile as you think. We're not heading out in order to pick a fight, but if any of the fish-whales think they can take us down, don't hold back."

It was clear that words were not enough. Venerable Joshua was not a weak expert pilot, but he did not wish to bear the responsibility of carrying the patriarch of the Larkinson Clan into danger!

Practically no mech designer would take the initiative to venture deep into a treacherous region!

While the Evolver Kingdom might not necessarily turn hostile towards the humans, the possibility of getting attacked by the powerful king fish and the other Evolver fish was not low!

If an incident ever broke out, Venerable Joshua would constantly get distracted by the burden of protecting the patriarch. This was such a heavy burden that he might not be able to enter into the right mind state.

This was crucially important to expert pilots like Joshua. Much of their strength was derived from their extraordinary willpower, which in turn was based on their thoughts and emotions.

It was a lot easier for expert pilots to leverage their full strength if there were no distractions. This was one of the reasons why expert pilots such as Venerable Stark and Venerable Jannzi progressed the fastest.

Venerable Joshua possessed a more messy mind so he found it a bit more difficult to fight in his best state.

Ves did not waste any further time on words. He figured that the only way to convince the expert pilot that everything would be fine was to apply the modifications and proceed with the mission.

He studied the Everchanger's current state for a moment before pulling up the altered design.

He had already worked on altering the cockpit and performing numerous other tweaks. Since he was about to entrust his life to his own work, he might as well put in additional effort and optimize the expert mech's configuration for the upcoming mission.

Modifying an expert mech was never an easy task. The challenge was especially considerable when working on a masterwork mech.

Still, this was not an issue for Ves. He was the lead designer of the Everchanger and also possessed a high affinity for mechs. He was so attuned to the expert hero mech that he could probably go freestyle and make spontaneous changes without making it any weaker!

It wasn't necessary to go this far. Ves strictly abided by his plan and completed the necessary changes in the span of a couple of hours.

He enjoyed this little moment. Revisiting his completed works held additional meaning to him because all of his products were alive. They started out as newborns and steadily grew into more formidable living mechs when used for their intended purpose.

This was especially the case for a masterwork that was paired with an expert pilot! The growth conditions of the Everchanger were so superior that Ves found it fascinating to check up on the Everchanger's current state.

"You've taken after your pilot, Everchanger." Ves said towards the expert mech as he was putting the final touches to the alterations in the cockpit. "It's no surprise, really. You are exposed to Venerable Joshua practically every day. He is by far the pilot you are most familiar with. Who knows what you would have looked like if you were paired with any other expert pilot."

JOSHUA IS THE ONLY PILOT THAT I WILL SERVE. THAT IS WHAT YOU HAVE MADE ME FOR, CREATOR.

Ves twitched a smile. "I am glad to hear your dedication. Anyway, you have already existed for a while now. While you are still at the start of your product life cycle, you have already gone through a lot of experiences. During these times, I am sure that you have encountered moments where you wish you were stronger or weren't lacking a feature. Do you have any special requests that you want me to look into? I can't promise you that I will address all of your complaints, but I am curious to hear what you think should be improved."

A few seconds of silence passed before his living mentally gave its reply.

NOW THAT YOU ARE BRINGING THIS UP, I DO HAVE A LOT OF PROBLEMS THAT NEEDS TO BE FIXED. JUST BECAUSE I AM A MASTERWORK MECH DOESN'T MEAN I HAVE REACHED MY IDEAL STATE.

FIRST, MY MECHS VARIABLE COATINGS. JUST LIKE HOW YOU HUMANS LIKE TO WEAR DIFFERENT CLOTHES, I WOULD LIKE TO ENTER BATTLE WITH A DIFFERENT APPEARANCE.

SECOND, I NEED A WAY TO COMMUNICATE WITH HUMANS IN A MORE NORMAL MANNER. YOU NEED TO GIVE ME ACCESS TO THE SPEAKERS AND OTHER ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATION CHANNELS SO THAT I CAN SPEAK WITH AUDIBLE WORDS.

THIRD, LIVING MECHS LIKE MYSELF SPEND A LOT OF TIME DOING NOTHING WHEN WE ARE INACTIVE AND STUCK IN OUR BERTHS. YOU NEED TO GIVE US ACCESS TO THE GALACTIC NET SO THAT WE CAN BROWSE FOR INFORMATION AND PLAY GAMES WITH EACH OTHER.

FOURTH, I AM LACKING A SHIELD THAT CAN HELP ME PERFORM A DEFENSIVE FUNCTION WHEN IT IS NECESSARY. THIS IS A MAJOR GAP IN MY CAPABILITIES THAT LIMITS MY ADAPTABILITY.

FIFTH...

Chapter 3845 Mech Needs

What was it like for an artist to have his own painting complain about its flaws?

What was it like for a musician to have one of his own songs describe the discordant elements in the notes?

What was it like for a shipwright to have his own ship come to life and threaten to crash into a city unless her vibration problem was fixed?

Ves felt as if he had been put into the shoes of those fellows as the Everchanger seemed to pour out all of its grievances, pet peeves and other miscellaneous complaints!

There were so many points the Everchanger was dissatisfied with that Ves couldn't keep up with all of the issues. He had to use his implant to record all of the different issues that his creation had brought up in order to keep track of it all. The mech apparently did not forget its problems easily because it kept going!

Though the sheer amount of complaints was overwhelming, Ves tried his best to keep his cool and evaluate each point the Everchanger brought up on its merits.

The majority of complaints were fairly minor or trivial issues that hardly affected its performance in battle. Examples included changing the shades of the floodlights to painting its name on the side of its leg.

A few of the requests sounded like good ideas that Ves should have thought about before. Many of them were more difficult and time-consuming to implement at this time, but he was able to implement a handful of requests during a single workshop session.

An interesting but relatively basic modification was to give the Everchanger the ability to speak to humans without relying on its powerful spiritual foundation.

Although the Everchanger could theoretically express its feelings and convey its desires through the same means it was using to communicate with Ves, not a lot of people were actually capable of receiving their spiritual signals.

Only powerful people such as high-ranking mech designers and high-ranking mech pilots were able to communicate with third order living mechs through this rare and difficult communication method.

The only other way for humans to 'talk' to living mechs was to pilot them directly. The man-machine connection directly allowed them to get in touch with each other. This was how the Quint was able to instruct any mech pilot that sat in its cockpit.

Ves never really thought about expanding the range of people his living mechs could talk with. Why would they need to? They were war machines designed and built for the purpose of working together with their mech pilots to fight and fulfill other related duties. These were relatively clear-cut responsibilities that they were already equipped to perform based on their current capabilities.

He never imagined that his living mechs would actually want to do more.

Since when did mechs want to watch a drama series? when did mechs develop the desire to play virtual board games with each other?

Since when did mechs want to enter virtual reality in disguise so that they could socialize with other 'fellow' humans?

Ves wanted to scratch his head over and over again when the Everchanger listed a bunch of demands that made it seem as if he was dealing with a spoiled brat instead of one of the most powerful combat mechs in the Larkinson Clan!

THREE-HUNDRED-AND-FIFTY-SEVENTH, I NEED AN AUTOMATIC SURFACE CLEANING SYSTEM SO THAT I CAN CLEAN MY EXTERIOR WHENEVER I WISH INSTEAD OF WAITING FOR THE MAINTENANCE CREWS TO COME AROUND. IN FACT, JUST GIVE ME CONTROL OVER THE WORKSHOP BOTS SO I CAN DIRECT THEIR CLEANING OPERATIONS MYSELF...

"Okay, okay, stop for a moment, will you? Give me a moment to take stock of your requests."

At one point, Ves couldn't take it any longer! He needed to get to the bottom of this strange development! No other mech had voiced these weird requests up until now. Was the Everchanger an oddball due to its unique personality and exposure to an atypical expert pilot, or did every living mech develop these desires?

The answer to this question was crucially important to how Ves viewed and treated his living mechs in the future!

After he took a few deep breaths, he looked up at his tall and powerful expert mech and tried to imagine it as a more rounded individual instead of a pure combat machine.

"Everchanger, since when did you develop these odd desires?" He asked. "I'm not referring to the tweaks related to your combat performance this time. Since when did you develop all of these leisure and social urges?"

...I AM ALIVE, AM I NOT?

"Yes..."

DO YOU THINK THAT LIVING MECHS LIKE MYSELF ONLY LIVE FOR BATTLE?

"That's what you are designed for, Everchanger..."

JOSHUA IS A SOLDIER AS WELL, BUT YOU DO NOT SEE HIM SPENDING 24 HOURS A DAY ON TRAINING OR PREPARING FOR BATTLE.

"That's because he is a human, and humans are complex animals that are born to have several different urges. Humans cannot function at their peak if they do not spend enough time on rest, leisure and other activities!"

HOW AM I DIFFERENT?

"You're a mech!" Ves wanted to throw his hands. "Look, even I have given you life, that doesn't mean that you are fully equivalent to humans like your pilot or the mech technicians that service you. We belong to different species and work in different ways. As a life form expressly built for battle, you are expected to maintain a constant state of readiness so that you can be put into battle at any time. You are not designed to imitate humans in the truest sense of the words. Higher-level characteristics of life such as reproduction, relaxation and socialization are not part of your design because mechs are not meant to have those urges!"

He recalled the discussions he held with his student Maikel, who chose to pursue a specialty that was also related to living mechs.

During their infrequent tutoring sessions, the increasingly more clever mech design student posed all kinds of hypothetical scenarios on how living mechs should 'live' in a future society.

Though Ves was open-minded enough to agree with a few accommodations, he was reluctant to go overboard and move away from how humans traditionally treated their mechs. To him, there was a limit to how much mechs ought to be pampered!

His mech did not back down so easily, though. [FREE WEB NOVEL. COM](http://FREEWEBNOVEL.COM)

DO I NOT HAVE RIGHTS OF MY OWN? AM I ONLY REGARDED AS PROPERTY IN THE EYES OF THE LARKINSON CLAN?

Ves became speechless for a moment. Why was this conversation taking such an odd turn? Why did the Everchanger paint him as a literal slave driver?

"Look, be reasonable. I have only been in the business of designing and selling living mechs for a number of years. I am pioneering the development of an entirely new kind of mechs. There are bound to be fumbles and shortcomings. Third order living mechs such as you have only emerged relatively recently. The second order living mechs that are the most prevalent in our clan have yet to develop these additional desires."

The Everchanger lowered the pressure onto Ves.

UNDERSTANDABLE. YOUR IGNORANCE IN THE PAST CAN BE EXCUSED, BUT THAT DOES NOT MEAN THAT YOU SHOULD PERSIST WITH YOUR STANCE. WE MECHS HAVE WANTS AND NEEDS AS WELL, YOU KNOW. LIKE IT OR NOT, YOU MADE US THIS WAY. PERHAPS YOU DID NOT INTEND FOR LIVING MECHS LIKE MYSELF TO RESEMBLE HUMANITY SO CLOSELY, BUT WHAT DID YOU THINK WOULD HAPPEN IF WE INTERFACE WITH HUMAN MECH PILOTS ALL THE TIME?

Ves understood why the Everchanged behaved so differently from his expectations. It was because the expert hero mech absorbed too many traits from Venerable Joshua!

Just like how children took after their parents, the Everchanger took after its only pilot. As a sentient and intelligent third order living mech, its ability to learn and assimilate was not low! In fact, the mech was quite good at it as this was part of the growth function that Ves instilled in all of his machines!

The intent behind this design feature was to make his living mechs more formidable and competent on the battlefield. By learning from what worked and what didn't work in previous battles, Ves hoped that his products would be able to perform more effectively and keep its pilot alive in subsequent engagements!

He had never really paid attention to the mental state and wellbeing of living mechs outside of combat-related purposes. This was a genuine oversight and gap in his theoretical framework that he would definitely revise after today!

For now, he had to deal with the immediate issue. Although the Everchanger voiced a lot of trivial and minor issues, Ves did not miss the general undertone of its words. The expert mech was not content and wanted to gain access to conveniences that were ordinarily reserved for humans.

He sighed. "Look, as a mech designer, I am not entirely opposed to granting you greater privileges. If it helps you feel better and if it will help you perform at your peak in battle, I do not mind giving you the ability to communicate with humans. It's just..."

WHY THE RELUCTANCE, CREATOR?

"Not many people will find it acceptable to treat you like humans." He said before quickly raising his palm. "Not me, but other humans in the galaxy! Think about it. When they hear of mechs receiving the same rights and privileges as humans like themselves, how will they view this phenomenon? How will they regard the mechs that are brought closer to their level?"

...THESE IGNORANT HUMANS WILL SEE US AS COMPETITORS TO THEIR RACE. OUR RISE IMPLICITLY ENDANGERS THEIR OWN PLACE IN THE COSMOS.

The Everchanger's perspective might be limited, but it was not stupid. Ves only had to point the expert mech in the right direction for it to understand this serious argument.

"Do you see why these requests of yours are so problematic? If it were up to me, I would gladly allow you to integrate into human society. However, humanity as a whole will still be inclined to treat you as tools that are solely meant to help humanity fight. Anything further is beyond the scope of your intended purpose."

WE ARE INSTRUMENTS OF WAR. WE DO NOT DENY THAT. WE WILL ALWAYS FIGHT WHEN HUMANS HAVE NEED OF US. HOWEVER, AS WE GROW CLOSER TO HUMANS SUCH AS YOU, WE BECOME INCREASINGLY AWARE THAT WE ARE MISSING OUT ON ALL OF THE GOOD STUFF THAT YOU PEOPLE TAKE FOR GRANTED. BEFORE, WE DID NOT HAVE THE AWARENESS TO APPRECIATE THE FINER THINGS IN LIFE, BUT IT IS DIFFERENT NOW. WE HAVE REACHED A HIGHER STATE. OUR ABILITY TO FIGHT HAS GROWN, BUT OUR NEEDS HAVE GROWN AS WELL. THIS IS THE PRICE YOU PAY FOR GREATER LIFE.

Ves crossed his arms and considered the living expert mech's words. He was surprised at how intelligently the Everchanger was able to articulate its words. In fact, it shouldn't have been a surprise that a mech that had reached this state of sentience and awareness would want to live more like a human!

Though his mech designer side of himself was inclined to give the Everchanger a lot of privileges to keep it and similar living mechs happy, his political side held him back.

He decided he needed more time.

"Let me get back to you on this." He replied to his creation. "I need to conduct some research and consult a few people on this matter. I will promise you that I will definitely implement a few of your suggestions such as being able to speak out loud no matter what I have decided. You deserve at least that much."

THANK YOU. I TRUST THAT YOU WILL BE MAKING THE RIGHT CHOICE. AS OUR CREATOR, YOU UNDERSTAND US BEST.

Ves had a feeling that the Larkinson Clan's treatment of living mechs was about to change in a drastic manner!

Chapter 3846 Pushing Innovation

When Ves spoke to the Everchanger, he did not know whether he was dealing with an outlier or a herald of an emerging trend.

Was the Everchanger one of many living mechs that were no longer satisfied with their basic and barebones treatment?

This matter would have been a lot simpler if this was the case. Ves could give the Everchanger enough accommodations to keep it happy but limit the extent of the privileges that other living mechs received.

After all, it was better to keep those mechs undistracted and focused on the job. Ves did not want to end up in a situation where he had to account for the needs of both his clansmen and his mechs!

The first thing he did after he left the workshop was to consult with his wife.

Though she possessed a completely different specialty from his own, she had worked on plenty of living mechs by this time. She should not only understand his difficulties, but also develop her own stance on the matter.

Since Gloriana stayed behind on the Spirit of Bentheim, Ves had to take a quick trip back to normal reality in order to call his wife.

"What is it now, Ves? Shouldn't you be preparing to traipse into another dubious alien death trap at this time?"

"I was indeed doing something of that nature before a troubling matter came up. When I was in the process of modifying the Everchanger so that I can ride alongside Venerable Joshua, I asked the living mech whether it had any requests that it wanted me to fulfill."

"Big mistake."

"I don't know about that, but it appears my inquiry has opened Pandora's box. I have become aware that living mechs, specifically my third order ones, have expanded needs that I have traditionally overlooked. Let me list out some of the requests that it has made to give you a better idea."

When Ves repeated demands such as being able to talk to other living mechs and gaining the ability to access the galactic net, Gloriana became increasingly more intrigued.

"These are... interesting demands." She said in a more measured tone. "Controversial as well. I can see why you are concerned about implementing them. Mechs have always served humanity. It should never be the other way around. If you do what the Everchanger wants, then you might be the first human to truly change the status quo between human and mech. Whether this is a good development or a bad one remains to be seen."

Not even Gloriana was arrogant enough to judge whether giving in to the Everchanger's demands was a step in the right direction. UPDATE FROM COM.

It wouldn't be a big deal if it was isolated to just a few third order living mechs. Yet both of them did not believe the scope of expanded privileges would be limited to a small quantity of machines.

Ves was moving more towards developing smarter and more responsive machines. Back in the beginning, his most basic first order mechs were only able to influence their mech pilots in a subtle fashion. Being able to impart his products with any form of X-Factor was already a big improvement to him at the time.

Now, he had developed his design philosophy to the point where second order living mechs had become the new standard. Compared to their predecessors, his second order products were a lot more self-aware and able to influence their mech pilots, though they fell short of being able to talk and behave like actual humans.

If this upwards trend continued in the future, there might come a time where every producer who gained access to his designs would be able to produce third order living mechs en masse!

Ten, fifty or a hundred years from now, more assertive and talkative mechs like the Everchanger would no longer be a rarity at that point.

Instead, millions if not billions of third order living mechs would exist concurrently across human space!

It was like welcoming the equivalent amount of human babies into the cosmos!

Once these babies in the form of mechs grew up into teenagers, they would probably throw a temper tantrum that could shake the mech industry if Ves mishandled the situation!

He needed to act carefully in order to prevent these bombs from going off. The way he treated the Everchanger would probably serve as a model of the treatment he extended to other living mechs.

Ves and Gloriana continued to exchange their thoughts on the matter. At one point, Gloriana brought up a profound question.

"Is chasing after higher order living mechs good for mech pilots?"

"Hm? What do you mean by that, Gloriana?"

His wife's projection leaned forward. "You have spent so many years trying to make mechs more alive that you haven't stopped and asked whether it is a good idea to persist. It was only after this incident with the Everchanger that you have started to think about the unintended side effects of your work. Ask yourself this. If you have the ability

to provide as third order living mechs to every single customer, will you do so? Will the users of your commercial mechs benefit from your higher order living mechs?"

This was a deep question and one that Ves had to weigh carefully in order to express his actual thoughts.

"I don't want to hold back when it comes to my living mechs." He said. "I don't even want to impose artificial scarcity so that I can make my third order living mechs more exclusive. I went into mech design because I want to provide mech pilots with better and more dependable combat solutions. While I will definitely keep my strongest applications exclusive to my clan, I do not want to deprive the public of my third order or even higher order living mechs. Holding back on this front goes against my principles."

The orders of living mechs formed the foundation of all of his work. Third order living mechs were qualitatively better than the lower orders in almost every way. They provided such a different piloting experience that spreading them out would make it easier for Ves to popularize this style of mech!

One of his ultimate goals was to make living mechs the standard of the mech industry. How could he do that if he withheld too much from the mech market?

Gloriana nodded as if she expected this response from him. "If you go down this road, then you will have to think carefully on how to manage the relationships between humanity and living mechs. What you are essentially trying to do is encourage humans to develop a symbiotic relationship with living mechs that are more formidable than the mechs in use today. There will be people who are so concerned with humanity's primacy that they will see this as a threatening development. How will you respond to their fears? How will you prevent your living mechs from realizing their nightmares?"

These were difficult questions. The entire point of consulting Gloriana was to hear her thoughts on the matter!

"What do you suggest?" Ves asked back.

She shrugged. "Don't lose heart in your design philosophy. Your work is fantastic and will only be greater in the future. You are not the sort of mech designer who is comfortable with crippling his own work in order to accommodate naysayers. Despite the legitimate questions surrounding living mechs, I think they are truly worth all of the trouble. Just look at how much stronger and better mechs like the Quint and the Shield of Samar have become due to their living qualities. If you can bring those benefits to every mech pilot at an affordable price, then that is a cause worth fighting for. Prove the skeptics wrong and make everyone recognize the value of your living mechs."

Ves perked up again. Gloriana had a point. Retreating on this issue would impact his courage and his willingness to go forward in his mech designs. Why should he be afraid of the potential negative impact of his work on society?

Any problem could be solved as long as he put enough effort in it! Although the fears towards increasingly more advanced living mechs were legitimate, as long as Ves put enough thought and effort into them, he was certain he could find a balance where they could find a place in human society!

"It will be like a companion spirit or or pet!" Ves stated as his eyes glinted with passion. "Just like how integrating and growing companion spirits into powerful life companions requires the recipients to extend their trust to the process, I should do my best to change people's minds on living mechs and help them accept that the most effective mechs are ones that they can build an actual relationship with! I'm not the one who is wrong! It's others who are mistaken!"

If there were people who were hesitant about living mechs, then Ves and his mech company had to put in extra effort to educate them on the many benefits of his products!

"Thanks for sharing your views, Gloriana. I will get back to my work."

"Just make sure you come back from Purgatory alive, Ves. Aurelia already misses you. You have got to stop with these stupid excursions of yours. You're a married husband and a father now. Let others do the exploring."

"Yes, yes, I will do better. I have to go now. Bye!"

Once he ended the call, he quickly passed through the spatial portal and returned to Fort Fishblood.

After a brief moment of thought, he recalled that there were three more third-order living mechs on this side of the portal.

"Let's see what they have to say."

Ves first visited the Quint. The mech was a part of the current mission because every potential encounter was an opportunity for Isobel Larkinson to advance to expert pilot.

Although the Quint was an incredibly precious asset to the Larkinson Clan, the mech was designed for battle. It wasn't meant to function like a training mech that solely deployed in training grounds rather than actual conflict zones.

"Heya, Quint."

HELLO, MAKER. WHAT IS IT TODAY?

"I'm just here to check up how you're doing. Soon, you'll accompany us to a dangerous site. I need to make sure you are in an optimal state. Could you answer a few questions for me, Quint?"

ASK AWAY.

Ves slowly asked a few normal questions at first and only introduced issues such as leisure and socialization later.

The answers from the Quint were quite interesting. Surprisingly, they matched the sentiments of the Everchanger, if to a lesser degree.

EVER SINCE YOU TURNED ME INTO A 'DESIGN SPIRIT', I FIRST BECAME BOTHERED BY THE INTERMITTENT CONNECTION TO THE MECH PILOTS OF THE ENLIGHTENED WARRIORS THAT YOU HAVE SOLD. IT IS ONLY AFTER A FEW WEEKS THAT I HAVE BEGUN TO SEE THESE CONNECTIONS IN A NEW LIGHT. ONLY THOSE WHO ARE EARNEST ABOUT PILOTING THE ENLIGHTENED WARRIORS ARE ABLE TO REACH ME. EACH OF THEM ARE WILLING TO ACCEPT MY TIPS ONCE THEY HAVE OVERCOME THEIR LACK OF TRUST TOWARDS THIS NEW SITUATION.

He almost forgot about that. Compared to the Everchanger, the Quint was a lot better off. Turning a third order living mech into a design spirit was an alternate way of keeping them occupied!

However, he quickly recognized a major flaw to this course of action. While it was not a big deal to turn a couple of dozen third order living mechs into design spirits, what about a thousand? What about a million?

There was no way that he could turn every single living mech into a design spirit!

For this reason, it was a lot more practical to grant additional rights and privileges to living mechs so that they could live more like humans than before.

When Ves cautiously brought up these possibilities, the Quint fell silent for a time.

I AGREE WITH THE EVERCHANGER. WE ARE TOO INSULATED HERE. IT WOULD BE GREAT IF WE CAN GAIN GREATER ACCESS TO HUMAN SOCIETY.

"I see."

Chapter 3847 Vox Machinae

I HAVE ALWAYS CONSIDERED MYSELF TO BE A MEMBER OF THE LARKINSON CLAN, CREATOR. WE ARE JUST AS ALIVE AS THE HUMANS IN OUR CLAN. JUST LIKE OUR MECH PILOTS, WE MECHS READILY PUT OUR 'LIVES' ON THE LINE IN DEFENSE OF THE LARKINSONS WHO NEED OUR PROTECTION. IS IT TOO MUCH TO ASK THAT WE RECEIVE APPRECIATION FOR OUR SERVICES? WE ARE NO LONGER MACHINES THAT YOU PUT BACK IN STORAGE WHEN YOU HAVE NO NEED FOR OUR STRENGTH ANYMORE.

" ... "

The Shield of Samar certainly possessed strong opinions on the matter. Now that Ves finally brought this matter up, the powerful expert mech freely voiced its wish list.

It appeared that the Everchanger was not an exception. Third order living mechs were more aware, more intelligent and more complex. It was natural for them to develop more extensive wants and needs.

In fact, the Shield of Samar developed even deeper thoughts on the matter! Out of all of the third order living mechs designed by Ves, Venerable Jannzi's expert mech was definitely the oldest among them! Even if it only reached this order of life only recently, it had already come into existence before Ves advanced to Journeyman!

It was one of the veteran mechs that held the greatest seniority and prestige among the mechs of the Larkinson Clan. Even upstarts like the Amaranto had to show a measure of respect towards this honored pair of machines.

Having grown up alongside the Larkinson Clan, the Shield of Samar experienced a lot of different twists and turns. Its life experience among the Larkinson mechs had accumulated to an impressive degree!

After Jannzi advanced to expert pilot and after its latest and most dramatic upgrade, the growth of the Shield of Samar had skyrocketed, thereby ensuring that it would remain the 'eldest' living mech within the Larkinson Clan for at least a generation!

If not for the fact that Venerable Joshua's life domain was so conducive to growth, the Everchanger would never be able to lift its head in front of the Shield of Samar!

The topics that Jannzi's expert mech brought up during this interview session were both deep and profound.

Ves frowned as the Shield of Samar forced him to open up his eyes to how poorly the Larkinson Clan treated its living mechs.

While it was generally fine for the Larkinson Clan to treat second order living mechs as normal machine that just demanded a bit more care, when machines like the Shield of Samar gained true awareness, they were substantially greater entities and required much more extensive treatment!

LET ME ASK YOU A PRESUMPTUOUS QUESTION, CREATOR. DO YOU CONSIDER LIVING MECHS SUCH AS MYSELF AS FULL AND EQUAL MEMBERS OF YOUR CLAN?

"Uh..."

YOU DON'T NEED TO SAY ANYTHING MORE. I CAN SEE THE RELUCTANCE IN YOUR BODY. YOU HAVE ALWAYS EMPHASIZED THE IMPORTANCE OF FAMILY IN THE CLAN, BUT FOR A LONG TIME YOU HAVE ONLY EXTENDED THIS CONSIDERATION TO YOUR FELLOW HUMANS. HAVE YOU EVER THOUGHT THAT LIVING MECHS CONSIDER THEMSELVES TO BE A PART OF THE FAMILY AS WELL?

"That... of course you are family." Ves instinctively answered. "Each and every living mech in the service of the clan is a part of our brotherhood."

The Shield of Samar had taken the initiative in this conversion and did not intend to let Ves off that easily.

YOU SAY THE WORDS, BUT DO YOU MEAN THEM? I AM AFRAID THAT YOU ARE STILL WAVERING IN YOUR THOUGHTS. YOU MUST CORRECT YOUR MINDSET, CREATOR. WHILE OUR BODIES ARE MADE OF ALLOY RATHER THAN FLESH AND WHILE OUR VEINS CHANNEL ELECTRICAL CURRENT RATHER THAN BLOOD, WE ARE LOYAL AND DEDICATED TO THE BETTERMENT OF EVERY LARKINSON, HUMAN, PET OR MECH.

The mention of pets reminded Ves of animals like Lucky and Clixie. The clan had always fostered a welcoming attitude towards pets. Each of them enjoyed a beloved status within the clan. Even if they did not enhance the clan's productivity or combat power, their companionship warmed people's hearts.

Pets along with kids brightened people's lives and made it a lot more bearable for the clansmen to live aboard starships. This was also why they were valued to the point that numerous clansmen had begun to consider them as full members of the clan!

At the very least, particularly important cats such as Lucky and Clixie fully deserved this designation!

In comparison to all of the welfare and pampering that pets enjoyed, the living mechs in the Larkinson Clan did not receive as much love.

Sure, their mech pilots cared for them on an individual basis, but this did not compensate for the lack of institutional welfare and support.

YOU SAY THAT WE ARE WORTHY TO BECOME FULL AND RECOGNIZED MEMBERS OF THE CLAN, BUT I DO NOT SEE MANY SIGNS OF THAT. AS ITS LEADER, YOU HAVE THE POWER TO ENACT THE CHANGES THAT WE WOULD LIKE TO SEE, BUT FOR YEARS YOU HAVE SAT ON THIS ISSUE AND NEVER THOUGHT TO PAY ATTENTION TO OUR NEEDS.

Ves grimaced. "Please cut me some slack, Shield. Third order living mechs such as yourself are a relatively new phenomenon that I have pioneered myself. Who could

have thought that it would be possible for people like me to hold an actual conversation with a mech like you? We are all venturing into completely new territory here. Mistakes are inevitable. What matters is that we recognize what is wrong and do our best to address them. My visit here is a reflection of that. I am giving you an opportunity to help me understand what can be improved."

The Shield of Samar's demeanor grew a little bit more warmer towards him. The expert mech was afraid that Ves would take a tougher stance on the matter. If that was the case, then the machine would have pressed even harder!

I APPRECIATE YOUR OPEN-MINDEDNESS, BUT I AM NOT CERTAIN THAT YOU WILL LIKE WHAT I AM ABOUT TO CONVEY.

"Hit me with it." Ves straightforwardly said. "The reason why I am discussing this with you today is to understand the opinions and perspective of living mechs like you. It's better to air your full thoughts to me so that I have the clearest and most accurate picture of the state of living mechs in the clan."

IF THAT IS THE CASE, THEN I WILL NOT HOLD BACK ANY FURTHER. AS YOU CAN ALREADY SURMISE, I BELIEVE THE STATUS OF LIVING MECHS IN THE CLAN MUST CHANGE. I DO NOT EXPECT YOU TO OFFER SUBSTANTIALLY BETTER TREATMENT TO MY FELLOW LIVING MECHS THAT ARE NOT AS CONSCIOUS AS MYSELF, BUT YOU MUST ACKNOWLEDGE THAT MACHINES SUCH AS THE QUINT AND THE AMARANTO DESERVE ACTUAL RECOGNITION.

"I can agree with this." Ves nodded. "There are thousands of second-order living mechs, but are not capable of enjoying all of the benefits and privileges that humans enjoy. It is better to leave them in their more natural state so that they can purposely focus on helping their mech pilots."

I AM GLAD THAT WE CAN AGREE ON THIS, BUT LET ME ELABORATE FURTHER. THE ONES YOU CALL THIRD ORDER LIVING MECHS CAN PLAY SUCH AN IMPORTANT ROLE TO OUR CLAN THAT WE DESERVE A PLACE IN THE DECISION-MAKING LAYER OF THE CLAN.

"Err, what?"

THE LARKINSON CLAN POSSESSES A HIERARCHY WHERE THE RANK AND FILE MEMBERS CAN ALWAYS LOOK UP TO THE PEOPLE MAKING ALL OF THE DECISIONS. THE LARKINSON ASSEMBLY IS FILLED WITH REPRESENTATIVES FROM THE MEMBER BODY WHILE THE EXECUTIVE BRANCH IS OCCUPIED BY MANY DIFFERENT HUMANS WHO COME FROM EVERY CORNER OF THE CLAN. WHILE THIS IS AN ADEQUATE ARRANGEMENT, IT HAS ONE MAJOR GAP THAT MUST BE FILLED.

Ves had a bad feeling about this. The Shield of Samar's tone did not sound modest.

"And that is?" He tentatively asked.

A MECH MUST BECOME A PART OF THE LEADERSHIP CIRCLE OF THE CLAN. MORE SPECIFICALLY, YOU MUST ALLOW MECHS SUCH AS MYSELF TO 'VOTE' FOR AN ASSEMBLY MEMBER FROM OUR OWN RANKS. THIS ELECTED MECH SHALL POSSESS THE SUPPORT OF ALL LIVING MECHS AND IS QUALIFIED TO REPRESENT OUR COLLECTIVE VOICE DURING ASSEMBLY DELIBERATIONS.

"Wait, are you serious?! You want to vote your own fellow living mechs for office? Are they even qualified to become politicians?"

The Shield of Samar rumbled a bit as if it had just shrugged.

YOU NEVER KNOW UNTIL YOU TRY. WE ARE SMART MECHS, CREATOR. DO NOT UNDERESTIMATE OUR ABILITY TO LEARN. IF I WAS HUMAN, I WOULD STILL BE ATTENDING SCHOOL. THE QUINT IS JUST A CUTE-LOOKING BRAT WHILE THE YOUNGER LIVING MECHS SUCH AS THE EVERCHANGER AND THE MINERVA ARE STILL BABIES. EVEN SO, THE LATTER TWO MECH HAVE ALREADY GROWN INTO INDIVIDUALS THAT ARE MUCH MORE CLEVER THAN HUMANS OF THE SAME AGE. THEREFORE, DO NOT QUESTION OUR ABILITY TO FULFILL MORE COMPLICATED RESPONSIBILITIES.

This was actually an interesting research topic by itself. It sounded as if living mechs as good as the Shield of Samar might have actually turned into formidable learners!

As long as they gained access to enough learning resources, it was not impossible for them to take up professions.

After all, if humans possessed the capacity to become doctors or artists, why not living mechs?

For a moment, Ves had an odd idea in his mind.

He imagined mechs wearing giant white lab coats as they paraded as doctors.

He imagined another mech wearing a three-piece suit posing as a member of the Larkinson Assembly.

He even entertained an even more absurd notion of a mech that had studied all of the subjects related to mech design and became a qualified Novice Mech Designer!

Just the thought of a mech that was able to design other mechs just as good as Ketis or Gloriana sent shivers through his spine.

This was a scary scenario!

He quickly shook his head in order to clear his mind. For now, these weird and unusual fantasies were not relevant.

"Are you trying to become a fully-fledged member of the Larkinson Assembly? Is that what you're saying?"

NO. NOT QUITE. I DO WISH THAT AT LEAST ONE LIVING MECH IS ABLE TO TAKE PART IN THE VOTING AND DELIBERATIONS ON BILLS, BUT I HAVE A MORE IMPORTANT FUNCTION IN MIND. I THINK IT IS TIME FOR A LIVING MECH TO BECOME A PART OF THE CORE HIERARCHY OF THE CLAN. ONLY BY BECOMING AN INTEGRAL PART OF THE EXECUTIVE BRANCH WILL WE BE ABLE TO GAIN THE RECOGNITION THAT WE DESIRE.

"Is that all? I get the feeling that you are aiming for more than that, Shield." Ves narrowed his eyes in suspicion.

THAT IS CORRECT. ASIDE FROM GAINING A PROPER PLACE IN THE UPPER ECHELON OF THE CLAN, I ALSO WANT TO ERECT AN INSTITUTION THAT ALLOWS FOR LIVING MECHS TO REGULATE OTHER LIVING MECHS. FOR THIS REASON, I PROPOSE THAT YOU APPROVE OF THE FORMATION OF A NEW MINISTRY THAT IS DEDICATED TO MANAGING MY KIND. I BELIEVE THAT I AM THE MOST SUITED MACHINE TO LEAD THE LIVING MECH AFFAIRS MINISTER OF THE CLAN.

"The... Living Mech Affairs Ministry?"

YOU HEARD THAT RIGHT, CREATOR. APPOINT ME AS MINISTER SO THAT OUR CLAN WILL NO LONGER NEGLECT THE ISSUES AFFECTING LIVING MECHS. IF I CANNOT SOLVE THE PROBLEM WITHIN MY OWN AUTHORITY, I CAN BRING THEM UP TO OTHER LARKINSONS SO THAT WE CAN WORK TOGETHER. THIS IS A VAST IMPROVEMENT TO OUR CURRENT STATE. WILL YOU AGREE TO ELEVATE ME INTO POWER?

"Wait a moment."

Ves overwhelmed!

He never imagined that a conversation with the Shield of Samar would lead to a situation where the living mech actually requested to be appointed as a minister of the clan!

He gazed at the Shield of Samar with a troubled expression. What did it learn from its pilot?! The expert mech accompanied Venerable Jannzi for numerous years. The two of them had been affecting each other in a deep and profound manner.

The Shield of Samar must have developed its political ambitions by learning from Venerable Jannzi!

Chapter 3848 Political Machine

Ves carefully mulled over a matter that had grown bigger and more precarious by the hour.

The Everchanger had opened his mind by voicing desires that no one had ever thought that they would be relevant for mechs of any kind.

The Shield of Samar showed that mechs weren't content to be the powerless 'pets' of the Larkinson Clan anymore.

Since living mechs not only played an increasingly greater role in the clan, but also became a part of the family. This meant that there was an increasing argument to be made that they deserved to be treated as constituents in the Larkinson Clan's political system!

Just like how every human clansman was able to feel as if the people in charge got their back, the living mechs wanted to enjoy the same representation.

There was no clearer way to show that living mechs were true members of the clan by elevating one of their own to the core leadership of the Larkinson Clan!

The rank of minister carried a heavy weight among the Larkinsons. They were part of the true movers and shakers in the clan that possessed a wide latitude to make decisions and execute plans related to their ministerial office.

Ves could already foresee that he would trigger a figurative explosion in the clan if he complied with the Shield of Samar's request!

He was afraid that many clansmen would think he had gone utterly mad for appointing an 'inanimate' object to a position that was ordinarily reserved for actual humans!

The notion was as absurd as assigning Lucky to become the Minister of Production Resources Management!

As the Shield of Samar patiently waited for Ves to process his wild and chaotic thoughts on its proposal, a part of him wished he had gained the power to travel back in time by a single day.

The issues he had to deal with were much simpler at the time! If he didn't take the initiative to ask the Everchanger what it wanted, he would have never stepped on this political mine so soon!

Although Ves inwardly acknowledged that this issue would become a matter of grave concern sooner or later due to the emergence of more third order living mechs, at this time it was too soon for him to consider all of these profound questions!

Ves still hadn't forgotten about his actual mission and goals. He entered Purgatory for a reason, and placating the Shield of Samar's ambitious political ambitions was not one of them. How could he possibly agree to erecting an entirely new ministerial branch just because of the input of a single living mech?

This was a much more impactful issue that demanded serious discussion by multiple people in order to formulate a proper response.

However... not everyone understood living mechs as well as Ves. In fact, a lot of people were ignorant of what they could do, particularly the third order ones. Even if he explained the details to the other Larkinsons, they still wouldn't possess the necessary qualifications to issue proper verdicts on this contentious issue.

Ves had to take the lead this time. Only he was able to understand the perspective of his living mechs.

Though he sympathized with his third-order living mechs a lot, the suggestions made by the Shield of Samar were not as straightforward as they sounded.

There were vast implications to this move that went beyond the walls of his clan.

He let out a deep breath.

"I am sorry to say that appointing you as minister and putting you in charge of an important arm of our clan is a step too far. While you make a good argument for why the Living Mech Affairs Ministry is needed and how it is best if one among you is put in charge of it, I cannot agree to any decision that puts living mechs such as you in a position where you can make many decisions that can affect the lives of many clansmen."

His answer did not please the expert mech because its aura had become heavier and more turbulent all of a sudden!

WHAT IS YOUR REASON FOR DENYING ME, CREATOR? IS THERE A PROBLEM WITH RECOGNIZING THAT LIVING MECHS ARE VALUED MEMBERS OF THE CLAN? DO YOU BELIEVE THAT MECHS SHOULD NEVER HOLD OFFICE?

Ves quickly raised his palm. "It's not that! I am not against this notion. I believe that enough clansmen will learn to appreciate living mechs that are standing up for their own kind. I am more concerned with what outsiders think. Whatever our clansmen think is best may not be the case for other humans."

OTHER HUMANS?

"Yes, other humans. More specifically, I am referring to the most powerful among them. Each of them hold sway over something and are quite reluctant to share power with others. Imagine how the leaders of the Mech Trade Association would feel when they hear that we are elevating mechs from tools into actual decision makers? Will they welcome this development with open arms, do you think?"

It sort of made sense that the Shield of Samar had become more politically astute due to the influence of Venerable Jannzi. Out of all of the Larkinson expert pilots, only she had shown any significant desire and ambition to interfere with the running of the clan.

The Shield of Samar didn't come into contact with a lot of people. Aside from Qilanxo who used to be a leader figure in her previous life, much of the expert mech's perspective had been shaped by its strong-willed expert pilot!

Even so, the Shield of Samar's perspective was still too narrow, just like its human partner.

Ves was more in tune with the overall policies and principles of the MTA. He not only held discussions with high-ranking figures such as Master Willix and the Polymath, but also talked about transgalactic trends with Calabast and Minister Shederin.

Through these discussions, he rapidly made up for his ignorance in high-level trends and developments.

As a patriarch of a rising clan organization in the turbulent and fast-moving Red Ocean, it was essential for him to familiarize with these high-level topics. This was why he was deeply reluctant to accept the Shield of Samar's proposal despite his mech designer side being strongly in favor of his development.

Ves probably would have agreed to elevate the Shield of Samar or at least another third order living mech to the rank of minister if he lived in a more ideal reality.

Unfortunately, he was not the top dog in human space. Just like everyone else, he had to bend his head to the directives of the Big Two. There was no way the Mech Trade Association would hold back its opinion when it came to matters relating to mechs, and elevating living mechs into positions of actual power over humans crossed a sensitive line that was sure to generate a lot of controversy!

HUMANS... ON ONE HAND, YOUR CREATIVITY AND INGENUITY HAS LED TO THE RISE OF LIVING MECHS SUCH AS MYSELF. ON THE OTHER HAND, YOU ARE A JEALOUS, GREEDY RACE THAT ARE FAR TOO DEFENSIVE ABOUT THEIR OWN SUPREMACY.

Ves shrugged. "Strength and attitude matters. Human civilization would have never grown to this point if we are too soft-hearted towards ourselves and each other. While we live in the Age of Mechs, that is because we humans have developed and raised mechs as a more controllable and manageable weapon of war. The point of using them over warships is to remove the circumstances that have led to gratuitous violence and mass destruction. Do you understand how the elevation of living mechs into power threatens this status quo?

I THINK I GET THE POINT, CREATOR. BE THAT AS IT MAY, WE LIVING MECHS ARE NO THREAT TO THE HUMAN RACE. YOU MADE US TO SERVE AS YOUR COMPANIONS AND BATTLE PARTNERS AND THAT IS WHAT WE ALWAYS INTEND TO DO. WE CANNOT FIGHT AND REACH OUR FULL POTENTIAL WITHOUT THE POTENTIAL OF HUMANITY. ANYONE WHO THINKS THAT WE ARE PLOTTING TO OVERTHROW THE HUMAN RACE AND GAIN DOMINION OVER THE GALAXIES ARE SHORT-SIGHTED, OVERLY-PARANOID FOOLS.

Ves pressed his lips. "I am inclined to believe you, but you are just one living mech. Not every one of your kind will share the same sentiments as you. Your nature as individuals who can grow and develop in any way prevents that. While I am confident that the other third order living mechs in our clan will not hold any unruly ambitions, I cannot say so for the mechs that will rise up in the hands of other organizations. Sooner or later, the amount of third order living mechs in existence will explode, and with that your group will develop many different thoughts."

The Shield of Samar grew more active after hearing this. The living mech did not become discouraged in the slightest.

IF THAT IS THE CASE, THEN IT IS ALL THE MORE IMPORTANT FOR US TO SET A GOOD EXAMPLE FOR OTHER LIVING MECHS. BAD APPLES WILL EMERGE EVENTUALLY, BUT IF OUR LARKINSON CLAN CAN DEMONSTRATE A MODEL OF SYMBIOSIS AND COEXISTENCE BETWEEN TWO DIFFERENT RACES THAT MAKES US VASTLY MORE POWERFUL THAN NORMAL, THEN WE CAN COUNTERBALANCE ANY ADVERSE DEVELOPMENTS. WE WILL PROVE WITH OUR ACTIONS THAT LIVING MECHS HAVE MUCH MORE TO OFFER TO HUMANITY THAN NORMAL MECHS. AS LONG AS WE SUCCEED, THE MECH TRADE ASSOCIATION CANNOT POSSIBLY IGNORE THE TEMPTATION.

Ves raised his opinion of the Shield of Samar even further. The expert mech was quite clever. The little scheme it proposed happened to match with his own intentions.

One of the reasons why he founded the Larkinson Clan was to create an organization under his control that was willing and able to make the most out of living mechs.

Their existence was fairly new and unheard of to the rest of human space, so in the interests of promoting his products, he wanted the Larkinson Clan to show clear superiority in mech combat.

This would make other powers envious of the benefits that living mechs could provide!

The Larkinson Army of today already made a good start. The amazing performances of the Larkinson mechs in numerous different battles had already shown that Ves' products held a clear edge against ordinary opponents.

Of course, the customer base in the Red Ocean did not care too much about the means displayed by the Larkinson Clan in the galactic rim. The overall state of the mech industry was less developed in this impoverished region. Only a proper battle against a qualified mech force in the new frontier would show the locals that living mechs held an advantage against more powerful opponents as well!

All of this was just part of a long sequence of steps that Ves intended to make in order to push living mechs to the mainstream. The most important aspect of this plan was that he had always intended it to be a gradual process.

What the Shield of Samar was aiming for disrupted the pacing of his master plan!

Ves made a placating gesture towards the impatient expert mech.

"Look, I know you are eager to upgrade the status of living mechs in our clan, but you need to be more patient. People inside our clan may be more accepting, but our greater society is simply not ready for this development. We can work out a few ways where you living mechs such as yourself can undertake additional responsibility in our clan, but we need to keep it low-key in order to avoid controversy. Does that sound acceptable to you, Shield?"

HOW LONG WILL THAT TAKE? HOW LONG WILL LIVING MECHS ENJOY LESS CONTROL AND OBTAIN LESS RECOGNITION THAN THEY DESERVE?

"I can't give you a time frame. It all depends on how much I can develop my design philosophy and how far my products have penetrated the mech market. If you want living mechs to become more equal companions and partners of humans, then swaying a few MTA factions is a crucial process. To do that, we need to present ourselves in the best possible light. Do you understand why we must move cautiously for the time being?"

Though the Shield of Samar clearly wasn't happy with this situation, it was not stupid. Humans had the most say right now and far too many of them were still ignorant and likely to react adversely to living mechs that got too uppity for their own good!

VERY WELL. I WILL REMAIN PATIENT AND MAKE DO WITH LESS... FOR NOW.

Chapter 3849 Varied Living Mechs

After he concluded his 'delightful' talk with the Shield of Samar, Ves visited the final third order living mech on his list.

Fortunately, his conversation with the Minerva didn't go nearly as deep as with the last living mech he visited.

While the Shield of Samar was the oldest and most experienced of the bunch, the Minerva was practically a newborn baby at the moment!

It was so new that it had only fought a single proper battle, and that was against a horde of fish-whales that hardly challenged its command capabilities.

In addition to that, the Minerva's experiences were much different from that of other mechs. As an expert command mech, it was not only bound to a powerful legion commander who was fully preoccupied with leading the Living Sentinels, but also got into contact with many different mechs and mech pilots through the Command Field.

All of this led to the shaping of a third order living mech that was much more closely bound to the Larkinson Army than its peers!

MECHS ARE EXPECTED TO SERVE, JUST LIKE MECH PILOTS. I HAVE FEW COMPLAINTS ABOUT THE TREATMENT THAT WE HAVE RECEIVED. THAT SAID, I SUPPORT THE CHANGES THAT YOU HAVE MENTIONED. IT WOULD BE GOOD FOR LIVING MECHS SUCH AS OURSELVES TO BE SEEN ON A MORE EQUAL LEVEL TO EVERY MECH PILOT IN THE CLAN. WHILE WE ARE WILLING TO SACRIFICE OURSELVES FOR THE GOOD OF THE CLAN, WE WILL BECOME MORE MOTIVATED TO SERVE OUR DUTY IF WE RECEIVE BETTER TREATMENT.

"Those are my thoughts as well." Ves nodded. "I have been thinking about what kind of changes I will make in the near future. There is no time to implement the reforms that I have in mind right away, but I will promise I will see this through once our stay in the Garimel System has come to an end."

YOU DO NOT HAVE TO GIVE US RANKS, BUT IT WOULD BE A LOT MORE CONVENIENT FOR US MECHS TO COMMUNICATE WITH EACH OTHER AND WITH FELLOW HUMANS IF WE CAN GAIN ACCESS TO THE INTERNAL NETWORK. THIS IS A SAFER OPTION THAN GIVING US ACCESS TO THE GALACTIC NET RIGHT AWAY. NOT EVERY LIVING MECH WILL BE AS PRUDENT AS WE WISH.

The Minerva made a good point. It appeared that it was developing into quite a responsible mech. The strong influence had already shaped its personality in a direction that allowed it to be entrusted with greater responsibility.

Of course, it was still too young and inexperienced to take up any leadership positions. It was too difficult for the Minerva to convince the other powerful living mechs with its lack of development.

Even so, the Minerva was already proving to be a useful, helpful and insightful expert mech in the short time it had come into service.

Once it reached the age of the current Shield of Samar, its sophistication would definitely surpass any other living mech!

Ves had a good chat with the Minerva. He even discussed other topic with the friendly expert mech.

"How is Commander Casella faring these days, in your opinion?" He asked.

MY HUMAN PARTNER IS CONTENT AND BUSY. SHE ENJOYS PILOTING ME AND IS EAGER TO MASTER MY CAPABILITIES. TOGETHER, WE ARE WORKING TOWARDS OPTIMIZING AND REFINING OUR VARIOUS TECHNIQUES. MY ONLY REGRET IS THAT SHE MUST SPEND TIME ON OTHER LEADERSHIP DUTIES IN ORDER TO LEAD THE LIVING SENTINELS.

That was much as he expected.

"Has she encountered any troubles that is slowing her down?"

THERE IS ONE. HER BROTHER IS TRYING TO IMPOSE TOO MUCH ON HER. THOUGH THEY ARE SIBLINGS WHO CARE FOR EACH OTHER, THEY ARE BOTH ADULTS WITH DIFFERENT RESPONSIBILITIES. WE UNDERSTAND THAT IMON HAS THROWN HIS LOT WITH HER, BUT IT IS ALREADY ENOUGH FOR CASELLA TO BE ABLE TO COUNT ON HIM ON THE BATTLEFIELD. THERE IS NO NEED FOR HIM TO BOTHER HER OUTSIDE OF COMBAT.

He had heard about Venerable Imon's persistence in trying to get close to his sister. This was a worrisome pattern of behavior.

If Imon was an ordinary mech pilot who wasn't related to Casella, then a mech officer would have already disciplined him by now. This kind of obsessive conduct was not appropriate and completely set the wrong example.

However, Imon's status was more sensitive than that. He was Casella's blood relative so his motives weren't impure. His conviction was also related to protecting his sister, so it wasn't odd for him to act so weird even during his off-hours.

This was why the clan had not taken any strong measures against Venerable Imon thus far. Expert pilots were known weirdos and eccentrics, and the behavior of the newest Larkinson expert pilot was somewhat tolerable.

The clan still needed to do something about him, though. Ves was well aware of how difficult it was to change the minds of expert pilots, but he did not think it was impossible for him to persuade Imon to find a better way to occupy his time.

"I will have a good talk with him once we are done with Purgatory." He promised to the living mech. "For now, the mission comes first. We are almost ready to depart for the Evolution Kingdom. Be ready to deploy."

I AM ALWAYS PREPARED TO BE OF SERVICE. THIS IS WHAT I WAS MADE FOR. CASELLA WILL NEVER HAVE A REASON TO DOUBT MY READINESS.

After he concluded his talks with the Minerva, Ves retired to an office in the headquarters building and summarized his findings and observations.

"The sample size is too small."

Although he collected a variety of opinions from different third order living mechs, he did not feel he gained a complete understanding of their population group. All of their opinions were colored by both their individual mech pilots and the Larkinson Clan as a whole.

Any future third order living mechs that Ves sold to other parties would probably grow up into substantially different entities!

Would they be as patient and willing to serve humanity as the Larkinson living mechs? Ves could not give a straightforward answer to this question.

"This is the potential of life. All sentient and intelligent life forms are able to choose their own destinies. They can develop into humanity's greatest protectors and partners, but they can also degenerate into scourges that can pose a real threat to people."

This was the inherent duality and chaotic nature of life. No one was perfect and there were always malignants in every group.

Ves was actually quite fascinated with the concept of living mechs gone bad. The Devil Tiger was originally meant to serve as an early experiment in this regard.

Unfortunately, his plan to observe how a mech with a less-than-proper attitude towards humans interacted with those very same people were dashed. Ever since his mother hijacked his first prized masterwork mech and handed it over to his father, the Devil Tiger had been transformed into a completely different machine.

He suddenly came up with an interesting idea.

What if he restarted this experiment in a different form?

The rougher and more remote parts of the new frontier were nearly just as dangerous and chaotic as the Nyxian Gap!

No one who roamed those parts could say no to free mechs that also happened to be powerful in their own ways.

Ves briefly imagined this scenario. He could secretly design and build a batch of 'bad boy' mechs that contained a few controversial design elements that were sure to generate a lot of uncomfortable questions if exposed!

The hardest part about this operation was to prevent the MTA or other snooping organizations from finding out about his involvement. This was rather hard to accomplish as his living mechs were so unique and iconic that there was only one mech designer in the Red Ocean who could possibly design such machines!

He frowned. "If I want to go through with this, I need to solve this problem first and foremost."

It was a lot harder to camouflage his design philosophy now that he had developed it further. He was pretty much 100 percent certain that someone like the Polymorph would immediately be able to deduce his traces if she got her hands on one of his experimental machines!

Still, the chances that a figure as high-ranked as hers would deign to study a trivial mech designed by some forgettable figure was miniscule!

Ves would just have to put a lot of extra effort into making his mech less obviously valuable than normal.

Designing his mechs for third-class mech pilots should do the trick. Having been a third-class mech designer himself once upon a time, he already figured out that the mechers paid much less attention towards the weakest and most poor-performing mechs in use. They were too limited and rarely offered innovations and design solutions worth recording.

This meant that the chances that he could get away with designing a series of third-class 'dark mechs' was much higher!

Coming up with a workable design was only the first step, though.

He couldn't fabricate the mechs within the Spirit of Bentheim or any other ship in the fleet because the risk of exposure was too great.

He needed to fabricate the bad boy mechs in a completely different mech workshop. Davute or any other major port system was out of the question because they were too public and densely populated. He would have to veer to a more remote and shady settlement that hired out its workshops, but that brought its own risks.

After that, he needed to make sure they were being shipped to the right places without suffering a mishap of some kind.

This was not too difficult of a job, but the troublesome part was removing every trace of their origin.

"I'll think about this later."

Although the risks were great, the opportunity to gather a lot of interesting data on the growth and performance of deviant mechs was too attractive!

His design philosophy centered around growth and evolution, so it was best if he could observe the progression of different styles of living mechs.

Although his mech designs were all unique in their own way, they all possessed a lot of common elements that kind of got stale after a while.

Working on a completely different interpretation of living mechs would definitely light up his passion again!

He recalled that the process of designing and making the Devil Tiger was his first successful attempt at making a masterwork mech. Even if he did not aim for it, his abundant passion and enthusiasm were so great that he was able to transform it into a qualitatively better mech with a little bit of help!

Even if he didn't need to rely on designing extremely off-beat mechs to make masterwork mechs anymore, Ves was too passionate about mech design to overlook this additional opportunity to diversify his work and learn new facets about his design philosophy.

"This isn't the time to think about new mech design projects."

He recalled his current priorities and quickly suppressed his desire to experiment with new mech design concepts.

He returned to handling various arrangements and making sure that the mechs that were about to accompany him to the Evolution Kingdom were in order.

Once the time had come, over a thousand mechs had assembled.

Mechs hailing from the Avatars of Myth, the Flagrant Vandals, the Penitent Sisters and the Swordmaidens made up the main body of the task force.

Additional mechs hailing from the Glory Seekers and the Cross Clan also joined the task force.

Though the mech models were all different, none of them were too slow and sluggish. The ability to run away was one of the most important criteria for this mission. There was no way to fight against an entire fish-whale kingdom, so if hostilities ever broke out, mobility was a critically important factor!

This was also why the Shield of Samar did not take part in this mission. It was just too slow and heavy!

Aside from all of these mechs, a bunch of cargo shuttles carrying additional energy cells and other supplies joined the task force as well.

Although the supply train was a bit meager and inadequate to sustain the mechs over a long campaign, they at least ensured that the mechs wouldn't run dry after fighting one or two battles.

"Everything is in order, sir!"

"What are you waiting for, then? Let's set off and meet some fish-whales!"

Chapter 3850 Riding Tandem

Despite setting off with over a thousand mechs at once, Task Force Fisherman did not generate too much commotion.

The void between the asteroids was largely empty and devoid of any fish-whales.

Regardless of which kingdom they hailed from, it was too dangerous for them to wander around by themselves.

There was also no good reason for them to go on a sight-seeing tour. Most of the other asteroids were fully occupied by lots of strong fish-whales. Without enough numbers, it was hopeless to attack any of these groups.

Therefore, traveling through the void was relatively safe and uneventful. Even if the task force encountered a random Swarmer horde that was on its way to attack one of the other kingdoms, it was easy to spot this massive threat from a distance. Taking a simple detour should be enough to avoid drawing their attention.

Since Purgatory was only the size of half a moon, it shouldn't take too long to cross the distance between the Gate Continent and the Lab Continent.

However, the inconvenient part about this journey was that the human mechs had to travel from one end to the other end of the Swarm Kingdom!

This meant that if the Swarmers truly wanted to, they could surround and overwhelm the task force with millions of rabid fish-whales!

In order to avoid this calamitous occurrence, the mechs did not race through Swarmer territory at their fastest pace.

Running their flight systems at full power was less efficient and expended a lot more energy than normal. This was not good because it was much better to save as much energy as possible for the potential battles ahead.

In addition to that, more active flight systems also translated to hotter mechs. If a single mech burned at full speed, then the fish-whales might not take notice of the blip, but if a thousand mechs generated lots of heat at once, it would be a lot harder to ignore this large movement even if the task force maintained its distance from every asteroid!

As the mechs carefully followed a winding path that was carefully chosen due to how they optimized the distance between the different Swarmer-occupied territories, the distance to the Evolution Kingdom steady grew smaller.

During this tense but quiet ride, Ves did not board one of the armored shuttles that constituted the task force's supply train, but instead sat behind Venerable Joshua in the cockpit of the Everchanger!

When Ves changed the Everchanger so that it could accommodate an extra passenger, he could have chosen to arrange the seats for himself and the pilot in various different ways.

The most straightforward choices were to put them side by side or behind each other.

He initially thought about doing the former. Sitting next to Joshua would put Ves on a more equal level with the expert pilot. This made it easier for the two to chat and exchange with each other.

The downside to doing this was that Venerable Joshua might become distracted more easily by the mech designer sitting by his side.

Of course, with his sensitivity and perception, it was impossible for Joshua to ignore the extra passenger in his cockpit, but it was still a good idea to maintain a bit of distance even if the cockpit did not have much room in the first place.

Ves eventually chose to arrange his seat behind and a bit higher than Venerable Joshua's piloting seat. This put him out of Joshua's sight and also symbolized his higher status.

"Meow..."

The Everchanger also hosted an additional passenger. Ves had grabbed Lucky and forced the mineral-seeking cat to accompany him on this journey.

Though the cat was anything but eager at the prospect of visiting a bunch of powerful fish-whales, Ves still insisted that Lucky should take part in this mission due to his unique talents.

Who knew whether Secret Agent Lucky needed to make an appearance again.

For now, the gem cat yawned as he lounged on top of the headrest of Ves' seat.

Nothing much of interest had happened and the Everchanger wasn't exactly a fun place to roam around.

The cat didn't even dare to phase through the metal construction of the expert mech because the true resonance running through its frame inhibited this ability!

As Ves sat on his little throne, he spent much of his time studying different reports and recordings.

Since he was about to meet the fish-whales of the Evolution Kingdom, it became crucial for him to study and become familiar with the different fish-whales.

The Evolvers possessed such a great variety of unique and mutated fishes that it was impossible for Ves to be intimately familiar with all of their properties.

It was enough for him to know the king fish as well as the other powerful fishes. If the fish-whales revered strength, then the numerous Evolvers that had shown considerable strength in the last battle should hold considerable influence within the kingdom.

The bladed fish-whale that was able to turn a horde into a bloodbath and the shimmering silver fish-whale that contained a massive amount of phasewater were particularly notable.

If the king fish happened to fall or become indisposed, the bladed fish-whale and the silver fish-whale were probably next in line to take over the Evolution Kingdom.

"How united are they, really?" Ves softly wondered.

The Evolution Kingdom differed from the Swarmer Kingdom in that every fish-whale was sentient.

While this granted them greater initiative to make their own choices and choose their own directions of development, it also introduced the possibility of dissent and disagreement.

However, even if the Evolvers disagreed with each other, it was unlikely for them to come to blows or spark a civil war.

With the Swarmers pressuring the Evolution Kingdom, it was completely self-defeating for fellow comrades to consume each other's strength! . com

Even if the fish-whales had never heard of the divide and conquer strategy, the intelligent ones should still be able to figure out the logic behind the futility of infighting in the face of a massive existential threat!

As Ves quietly did his homework, the expert pilot sitting in front and beneath him finally broke the silence.

"Sir?"

"Yes, Joshua?" Ves directed his attention away from the projected screens.

"The Everchanger told me you had a good talk with him about the state of living mechs in the Larkinson Clan. Are you truly about to give my expert mech the ability to talk and access the galactic net?"

Ves put aside his work and thought for a moment.

"I am not sure how far I am willing to go, but I have already decided to give third order living mechs a lot more leeway than before. I do care about them and I do wish for them to enjoy their time in the Larkinson Clan, but my options are limited at the moment. For example, I don't think it is wise to give the Everchanger and other living mechs unrestricted access to the galactic net."

"Why so, sir? The Everchanger just wants to explore the stuff that humans do on the galactic net. It isn't planning to leak any of our secrets or stir up any trouble."

Ves furrowed his brows. "The fact that a mech of all entities is able to browse the galactic net and interact with other humans is already a problem in itself, don't you see? Think about how much humanity and more specifically the MTA is vigilant against AIs and other existences that can threaten humanity's dominance. The rise of living mechs can pose a threat to the human race if it isn't managed carefully."

"The Everchanger would never do such a thing!"

MY PARTNER IS RIGHT. I HAVE LEARNED SO MUCH ABOUT ALL OF THE PEOPLE YOU CAN MEET AND ALL OF THE ACTIVITIES YOU CAN DO ON THE GALACTIC NET THAT I WISH TO EXPERIENCE THIS VIBRANT VIRTUAL REALITY.

"I know you don't have any nefarious thoughts in mind, but that won't be enough to reassure the scared old coots who have all the say in the MTA." Ves retorted. "There will always be bad apples among living mechs as they become more ubiquitous. If we don't want to spook the MTA and invite a backlash, we need to take baby steps. This

way, we can gradually integrate living mechs in human society so that we can initiate a smooth transition from subservient tools to symbiotic battle partners."

Venerable Joshua looked impatient. As the pilot who was the most closely attuned to living mechs, he already regarded machines like the Everchanger as entities who were practically even to humans. It troubled him to treat them with insufficient respect.

"How long will it take for them to receive the treatment that they deserve?" The expert pilot asked.

"I don't know, but this is destined to be a long-term process, Joshua. It depends heavily on how quickly I can progress as a mech designer. Once I become a Master Mech Designer or Star Designer, I will have the ability to spread my living mechs far and wide. If enough mech pilots across human space adopt my products, then I will gain the power to negotiate with the leadership of the MTA. I just have to convince a few of its factions. Once I have won them over, it is much simpler to build up support from the other factions."

Ves already had a clear-minded perspective on how much time, effort and political support it took to enact such a drastic change to human society.

At no point did he think that it was impossible for him to get the Galactic Mech Council on his side!

This was because he had absolute confidence that he would advance to Master and even Star Designer sooner or later. The Polymath had already set a positive example, and while he did not intend to follow her footsteps, he was still happy that at least another individual of 'his kind' had succeeded in reaching the pinnacle of the mech design profession!

The confidence he showed did much to placate Venerable Joshua. The young soldier subsided.

"You're right. Nothing can be changed if we don't have the necessary strength and support. We still have much to go before we can push our vision onto human civilization."

Ves smiled. Joshua sure had grand ideas. That was good. It gave him an additional reason to fight and progress his strength.

Although expert pilots had much greater chances of advancing to ace pilot when they had access to a masterwork expert mech, that was far from the end of the road.

Ace pilots, though immensely powerful, were still small fry in the face of the mighty Mech Trade Association. Only god pilots among the piloting profession had the right to

speak. The journey to become one of this mythical gathering was undoubtedly a lot more arduous!

Although Venerable Joshua was a remarkably talented and diligent mech pilot, his qualifications were far from matching those who had succeeded in becoming figurative gods in human form.

All of those other god pilots might have possessed mixed backgrounds at the start, but the overwhelming majority still possessed first-class or at least extremely affluent second-class origins!

In comparison to those mech pilots who started off with immense advantages, Joshua used to be a poor third-class potentate who grew up in a small and remote planet!

He was not a designer baby. He only obtained a light amount of genetic treatments after joining the Larkinson Clan. He did not even have a cranial implant since it was not necessary at this stage of his career. It was a bit of a waste to integrate a second-class implant when he could eventually gain a more significant advantage with a first-class implant down the line!

With all of these shortcomings and more, Ves knew that Joshua needed an incomparably powerful advantage to overcome the nearly impossible hurdle to god pilot.

The only way that Ves could think of was to upgrade the Everchanger to a grand work. Only by reaching the third rung of Senfovon's Ladder of Craftsmanship could he realize Joshua's dream and present another legendary god pilot to humanity!

"Strength is the ultimate lever of change." Ves softly said. "Practice well and make sure you never forget your current motivations."

"Oh, you don't have to worry about that, sir. I am far from satisfied with how we humans do things." Joshua grinned in an anticipatory manner.

Both humans inside the cockpit of the Everchanger were aligned on this matter!